

17th February 2022

Dear Parents,

The end of one of the longest post-Christmas half terms is almost upon us and I am sure that the students and staff will welcome the break next week. It happens to coincide with an encouraging downturn in Covid numbers, which means that after the holiday we can reinstate face-to-face assemblies after a few months delivering virtually. Most parents' evenings will continue virtually; however, for Year 11 and Year 13, as there are two scheduled parents' evenings over the year, we decided that the second should be the old-fashioned variety. We are now more confident that the Year 13 evening on March 15th and the Year 11 evening on March 24th will go ahead, details coming out nearer the time about booking and other logistics.

Assistant Head Recruitment

This time of year is always busy in terms of recruitment and last week we were delighted to appoint Mr Jon Scourfield to the role of Assistant Headteacher (Student Services and Intervention). Jon has been Head of Business, Economics and Computing here since 2004 and beat off strong competition from external candidates to secure the role. We have several other vacancies to appoint to, but so far in all of our newly-recruited staff, we are excited by what they will add and bring to the Sheldon community from next September.

Matron leaving

Sadly, we will be saying Goodbye to Matron, Mrs Kathy Staddon, who leaves this Friday. I wrote separately to parents of students with specific medical needs last week to alert them to Kathy's departure and today we are interviewing for her replacement. The new post-holder will be deemed Lead First Aider and will have overall responsibility for dealing with students' emergency needs. This is a timely reminder that even though Kathy is a qualified nurse, it was never meant to be her job to diagnose ailments or work in the way GPs do; over time, increasing numbers of students made their way down to her for exactly that or have even been sent in to school despite being poorly for her to give a second opinion. With the new arrangement, we will be in a position with the Lead First Aider and over a dozen other fully-qualified first aid members of staff to deal with medical situations as they arise, but the medical needs will have to be ones that occur during the day and which genuinely prevent students from being able to work in class. We are also coming into line with most other secondary schools and will not be routinely administering paracetamol, even if parental permission has been granted. Kathy has been a valued colleague over many years and who will be missed, and we wish her well in her new role working for the Nursing and Midwifery Council as a competency assessor at Oxford Brookes University.

National Apprenticeship Week

Last week was National Apprenticeship Week, which was an opportunity for a number of employers to come in to Sheldon to speak to Year 11s and 13s in particular about opportunities beyond school. The companies and groups were varied including Specsavers, The Army, Siemens, Wheelers Group, St James Wealth Management, and Hanson UK, all of whom were able to give valuable insight to our

Hardenhuish Lane, Chippenham, Wilts. SN14 6HJ

Headteacher: Neil Spurdell BSc (Hons)

Tel: 01249 766020 **Fax:** 01249 766030

Email: admin@sheldonschool.co.uk **Web:** www.sheldonschool.co.uk



young people. National Careers Week will follow in March with yet more employers visiting: engineering, health care, medicine, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and barbering, law and legal just some of the professions being available for students to learn more about.

DofE

We have proudly continued business as normal in extra-curricular pursuits, the DofE Award Scheme being but one. It has had some fantastic success so far with more than 70 students achieving their awards since September. Over 100 students have joined the scheme this year, with an impressive array of activities that they have embarked on. The volunteering work by Sheldon students has also made a difference to many within our local communities and we have been delighted by their contributions. Preparations for the Bronze, Silver and Gold expeditions are now well underway and students can begin to get excited by that. Emily Williamson in Year 13 is one student who has been all the way through the process, recently completing all sections of her Gold award, so a trip to Buckingham Palace will be next – massive congratulations to her!

School Council News

Overseen by Miss Frater, Head of Year 12, the school council has met to discuss a variety of topics covering issues in school, those on the local scene and some further afield. Recently, our Premises Manager, Mr Westlake visited the council to discuss an opportunity for applying for funds for a community garden on the school site, which they have now done. If you are interested in the project, this link will take you to the RHS website: [Community Gardens supported by the RHS / RHS Gardening](#) and we will hope that the council will hear back positively from the RHS in due course.

News from the Languages faculty

This half term, the Year 9 Language Ambassadors have been visiting Ivy Lane Primary School with Mrs Clemas on Thursday mornings, teaching the Year 6s greetings in French and also the vocabulary of clothes. They have worked with the Year 6s in small groups, modelling the activities at the front of the class, and have also invented a couple of games beforehand to use to teach the vocabulary, which the Year 6s thoroughly enjoyed. Today's final lesson with the Year 6s will involve putting on a fashion show, with the Year 9 ambassadors as judges.

Maths Challenges

Over 120 pupils from Years 9 and 10 recently took part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge, a 60-minute challenge undertaken by students across the world; it is formulated to encourage mathematical reasoning, precision of thought, and fluency in using basic mathematical techniques to solve interesting problems – something obviously very close to my heart. The students won't find out the results until after half term, but it has been a great way to stretch the old brain cells, so if you fancy a little challenge yourself, have a go at one of the questions when you have a spare moment: work out half of 4^{2022} (and leave your answer in index form).

Governor News

At the recent Parent Governor election, Mrs Nicola Dowd, Mr Justin Delap and Mr Ken Brough were all successfully appointed and are now learning about the various ways in which governors work

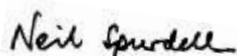
with the senior team to contribute to the effective running of Sheldon School and ensure good outcomes for all students. If you are interested in the role, there will be a further election to appoint two new Parent Governors in March. Whilst we are always delighted to welcome anyone with the capacity and enthusiasm to take on this very important role, we are particularly interested in anyone who has a background in finance, HR, or facilities management. If you would like further information, please contact the Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Julie Hawtin (jhawtin@sheldonschool.co.uk), or the Chair of Governors, Mrs Louise Carver (chairofgovernors@sheldonschool.co.uk). If you wish to stand for election, you would need to complete a nomination form; this and information on becoming a school governor are on the Sheldon website under Information/Governors. Completed forms should be returned to school reception, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors, or emailed to jhawtin@sheldonschool.co.uk by midday on Friday 4th March 2022. If there are more than two nominations, there will be an election by secret ballot.

High Winds

I am sure you will have seen the weather forecast for tomorrow for extremely high winds as a result of Storm Eunice. The Local Authority has also issued us with a set of guidelines to follow. We still intend to stay open, but obviously will be keeping a very close eye on the site and the safety around it. All PE lessons tomorrow will be taken indoors and all lessons scheduled for M10, M11 and PE2 have been re-roomed. Fixed standing netball poles and other loose boarding items have also been taken down or secured. It may be that we ask students to stay in at lunchtime and as an exception use their tutor bases, but we will take a view on this nearer the time when it is clear how strong the wind is. I am sure that the students will respond very sensibly, as they always have done when serious issues have had to be dealt with.

And then, let's hope the storm will quickly abate and that we can enjoy a calm half term break. We will look forward to welcoming everybody back on Monday February 28th.

Yours faithfully,



Neil Spurdell
Headteacher