

## Headteacher's Update

10<sup>th</sup> December 2021

The run in to Christmas started in earnest this week with a wonderful Christmas Concert on Tuesday evening, followed by Christmas lunch on Wednesday. The Christmas Concert finally returned after a two years absence due to the pandemic and it was fantastic. Seven ensembles played in the concert including the Junior Orchestra, Choir, Chamber Orchestra and Concert Band to a large and appreciative audience.

The concert began with the newly formed Chamber Orchestra playing a selection of classical pieces including pieces from composers like Stravinsky and Dvorak. This was then followed by String Orchestra, a duet from Sixth Formers Adea and Dhruv, our Choir and Function Band, all playing a range of popular and Christmas music. The penultimate item was the Vyners Swing Band who played three pieces, two of which were played by the original Swing Band formed by the late Perry Parsons.



Christmas lunch was fantastic and I would like to thank our Chef, Luis Herrera and his team for the meals that they served to the staff and students on Wednesday. What was most rewarding for me was the community feel of dozens of students at any one time sitting together enjoying the Christmas music, the company of their friends and a nutritious roast dinner in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The concert culminated with some exceptional musicianship in an exuberant performance by the Concert Band of Robert Sheldon's, *A Joyful Journey*, which will be one of the pieces that we will take on tour to Amsterdam with us in July 2022.

Well done to everyone involved and my particular thanks to Mr Cullum and Mrs Coyle for their excellent organisation and leadership of this event. We are very much looking forward to future events including the production of *Hairspray* and the Spring Concert.



I would also like to remind families that we will break up for the Christmas holiday at 12.15pm on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December. I would also draw parent's attention to Mr Cahill's email that was sent out earlier this week that outlines the testing arrangements and phased return for students at the start of the spring term in January. This has been put in place to allow for mass Covid testing that the DfE has asked all schools to undertake when students return to school. A reminder of dates and timings of testing will be shared in early January.

### **Increase in canteen pricing**

Parents will be aware of the continued pressure on the price of goods. The pressure of food price increases is regrettably being felt in the school canteen as much as in the weekly household shop. Prices in the canteen were last increased in October 2018. We are unfortunately now at the stage where we need to implement a price increase.

Canteen prices will be rising by 5% from the start of the spring term. For most items, this is between a 5p and 10p increase per item. I am pleased to confirm that the price of the main meal option remains fixed at £2.30. We have also held the prices of healthier items, such as fresh fruit and salad boxes.

A price increase is not something we undertake lightly. I hope parents will understand though that neither the school, nor Aspens are able to absorb the continued price increases in raw materials

### **Covid 19 Additional Measures**

The Prime Minister's announcement on Wednesday evening of additional Covid 19 was followed by additional guidance from the DfE regarding contingency measures that are an attempt to reduce the spread of the Omicron variant. The main implication for us as a school is that all staff, students and visitors must wear face coverings within the buildings (unless exempt). The only exception to this is when seated in the classroom or dining room areas. Based upon this guidance we have decided to proceed with the **Awards Evening** on Thursday. However, this will be a ticketed event. As previously mentioned, the event will be divided into the lower school, starting at 5.30pm and upper school, at 7.30pm. We will also arrange seating to offer a degree of social distancing.

All students, staff and parents will be required to wear face coverings, unless exempt and we will be shortening the length of speeches, etc. to ensure all present are not required to remain within the hall for an excessive amount of time. The guest speaker will now not attend in person and has recorded a video presentation for the evening. There will also not be any refreshments provided for guests after the event as was previously the case prior to the pandemic. Ultimately, we did not want to cancel this event as it is such an important evening in the school calendar. I hope that parents and carers understand the additional measures that we have decided to take.

### **England U16 Recognition**

Finally this week, I would like to warmly congratulate Ryeesa Sekhon (10F) who was invited to and attended her first England U16 Football training camp this week. This was the first England Women's U16 event of the season and Ryeesa was one of 24 players to attend. During the five days the girls took part in daily training sessions, some of which included physical profiling. All training sessions were supported by session briefs. There was a competitive opportunity on day five where the girls were involved in playing a match against Aston Villa. The feedback from the Lionesses Player Education Officer highlighted the fact that Ryeesa coped well in her new environment and made excellent progress throughout the week. This is a marvellous achievement; we are hopeful that Ryeesa will continue to make similar progress and that we will see her representing the Lionesses in the near future.

Have a great weekend.

**Gary Mullings**  
**Headteacher**

### **Headteacher's Commendations**

#### **Work Related Learning**

Elizabeth Allen	8G
Yazen Almunshi	8G
Ayana Ansari	8G
Adam Bewketu	8G
Tom Budd	8G
Aahil Chughtai	8G