



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

6 November 2020

Dear Parents,

I am very pleased to report that the guidance for schools now published¹ is largely as predicted in my last letter. Compliance should not affect our operation significantly except that, understandably, pupils may no longer enjoy town leave owing to the lockdown. I am happy to inform you that we have reopened the school shop to provide an alternative for pupils and we are refreshing our facilities provision on the weekend for pupils staying here.

It remains very important that all parents ring us for advice before sending their child into school if the pupil / anyone in their household / anyone they have been in contact with has tested positive or shows symptoms.

Boarders who normally go home at weekends may still do so if necessary but we ask that parents ensure that every precaution is taken to keep to the lockdown rules, so pupils should go straight home to their household and not mix with others. Since our academic and co-curricular offering from Monday to Saturday is part of our school day, almost all our activities will continue unless there is further change to the slightly unclear guidance referring to 'after-school clubs'.

Overall, then, I think we should count ourselves very lucky that the structure of our College allows our pupils to enjoy a much wider educational experience and time with friends than most others under these rules. The greatest challenges we now address come from the overseas travel restrictions, which I address in the following section of this letter for those affected.

Exeat, Christmas and Travel Arrangements

Because everyone needs a break from routine where it is safe to do so, we plan to go ahead with the Exeat from 2.35pm on Friday 20 November. Overseas boarders should go to guardians in the normal way who constitute their UK household under the rules. Hsms will be talking with overseas pupils and parents to establish that they have secure options to go to their guardians where possible. No pupil will be asked to go away from school on Exeat unless safe and compliant arrangements can be made.

We are aware that Germany was removed last night from the UK 'travel corridor'² list and so weekend hops to Europe are now impossible, although we imagine that most parents would have already determined this was impractical. Hsms are aware of the particular issues of European pupils and will be working to manage safe and desirable options for them during the Exeat.

The College will need to shut down over Christmas. Again hsms will be ascertaining travel arrangements and ensuring that information gets to our medical centre in a timely fashion so we can provide for the testing required prior to travel, in particular to China and Hong Kong. We have allowed an early departure on 5/6 December for those who need to self-isolate in hotel accommodation on arrival in their home country. For others who can go straight home, we recommend maximising the time in school this term, as in-person learning is preferable to keeping in touch with our remote provision. We ask that parents avoid sudden decisions to leave early as this will make it very difficult to arrange testing.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

For those pupils returning in January 2021 from countries not on the travel corridor list, we ask that, where possible, you arrange for them to stay with guardians so that they can comfortably manage the required period of self-isolation prior to returning to the College at the beginning of term. It is difficult for us to arrange self-isolation in houses for more than a few pupils and still be compliant with regulations. Remote learning and support will of course be provided for self-isolating pupils. We are aware that some pupils are concerned about the effect of travel disruption on mock exams and EPQ presentations and we will make arrangements so that no pupils are disadvantaged.

We are aware that some parents would prefer for pupils to remain in the UK over the Christmas holidays. Please make arrangements with guardians who should in most cases be well set to provide for the Christmas period and let your hsm know your plans as soon as possible. We have also identified that Brightworld offers residential options that can be viewed here: <https://www.brightworldguardianships.com/en/holiday-courses/christmas-2020-residential-holiday-programmes/> (this needs to be booked before 20 November) and we will let you know of any other good options we become aware of for those wishing to stay.

Hsms and matrons will be working with families to establish that all our pupils have safe and organised arrangements for the Christmas period and for the return in January and will appreciate your earliest possible confirmation of your intentions so they can plan effectively.

I am fully aware of the challenges and concerns raised for many of our families with the restrictions necessitated by the global pandemic. I am hugely grateful for your loyalty and support in helping us navigate the best options for your children's education with calmness and a can-do spirit.

With very best wishes,



Tom Lawson
Headmaster

cc. all staff; all pupils