



# Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School

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15th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

At this time of year many of us take a moment to reflect on the events of the past 12 months. Well, what a year it's been! As I will say in our end of term Virtual Assembly to pupils, words and phrases that we may never have heard of before have taken on new meaning. Many of these words can leave us feeling anxious and uncertain. But there are also many positive words that have come to the forefront of my thinking in recent months. Words such as kindness, altruism, consideration, resilience, togetherness and trust. I see examples of these every day at school amongst pupils and staff - and from you as parents and carers - and my main message in this newsletter is to express my thanks for that. It is this sense of teamwork across the whole community that I think makes Bishop's a special place to work and learn and I know that this is also what will fortify us in meeting the challenges that may lie ahead.

Some of you may have read media reports in the last week regarding the threat of legal action by the Department for Education against a number of schools and local authorities regarding the use of remote learning. It is deeply concerning to me that the Department has taken this approach towards schools, which I feel undermines the positive values I have mentioned above. I work closely with other Headteachers and know that we are all working in the best interests of our schools, pupils and staff. Each school has its own context and circumstances and we have all faced enormous challenges in recent months. I will always aim to keep our school open to as many pupils as possible and we have been fortunate so far that the small number of cases we have had at school have had a limited impact on our day-to-day operations. Other schools have not been so fortunate and I feel that it is important that they are allowed to make decisions in their best interests. In my view schools have been heroic in their response to this pandemic, often in face of government guidance that has been untimely, vague, ill-informed, inconsistent and lacking any real understanding of how schools work. I have written a personal letter of support to one local school affected by the Department's stance and raised my concerns with the relevant authorities and our local MP.

## End of Term / Start of Term / Notification system

A reminder that **term ends on Thursday 17th December at 3 pm**. Please make arrangements for your child to be off site at 3 pm so that we can clear the building.

*"This is an OUTSTANDING school" - Ofsted 2016*



We have been asked by HCC to provide a facility for parents/carers to notify us of a Covid-19 positive test result for a pupil at the school for the first few days of the school holidays. The infectious period for Covid-19 is defined as being 48 hours before the start of symptoms or before getting a positive test result if you have been asymptomatic. **Therefore, you only need to notify the school of a positive test if your child starts symptoms before 3 pm on Sunday 20th December and then gets a positive test result in the following days.**

With some families making arrangements to see relatives over the Christmas 'window' it is important that we notify you if your child may have been in close contact with a positive case. If your child tests positive **and was in school during their infectious period** you can email the school using [admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk) and use the emergency contact number: 07592 756504. These contacts should only be used to report a positive test and will only be available until Wednesday 23rd December. If your child tests positive during the holidays but was not in school during their infectious period, please follow the NHS guidance regarding isolation and notify the school by email so that we can make contact if necessary when term resumes. A reminder that no pupils should attend school if they or a member of their household has symptoms of Covid-19 until a negative test has been received or their isolation period is completed.

The Spring term starts on January 4th and pupils should be on site by 8.30 am. We would ask for your support in ensuring that your child starts the term with the correct uniform and complies with our rules concerning make-up and hair. Pupils who do not comply will be sent home on the first day of term.

### **Summer 2021 Exams**

The Department for Education has announced some 'exceptional measures' to support students sitting exams this summer. There are several elements to this and details are going to be published later in January. A short parents' Q&A document can be viewed here: [Exams 2021 - QA for parents](#). You can also respond to the Ofqual consultation regarding these proposals here: [Support materials and advance information in 2021 GCSE, AS and A level exams](#).

### **Enrichment - Spring term**

I am pleased to say that we will return to our full enrichment programme from January. Please see the attached document or view the full schedule on our website.

### **Bad Weather Conditions**

It is becoming increasingly difficult to predict what will happen with our variable weather and we have been checking our communication systems to ensure that should there be any need for school closure over the winter, then processes are in place. We will continue to use our text messaging system to inform parents of any closure and also post information on the website and social media.

I always do all I can to keep the school open in bad weather and not interrupt teaching and learning if at all possible. I also understand concerns that parents have regarding dangerous road conditions and will consider all the advice available before deciding whether to close the school or not. A significant degree of communication (including with all local schools) takes place behind the scenes and in the very early hours of the morning before any decision is made. However, sometimes decisions have to be made a short notice and, though inconvenient, this cannot be avoided.

### **Parent Governor Appointment**

Welcome to our new Parent Governor, Mr Richard Hoy who attended his first Governors' Meetings this term.

### **Healthy Start Promotion & Benefit-checker**

We have been asked by HCC to raise awareness of the following:

*Are you pregnant or have a child under four? Did you know you could be missing out on free fruit and vegetables or milk worth at least £200 a year?*

*If you are at least 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four years old, and in receipt of certain benefits, you could be entitled to Healthy Start Vouchers worth £3.10 per child per week (£4.25 per week from April 2021), to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and instant formula milk. You can also use them to buy certain pulses and canned fruit and vegetables.*

*If you are entitled to Healthy Start Vouchers you will also get free vitamins designed to help pregnant and breastfeeding women and growing children. Pregnant women and every child over one and under four years old can get one voucher every week. Children under one year old can get £6.20 per week. Some supermarkets are also reducing the cost of shopping by an extra £1 to those redeeming the Healthy Start Vouchers.*

Check your eligibility on [www.gov.uk/healthy-start](http://www.gov.uk/healthy-start) You can also use the benefit-checker on the County Council's website, and access free information about benefits that you might be missing-out on – [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/benefits)

### **Interested in Teaching?**

Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School is a member of the Alban Federation partnership that works in the area to provide teacher training. Each year the Federation trains a large number of adults, either straight from University or as career changers, and places them in a host school for the year to enable them to complete their training and gain Qualified Teacher Status. All applications are submitted through UCAS (the University Admission System) and the application window is now open for courses starting in September 2021. Courses are available in both Primary and Secondary programmes, with salaries or bursaries available for suitably qualified candidates in some subjects.

If you are interested in becoming a teacher and would like general advice or specific guidance as to how to apply, please feel free to contact the Alban Federation team via email via [afgtpenquiries@sandringham.herts.sch.uk](mailto:afgtpenquiries@sandringham.herts.sch.uk) or by phone on 01727 799560 Ext217.

Please send any comments or queries you may have regarding anything in this newsletter **via email**. I am not always able to respond to each individual comment, but can assure that I do always take the time to consider the points made and take action where appropriate.

Thank you once again for the messages of support and encouragement we have received. They are very much welcomed. I wish you all an enjoyable Christmas and New Year with your family and look forward to a successful 2021.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A Wood  
Headteacher