



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

3 November 2020

Dear Parents,

Yesterday saw the return to termtime after our very own 'circuit-breaker', or at the very least a well-timed half-term break. I hope that many of you managed to spend some family time and I know the pupils were pleased to have a rest from schooling.

As you are aware, this weekend the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown until 2 December and we await further details on the specifics. He was clear that schools should remain open so the bulk of our operations should not be affected. At the edges of our provision, there will be some changes. For example, town leave for pupils, unless it is essential, is not permitted in lockdown and some out-of-school / extra activities may be curtailed. Regrettably we will not be able to have Christmas invitational events such as the Advent and Carol services (please see the letter from the Chaplain attached). We already have substantially in place the rules on face-coverings that are anticipated to apply to all secondary schools in the regulations.

We have been following the information gathered by the Boarding Schools Association (BSA) on any changes to weekends, exeats, and travel issues. The main challenges with travel remain the testing and self-isolation requirements of international travel. I can assure all parents that we are aware of the difficulties and will seek to ensure effective access to testing compliant with border crossings. We are well placed to support you as we finalise arrangements in the light of evolving circumstances.

Yesterday the government stated: 'The Prime Minister and Education Secretary have been clear that exams will go ahead next summer, as they are the fairest and most accurate way to measure a pupil's attainment.'¹ However, there remains the likelihood of minor changes and contingency plans for exams (described in my 13 October letter to exam year groups available on the [school website](#)). Because the summer exam timetable is still provisional, our summer term dates are not confirmed as final and there may be an effect on other College commitments such as Duke of Edinburgh award expeditions. We will, of course, confirm as soon as we are able to do so.

There is a strong evidence base developing to show that schools are not a major form of Coronavirus transmission. Data in England show that adults rather than children are likely to cause infection² and in Italy only 1,212 of 65,000 schools that opened at the height of the outbreak had an infection, of which 93 per cent were schools with only one infection³.

continued

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november#going-to-school-college-and-university>

² Ismail, S. A., Saliba, C., Lopez Bernal, J. A., Ramsay, M. E. & Ladhani, S. N. Preprint at medRxiv <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.08.21.20178574> (2020).

³ Buonsenso, D., De Rose, C., Moroni, R. & Valentini, P. Preprint at medRxiv <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.10.10.20210328> (2020). Reported in Nature 29.10.20 and The Times 1.11.20. Also, for those interested, [this paper from Victoria](#)³, Australia lays out the case for reopening schools.

We are prepared and must accept that, nevertheless, this current Covid surge could affect our school and there is no such thing as zero risk of transmission in an environment such as ours. However, Eastbourne and local environs have persistently had a very low number of Covid cases and the coming national lockdown can only help in the cause of preventing cases from rising rapidly in our area.

At this time I urge you and your children to try not to be concerned with every news story. I will write again to you all or to affected groups once we have received the DfE guidance if there is anything substantial that will affect our provision or school arrangements not mentioned here.

With very best wishes,



Tom Lawson
Headmaster

cc. all staff; all pupils
Encs



Carol Services and Christmas Day Service

Dear Parents

We are determined to share the Christmas message and the choir's seasonal singing even though we cannot gather in person. Instead of the normal services in St Saviour's and All Saints' we shall be making some recordings of the choir and our internal services with the intention of sharing an end-of-term video with parents.

Restrictions now in place mean, sadly, that no parents will be able to attend the Advent Carol Service which was due to take place in College Chapel on Advent Sunday, 29 November. Instead, the service will be recorded in advance and will be accessible from this day. Further details will be sent in due course. The Chamber Choir, accompanied by the Chapel organ, will sing a variety of Advent music, and readers will tell the Advent story. We hope to resume our normal routine in 2021 of this service in St Saviour's Church as usual to celebrate this important moment in the church's year.

Also, there will be no large gatherings for our Christmas Carol Service though all pupils will have the opportunity to celebrate. The College will be holding in College Chapel, for each year group separately over the last few days of term, an end-of-term assembly to celebrate the term's achievements followed by a Christmas message. We are obviously unable to invite guests. We are sorry also that there will be no community Carol Service in All Saints' Church on the penultimate day of term. Again, we hope to resume our normal routine in 2021 with a whole-school Carol Service in All Saints' Church (to which some parents are invited) on the last day of term, and a similar service on the preceding day for the community and any parents and other friends.

In 2019 we were able to re-introduce, after a break of a few years, the family Holy Communion Service on Christmas Day at 10.00am in the College Chapel which was well attended. Again, we hope to provide this again in 2021. You will understand that the current uncertain situation makes it difficult to plan this year.

With best wishes

Revd Daniel Merceron
College Chaplain

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