

Update from the Headteacher

Dear Parent/Carer

In what has felt like a week of significant news, schools have also seen a number of key announcements.

The first arrived last Friday, not long after last week's T-bulletin was sent, and was the much anticipated consultation on alternative arrangements for this year's GCSEs, A levels and vocational examinations. Parents and students in year groups who are directly affected have received a detailed summary of the proposals but any parent or student can submit a response. The full consultation document can be found [here](#) and responses can be made online [here](#). The closing date for responses is 29th January 11.45 p.m.

On Sunday, the issue of rapid testing in schools was being raised in the press. The main debate surrounded the use of these tests on a daily basis for 'close contacts' to avoid the need for self isolation. Schools have now been instructed that the plans for serial, daily testing of close contacts will be paused, but we should continue with our arrangements for routine testing of staff and those students working on site who wish to do so on a twice weekly basis.

At Ashlyns, we have been fortunate to have a committed group of staff who have undergone thorough training and are ready to roll out whatever the renewed plan is when we welcome all students and staff back to school.

On that note, the Secretary of State for Education has pledged to give schools and parents two weeks' notice of any return to school so that effective preparations can be made. Once we receive this notification, we will of course keep you updated with the finer details of the plan for safe return to the physical school building; however, once again I would like to acknowledge the hard work, determination and resilience of our staff and students as they continue with remote learning.

I am aware that many students miss visiting our school library and meeting the range of authors we host. In addition to highlighting our virtual LRC (see LRC News in the right hand margin), please encourage your child to check out the Virtual School Library at the Oak National Academy. Each week a popular children's author will provide free books, exclusive videos and their top three recommended reads ([link here](#)). This week's guest author is Jacqueline Wilson.

The major mobile networks are planning to make access to Oak Academy data free to browse until schools reopen and we are expecting the date this takes effect to be published in the next week.
(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-55719428>)

With snow showers predicted in the days ahead, I wish you a warm and safe weekend.

James Shapland

Hub Provision

If you are a key worker or have a vulnerable child and would like a place for them at school in our Hub please contact admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk. All spaces must be pre-booked to ensure we have adequate, safe levels of provision.

Free School Meals

If you believe your child may qualify for free school meals, and have not notified us, please contact Mrs Hallahan (whallah@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk) who will be able to provide further advice and assistance.

Year 11 'Session 6'

'Session 6' for Year 11 will now run as a Google Meet, where students can drop in if they need any advice or support, or if they want to let us know what they want to achieve in their study over that hour for some added accountability! The Google Meet link will be posted on the Year 11 Google Classroom; please encourage your child to drop in if they would like support or a chat about next steps.

Letters this week

- [Ofqual Consultation](#)
- [SEND letter from HCC](#)

Remote Learning

We continue to be extremely impressed by students' attitude to learning and engagement in their live lesson and in completing the work set up by their teachers. A total of 3864 merits have been awarded over the last five school days, with a third of these being for 'outstanding effort in remote learning.' A reminder that students must complete all tasks set on Google Classroom; parents can check on their child's engagement with these tasks through Insight as teachers will give an F1 where assignments are not completed. These tasks are as important to their learning as their attendance in the live lessons as these are where students apply what they have learned.

Students should be working for around 45 minutes of each lesson, whether in a live lesson or completing the work. We would encourage parents to support their children in taking these breaks, and in trying to take time away from screens during these lesson breaks, as well as at break and lunch time.

We began a trial of *student cameras on* during some Year 13 lessons this week, and will continue this in some sixth form lessons again next week. In a lesson with cameras on, students must only turn their cameras on at the request of the teacher, and blur their background (or, where this is not possible due to technology, ensure they will not be interrupted and sit against a neutral background). It is not mandatory for students to turn their cameras on if they are uncomfortable doing so.

Punctuality

Please ensure your child logs into timetabled lessons at the correct start time every day. This will help maximise learning in the 45 minutes of lesson time so that we can still allow students a break and a stretch in between.

P1: 09:00

P2: 10:00

P3: 11:20

P4: 12:20

P5: 14:20

PE Weekly House Challenge

As part of Core PE lessons, the PE Department is setting students (and staff) a fun weekly challenge for house points. All entries will be awarded points:

[Physical Challenges! - #1](#)

PE Team's efforts: [Challenge 1](#)

[Physical Challenges! - #2](#)

PE Team's efforts: [Challenge 2](#)

Results can be uploaded [here](#) and the PE team will announce the winning house each week. Good luck!

LRC News

Well done to all the students who are borrowing books from the eLibrary and a reminder that the LRC App has lots of information and resources to help you with remote learning.

Chorleywood Bookshop has just launched its annual writing competition, which this year is being judged by the current Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell. Details on the theme and how to enter can be found [here](#).

Our Harry Potter Digital Escape Room was extremely popular with a record number of students completing the challenge. It was a close run contest but Coram came in at the top spot followed by Raven, Handel and Bourne. If you have any suggestions for a new literary themed Digital Escape Room, do let Miss Lambert know.

Finally, the Carnegie Medal is one of the UK's oldest literary awards, recognising outstanding writing for children. Discover the fantastic titles that have been nominated this year by clicking [here](#).

House Point Update

Current house points			
Bourne	Coram	Handel	Raven
20067	19952	19432	19363
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

22/01/2021

Student Wellbeing

We are delighted to announce two upcoming events hosted by Dr Kathy Weston.

The first has been arranged exclusively for Ashlyns parents and will undoubtedly be of great interest:

'Tooled Up Education and Ashlyns: Lockdown 3: Helping Teens Cope with the Coronacoaster'

This talk is for parents who are keen to explore ways in which teens can be optimally supported during the current period of lockdown. There are lots of topics to consider including: dealing with uncertainty, denial of social activity, screen dependency, motivation to learn, staying mentally healthy, reducing anxiety and managing family conflict and stress. Dr Weston welcomes any questions ahead of the talk from Ashlyns parents, (which can be sent via the 'get support' function of the new Tooled Up Education site.

When: Jan 29, 2021 7:30PM. Register in advance for this webinar using the following [link](#).

Tickets are allocated on a first come, first served basis so register now to secure your place.

The second event gives you the opportunity to raise specific issues for Kathy to address:

'Parenting Through a Pandemic: Q&A Session' with Dr Kathy Weston - 11 - 18 year olds

To help address some of the challenges that all families are currently facing, Dr Kathy Weston has agreed to host a 40 minute live Q&A session on 'Parenting Through a Pandemic', on Sunday 31st January.

As part of our Tooled Up membership, this is free for all parents of our school. At the moment, Dr Weston is receiving unprecedented volumes of questions from parents, and this webinar gives you the opportunity to have your own worries addressed, live (anonymously, of course). Expect to leave armed with simple to apply tips, designed to build children's resilience and energise the whole family. Please do take advantage of this valuable extra support available by registering your space on the link below.

When: Jan 31, 2021 7:00 PM Register in advance for this webinar using the following [link](#).

Many of you have already attended and benefitted from sessions run by Dr Kathy Weston and I do recommend taking this opportunity not only to share and understand the challenges that we are all facing together, but also to take away advice that will help to make this lockdown period feel less challenging.

Wellbeing Ambassador Newsletter

This week the Sixth Form Wellbeing Ambassadors published the first edition of their upper school student wellbeing newsletter, jam-packed full of great ideas for students to keep motivated, stay positive, and to challenge themselves, as well as providing a healthy and tasty chilli recipe to try out. Please take a look at the newsletter [here](#)

ASA News

The next ASA Meeting is on Tuesday 26th January at 7.30pm - via ZOOM - all are welcome

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87202760557?pwd=R2VoOTIXcGxIV2hpdHhuMUUs4OU5Edz09>

Meeting ID: 872 0276 0557
Passcode: R86HNu

BAG 2 SCHOOL

Drop-off from now until Thursday 25th Feb - [see attached flyer](#)

Please remember to bag up your unwanted items and help raise some money for our ASA - bags available if you need them (just drop a line via email to the ASA) and drop off at: 30 Oakwood (off Shootersway), Berkhamsted, HP4 3NQ (in front of the garage)

Paint Offer from Dacorum Decorating Supplies (Berkhamsted)

Dacorum Decorating are continuing to offer tins of mis-tint mixed paints with proceeds going to the ASA, so if you're thinking of redecorating, why not pop along to their shop (317 High Street)? They're still open (as an essential service, one person in shop at a time) - contact the shop for more info. Suggested Donation: 1L, 2.5L @£5/pot, and 5L, 7.5L, 10L @£10/pot

SEND

DSPL8 Spring Term Communication for Parent/Carers

DSPL's latest parent newsletter can be found [here](#) with dates available to book for ADD-vance mini consultations and lots of advice and guidance for support.

An open letter from the Director of Children's services about education provision in schools, for parent/ carers of children and young people with SEND

Jenny Coles, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire County Council has sent out an open letter for all parent/ carers of children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire.

The letter gives information about how schools and the local area are working to meet your child's needs in these difficult times.

The letter highlights key points from the Department for Education's [school national restrictions guidance](#) and further details about the situation in Hertfordshire, including:

- school attendance rules for children with EHCPs
- when school closures may occur due to health and safety reasons
- provision for support outlined within EHCPs
- services supporting young people with SEND

Read the letter on the link [here](#)

Safeguarding

Childhood winter illnesses – knowing what to do

Please see an update from the local NHS provider below:

Now we are in winter many children may be experiencing common illnesses like coughs and colds.

We know that some parents and carers aren't always sure what to do when their child is unwell. A

[new NHS leaflet](#) has been published to help you spot common winter illnesses and how you can treat their child at home.

It is also important that parents know where to go for medical advice when they need it and what to do in an emergency, which can be a little confusing during the coronavirus pandemic. The NHS

Would like to reassure parents it is still providing safe care when they need it.

As well as providing clarity on where to go for medical advice, there is a host of information in the leaflet from how to treat colds and earache at home, to how to spot serious conditions such as meningitis and sepsis. There is also information on coronavirus.