

## Learning for Life!

Acting Headteacher: **Mrs Claudia Thiele** BEd Hons NPQSL, NPQH



July 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to start my termly letter by sending my heart-felt 'thank you' to you all. Without your support, feedback and encouragement, I would have had a very different experience in my first two terms as Lonsdale's Headteacher. We have thoroughly enjoyed seeing so many of you at our school events, including Sports Day and the Social Afternoon in July. It was wonderful to see that some of you were able to meet other parents at those events.

Over the Summer Term, our pupils have done us proud, not only with their personal growth and development, but also in their independence and learning skills. They have collected food for a local food bank through a non-uniform day, helped to actively enhance our outside environment by planting and looking after the plants and competed in local and regional sports competitions, returning with medals. We are incredibly proud of them. In addition, we have seen a growth and development in the Open Orchestra where our pupils were given the opportunity to perform at a theatre in St Albans. Over the last week, the Leavers' and Primary Proms have been a highlights of this term.

We are proud of the resilience our young people are developing. We have had changes within our Senior Leadership Team, and our pupils have shown great support, not only contributing ideas to help develop a new strategic plan for the school, but also embracing change and new opportunities, as well as sharing their feedback and asking questions.

I would like to thank our two volunteers, Kat, who comes in every week to support in class and help with reading, and Syd, who runs a VOCA Communication Club at lunchtime on Tuesdays for our pupils. We appreciate the commitment of having regular volunteers join us, which helps to enhance the opportunities we offer for our pupils. Within our School Development Plan, one of our priorities is to build up our bank of regular volunteers. Some of you have previously asked if you could volunteer as parents, and I will write to you further in September to explore how, as a school and in partnership with you, we can develop the idea of parents being able to volunteer further.

I am sure you would like to join me in thanking the Lonsdale Staff Team and our Governors. Together, we have had to work hard over the last year to overcome many challenges. As you are aware, we were impacted by a number of vacancies at the beginning of the school year. However, I am pleased to announce that all positions have now been filled, and our new staff members are settling into their roles. We are looking forward to welcoming Miss Samantha Jones (Teacher), Georgia Brent (Clinical Care Worker) and Kirsty Gearing (Learning Support Assistant) in September.

The Summer Term is also a time to say 'goodbye' to some team members who are moving on. This year, we wish all the best to Mrs Sally Taylor, who has supported the Senior Leadership Team over the past 6 years, Miss Fiona Ryner, who joined the school as a teacher in 2021, and Mrs Suzanne Funicello, who has worked as a school counsellor at Lonsdale since 2021. We would also like to thank Mrs Julie Thornley from the NHS Speech and Language Therapy Team, who has been based at Lonsdale to support many pupils over nearly three decades. We wish them all the luck and happiness in the future and appreciate all they have done for our school.

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The new school year will bring many new opportunities. Our class groups have chosen the name of a country, all pupils will continue to swim fortnightly for half a school year, we will start to develop our upstairs 'practice flat' and refine our Preparing for Adulthood programme. Every class will participate in termly educational visits, and we will continue our collaboration with Marriotts School.

In September, the pupils will return to school on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, where we will be welcoming twenty new pupils and their families to Lonsdale.

Over the summer holidays, our refurbishment project to convert our residential area will start. On our return, we will come back to four new learning spaces upstairs. As the building works are being organised and overseen by Hertfordshire County Council and Equans (our facilities management company), we have been liaising with both teams and our Governors to ensure that plans are in place for every eventuality, should challenges be encountered during the summer building works. We will send you an update on the 27<sup>th</sup> August to keep you informed about the refurbishments.

We have put together some holiday activities, which can be accessed via the 'Student Area' tab on our website. We are looking forward to seeing our pupils back in September and sharing holiday news.

On behalf of everyone at Lonsdale, I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer holiday with family and friends.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Claudia Thiele  
Acting Headteacher

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