

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

I hope you have been enjoying the winter break and that you have all managed to stay safe during this unprecedented festive season.

No doubt you have been wondering about the school's plans for the remainder of the semester, which finishes on January 29.

The school has decided to return to full time in-school classes beginning Monday, January 4. This decision is based on the following:

- the COVID-19 infection rate is now much lower, with our Provincial Health Officer's announcement that BC has flattened the curve
- school children are at very low risk of contracting or spreading the virus
- a vaccine is now available and vaccinations have begun
- all VSB schools are in full in-person instructional mode
- online learning is no substitute for in-class instruction

The last point is of particular concern to us as we have seen over the past months of online instruction that it is much more difficult for students to achieve or even maintain high marks online than it is in person. Students actually have to work harder online to get the same results but the motivation and accountability are not as strong in online classes and so performance suffers. We want all of our students to achieve the best marks they are capable of and unfortunately we have not been seeing this in the months we have been offering classes online. We feel that the regular routine of coming to school establishes a sense of self-discipline, enthusiastic engagement with peers and teachers, and a positive attitude that passive partial attention to a computer screen can never provide.

This is a good opportunity to remind students that classes actually begin at 9:00am so arriving at the front desk at 8:59 or even 9:00 does not mean you are on time! You should aim to arrive at school at 8:45 or soon after so that you are in your classroom by 8:55 and ready to learn when class starts.

If any parents/guardians still wish to keep their children/wards out of school in spite of the above observations they may submit a written request with their reasons for doing so. However, I would like to point out that we will be unable to offer online lessons as we did when all lessons were online. Now, all in-school classes will be taught directly to the students attending in person; students watching on Zoom will simply be able to see what is happening in the classroom and will have very limited interaction with their teachers.

I hope this answers any questions that you might have about our instructional plans going forward. Of course, all our previous health and safety protocols will remain in place such as temperature checks, hand sanitising, mask wearing, desk shields, physical distancing etc. Rest assured that we want to ensure the safest environment for all.

Wish best wishes to all for the New Year ... it must surely be better than 2020!

David

David Darling
Head of School | Canada Royal Arts High School