



Dear Parents and Guardians,

It seems a little soon to be writing an end of term letter, but this one feels rather akin to that; my apologies that it is rather long. It has been wonderful to have your boys back with us – and, from all my interactions with them, I know they have felt the same way.

Future term dates

Next term starts for the day boys on Tuesday 20 April (19 April is a staff INSET day). Boarders will return the night before, in the main, but a letter is going out to boarders specifically, as it is a complex situation for those overseas.

Please note that, unusually, the autumn term's teaching starts on a Monday (6 September); the staff INSET and New Boys' Day have been pushed back into the preceding week.

What will next term look like?

As with so many of my letters during the last year, this is still rather an open question. At the moment, we are *hoping* that we do not all have to wear masks, that sport will resume as close to normally as possible, that other areas of school life may open up gradually (it is about time we all had a good sing, for instance), and that some form of Speech Day and Leavers' celebration may go ahead (we are looking at a number of modified options); but we will not know for a while. We are all aware that 21 June has been mooted as the date after which it is possible that no restrictions will apply anywhere in the UK – but we also have to prepare for all eventualities and sensitivities. Broadly speaking, our thoughts and plans usually reflect a realistic optimism (or perhaps an optimistic realism!).

The boys in the Fifth Form and Upper Sixth have been provided with a 'road map' for the months ahead. I should stress that, whatever they read in the press, they will still have to work every bit as hard as any 'normal' year group which has gone through this process. It is clear that their (extremely unlucky) predicament is being taken into account in a number of different ways, and quite rightly so, but they will still need to put in the hours, I am afraid. Motivation has been affected for just about everybody in the country during this past year – and teenagers are no less affected, we all recognise that – but I do hope that this period back at school has reignited their enthusiasm for the weeks ahead. Obviously, all channels of communication remain wide open; and please use them if you need.

Boarding for current day boys

We were delighted by the response to our messages about boarding next term, both in the Prep School and the Upper School. If there are any more families who would like to try boarding for a term, please [contact Richard Midgley](#) (Registrar). And if you have not yet seen the research on boarding, then I include the links to the research findings and the recording of the discussion between myself and the researcher at our recent 'Inside Boarding at Bedford' event here:

- a. [The Appeal and Value of Boarding, Bedford School research findings](#)
- b. [Inside Boarding at Bedford fireside chat](#)

Sarah Everard

You might be interested to know that I gave an assembly to the Upper School (as did Mr Silk to the Prep School, which has already been sent to Prep parents) in the immediate aftermath of Sarah Everard's appalling death. You can read it [here](#). There has subsequently been a lot written in the newspapers (with reference to a website of extremely disturbing testimonies called Everyone's Invited) about how we in schools teach boys to respect girls and women as equals. As an all-boys school, we feel a particular responsibility in that regard, and I do hope that you find the pervasive culture here is conducive to mutual respect between people, regardless of gender, race, sexuality or any other 'difference'. That is not the same as saying we do not have our problems – we do, just like everywhere else – but that we are constantly trying to reinforce a culture which is inclusive, kind and mutually respectful. Recent events must serve to strengthen that determination; and this might be a good topic for dinner tables this weekend.

In the Prep School our PSHE programme runs on a weekly basis, as befits boys of that age. Our Upper School PSHE programme (we call it Citizenship) is unlike any other senior school I have worked in. Usually, there is a single weekly (or fortnightly) PSHCE lesson with a tutor to teach each topic, often reluctantly. Here, we choose instead to collapse the timetable entirely five times per year to concentrate time on specific topics; this allows us to use not only our own staff, but also a range of outside speakers and leaders of collaborative sessions. It also shows the boys our commitment to this area – i.e., that we are prepared to take full days 'off' timetable to cover it. When we brought this in about ten years ago, our attendance figures on those days dropped off; in the last few years, attendance has been higher on those days than on 'normal' days! We regularly gain pupil feedback, and it is uniformly positive; it also helps us to modify the programme.

With respect to the matter at hand, our curriculum covers relationship work in every year group in the Prep School (including, more specifically, in Year 8, issues of consent and sharing sexual images); and this is also the case in the Upper School (including, more specifically, positive relationships (Fourth Form), pornography (Remove Form), several sessions on relationships – including on consent and abusive relationships (Fifth Form), coercive control (Lower Sixth), unhealthy relationships, stalking and harassment (Upper Sixth)). Needless to say, sessions on alcohol and drugs (not always entirely unrelated) and legalities are also held; and the programme, which is run by a team rather than an individual, is under constant review and reform. Current (and some past) materials can be found on Firefly.

As you will already know, relationships and sex education becomes statutory from April this year. As part of this, we have written a specific policy (which will be posted on the school website) in consultation with staff, parents and pupils. A draft went out to parents in November for feedback and to staff at the start of this half term, and we have put it to the lead mentors and school council for pupil feedback. The link to the draft copy is [here](#); if you wish to provide any final feedback, please do [email Mr Rooke](#), who is standing in for Ms Swallow as Head of General Education whilst she takes maternity leave. It will be published shortly, and is based upon [this document](#).

Of course, PSHE (or Citizenship) is only one aspect of the way we teach these things. There are many other opportunities to address this and related matters at assemblies or via clubs and societies. However, by far the most important contributor is the way we conduct ourselves on a day-to-day basis, provide avenues for boys (and staff and parents) to call out what is wrong, to listen and be open to a range of opinion, and to insist upon an atmosphere of inclusion and mutual respect. We are far from perfect, but we will (and do) try – and I can commit to that without qualification. I spoke to the whole Upper School again today about this topic; and all of my discussions this week with various

groups of (older, so far) boys, and individuals, have been extremely encouraging: the boys have shown a strong desire to engage with this issue; to listen; to learn; and to improve things for years to come. We will be working hard to do just that over the months ahead.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hodgson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Hodgson
Head Master