



19 July 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

As the school year draws to a close, you could be forgiven for thinking that at Ashlyns we had forgotten, as our school calendar continues to be packed with a vast array of events and activities.

Having great experiences, that form lasting memories for our students, has always been central to the work we do, and we know these are valued by our school community. This was particularly showcased at the summer concert, where there was once again such great and memorable musical accomplishment on show. The mini Year 13 'takeover' slot highlighted just how much the students valued this 'musical family', and I am sure the phenomenal solo and group performances, as well as the ensemble ABBA medley will be a lasting memory for all those involved. In a similar vein, the quality of art work displayed at the GCSE and A level exhibitions highlighted a diverse range of artistic flair and creativity, as well as commitment and care in creating these pieces. My thanks go to our Music and Art departments, who continue to nurture the arts in our young people and help us all realise the power of these disciplines in developing well-rounded young people.

We know that great experiences are even better when they are shared, and this has been evident in abundance through so much of the summer term. We've seen: great teamwork and group support in the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh expeditions; fantastic participation and encouragement on Sports Day; and enjoyment and fun this week through our Activity Days and trips. With the World Challenge trip to Vietnam, we'll have even more memorable experiences to share next term. Best of luck to all those embarking on this adventure.

As ever, our Student Leadership Team has been busy supporting the school community. This term they have: supported the mentoring programme; led the character programme in tutor time for Year 7 and Year 8; helped at key events including the Proms and Sixth Form Induction, Year 6 Transition and our Senior Citizens' tea party. In addition to all of this, they have been supporting and guiding our local primary school pupils, as well as supporting new staff recruitment as part of the student panel during interviews over the term. Well done to all of them. They truly are exceptional ambassadors for our school.

Alongside the experiences noted above, we know that our staff and students work hard to ensure our examination year students are ready for 'exam season'. I'm sure the families of those taking exams breathe a sigh of relief when the final exam has been taken and the students can relax and take a break before turning their mind to their next steps. Prom plans and leaving celebrations are always a talking point and this year was no different, providing a fitting end to those months (years!) of hard work, revision and application. We look forward to celebrating their achievements on A level and GCSE results days in August.

Of course, we don't wait until GCSE and A levels to celebrate success and have used our end of year Reward Assemblies to recognise the significant achievements of our students. These rewards acknowledge achievements in academic life, character and wider personal development and over the last two weeks, we have handed out awards to almost 250 students. Congratulations to all those who received recognition this year.

I am always mindful that the range of activities, experiences and achievements are also due in large part to our excellent, committed staff - both teachers and support staff alike, who all strive to ensure our students have the best learning experiences possible in a caring and supportive environment.

There has been much in the news in recent months about the various challenges facing schools. At Ashlyns, of course, we are not immune to those challenges, but are fortunate to have the support and guidance of many committed and skilled volunteers to support us. Whether it is the Governing Board, who provide the strategic direction and vision for the school, the ASA whose activities bring the school community together and raise much needed funds for the school, or the many parents and carers who offer their time and help in so many ways, including offering carers support and guidance, we would like to say a huge thank you. We are fortunate to have this continued support.

The end of the summer term does not mean work stops though, as our site team takes advantage of quieter days to complete key projects. This summer will see the refurbishment of student toilets alongside the commencement of the music block extension.

As always, as we approach the end of any school year we have mixed emotions, as colleagues move on to new challenges and opportunities. This term we say farewell to Mrs Martell (Drama), Miss Peart (Teaching Assistant), Mr Petrovic (Premises), Mrs Lowe (Science), Mrs Young (Teaching Assistant) and Mrs Skidmore (Economics). We also wish a very happy retirement to Mrs Thompson (Reprographics Technician) who has worked at Ashlyns for 35 years! We wish everyone all the very best in their future endeavours.

September may seem a long way ahead, but please make a note of the [arrangements for the beginning of the Autumn term](#).

I have always been a fan of the newspaper cartoon Calvin and Hobbes, whose wry, philosophical observations on life have stuck with me from childhood through to adulthood - including this one: 'There's never enough time to do all the nothing you want.' As we head into the summer break, I hope you find the time to rest, explore and even find the space to enjoy the freedom of doing a little 'nothing'.

I wish you all a safe and restful summer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shapland', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Shapland
Headteacher