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Growing hearts and minds

Headteacher's end of year letter to parents, July 2026

Dear families,

As we reach the end of another year at Sheriffhales, I would like to share with you a summary of our busy life in school in 2025-26.

Since our Outstanding Ofsted last summer, I have continued to focus on the very best education and outcomes for all our children. There are about 128 primary schools in Shropshire, around 8 of which are rated Outstanding, so you can see that we really are a very special little school. The challenges that we face as a small, rural school are shared with many others, where falling numbers and funding difficulties mean that offering an excellent educational experience is tough. At Sheriffhales, every decision is based on the good of the school and the children it supports. We are a growing school, oversubscribed in many cohorts, with a thriving Preschool and we now have over 100 children on roll: thank you all for the support you give in placing your children with us.

Sport, PE and outdoor activity is always a huge part of school life. This year has seen both key stages participate in all kinds of extra-curricular events, both fun and competitive (still fun!), from athletics and cricket to Boogie Nights, swimming and multi-sports! Sheriffhales is always congratulated for its team spirit and encouragement and we have come away from each event with awards for Determination, Passion, Respect, Teamwork and Honesty. Just this week, we have been awarded with the School Games Platinum Award, reflecting our commitment to excellent sporting provision. Congratulations to all the children and staff who have made this happen over the last 4 years, with a special shout-out to Mr Bennett and Mrs Thompson and to Mrs Harris for the mammoth task of organising our sports! Thanks too, to all the staff who attend these events after school – they volunteer their time to do this. We have all enjoyed being outside with our Sheriffhales 6 curriculum as well as special activities like the pancake race, gardening club and climbing wall! Thank you to Neil and Judy from Sports4schools for running the sports-based after school club for a quarter of the school!

Music plays another really important role and the school literally shakes several days a week when music lessons with Loudhall Music are taking place in our music room. Besides their weekly music lessons in class, children have had lessons in drums, guitar, ukelele, vocals and keyboard and all are on display, along with the beautiful choir, in our end of term concerts. These opportunities to perform, as well our singing in church, have been golden opportunities for children to develop their confidence and pride in their achievements – and for parents to learn the words to 'Spring Chicken'! Thank you for all your support for lessons and concerts, when we can celebrate the children together. Your feedback about the end of term concerts says how much you enjoy these concerts and we know the children love them!

We have enjoyed many opportunities to celebrate: we have had 2 parents' meetings and two showcase afternoons, as well as the Open 10 on the first Monday of the month, as well as all the parent workshops and stay'n'plays. Our celebration Star and Superstar assemblies have given us a weekly window into the successes of our children, both in school and out. This year, we have introduced new end-of-year awards for Writing and Reading Achievement, Creativity, STEM, Kindness Role Model and Sheriffhales 6, to complement our existing PE and Music awards – congratulations to all those children who received an award from the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and Chair of Governors and to all our Stars and Superstars, too! We've been awarded a School of Kindness Award AGAIN and raised over £2500 for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

As always, the PTFA have been fantastic friends to the school. Their enthusiastic efforts have raised thousands in support of the children's activities. They have supported the pantomime, numerous doughnut and lolly sales, the Christmas and Summer Fayres, the Amazon wish list for classes, pop-up shops for someone special, class resources, reading cupboard, class spends each term and contributed to all manner of trips and visits including Monkey Forest and the climbing wall. Without the PTFA, the cost of many things we offer would be so much more for families, and the children would not have as much going on as they do! Thank you to all who have supported and helped PTFA events this last year: you have been brilliant!

Talking of school friends, thanks also to Sheriffhales Community Energy. Did you know that the Sheriffhales community owns its very own solar farm? This amazing community asset has supported local individuals and groups for several years, through a series of grants. Many of you have commented on the sight of me on the mower! Tight school funds mean that I cannot afford a mower (or a caretaker, for that matter) and the Community Energy fund stepped in to help. This year, they have also donated the very smart water butts which we use to keep the polytunnel watered. Thanks to them for their generous support!

A friend moved on to pastures new this year, too: Reverend Chris, who has led many Christmas, Easter and special church services, as well as termly Open the Book assemblies, hung up his surplice after 18 years of tremendous service and friendship to the parish of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong. I would like to thank Chris for all he has done – and it's a lot – to support this school over the years. We're not a C of E school, but he has still ensured that the school's interests and activities have been represented and cared for: I cannot thank him enough.

The school has continued to enjoy a special friendship with the High Sheriff of Shropshire office. Thank you to Jane Trowbridge for her encouragement for Sheriffhales. Our children ran a bake sale and supported her youth initiative, which raised over £20000 in aid of youth activities across the county, and we look forward to welcoming the new High Sheriff in the next year.

As ever, I want to thank my incredible staff team for all they have done throughout the last year, going above and beyond every day. It is widely talked about in the school communities across the country, that the demands and expectations placed on those working in schools grow and grow. Much of what they do is unseen and unsung and so I say loudly and publicly to them all – you are small but mighty THANK YOU!

Also largely under the radar are the school's governors. All unpaid volunteers, this highly experienced and dedicated group give their time and energies to support and challenge the school, ensuring that it does what it says on the tin. Our tin says 'Outstanding', so they have a lot

to do to be reassured that it is actually happening! We have welcomed new governors to the board this year and we are grateful to them all for their very valuable contribution to school life.

Saving the best 'til last, thank you to our children – the heart and lifeblood of the school. Whether working together to run 1000km, or high-fiving at sports events, the children shine. Our athletes, ambassadors, representatives and committee members have worked together for our vibrant school community, celebrating their differences. They have fallen down, helped each other up and urged each other on. There are lots of new initiatives coming next year, advised and guided by them, including an anti-bullying committee, a bee initiative and a healthier eating working party who have already set things up for September.

I would like to thank you and everyone in our school community for the support they have shown for Sheriffhales over the last year. I wish year 6 every success and they move to secondary and everyone a lovely summer break. See you all on September 1st!

Justine Keeling-Paglia