

CANFORD

Canford School

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From the Headmaster
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14th January 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we are now approaching the end of the first full week of this second extended period of remote education, I thought an overview update would be helpful. By way of introduction, please view the recorded message from the following link:

[Remote Learning – introductory message](#)

We will continue to provide you with additional information on the programme and updates on what the pupils are creating, doing and achieving via social media and other means as the days unfold. Our social media feeds and the [dedicated Covid-19 web page](#) will be updated regularly with latest news and information about activities across the school.

A quick reminder also that the exeat from lunchtime on Friday 22nd January to Sunday 24th January will take place as published. Overseas pupils who are currently at school will remain onsite.

Although we had only three days' notice this time, instead of over three weeks last year, that we would not have pupils back onsite and that we would have to deliver online education for an extended period, we already had structures and systems in place which we could 'dust off' pretty quickly, especially in relation to the academic programme. As a consequence of the short notice we were given, some aspects have taken a little longer to organise and put in place. However, the wheels are now turning across most aspects of Canford's remote educational programme, and this will continue to gather momentum.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their excellent efforts in getting the academic programme moving so swiftly and it has been super to receive some very positive feedback from various quarters on the remote programme over the past few days.

The academic enrichment programme has already started to gather pace with, amongst other things, Lower Sixth EPQ students are receiving a virtual talk from Southampton university this week; over 100 Lower Sixth have signed up for the Pi programme exploring subjects they may wish to pursue at university in greater depth and these sessions will begin next week; the Fifth Form have begun their fifth cycle of subject specific enrichment on Fridays; the Fourth Form Global Connections course has been adapted and successfully moved online; a large number of Lower Sixth have already taken part in external essay competitions; and pupils are attending online courses and Gresham's lectures to extend their learning.

A couple of key points of information for pupils, parents (and staff) on the academic programme. We continue to find it a challenge to consistently get pupils to turn on their cameras during lessons although we do appreciate that, on occasions, there are good reasons for this (e.g. limited bandwidth etc). However, Microsoft Teams now has far

greater capacity for a larger number of people to be 'in view' at the same time and there is no doubt that this visual element helps with class interaction and engagement, alongside other innovations such as 'breakout rooms'. We will be asking all teachers to stress more fully that cameras, wherever possible, should be on in lessons and any support from you for this would be welcome.

It is very important that lessons start (and end) on time and teachers are aware of this but we also need to ensure that pupils are punctual to online lessons and other activity sessions. Late arrival can be even more disruptive than in a physical lesson. Alongside this can we please stress the importance of pupils getting good and regular sleep as they would in normal times. We have had a few instances of pupils having a poor sleep routine and staying up much later than usual – this will have an inevitable impact on their energy and attention levels. We fully understand the difficulties of these things, and many of our colleagues are managing their own children's habits also but any help and support in these areas would be most welcome.

We are acutely aware of the added importance of pastoral and wellbeing provision under the present circumstances and we continue to deliver significant support to pupils in all year groups, building on the initiatives from the previous lockdown period. This consists of a wide variety of formal and informal meetings and events which focus on both individual wellbeing and on the mental health of the school community. Tutoring in small groups and for individuals will occur every Monday afternoon for juniors, as it did this week, while for Sixth Form regular 1-1 on-line tutorials are also underway. Regular House meetings and assemblies have also taken place and will continue to do so, while creative and positive use of House and School social media platforms is being used to share and celebrate progress and achievement. We were also delighted to see a variety of quizzes, competitions and social meetings last weekend, initiated by both staff and pupils within Houses and no doubt the opportunity and appetite for such interaction will continue to bloom.

We are offering a number of mental health and wellbeing opportunities including remote access to the Health Centre and our counsellors. Our Heads of Wellbeing, Melissa Clinton and Pagan Bishop, have been in communication with pupils offering a variety of opportunities to connect with the school wellbeing programme, including the provision of a link to a 'Canford wellbeing journal', while connected to this Hannah Ryan, Head of SFL, continues to offer ELSA sessions for those who would like wider emotional support. Following on from his popular talks programme last summer, Phil Jack, the Chaplain, is starting a series of 'Lockdown Chapel' podcasts this week, with additional group discussions and bible study sessions already under way. Likewise, the PSME programme remains active, and as part of this all of the Fourth Form will have heard a talk by Karl Hopwood, a highly regarded specialist on e-safety, by the end of this week.

Of course, we are especially aware of the impact of increased screen time on our pupils as a result of online schooling and indeed it is crucial that we all avoid becoming glued to our devices. Please note that, in line with the normal school policy, Shells and Fourth Form should not have their phone with them during lesson time as it will very often act as a significant distraction. This may also be true for senior pupils and is an aspect which we urge some discussion about at home. In normal times we would also remove all ICT devices from Shell, Fourth and Fifth Form boarders overnight when they are at school and would encourage you to do the same. These basic ground rules, and a good dose of exercise away from screens each day, make life much simpler for everyone concerned and can dramatically improve sleep, concentration - and conversation! There have also been stark reminders of the need to be especially vigilant about online safety in our present environment and again open conversation and careful monitoring is to be encouraged. For more information please see the following link:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

We are now seeing both the wider enrichment and co-curricular programmes taking shape too and there are plenty of exciting opportunities to grasp going forwards.

Our main aim in the co-curricular programme is to provide focus and structure, but to ensure also that there is an opportunity for time away from screens and some degree of independence and individual choice for pupils in terms of how they spend their time when not in online lessons.

Music lessons and ensembles continue remotely. There are some drama productions in rehearsal and also a set of drama-based activities and challenges sent out on a Sunday evening. All Sixth Form pupils should be involved with a Community Service project and pupils in the junior part of the school will have a directed activity, chosen from a list sent out last week. Various challenges (such as the Art 'Just a Minute' film competition), activities such as Debating and MUN and various talks and seminars will also take place and pupils will be given notification of these when sessions are due to take place. Duke of Edinburgh Award pupils continue to collaborate remotely. A physical activity programme is sent to all pupils each Sunday for the week ahead outlining some 'live' sessions but also some remote challenges where their achievements can be logged online. There has been an emphasis this week on getting the pupils out into the fresh air. Do look out for the #21Challenge which will be launched next week. There are also specific sessions aimed at squads based on the pupils' games choices for this term. Feedback should allow tutors to have plenty of information about pupil involvement across the co-curricular programme.

In addition we are about to launch the Canford 'Lockdown Trophy' competition where pupils (and parents and OCs) can earn points for their House in all sorts of ways over the weeks ahead. It will be a team effort by all! We will publish the Lockdown Trophy 'league table' each week as the 'season' unfolds. The pupils in the winning house will receive a trophy and a special Headmaster's reward when they are back in situ.

I would like to thank you all once again for all your support. We cannot change much of the situation we find ourselves in but there are many things we can control and it is more important than ever that we put our best foot forward and that everyone in the Canford community works as hard as they can to look after and look out for each other.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ben Vessey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ben Vessey