

14th July 2022

Dear Parents,

Turnaround

For the first time in three years, we have been able to run our traditional week of Turnaround in which each year gets promoted to its September timetable. It also means our new Year 7s from primary schools can experience a full week at secondary school and overcome any anxieties ahead of the summer. It has been a real pleasure to welcome our latest recruits to Sheldon and I have been extremely heartened by the way they have settled in. We have also had two evenings for year 6 parents, both those new to the Sheldon community and those who have a longstanding relationship with the school; we now look forward to what we hope will be a really positive five or seven years with the near 280-strong set of students.

Hot weather

The summer is certainly here! We have had unseasonably high temperatures in the past, but it seems a while since we had a block of really hot weather. Fortunately, there is plenty of shade available for students to find if they want it, although lots have enjoyed basking in the sunshine. A small number of parents have asked why their children cannot wear PE kit to school during this time, so I will explain our rationale here: firstly, most students have only one PE kit, which would lead to the need for regular washing; secondly, PE lessons are still taking place which would mean students staying in very sweaty PE kit for the rest of the day for their remaining lessons; thirdly, a number of students have commented that they would feel self-conscious wearing their PE kit all day, every day for normal lessons. The relaxation of the wearing of ties in addition to jumpers not needing to be worn means that students should feel comfortable in their uniform, with the introduction of tailored shorts alongside skirts several years ago allowing for further cooling down. I appreciate that not everyone will agree with this stance, but we need a consistent approach for all students and that is our reasoning for adopting this one. This will also be our position in future periods of very hot weather.

Sports Day

This will take place next Monday, but has been moved to earlier in the day so that it is all complete just after break, hopefully in more pleasant and suitable conditions. Field events have already taken place ahead of the races on Monday, with Otis Poole in Year 9 breaking the school record for the boys' high jump with a phenomenal jump of 1m 62. In normal times it would be more appropriate to round the day off with the sports, but we have factored in the forecast and adjusted proceedings. Lessons will therefore resume during period 3 and, on this particular occasion, students will be permitted to come to school in their PE kit. They should also come armed with plenty of fluids, sun cream and a hat.

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Olympic Fun Run

Two weeks ago, we were fortunate to be joined by Winter Olympic gold medallist, Amy Williams for our Olympic Fun Run. This event had been a Sheldon highlight for many years until the pandemic, although we did run a postponed version earlier this academic year, and it was wonderful to see it taking place once again. Amy delivered an inspirational address to the students before they finished off their afternoon with a run around the grounds.

More athletic success

Five Sheldon students qualified for the English Schools National Athletics Finals last weekend, that in itself being a huge achievement. Our Sheldon athletes performed brilliantly: Adam Merrett (Year 10) came 9th in the inter-boys' hammer, Harry Maxwell (Year 10) came 15th in the inter-boys' 3000m, Joe Carter (Year 13) came 10th in the senior boys 100m, James Viner in (Year 13) came 3rd in the senior boys' hammer and Owen Merrett came 1st in the senior boys' hammer. These are superb results and we are incredibly proud of them all. In addition, our Year 7 athletes also recently qualified for the County Finals of the Wiltshire School Games athletics competition. All pupils performed fantastically well, with the girls' team bringing home a silver medal.

Work Experience

Another activity to be reinstated this term was the Year 10 work experience programme, 235 students managing to secure placements, with only 10 being virtual. Being able to offer this to our young people at this time in their school careers has always been an invaluable opportunity and feedback from those who took part was incredibly positive, 95% of them enjoying their week and finding it useful. More recently, the majority of Year 12 also had their chance to do likewise, again with a great deal of positive feedback. Amongst them was Connor Roe whose placement took him to the USA; it is not unusual for students in the Sixth Form to travel further afield, although it is rare to see them go overseas. It was, however, a great experience for Connor and his account is below:

For my work experience I went to Wilmington, North Carolina. The clinical research organisation I completed my work experience with is known as Thermo Fisher Scientific. During the week I had a full calendar from 9am to 5pm each day starting Tuesday and finishing Friday as the Monday was the 4th of July so we were out of office. During these meetings I encountered several departments from within the company and met with the senior vice presidents from each sector such as; Legal, Finance, Operations, Commercial and many others. Throughout the week I was given case studies some were current clinical trials such examples being the Moderna Covid vaccination research and development and Takeda Rare Disease analysis. Others were artificial, it compelled me to have to work through a protocol and ensure the method given was ethically satisfactory. Having an insight on these trials made me realise how paramount clinical research is to evolving the healthcare industry.

Courtroom Hearings

Staying in the Sixth Form, the Year 12 Critical Thinking group took part in some very successful mock court room battles to vindicate their "clients" reputations: Martin Luther King, Princess Diana, Michael Jackson and Katie Price. Mr Spiers sat in judgement and ruled for or against. It was great fun for those watching and a wonderful learning experience was had by all. Photos are on Twitter for those who would like to see more.

Dance Shows

Celebrating the work of all the dance clubs over the year, we saw a series of performances from the different groups: Sheldon Dance Company (Years 7-9), Boyz Dance (Years 7-8), Year 9 Dance and the Year 8 club. They have thoroughly enjoyed their extra-curricular work and it was great for them to be able to showcase all that they had been working on. Well done, everybody.

Summer Concert

Also within Performing Arts, we held a rousing summer concert a few weeks ago. One of the things I was most looking forward to when I joined as headteacher ten years ago from a school much smaller was the opportunity to see productions from the music and drama departments on a bigger scale. I have never been disappointed and this latest event was a real triumph. Well over 80 students were involved, including half a dozen Year 13s who were performing for the very last time. What a treat for everyone who was gathered and we look forward to more musical highlights in the coming academic year.

DofE

We have had well over 40 students out this week taking part in their DofE Silver or Gold expeditions, an even more formidable challenge, given the very high temperatures. Since the last newsletter, a further five students have completed their DofE Gold and we will expect several more to finish after this week's efforts. All involved have entered into the spirit of it all with great enthusiasm and thoroughly deserve their successes; I am sure that they will now enjoy a little rest that the holiday will bring.

On-line Safety

As we move into the summer holidays, the amount of time spent online is likely to increase for the students. Although there are many benefits to social interaction online, I know many of you will be concerned around the potential risks involved. As a school, we subscribe to the National Online Safety Hub and there you will find many resources designed for parents which you may find useful; these include an online training course, highlighting strategies that you can use to improve online safety. Parents who have completed this training so far have certainly found it very informative, so if you want to consider this further, you can register for free by clicking on this link:

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/sheldon-school>

Parent survey

A little while ago, we asked parents to complete a survey on aspects within school life, the key headlines from which we were able to share with a sampled group of parents (about 35 in number) in a face-to-face evening with the senior management team. The overall feedback was incredibly positive, especially in terms of what students were experiencing in lessons, but as with all of these things, it identified areas for focus. You will have seen from recent correspondence some definitive actions taken, for example the move to have year-based toilets and a tougher stance on vaping, and we will constantly be looking at what might be better to further enhance the students' experiences. We will be seeking further comment during 2022/23 and appreciate constructive feedback; thank

you to the 250 or so who fed back this time, and next year, I hope more will be moved to do so – we do consider every response carefully.

Proms

Year 11 and Year 13 have recently marked the end of their time with us with two evenings in all their finery, the Year 11s at Grittleton and Year 13 at Wellington Barn. Both events went off really well in a perfect atmosphere and were a great end to five or seven years at Sheldon. As outlined in the last newsletter, both year groups worked incredibly hard towards their GCSEs and A Levels, so it was excellent to see them having such a good time to round it all off.

Sheldon Standard

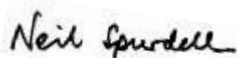
After a gap of two-and-a-half years, the Standard will be back next year. For those of you whose oldest children are in Years 7 and 8, you probably won't have the faintest idea what I am writing about. During 2022/23, we are hoping to be operating at near pre-pandemic levels in terms of extra-curricular opportunities and also get going with a number of trips and visits, all of which can be captured in a newsletter – the Sheldon Standard. We will be publishing this twice each half term, which will hopefully enable parents to get an even clearer picture of all that is going on in the school.

End of term

And then, it will all be over for another year. 2021/22 has seen some challenges, but in the main, students have navigated their way through the year amazingly well. Time now for them to rest up and recharge the batteries before setting out all over again. A reminder that students finish next Tuesday at 12:30pm – school buses will not arrive until 3pm, however, so if your child normally leaves school that way, they will need to be supervised in school until that time, or you will need to make alternative arrangements for them. Should your child need to stay until 3pm, please can you inform their head of year as it is important we have a precise list of who is going to be on site.

The new year begins for all students on Tuesday 6th September, but in the meantime, I hope they all enjoy the break and that you might also enjoy some rest and relaxation with them.

Yours faithfully,



Neil Spurdell
Headteacher