

CANFORD

Canford School

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From the Headmaster
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19 December 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is clear that your sons and daughters have hugely enjoyed being back in school over the past term, and it has been truly wonderful to see them taking advantage of all the opportunities Canford has to offer. School is not just about education. It is about being part of a community where engagement with people each day brings the warmth, friendship and focus that supports pupils' physical and mental wellbeing, and also provides a sense of normality in these unpredictable times.

I hope the onset of the school holiday and the approach of the Christmas period brings much needed rest and relaxation. Without wishing to be 'Grinch-like', and with the sentiments expressed above in mind, it is really important that we all make good choices over Christmas and New Year so that we do not jeopardise our capacity to commence the new school term smoothly and safely. As you know the Government has announced that families can form 'Christmas Bubbles' between 23rd and 27th December and I would ask that the rules on bubbles, family gatherings and tier restrictions are followed carefully over this period, and that the tighter restrictions which will be in place for the days thereafter are also observed. Those giving scientific advice to us all have stressed that it is really important we follow these rules if we want to avoid increased risk of infection in January.

Further information on bubbles and tiers can be found in the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

Could I reiterate also that it is critical you do not send your child back to school at the start of next term if you have any concerns about possible contact with someone who has Covid-19, or where possible symptoms may exist in the family or wider Christmas bubble. It is better to wait and see rather than increasing possible risk for the school community.

In relation to the recent announcements from the Government on regular mass testing in schools, and a staggered return at the start of next term, I would like to make the following points:

The proposed regular mass testing programme will be valuable, not least in reducing the impact of isolation on close contacts of positive cases, but there are many details which remain unclear and there will be many logistical aspects to work through. The Government's 'dictated' timeline, especially given the timing of this over the Christmas/New Year holiday period presents major issues in terms of planning and implementation. We await further details from the Government which they have rather vaguely stated as being 'released over the next few days'. Also we will need to seek feedback from our professional associations and medical advisors as to how this

programme will actually work on the ground and what associated permissions, administration and resources are required.

The Government has also stated that schools should organise a staggered start to on-site provision of education for the new term. Again the details of this are still emerging and we will need to see how this guidance evolves before we can decide on the impact it has on previously published plans for the start of next term. Whilst this remains our preferred option, you will appreciate that we do need to follow the guidance issued by the Government, as we have throughout this crisis.

The initial Government guidance on this matter, as we currently understand it, indicates that:

- we would be required to deliver normal on-site education to the 5th Form and U6th groups, and all international pupils who have fixed travel plans, from Wednesday 6th January (with boarders in these groups returning on Tuesday 5th January).
- we would be required to teach the Shell, 4th and L6th groups remotely from the start of term on Wednesday 6th January and then full on-site education from Monday 11th January (with boarders in these groups returning on Sunday 10th January).

This is an extremely fluid situation and we will endeavour to communicate with you in firmer terms as soon as possible when we have greater clarity in relation to both the testing programme and, more pressingly, the start of term arrangements. However, I felt it was important to raise some flags early.

We all wish things were different but it is important that we do everything we can to minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection before pupils return in January and I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation on all these matters.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmas.

Warmest regards,

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

Ben Vessey