



From the Headmaster  
BAM Vessey MA MBA

20 March 2020

Dear Parents,

In the *'To 2023 and Beyond'* publication, I wrote that I felt sure the School's founder Reverend Percy Warrington would have been justifiably proud of Canford today in fulfilling his aim for pupils to be well prepared to *'take their place in the battle of life and develop their character in every way.'*

While I would not describe the past term as a battle, as a school community it has certainly presented us with some significant challenges. The ongoing disruption, fears and worry as a result of Coronavirus Covid-19 have brought distress and difficult times for both the wider world and for Canford families. With the global lockdown, many of our pupils living abroad have struggled to return home, our planned Easter trips to the Italian Lakes, Cambodia, Holland and Portland have been cancelled and we have been forced to abandon or postpone many of the regular events and sports fixtures we were all looking forward to. Recent Government announcements on school closures and public exams have added to that anxiety. None of us know what the coming months may hold and I thank you once again for your ongoing consideration and support during these unprecedented and uncertain days.

One of our core Canford values is a courageous attitude, and our community has certainly demonstrated this in so many ways in recent weeks. Yet despite these dark days, I look back on the past term with real pride and think it is important that we reflect on just how hard our pupils and staff have worked, their positive approach and how much they have achieved despite the challenges they have faced.

The Chinese Spring Festival celebrations allowed Canfordians across the year groups to respect diversity and different cultures while also offering support to our cohort of Chinese pupils, albeit small in number, who were unable to celebrate with their families this year. I was heartened to see our community responding in such caring and kind ways during a very difficult time.

There is nothing unique about challenge on the sports field but once again Canfordians have excelled both as individuals and as teams, not only in terms of fine victories but also in their attitude and approach in the face of setbacks. There are too many memorable positive moments to mention, but highlights in fixtures have included some fine victories in our boys' hockey against counterparts at Millfield, our U14 boys reaching the Tier 1 West of England finals and our U16 girls reaching the Tier 1

quarter finals. Our 1<sup>st</sup> VII netballers won the Bradfield College tournament and both they and the U15s (also County champions) reached the last 16 of the Independent Schools Netball Cup competition. Agonisingly both lost by a single goal in very tight games. The 1<sup>st</sup> VII and U16 squads also won through to the National finals and both teams ended up placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the country. A superb achievement! There were top 10 performances for Canfordians in the Cross Country Studland Stampede, and in Real Tennis fine wins against The Hyde and reaching the semi finals of the National Doubles. Our lacrosse team had to face disappointment as the National Lacrosse Championships were cancelled at the last minute but they have shown real courage and purpose over the season. Individual pupils have also gained national and regional selection. I hope you have enjoyed the regular sports reports which record the highs, and also the lows, an inevitable part of sporting life which Canfordians have faced with fresh resolve and determination every week. I know our new Director of Sport and Physical Well Being, Tony Diprose, has been truly impressed by the values and behaviours consistently demonstrated by Canfordians across our extensive programme.

Throughout the term our pupils have embraced their academic challenges, approaching them with energy and confidence. The CP Snow and Baynham enrichment competitions for the Lower Sixth produced well researched and thought provoking essays on topics ranging from *"To what extent are celebrity climate change activists hypocrites?"*, *"Is Nuclear Fusion the energy of the future?"* to *"Is Greek mythology as important to study as Shakespeare?"* Our LandRover InSchools 4x4 challenge teams performed superbly at the regional finals in February, with Team Evac winning through to the Nationals at LandRover HQ which we hope will be rescheduled for later this year. The majority of our Upper Sixth UCAS applicants have now received decisions, and I am delighted to be able to report that 563 offers have been received by the 156 applicants for a range of courses spanning arts and sciences. 87% of offers are to universities in the Russell Group/Sunday Times Top 12 and include thirteen successful applications to Oxbridge, with all four applications to medical schools and for veterinary science receiving at least one offer in that extremely competitive entry process. The Government announcement that public examinations will not take place in May or June has come as a shock to us all across the sector, particularly as there is no clear guidance as I write on the plan for assessment and award of qualifications. Despite this uncertainty, I hope that pupils will reflect on the immense amount they will have learned from their studies to date which will set them in excellent stead for the future, whatever the government decides. We will of course be keeping all families fully informed of Government directives and other impacts on academic programmes in the future.

Combining academic work with many co-curricular commitments brings its own set of challenges for our pupils, and tutors do an excellent job in ensuring that that balance is maintained. In the Arts, we have enjoyed some memorable music, drama and art over the course of the term, requiring our pupils to work extremely hard. The Britten Sinfonia residency produced music of a very high standard, while the Jazz Concert had us all toe tapping from Gershwin to Beethoven. Equally I have much enjoyed the numerous informal concerts throughout the term which have provided performance opportunities for our musicians and a welcome respite from the challenges of daily life for the audiences. The cancellation of the Lighthouse Concert was deeply upsetting given the hard work in preparation but I was uplifted by the courageous attitude and sense of purpose shown by our musicians as they performed their pieces for a recorded broadcast instead which you can find on the link below. Drama has seen similar contrast, with the senior play 'Frankenstein' transporting us brilliantly to a dark gothic world and the lively House Drama festival a mix of genres and styles – all the result of significant hours of hard work and high ambition by pupils and staff. Typography was skilfully expressed through an

exhibition in the Coldstream Gallery while a display of staff and pupil art showcased the range of artistic talent we have here. The CCF parade and inspection was once again impressive with our visiting Inspection Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Smith, The Royal Dragoon Guards, full of admiration for the way in which the pupils had met the challenges faced and excelled individually and collectively.

The strength of our school community in these past weeks has been tested in numerous ways, but the variety of examples where we have seen our pupils *'inspired to explore, empowered to express and challenged to excel'* this term are clear demonstration of the integrity of our vision. While the weeks ahead remain unpredictable, Canford is committed to providing the best educational experience for every pupil. Just as we are being asked to adapt our daily lives, as a school we are adapting to the current circumstances to achieve this aim. I have been truly inspired by the way that pupils and staff have responded to the current situation, and the remote learning in the final two days of term saw pupils engaged and unfazed by the new virtual teaching environment and teachers grasping the technology and using their initiative to deliver the academic curriculum. A short compilation on the link at the end of this letter gives you a flavour of the initial remote lessons taking place. We are fortunate to live in an age where we can take full advantage of technology to maintain connection with pupils and their families.

I hope the Easter break provides the chance to reflect calmly on the world situation and to positively regroup for the future. Over the holiday please be assured that myself and staff will be developing a series of plans to further support all our pupils and their families in the coming months across not only the academic but also the co-curricular and pastoral areas of school life.

Thank you for your many positive messages and for your ongoing support of the School. We will be in touch with you again early next week on various matters. My very best wishes go to you all, with my greatest hope that we all remain safe and well.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Jessy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end of the name.

#### Links

[Easter Term 2020 highlights with introductory message from the Headmaster](#)

[Lighthouse Concert recording – March 2020](#)

[Remote learning film – Day 1](#)

[Covid-19 – resources website page for Canford families](#)