



17 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We have finally reached the end of a very busy term and many are looking forward to the Christmas break.

There are a number of important COVID-19 updates this week, as well as a few smaller announcements for you all.

REMINDER: 'Test and Trace' during the School Christmas Holidays

Should your child receive a positive test result for COVID-19 during the school holidays please inform us straight away by:

- Emailing absence@backwellschool.net. Please put COVID-19 positive result in the email subject.
- Please include your child's full name and tutor group. We would ask that you do not share on social media the result as it can cause panic and anxiety amongst other families.
- Also please inform us of the day your child first displayed symptoms, and the date they took the COVID-19 test in your email.
- A member of the senior leadership team may get in touch with you to ask some further questions.

All parents need to be aware that, as a school, we are required to 'track and trace' any cases within the student/staff body until Thursday 23 December. This means that we may have to get in touch with families in the first few days of the Christmas holidays if we have confirmation of any positive cases which will require others to go into self-isolation.

The absence email shown above will be regularly monitored over this six-day period by senior members of staff. We will ensure it is checked by **11.00 am** and **5.30 pm** every day up to and including 23 December. Please try to email by these times wherever possible.

Government Announcements regarding mass testing in schools and a 'staggered start' to Term 3

Earlier this week, the Government announced that in January mass rapid COVID-19 testing will be carried out in secondary schools. This will be a huge undertaking for the school and we are waiting for full details. We do know that parental permission will be needed for students to be tested. If the scheme runs as envisaged, it will significantly reduce the need for students to self-isolate which will, of course, be very welcome.

Today the government made a further announcement that, in order for schools to prepare for their new roles as 'Testing Centres', the return to school in January will be 'staggered'. It has been suggested that, other than Years 11 and 13, students will have remote learning for the first week of term.

Even though it is the last day of term today, no details about this 'staggered start' have been published yet that I can share with you. Consequently I will need to contact parents and carers over the holiday period to set out in detail the government plans, and how we will be implementing them at Backwell. We will endeavour to limit any contact to essential information only and will communicate with parents as swiftly as possible should any further announcements be made.

I know you will be understanding as the school tries to adjust to these huge, last-minute changes. We will of course continue update you all in due course with our plans and arrangements - in the meantime our current test and trace procedures will stay in place.

Changes to social spaces/catering provision from Tuesday 5 January

We will be making a number of changes to our dedicated year group bubble social spaces and canteen access from Tuesday 5 January:

- The Year 7 social area will move to the Tennis Courts.
- The Year 8 social area will move from the Tennis Courts to the space between the Theatre and Art/The Library.
- All year groups will be able to purchase food, drinks and snacks during **both** Break 1 and Break 2. We will be making some alterations to our catering provision and serving points which means that we can enable students, within their year group bubbles and dedicated areas, to make purchases twice a day.

These changes will come into force from Tuesday so that we can inform all students of these updates during Tutor Time on this date.

As I write this, we have learned that North Somerset has been moved down to Tier 2 of the national COVID plan. While I know that the Backwell community will remain cautious and mindful of the safety of others, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your part in working together to respond to the pandemic and playing your part in reducing the transmission of the virus in our area. I would also like to thank you for the very many kind messages of support we have received, thoughtfully acknowledging the efforts we have made at school this year.

Wishing you all the most happy and healthy holiday, Christmas and New Year.

Jon Nunes
Headteacher

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OTHER MESSAGES ...

Virtual Christmas Live Lounge

This will be 'released' on Frog later tonight. Students and their families, can visit the Music page in the curriculum area of Frog to watch the latest performances from our talented musical students.

Developing Employability Skills for Students in Years 10 to 12

To support the development of employability skills, we've signed up all students in Years 10 to 13 for free online courses with Eton X. The students **must register themselves by Thursday 31 December**. They then have the rest of the academic year to complete the modules (they will receive a certificate at the end, which they can add to their CVs etc). We have chosen specific courses that we think are the most suitable for each year group as follows:

- Year 10: Interview skills
- Year 11: Creative problem solving
- Year 12: Resilience
- Year 13: Making an impact

Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation with instructions and encourage your child to sign up ASAP! Once they've completed the online course they should add this to their "activities" on Unifrog. Details and information about EtonX are also on the student home page of FROG.

Message for all Year 11 Backwell students applying to Backwell Sixth Form for September 2021 entry

We are pleased to have received online applications from Year 11 Backwell students. We confirm that by saving your application, it has been submitted and received.

The deadline for applications has passed. We can still consider late applications and will do our best to accommodate your subject choices, based on class numbers and subject combinations.

We will be in contact with all applicants in due course regarding arrangements for individual subject choice meetings, which we anticipate will take place in early spring 2021.

Please do not make any requests for subject changes until your meeting, as we will be unable to process any changes until then.

Year 7 and Year 13 Reports

This is to let parents/carers know that reports for students in Years 7 and 13 are now available to view on the Parents' Portal.

The Parents' Portal can be accessed on Frog via: <https://froglearn.backwellschool.net/app/os#>

Please log on using your unique User Name and password. The report can then be found on the dashboard under 'My Child', 'Attainment'.

You can find out more about how to access your Parent Portal account in the attached document 'A Guide to Accessing the Parent's Portal'.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the school

Instrumental Lessons Spring Term 2021

Instrumental lessons will start back from Tuesday 5 January. All students will need to check the board outside the Music Office for new lesson times on the first day back next term. Please note there will be no lessons the week of the 18th January. Parents who have requested to start lessons next term will be hearing details about first lessons via email over the Christmas holidays. If you have any queries, please contact vcooper@backwellschool.net.

Out-of-Catchment Coach Payments

Just a reminder that payment for the out-of-catchment school transport service for Term 3 is due by Friday 17 December 2020. If payment is not made by the beginning of term, transport for your child may be withdrawn.

To make a payment, please click on the link to [ParentPay](#). If you have any problems accessing the ParentPay service, or you wish to discuss payments or financial difficulties, then please contact the Finance Team on 01275 465941.

Free School Meal Vouchers

Families entitled to free school meals should today have received a 'Covid Winter Voucher' from WONDE/Schoolvouchers.com to the value of £30.00. This will be issued via email. So if you are expecting a voucher please remember to check your SPAM or Junk folders if it doesn't seem to have arrived.

Exam Certificate Collection

The Exams team have a number of outstanding permission slips giving permission for siblings to collect exam certificates on behalf of students who have now left. Please could you remind them that they need to come to the Exams office to collect these certificates as soon as possible.

Careers Bulletin

Please find below a link to the Careers Bulletin on our school website. This bulletin includes a section on online and virtual careers resources, including the school's online careers platform, Unifrog.

[Current Careers Events and Opportunities \(17 December 2020\)](#)

If you have any queries regarding future plans Mrs Ball can be contacted on her school email cball@backwellschool.net.

And finally

Why not take a look at the Christmas Wellbeing page on the Student section of Frog. On there, there is a summary of how well students have been coping during this difficult year; some tips for looking after yourself at Christmas; revision wellbeing tips for exam classes, as well as some useful links.

Upcoming Events

Monday 4 January	Back to school!
13 & 14 January	Year 9 Vaccinations (Meningococcal ACWY and Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus)
Thursday 14 January	Year 12 Parents' Evening
18 – 22 January	Year 11 Trial Exams
Thursday 21 January	Year 10 Parents' Evening (<i>information coming soon</i>)
25 – 29 January	Year 13 Trial Exams
Thursday 28 January	Year 9 Options Presentation Evening
Thursday 4 February	Year 9 Parents' Evening

LETTERS HOME ...

[Sixth Form Bulletin for week beginning Monday 4 January](#) – Parents/Carers of Sixth Form students

[Year 9 Vaccinations](#)– Parents/Carers Year 9 students

[A 'Thank You' from the Chair of Governors](#)– All Parents/Carers

[Important Letter for the School Community](#) – All Parents/Carers

[Year 12 Parents' Evening: Thursday 14 January 2021](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 12 students