

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a term packed with learning and wider experiences for our students. Our recognition assemblies today and yesterday reflected a thriving school community with a high percentage of students receiving at least one form of recognition for their contribution across terms 3 and 4. At the core of our approach to education at Fitzharrys is what is happening in lessons. Throughout this term I've been continually impressed every time I visit a classroom. This is due to the focus, engagement, interest, and consequent acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding. All of this is under the expert guidance of Fitzharrys staff. Year 10, 11, and 12 students have exemplified this through their excellent approach to mock and practice assessments across this term. Alongside this sits a wide range of super and extra-curricular activities to support our students' development. This term has been unparalleled in terms of the number of such activities and their breadth. It is with great pride that I'm able to share what Fitzharrys students have been doing in term 4:

### Aspiration

Alongside practice exams, our year 11 students have been busy with Geography fieldtrips to Oxford, Food exams, and practical assessments in a range of subjects. JMF6 students have been adding to their understanding through a trip to the Natural History Museum in Oxford and a Theatre trip to see 'Death of a Salesman' in Birmingham. Sixth form students have also received support around revision and study strategies with sessions from Elevate Learning. There have been a range of Maths competitions in and out of school. In the Naboj Maths Competition our senior team came 3<sup>rd</sup>, whilst our junior team came 7<sup>th</sup>. In the year 10 Maths Feast for schools across Oxfordshire we entered two teams, one of whom won the competition. Students have also taken part in the UKMT challenge, and the pink and grey Maths Kangaroo. All of our year 9 students had the opportunity to see Macbeth at the Amey Theatre in Abingdon, alongside year 10 Drama students. A group of keen readers also took part in the Carnegie tea. The benefits of the OX14LP partnership were evident through the medic day for prospective medicine students in JMF6, Oxbridge club for those considering applications to Oxford and Cambridge University, and our participation in the Atom Festival 'Famelab Academy 2025' at the Amey Theatre, where our year 9 entrant won the event.

### Opportunity

A highlight of the term was the superb performance of 'The Lion King'. Both nights of this fabulous school production deservedly received standing ovations. Our primary school matinee was also a hit. Congratulations to everyone involved in this wonderful show: the quality of acting, singing, dancing, and technical support was very high. We cannot wait for next year's production. There have also been other performances this term with students performing 'Shakespeare Shorts' at the Unicorn theatre in Oxford. In addition, the band 'Carnage' performed at the rock concert held at the Amey Theatre, to critical acclaim, and students took part in the Oxford Bach choir. OX14 LP opportunities continued with ChallengED for our year 8 students. Fitzharrys also entered a team for Robocon at Abingdon School, with one of our year 10 students winning the prize for 'Flame-tempered resolve'. Students also represented the school in a Geography quiz at Magdalen School, a STEM event in Carterton for students with parents in the armed forces, and a brilliant mock trial performance including a student winning the prize for best usher.

Sporting events and success have run throughout term 4. Our netballers have been excellent, with year 8 and 9 doing superbly at the county finals, and year 7 and 10 playing a number of matches and tournaments. Girls football has also been busy, with year 8 and 9 students playing a number of games, including the year 8s reaching the county 5-a-side finals. Boys have also been busy, with our year 7 boys narrowly losing the county cup semi-final this Wednesday, whilst also competing in the Vale 5-a-side tournament. There has also been a house badminton competition during term 4, with students from all year

groups participating over lunchtimes and afternoon registration. It has been brilliant to see such high levels of participation and sportsmanship. Across all opportunities on offer, we see high levels of engagement and teamwork. I know that there are many other clubs that continue to run, such as Duke of Edinburgh, where students learn and flourish beyond the normal curriculum.

### **Integrity**

Students have received some important messages from external speakers this term, including a talk from a Holocaust survivor to all of year 9, and a session on the dangers of county lines from 'Justice in Motion', an Oxford based physical theatre company, for year 7 students. Our student council groups have been active through fundraising for Comic Relief, surveys into use of our 'Park and Stride' initiative, supporting 'Dr Bike' in the maintenance of students' bicycles, and raising over £500 for the local charity 'Carbon Cutters' through a staff Karaoke event. It is also wonderful to see students support others in our community on a regular basis, with groups of students heading to Leafield care home, and local primary schools, alongside JMF6 students supporting those lower down the school with peer and academic support as part of our OX14 LP initiatives.

I am indebted to the commitment and support of our staff who lead, organise, and facilitate all of these activities and events. This includes our Oxford University PGCE interns, who have been with us since late September. As they move onto their final placements, we wish them the very best and say thank you. We know that they've learnt a great deal from staff and students alike. We also look forward to welcoming our next interns in term 5.

### **Uniform**

As we come back in two weeks' time, our school uniform policy adjusts to reflect the warmer weather. Student can therefore wear the Fitzharrys uniform polo shirts instead of a shirt, blazer, and tie. Tailored shorts are also optional in term 5 and 6. The rest of our uniform policy remains the same [Uniform - Fitzharrys School](#) Earlier this term there was some confusion over school shoes. Our updated guidance [SCHOOL-SHOE-GUIDANCE-for-parents-March-2025-final.pdf](#) should give you clarity, and we expect all students to be in the correct footwear at the start of term 5.

### **Water**

Please remember that hydration in the school day is important. At Fitzharrys we have water fountains around the site for students to top up water bottles before school, at break, at lunch time, and at the end of the school day. Drinking water reduces headaches and increases concentration. We have a high number of left over water bottles in our lost property. In the first week of next term these will be available after school between 3.30pm and 4.30pm for parents to come and look through to recover any lost items. After that the remaining bottles will be reused by the school, including being offered as spares to students who are without water bottles.

### **Online safety**

Online safety continues to be of importance in our approach to the teaching of PSHE, Computer Science, and our policy around mobile phones. During next term we will be enhancing our mobile phone policy with an update around smart watches and the enforcement of our rules about the use of phones at the end of the school day. We are aware of the coverage of 'Adolescence' and the conversations around this in the media and in schools. The Department for Education has made the Netflix series freely accessible to all schools, and we will be looking carefully at how this is utilised to enhance our delivery of key messages to students, alongside our support for parents and carers. One area that has come to our attention this term has been WhatsApp groups that students use. We would encourage you to focus on how your child uses these. There are 2 pieces of guidance which are a good starting point. These have been sent to you alongside this letter.

### **Term 5**

Year 11 and year 13 will come back into the exam season, following a busy Easter holiday of revision and preparation. We wish them well as they study over the break. We are confident that they have been taught well and have the skills to embrace revision and independent study, things that we know make such a difference in their preparation. A reminder that the school website has guidance on revision that echoes messages shared with students [Revision - Fitzharrys School](#).

Please can I also remind you about the parent survey that was sent to you earlier this week [Parent Survey](#). The deadline for this is 25<sup>th</sup> April and I would be grateful for your reflections on the education we provide. I am very proud of Fitzharrys School, but we are always looking to further improve, so your feedback is most welcome.

Over the first week of the Easter break our Football and Netball tour of the Netherlands takes place. We wish the students and staff the very best and look forward to hearing about their adventures when we return to school on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

I hope that you and your families have a relaxing Easter break.

Yours sincerely,

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

Will Speke  
Headteacher