



Dear parent,

Here we are! We have been eagerly preparing for the girls' return to school, and what a joy it is to have them back in the building! It was a real delight to greet them yesterday and to welcome our new families.

Returning to school

Understandably, some of the girls, and indeed you, as a parent, might be feeling apprehensive. How are you feeling about the return to school? Optimistic? Pessimistic? Earlier this week, I was reminded of a quote from George Bernard Shaw: "Both optimists and pessimists contribute to the society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist the parachute."

Here at St Christopher's, we are optimistic. Inevitably, some of our preparations will be reviewed and changed, as we learn to navigate the challenges imposed by social distancing.

Our job is to reconcile our duty (and pleasure) to educate with safety requirements. A school cannot work like a prison, however: it must be a welcoming, open and safe space for our children and the staff. Here is our challenge: to enlighten and to protect.

Journeys to school

Thank you for supporting a much smoother arrival at the school site this morning and we hope that this will continue. A particular thank you to all who have taken the time to walk and cycle to school and to those of you who have to drive for not parking near the site; we were very heartened to see the safe area outside the school and the space allowed for more social distancing.

Update on COVID-19 testing from PHE

We have received updated advice from Public Health England on the issue of COVID-19 testing. They would like to ensure that they can identify those with coronavirus while avoiding a huge increase in demand for tests from people without coronavirus symptoms, and they have asked us to recommend that pupils and staff who feel unwell get tested if:

- they develop one or more of the main coronavirus symptoms:
- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- the loss or change of their sense of taste or smell, or
- they are recommended to get tested by a healthcare provider (e.g. GP or nurse)

If a pupil or staff member develops one or more of the main coronavirus symptoms described above, only they should be tested. They suggest that there is no need for their households to have a test, unless they are also symptomatic. Unless a pupil or staff member has one of the three main coronavirus symptoms, they should only be tested if instructed otherwise by the local authority, health protection team or their GP. As schools and colleges across England return, pupils may feel unwell for example with a sore throat, stomach upset or a headache. These pupils don't need to book a test but may need to stay off school or college and seek medical advice through their GP or pharmacist as usual.

Over the last two days, we have also listened to the pupils, allayed their fears, and answered their many questions. Worries were very soon forgotten: very quickly, their attention turned to their friends and the new staff.

Staff news

This year we welcome five new colleagues:

- Mr Aron Clark, Sports/KS2 teaching assistant
- Mrs Gail Davies and Mrs Katie Gosling, playground supervisors
- Miss Jennie McGovern, Reception teacher
- Miss Emma Rawles, Year 1 teacher

I also had quite a few questions to respond to! I tried my best to answer them all in this morning's assembly. If your daughter came home today talking about wanting a whippet... it is probably my fault!

We also hosted our annual curriculum evening last night, which many of you attended. I hope you found it informative, but if you have any queries about your daughter and her learning, do please contact her form teacher; she/he will remain your first point of contact for any pupil-related issues or questions. The meetings were recorded, and your form teacher will send you the link directly.

Music

We are delighted that instrumental lessons, ensembles and musical performances will gradually be resuming this term and write with information to help you better understand the offerings.

Music will look a little different at St Christopher's this term, with some big changes to singing and large-scale performances. Guidance on music has been very changeable, but we will update you during the coming weeks as it becomes clearer what we can safely do in school.

Individual music lessons

Individual lessons will commence from Monday 14th September. Where possible, lessons will take place face-to-face. Please note: Some teachers have opted to teach remotely via Zoom. These lessons will be scheduled outside of the school day.

Existing pupils should expect to hear from their instrumental teacher in the second week of term, or before, to discuss the details of their first lesson. Once we have lessons up and running and better understand availability, those currently on waiting lists or wanting to be added to waiting lists will be contacted.

All instrumental teaching rooms will be fitted with protective screens for the pupil and teacher to maintain a safe distance. Hand sanitiser is available in all rooms and windows will be open for ventilation.

Music Ensembles

We have plans for small instrumental ensembles and choirs and are working to clarify the possibilities. We will update you as soon as we have more information.

Performances

Our large-scale music performances: Christmas Concert, Reception and Year 1 Plays, and Year 5's Words and Music, will take place in a new guise. As soon as we have cemented our ideas we will be in touch.

Later in the term we hope to share both live and/ or pre-recorded performances of our Tuesday Morning and Year Group concerts. We also hope to continue with some virtual performances to enable music making across year groups.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the music department music@stchristophers.london

Cohesion and community

Over the next few weeks, I will be hosting a series of online meetings and discussions. You will have received information about some of these already, but here are the details of the Coffee Breaks:

Reception, Years 1, 2 and 3: Tuesday 8 September, 10am **OR** Thursday 10th September, 10am

Years 4, 5 and 6: Tuesday 15 September, 10am

Please use the link below to book your place:

<https://www.schoolinterviews.co.uk/code?code=xsbdn>

I will also be talking to the girls and the staff, to hear their thoughts about St Christopher's. Judging by the questions they have asked me already, I know the girls will have lots to say.

Thank you for your ongoing support. I look forward to meeting many of you over the next weeks.

Best wishes

Sandrine Paillasse
Head