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A weekly update for Parents on news from Benenden

Friday 10 January 2020



NEPALESE ADVENTURE! Girls have amazing time on nine-day trek [Details](#)

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Welcome from the Headmistress

Dear Parents

I hope you had a relaxing festive period with your families; I spent much of mine battling the rain in Wales though still managed a dip in the sea (in a wetsuit) on New Year's Day!

It is my pleasure to wish you a Happy New Year, and indeed a Happy New Decade. The end of such a period offers an opportunity to look back over the last ten years and when I carried out this exercise I was reminded of what a busy, and at times turbulent, decade it has been in the education sector. With that in mind, I put together an Education Quiz of the Decade for staff this week, which you might be interested in testing yourself with! [Click here to try it.](#)

Two trips went out during the holidays: the [Nepal trip](#) and the [ski championships](#) in the

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As you would expect, girls have been straight back into the thick of it this week: the Upper Fifts have returned from the holidays to their mocks and the Six Ones have been taking their progress tests. The Six Twos have their mocks next month.

Meanwhile at the other end of the School, the Fourths have been in [Enquiry days](#), experiencing lessons devoted to the subject of Migration.

The girls who are not busy revising this weekend will be enjoying House Shout, our traditional start to the Spring Term which is being held in the Theatre while construction on our new School Hall and Music School continues. It is extremely exciting to watch this development progressing: we have returned from Christmas to see the elevations now starting to take shape, giving the girls a great impression of what they can look forward to from this wonderful new facility.

If Christmas already feels like a long time ago, the general election – which was dominating everything this time last month – seems a distant memory. While it is a relief that our new Government does not have a stated anti-independent school stance, the sector remains under considerable political pressure. We will, of course, continue to promote our long-standing partnership work in the community, along with the wider benefit we bring to the local economy, while at the same time working hard to expand our partnership working as well as extending our bursaries provision and exploring additional sources of income.

With the start of the new year, I have now taken up my post as President-elect of the Girls' School Association (GSA) for 2020, taking over as President in 2021. This year will be an opportunity to further raise the profile of Benenden and to position our School as a prominent voice for girls' education and the independent sector more broadly. Please rest assured that this role will not detract in any way from my focus on Benenden and I have relinquished other external roles to ensure I have sufficient time to fulfil it.

There is much to look forward to in the coming weeks of this term, including [Burns Night Reeling](#); the Careers, Higher Education and Futures Convention; the Chapel Choir performing Evensong at Eton; LAX Nationals and several fascinating lectures, including the annual [Parents' Lecture on 23 January](#), and an Evening with Charles Dance in February, both of which we would be delighted to welcome parents to.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind parents of Lower Fifth girls of the [drinks party in London](#) on Thursday 6 February, which is always a lovely sociable evening and a good opportunity to catch up with fellow parents and staff.

I hope to see you at one of these events or another occasion very soon.

With very best wishes

Samantha Price

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News and Announcements

Term Dates for 2020-2021

We would like to draw parents' attention to the term dates for the school year 2020-2021.

As was sent out in the mailout, these dates have changed since they were provisionally published a year or so ago, so we wanted to ensure that all parents have the correct dates in their diaries.

Most notably, the next school year now begins on 1 September 2020 for the Sixth Form and 2 September 2020 for the Lower School. This has brought our dates in line with most of our peer schools.

The confirmed Autumn Term dates for 2020 are as follows:

- Tuesday 1 September - 8.30am - Staff return
- **Tuesday 1 September - 2.00pm - Six Two Students return to School**
- **Tuesday 1 September - 3.30pm - Six One Students return to School**
- **Wednesday 2 September - 3.00pm - Current Lower School Students return**
- **Wednesday 2 September - 4.00pm - New Lower School Students return**
- Friday 18 September - 12.30pm - Fixed Exeat begins
- Sunday 20 September - 7.30pm - Fixed Exeat ends
- **Friday 16 October - 12.30pm - Half Term begins**
- **Sunday 1 November - 7.30pm - Half Term ends**
- Wednesday 4 November - Oxbridge Admissions Tests
- Saturday 7 November - 12.30pm - Fourth-Lower Fifth Meet the Tutor
- Friday 20 November - 7.30pm - Fixed Exeat begins
- Sunday 22 November - 10.15am - Fixed Exeat ends
- Saturday 28 November - 3.00pm - Fifth Parents' Meeting
- **Friday 11 December - Term ends**

We hope this helps parents to plan their diaries.

Steve Miller

First Deputy

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RAP Project

Thursday 23 January 2020

A reminder that The Benenden School Parents' Association is taking bookings for the next Parents' Lecture by the RAP Project. The booking deadline is Thursday 16 January.

- [Full details later in the Bulletin here](#)

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LAST CHANCE TO BOOK: Burns Night Reeling

Saturday 18 January, 6.30pm in the Cafe

There are a few spaces still remaining for this event, which is for parents of Sixth Formers and their daughters.

- [Full details later in the Bulletin here](#)

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Lower Fifth Parents' Drinks

Thursday 6 February, 6.30pm to 8.30pm, Oriental Club, London

We would be delighted to welcome parents of the Lower Fifth to a drinks party at the Oriental Club in London on Thursday 6 February.

- [Full details later in the Bulletin here](#)

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Junior School Play: Wickenden Hall

6 and 7 February

The Junior School Play - Wickenden Hall - is being performed by Fourths and Upper Fourths and is loosely based on the stories of Malory Towers. It looks at the nostalgic world of a girls' boarding school (long before Hogwarts!) where the girls endure midnight feasts, cliff rescues, pranks and everlasting friendships.

The performance times are:

- **Thursday 6 February** at 7.00pm
- **Friday 7 February** matinee at 2.30pm
- **Friday 7 February** at 7.00pm

Please note that the above performances and timings have been confirmed since the Christmas mailout and are correct in the School Diary.

The Box Office will be open next week; look out for the email!

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THE BOARDING OPTION

A Saturday morning information event, featuring a discussion and Q&A with Heads of leading girls', boys' and prep schools

BENENDEN **TONBRIDGE SCHOOL** **BRAMBLETYE** **EATON HOUSE SCHOOLS**

A chance to discover how modern independent schools prepare young people to be the next business leaders

Saturday 21 March, 10.30am

Saatchi Gallery, Duke of York's HQ,
King's Rd, Chelsea, London SW3 4RY

Info and booking: www.benenden.school/next

Next Steps: The Boarding Option

Saturday 21 March

Benenden is delighted to be taking part in this discussion, with three other leading boarding schools, being held at the Saatchi Gallery on Kings Road in Chelsea.

This event offers prospective parents the opportunity to discover how modern independent schools prepare young people to be the next business leaders, and to ask questions of our panel of experts, which includes Samantha Price, as well as the Heads from Tonbridge, Brambletye and Eaton House, The Manor.

We would be delighted if parents could share details of this free event with friends and colleagues who may be interested in attending.

- [Booking and more information](#)

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Talks on How the Human Brain Works

Cranbrook Parents' Association have organised a series of talks that might be of interest to Benenden parents. They look at how the human brain works - covering wellbeing, anxiety, what is in the brain and how to respond to it.

- [Full details](#)

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Spring Term Co-Curricular Weekly Activities

We run numerous co-curricular activities throughout the week for girls of all year groups. Below is this year's full list of options. Please speak to your daughter about any additional opportunities she might want to pursue:

- [View the complete list](#)

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Academic News

Lower Fifth Parents' Morning

Saturday 18 January

A reminder that we are holding a Lower Fifth Parents' Morning on Saturday 18 January, starting at 9.45am with coffee in the Theatre.

This will be a chance for both students and parents to learn more about the process of choosing GCSEs and to discuss any queries with teachers, tutors, Hms, the Head of Lower Fifth (Miss Ellie Fryer) and the Senior Management Team. Please note that Mrs Northridge, a Lower Fifth tutor, will not be able to attend.

If you would like to attend and haven't already advised us, please complete the Lower Fifth Parents' Morning booking form below.

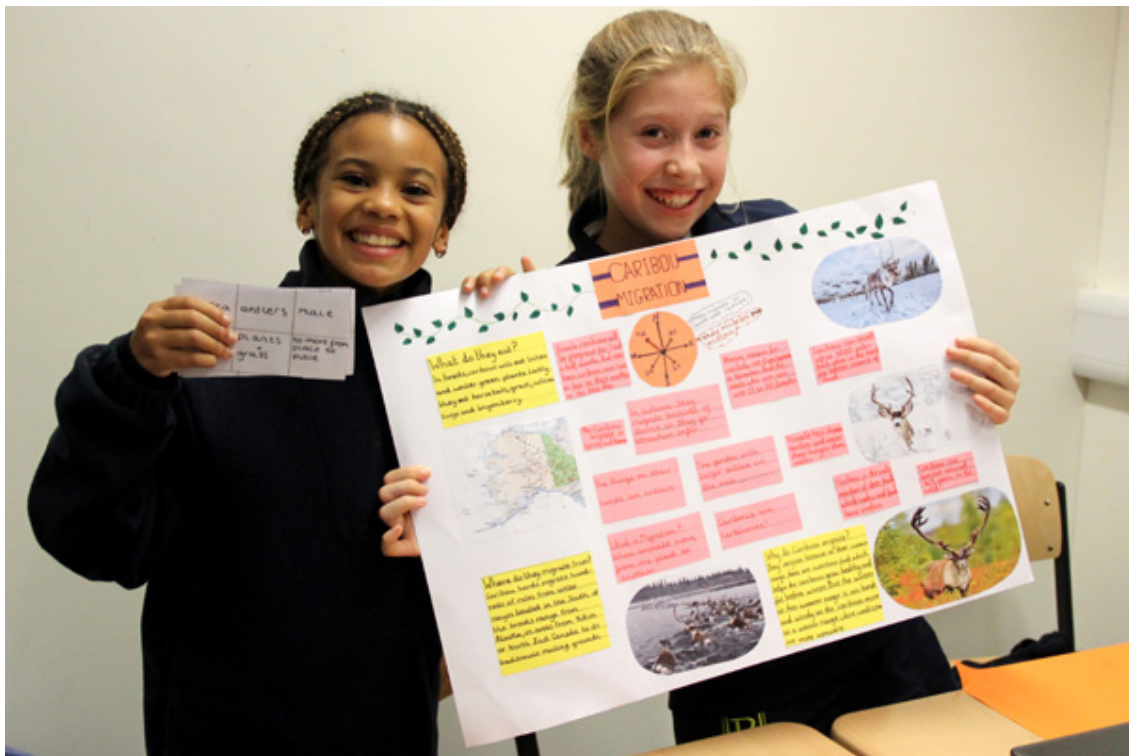
- [Book here](#)
- [View the GCSE Making Choices Booklet for September 2020](#)

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Reminder: Parents' Mornings in the Spring Term

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- **18 January** - Lower Fifth
- **1 February** - Upper Fifth
- **8 February** - Six One
- **7 March** - Six Two
- **13 March** - Fourth and Upper Fourth (Please note that this is being held at 1.00pm on a Friday - the day of the Exeat. Further details will follow in due course).

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Fourths' Enquiry Days

The Fourths have been busy learning about migration as part of their Enquiry Days this week. Enquiry Days give girls a chance to explore important and exciting questions as a year group.

They have been working in groups to make an educational resource, aimed at Year Four students at Benenden Primary School, about one animal. The resource could be a poster, page of a textbook, story book, board game, or anything else that physically exists and will help children learn.

Over the course of Wednesday and yesterday they benefited from a range of sessions to help them with their task, these include: learning about the sort of language they would use when communicating with a Year Four pupil; how to work as a team; how to do advanced research; designing a successful visual product and, of course, how to make the final resource!

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LANDSCAPE



Benenden's head of art discusses teaching the subject and its importance in the modern world

Words PHILIPPA FUTRELL

An teachers everywhere are used to being pretty much left to our own devices. Like the majority, I find most comfortable in the Art Department, safe in the knowledge that art might not quite fit, conform or be fully understood by much of the rest of the school, let alone wider society. It has therefore been historic, but most welcome to read recently of a growing need for art courses in home interiors, essentially an education in how to buy art. However, the exposure through programmes on national TV about commissioning art for the home,

not to mention celebrity painting competitions, has threatened to me more than ever that we all have very different comfort zones, and not just in taste. Parents have historically pondered on several themes: "Can art be taught?", "Art should be enjoyable" and "No-one else in the family is artistic". What is exciting from current publicity is the growing perception that art can be for everybody and that all art forms should have equal consideration. "So why teach it at school?" To stretch creative thinking muscles and grow the brain, to join those

who find wellbeing from being creative with their hands or allow that rebel inside who does not want to conform to the "right" answer have a voice. Indeed, teachers and students alike should always be asking themselves: "What would happen if...?" In this way even if art remains a hobby beyond school, these risk-taking moments can be an inspiration, whether for a scientist or a politician, or perhaps just in being able to decisively purchase a piece of art for your home because you know why you like it. Teaching and justifying art in response to the ELDS - a



performance measures of core subjects, which exclude art subjects - might be the definitive way for schools to respond to change and bureaucratic hurdles, but if it means that the subject is more widely respected for its challenges and benefits then the insight will be worth the effort. Sadly, there will always be those who will dismiss art as trivial, despite the growing desire for everything from designed buildings, homeware and clothing to films, mobile phone covers and signage. The core of art education has changed very little from when it

started to teach, and it is excellent to see it's firmly back in fashion in many art schools. In this moment we will continue to build upon the acclaimed art education begun in the 20th century which, importantly, still flourishes in Britain today and allows for a thriving arts industry for students to aspire to join or appreciate. As long as there is still a sense of joy in creating, then art will have a firm place to live in schools. ■

Philippa Futrell is head of art at Benenden School - see more at benenden.school



The Changing Perception of Art

Our Head of Art, Philippa Futrell, has written a fascinating piece about the changing perception of art, which has been published in the latest edition of School Report magazine.

- [View the article](#)

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Higher Education and Careers Bulletin

This week's Bulletin is below. It contains information on degree apprenticeships at Rolls Royce, The Royal College of Music open day, help funding gap year projects and the Newnham College essay competition.

- [Read the latest Bulletin](#)

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Trips



Nepal Trip

On 5 December a group of 17 students and four staff left Benenden for a nine-day trek in Nepal.

It took the group from 900m above sea level to 4,130m above sea level; the route is undulating which adds to the challenge and there are quite a lot of steps along the way.

The **first day's** trekking ended with the challenging Ulleri steps which definitely required soul-searching from some!

Day two saw the group move to Ghorepani at the base of Poon Hill.

Day three started with an early morning walk to catch the sunrise at Poon Hill.

Day four takes in a steady climb to Chhomrong, which is known for its amazing steps,

Day five started with a gentle walk up, before we reached more downhill steps to Bamboo, the highest point so far on the trail.

Day six was planned to be a gentle walk for two hours up to Machhapuchhre Base Camp (MBC). We woke to gentle snowfall and felt the walk would look much prettier. After just over two hours of walking through the snow, which was now about 30cms deep, we reached our destination.

After chatting with our mountain guide we decided to summit Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) that afternoon to ensure we did so when it was safe.

Day seven was another early start to get us moving out of the fresh snow and down to Bamboo.

The route down was almost unrecognisable from the route up the day before. The group powered through the day before reaching Bamboo and some guaranteed hot showers.

Day eight was a short day but one that included plenty of uphill steps as we tackled the Bamboo steps and the Chhomrong steps in quick succession. The pace was steady and the group was rewarded with some of the cutest puppies at Chhomrong.

Day nine was a short walk but one that started with a 280m Burma rope bridge, an amazing piece of engineering which was not for the faint hearted. After the bridge the trek winds its way down the Modi Khola before we ended the trek and headed back to Pokhara.

Following the trekking we visited the Gurkha Welfare Trust as part of our charity work and the Gurkha Museum as part of our cultural awareness.

There was another day on the bus before we reached Kathmandu via Swayambuntha, the Monkey Temple, for more culture and charity engagement. Our trip to Bloom Nepal allowed the staff and students an opportunity to see the hard work that the local students expend in the pursuit of their dreams and certainly opened a few eyes to how the Nepalese culture is very focused on achieving their targets.

The **final day** allowed us to visit Kathmandu Durbar Square to see the temples.

Barry Imms

Head of Outdoor Education

- [Photo Gallery](#).
- The above is a summarised account of the trip. [Read a more extensive version here.](#)

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Music and Drama

Epiphany Concert

Friday 17 January, 6.30pm

Next week The Chapel Choir will be singing Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols in a concert at St Mildred's Church in Tenterden, with music by Elgar, Quartel and Tavener. If you have purchased the Make We Merry CD, you will recognise the beautiful Quartel piece with solo cello.

Tickets will be available on the door (£10 adult, £5 students), from Webb's Ironmongery Stores, Tenterden High Street, or you can [purchase online tickets here](#).

If you would like to buy a copy of the Make We Merry CD at a cost of £10, please email the [Music Department](#).

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Sport



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Independent Schools Slalom Champions

On the last day of term the Benenden Ski Team set off for the Independent Schools Ski Championships in Les Deux Alpes.

Despite heavy winds preventing training on the first day, the girls performed exceptionally well as a team and brought home the winning trophy for the Senior Girls Slalom race.

Aurelia Branson in Lower Fifth was awarded two individual medals for her performance in the Giant Slalom and Slalom races, adding to the success of the team.

Well done everyone.

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School Life



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Refurbishments On-Site

Our Estates Team were busy over the Christmas Holidays carrying out a variety of work.

Our photos show the newly cleaned tennis courts and work done to upgrade the washrooms in Medway - part of our boarding houses refurbishment programme which began last year and we look forward to bringing other houses' facilities up to this standard.

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Running London Marathon for Former Benenden Tennis Coach

Unbelievably it is over eight years since one of our favourite tennis coaches, David Smiley, passed away whilst skiing in Bulgaria.

He was only 23 and died as a result of unexplained heart failure. Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) is a fantastic charity which, amongst other things, helps fund screening of young people.

Having run the London Marathon myself in 2015 for CRY, the mantle has now fallen to my daughter, Lucy, who left Benenden in 2014. Lucy is running the 26 miles on Sunday 26 April in memory of David.

Any contributions to CRY would be gratefully received and I know will spur her on enormously.

- [Sponsor Lucy](#)

Peter Hopkisson

Head of History

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Prayer Themes

Weekly theme: Welcome Back

On Wednesday Mrs Price welcomed everyone back to School and then introduced one of our new Chaplains, Reverend Tracey Bateson.

Reverend Bateson made a great initial impact, combining a reflection on the experience of opening presents on Christmas day with messages about the symbolism of those experiences - all while riding a scooter around the Sports Hall.

Today we were pleased to welcome back one of our Seniors, Aisling Clube, to speak to the girls about her involvement with a charity in Kenya that is supporting young people, particularly girls, with their education.

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Travel Arrangements

The latest travel arrangements can be found on the Portal [here](#).

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Parents' Events and Information

Burns Night Reeling

Saturday 18 January, 6.30pm in the Café

We look forward to seeing parents of Sixth Formers at this event next weekend. We are pleased to advise that we have capacity for a few more guests so if you would like to attend and have not yet booked, please contact [Fiona Bruce-Smythe](#), the event organiser.

Attending parents will receive final details of the event next week. Would parents please note that, in the unfortunate event of you needing to cancel, we are unable to offer refunds at this late stage.

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Parents' Lecture 2020: The RAP Project

Thursday 23 January 2020

The Benenden School Parents' Association is taking bookings for the next Parents' Lecture by the RAP Project. The booking deadline is **Thursday 16 January**.

The talk is designed to give teenagers and their parents advice on personal safety, defining rape, sexual assault and consent as well as examining how online pornography, sexting and social media are influencing, attitudes, behaviours and expectations.

A coach is available between the School and Staplehurst Station.

- [Full details and booking information](#)

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Lower Fifth Parents' Drinks

Thursday 6 February, 6.30pm to 8.30pm, Oriental Club, London.

We would like to invite parents of the Lower Fifth to a drinks party at the Oriental Club in London on Thursday 6 February. This is a great opportunity for you to meet other parents if you are a new parent and vice versa if you are a current parent.

Full details, including a link to RSVP, are below. If you have any queries about the event please [contact Dawn Bradford](#).

- [Full details and booking](#)

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Save the Date: Upper Fifth Parents' Lunch

5 March 2020, London

We would invite parents of girls in the Upper Fifth to save the date for this year group lunch later this term. These year group lunches are always lovely occasions and a great opportunity to meet other parents in your daughter's year.

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Parents' Events

Upcoming social events for parents, mostly organised by the Parents' Events Committee.
See also the dedicated [PEC section](#) on the Portal.

Spring Term

18 January Burns Night Reeling [Details](#)

23 January Parents' Lecture: The RAP Project [Details](#)

6 February Lower Fifth Drinks Party [Details](#)

5 March Upper Fifth Parents' Lunch [Details to follow](#)

12 March Fifth Parents' Lunch [Details to follow](#)

Summer Term

27 to 30 April Parents' Trip to Porto [Details](#)

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Diary Dates

Please find below some of the main forthcoming School dates.

2020

18 January Burns Night Reeling

18 January Lower Fifth Parents' Morning

23 January Parents' Lecture

24 January Fixed Exeat

1 February Upper Fifth Parents' Morning

6 February Lower Fifth Parents' Drinks Party

6-7 February Lower School Play, Wickenden Hall

8 February Six One Parents' Morning

14 February Half Term begins

23 February Half Term ends

7 March Six Two Parents' Morning

13 March Fixed Exeat

13 March Fourth and Upper Fourth Parents' Meeting

26 March End of Spring Term

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7 May Fixed Exeat
22 May Half Term begins
31 May Half Term ends
2 July Leavers' Ball
4 July Speech Day and end of Summer Term

1 September Sixth Form students return to School
2 September Lower School students return to School
18 September Fixed Exeat
16 October Half Term begins
1 November Half Term ends
20 November Fixed Exeat
11 December End of Autumn Term

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