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18<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for all your support across a busy year. As we come to the summer holiday, it is important to reflect on what has been achieved, and our next steps. This term has been a fitting finale to a superb academic year. In school today we had our recognition assemblies where we gave out a range of certificates and rewards to celebrate the achievements of our students. I would like to take the time to mention some key events that have occurred, and to then share some key messages for the start the next academic year.

**Aspiration**

There has been no let-up in the desire and ambition for learning shown by our students and teachers during term 6. In Maths, students have competed in the Junior Maths Kangaroo, and the Maths Olympiad. A group of avid readers have taken part in the Carnegie forum, sharing their reflections on a range of books nominated for the Carnegie medal. A group of Scientists have taken their research to the IRIS conference in London, where they presented their findings. A group of Chemistry students competed in the RSC Chemistry Competition against other OX14 LP schools and won the coveted trophy. Year 12 Biology students have been carrying out local fieldwork, as have year 10 Geography students in the River Thames. Year 10 students also enjoyed a trip to London to experience elements of the History and English curricula.

Musical talent has also been on show with a group of students taking part in the Bach choir in Oxford, our wonderful Summer Concert, and this week's impressive STARS event. Year 10 students also had a brilliant day of mock interviews where they impressed a wide range of local employers. This has been followed by an excellent week of work experience. Year 12 students visited Oxford Brookes university for the UCAS and apprenticeship fair, as they continue to focus on their next steps. Aspirations have been high in the sporting arena, with Quad kids competitions leading to our year 7 team reaching the county finals, and netballers receiving a specialised coaching session to hone their skills for next year.

**Opportunity**

There have been a range of other sporting opportunities this term, with rounders fixtures for various year groups, and a group of students honing their cricketing skills as 'cricket leaders' working with other schools in the OX14 LP. Sports day was wonderful, with students behaving in an exemplary way. All staff were impressed by the effort, support, and positivity that our students showed. There were some superb individual performances, including those of 2 students who last week competed in the English National Schools Championships, representing Oxfordshire. Divine (Y10) and Harry (Y9), competed alongside Kimberly (Y12) and Lincoln (Y11) with the best in the country. Divine is today representing England in the 'Home countries international Schools' championships. Our last sporting opportunity has been the inter house rounders competition, which took place this week.

Fitzactive is a highlight of term 6 and was packed with opportunities for our students. Year 7 camp was a real success, with students adapting well to the heat. Teambuilding was a focus for their time away, and it was great to see so many students building on their strong start to life at Fitzharrys. The campfire songs were delivered with style and enthusiasm. Year 9 Bronze Duke of Edinburgh students completed their expedition in challenging conditions. Whilst years 8 and 9 enjoyed a range of activities in school and in the local area, including a year 9 day in Abingdon where they learnt about our town in greater detail. Trips to Xscape and Thorpe Park rounded off a great week, with excellent behaviour amidst lots of excitement.

**Integrity**

A key part of Fitzactive is the work within our community. Year 9 were brilliant in learning Ultimate Frisbee, and then teaching it to primary students at Rush Common Primary School, supporting students at Dunmore with reading, and running our wellbeing café for local care home residents and other visitors. Students in other year groups have also demonstrated empathy and support for others during term 6: our year 7 buddies were brilliant in helping on both our transition day and transition evening. Our service children have also taken part in mentor training to support other service students. Our sustainability student voice reps have been busy supporting Dr Bike in fixing students' bicycles, and in reducing our plastic waste by liaising with our catering team. Our

participation in the youth council project has also been ongoing, a newsletter summarising the work of the council can be found here [YCP-Newsletter-Issue-1.pdf](#). Whole year group events have allowed both staff and students to celebrate and to say goodbye. The year 13 leavers ball was a great evening, with dancing, reminiscing, and laughter. Year 11 Prom was also a superb evening. Following some stylish arrivals, students danced the night away with friends and their teachers. It was a fitting farewell to a fabulous group of students.

### **OX14 Learning Partnership**

Across the year many of the opportunities our students have taken part stem from the work of the OX14 LP. It is a privilege to be part of this partnership, and we know it is having an impact on young people across Abingdon. The OX14 LP summer newsletter shares some of these successes, and can be found here: [Summer Newsletter – OX14 Learning Partnership](#)

### **Goodbyes**

After school today we will be saying thank you and goodbye to members of staff who are leaving Fitzharrys. Miss Homan has taught English this year at Fitzharrys, we are grateful to her for her contribution and wish her well in her new school in Oxford. Mrs McGeer is also moving to a school in Oxford, and we thank her for her teaching of Modern Foreign Languages. Mr Cherrill-Case, who has been a Learning Support Assistant this year, is heading off to university after being a great support to students in school, particularly those in year 7. Mrs Amos, who has been an excellent SENCO, working both to support young people, and guide families through the intricacies of Special Educational Needs provision, is moving on to be Assistant Headteacher at John Mason School. We are thankful for her contribution to the education of young people at Fitzharrys. Mrs Chadwick is also moving to a new school in Oxfordshire, following leading the Humanities faculty. Many students will have experienced her calm and positive lessons, and we wish her the very best in her new role. Lastly, it is an emotional goodbye to Mr Haycocks, who, after 26 years working at Fitzharrys, is retiring from teaching. We will miss his humour, warmth, and enthusiasm, and are indebted to him for his considerable impact to the Fitzharrys community over such a long period of time.

### **Getting ready for September**

As you move toward the end of the summer break, I know that there will be preparations for the new academic year. It is important that all students make a positive start to the academic year. The main drive for this will be through their learning, and their positive attitude to learning as part of Fitzharrys School. Having the correct equipment to enable access to lessons and activities in school will be vital. Guidance to what equipment students should bring for lessons can be found here [Uniform - Fitzharrys School](#). From September this list will include a green pen, and whiteboard pen. Please can you ensure this equipment, alongside the other items are brought to school from the first day in September.

### **Reading books**

From September, as part of our literacy strategy, all Key Stage 3 (KS3) students will be expected to have a current reading book with them at all times. They may be asked to get this out at short notice in any lesson. All of KS3 will have regular access to the library during break and lunch times to change their book. This is in addition to timetabled reading lessons in the library once a fortnight with their English teacher. Please make sure your child has a current reading book with them at the start of term. They will be asked to show this to their English teacher in their first week. Any book which interests your child is fine. We will work with them to guide them towards suitably challenging and engaging texts once we have got an idea of their interests and reading ability. If you'd like to see an example of suggested reading material, please see our list of '[100-Books.pdf](#) to read before you leave Fitzharrys' on our school website. We look forward to seeing what they're reading. We know the importance of literacy in helping students learn and progress.

### **Water bottles**

This term our sustainability student voice committee have worked hard to ensure that we are reducing our impact on the environment. Part of this has been about reducing the amount of plastic and waste the school produces. Plastic bottles have been removed from the canteen sales as part of this drive. In September we will expect all students to bring with them a refillable water bottle, which they can refill at water fountains around the school, and at a newly installed drinks station. Students will be able to buy tokens using their lunch cards to buy a range of fruit drinks and water. To use this, students will need to have a 500ml drinks bottle with them. Therefore, we will expect all students to bring such a bottle into school with them every day.

### **Mobile phones**

This year the vast majority of students have adhered to our clear rules about mobile devices in school. We frame this as 'See it, Hear it, Lose it'. It is a simple principle that is used to ensure that students avoid screen time in the school day. We know the risks of mobile phone use in terms of mental health, distractions from learning, online bullying, and social skills.

From September, we are adjusting the rule and what we mean by 'See it'. In the new academic year, all phones should be in bags, switched off during the school day. There is no need for a student to have immediate access to their phone in the school day. Therefore, if a phone, or outline of a phone is seen in a blazer, trouser, or other pocket, it will be confiscated on the 'See it' principle. If a student is seen using a smart watch for anything other than telling the time, the phone will also be confiscated. If a student has earphones, buds, or pods in their ear, the assumption will be that they are connected to their phone, and so both will be confiscated. For most students this will not have any impact on their behaviours in the school day; however, for a small minority this may well present some challenges. We will support those who struggle without access to their phone in the school day, building on our PSHE lessons on the risks of mobile devices. We believe this is a balanced approach to managing mobile devices in school; allowing students to understand the reasons, have clear parameters, and enjoy their learning and social time in a mobile phone free environment.

### **Uniform**

Please can I request that uniform is in line with expectations from the first day. A reminder that students will need to be in full uniform in September, with a shirt, tie, and blazer. For those requiring new shoes, our guidance on what is acceptable in school can be found here: [Uniform - Fitzharrys School](#)

For those whose children wear a skirt to school, please do remind your child to ensure the length of the skirt is reasonable. This term staff have continually had to request skirts are lengthened for some students, to ensure they are following our uniform expectations. Your support on this would be greatly appreciated.

### **Summer activities**

We have received communication from Thames Valley Police about some risky behaviours in rivers, and of damage being caused to the outdoor pool in Abingdon. Please do remind your child about the risks of unsafe behaviours in either location.

Members of staff will be in for both GCSE and A level results days. Parents of year 11 and year 13 students will receive separate communication outlining the specifics of how to collect their results. We will be sharing pictures of students celebrating their results on social media and on the school website.

Our site team will be working hard over the summer, redecorating key areas of the site, and carrying out essential maintenance. This includes preparing the site for the installation of Wall Art onto the Maths staircase, MFL staircase, and in other key areas in the school. I am extremely grateful for all the contributions and fundraising, which has led to this substantial investment. As we continue to improve our site, we are looking to create a group of willing parent volunteers with some gardening expertise who can lend their knowledge and time to help further improve key areas of the site. If you are interested in lending your support once a month or so, please send an email to the office account for the attention of Mrs Twyford. She will be in touch in the autumn term to co-ordinate the expertise over the next academic year.

Once again, I am grateful for your support in helping us create the learning environment where all our students can thrive. I am proud of what all our students have achieved this year, and I am excited about our continued growth and development. We welcome 180 students into year 7 in September. They, alongside our year 10 and year 12 students will start on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. All students will be in school on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September.

I hope you and your families have a restful summer break and look forward to seeing all Fitzharrys students back in September for another successful year.

Yours sincerely,



Will Speke  
Headteacher