

4 May 2020

Dear Parents,

On Sunday 10 May we are expecting the government to announce its intentions for its plans to begin a phased return from lockdown. You will have read that this is likely to include a return to school for some age groups, possibly from 1 June 2020.

I thought it would be helpful, therefore, to alert you to expect us to write within a couple of days of that announcement of the plans at the College and St Andrew's Prep in the light of that guidance. Please bear in mind that we do not know whether the government will be highly directive or (less likely) allow schools a degree of discretion. We must assume, based on recent experience, that the decision will not have properly considered the particular circumstances of independent schools with their different transition ages, number of boarders, and other peculiarities(!).

It is worth restating that **nothing would please us more than a return to normal school life: the buzz of children interacting and enjoying the many academic, co-curricular and social aspects of the summer term.** Regrettably, we do not anticipate that this will be an option. In fact, there are likely to be all sorts of **constraints on how we operate, and the consequences of that will be that there will be some practical problems we cannot fully solve and trade-offs we will need to make.**

On the basis of very little hard information at the moment, we are doing our best to plan for the various scenarios so that we can be ready to provide the best possible school experience for all our pupils. Some of the issues identified in our planning include:

A significant proportion of pupils will necessarily remain at home for various reasons, either because:

- (a) the government only has some year groups back to school, or
- (b) because they or their family are vulnerable, or
- (c) because travelling to school / returning from overseas is unfeasible.

Our teachers must devote time to continued remote learning, so there is a difficult trade off with how we divide our resources between those coming in and those remaining at home.

A number of our teaching and support staff will be unable to come into school. For example, some will be at risk because of underlying health conditions or they have a vulnerable family member, and so on.

We may be obliged to make arrangements for social distancing, washing, and personal protection. In some cases this will be resolvable with preparation and thought, but *inter alia* we are concerned about availability of supplies, which will become even more difficult if businesses and schools are all trying to purchase them at the same time following the return from the lockdown timetable.

To take an example, playing cricket is clearly a low-risk activity (many a club player reading this will know that they have socially distanced at fine leg for much of their playing career!) But a cricket pavilion, a changing room, the loos, the minibus: all these are not easily managed without contact.

We could go on for pages with the practical snags we must address but our approach is to think about **what parents most need, want and expect from the return and plan to overcome as many of the practical problems as we can**. There will not be uniformity in the provision for every year group, activity, or family circumstance, given the likely restrictions, but we will do our best to give the greatest happiness to the greatest number, while also giving due regard to keeping everyone safe and well.

Please be optimistic that we will do a good job of pivoting (again) to whatever arrangements are mandated and **understanding of the consequences of the many constraints we will face**.

Best wishes,



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PS Eastbourne College other news:

1. As you will have seen in the letter from the Chief Operating Officer dated 9 April 2020, it is still our anticipated plan and hope to run a Cornflower Ball for the current Upper Sixth. Whether this takes place on the scheduled end of June date, later in late summer / early autumn, or even a winter ball is yet to be confirmed. Key drivers will be safety of attendees as well as what is permitted by regulations. Once we have a confirmed and quite probably revised plan which we can put to everyone, we will then collate positive RSVPs and be in a position to issue full refunds to anyone who decides that they cannot or do not wish to attend. Obviously in the event of the ball not running at all, full refunds will be issued to all. Thank you for bearing with us.
2. Notice of review of Relationship and Sex Education policy. As you would expect within the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, we have an important component which covers Relationships and Sex Education. While the curriculum and scheme of work has been in place and evolved for over two decades, as from September 2020, regulations require us to notify parents that we have a policy in place to act as a formal framework which sits behind this part of the curriculum. Note this policy, while new, does not signify anything particularly different from our current PSHE, although the curriculum topics and material evolve a little each year, in order to make them more relevant and / or accessible. Should you wish to see the policy, it is available along with many others on the Parent Portal. Between now and September, if you have any questions about or comments on the RSE policy, please direct these to the Head of PSHE, Mrs Jenny Kirtley in the first instance.