



HILTON COLLEGE

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HEADMASTER: GJ HARRIS B.A. Hons (Wits)

7 January 2021

Dear Parents,

2021 has begun and with it some of our fears about this pandemic are being realised. Regrettably our ability to be certain about our opening for the academic year is in the balance given the restrictions which govern us under Level 3 regulations.

We wait patiently for the next address from the President to gain more clarity.

In the meantime, our draft plan is a return of learners as follows:

- Sunday 17th January 9h30: All Grade 12s back at school. *Programme for parents and boys starts at 10h00, parents to depart at 11h30.*
- Monday 18th January 09h00: Grade 8 learners and parents arrive (*the programme is being revised - parents will now depart at 12h00*)
- Tuesday 19th January: Grade 9-11 learners arrive, including new boys in Grade 9-11. To manage the influx of people, please try to stagger arrival times if possible. Ideally Grade 9s should arrive at 15h00, Grade 10s at 17h00 and Grade 11s at 19h00 (bespoke arrangements will be made for new boys in these grades)

We envisage a hybrid approach to learning and teaching with some out of country boys unable to return to school and certain academic staff required to teach from home due to co-morbidities and the like. Under Level 3 regulations we will NOT be allowed to commence inter-school sport for any sporting codes.

In the case of tighter government restrictions being introduced, a delayed or more staggered approach than the one outlined above may be applicable. In such a scenario, our Matrics and the Grade 8s would be the first boys back on campus, followed as soon as possible by the other Grades. Online distance learning will begin for all learners that cannot return to campus in January. This delayed or staggered approach would be a last resort, but we need to consider this scenario to ensure that we stay compliant with government regulations.

We learnt valuable lessons in our response to the pandemic during the course of 2020 and we will take these learnings and apply them as best we can:

- The online teaching programme that our staff implemented last year was outstanding but we still believe that the academic, social and emotional needs of your sons are best served when they are with their teachers and peers, in person and on campus. Please partner with us in getting your boys back to school as soon as this can be safely achieved.
- The quarantine centre was problematic on a number of fronts and, as a result, we have decided to discontinue this with the exception of accommodating out of country boys, or boys who need to spend a night awaiting collection by a parent. If the new strain of Covid is indeed more virulent and contagious, we believe we need to get a boy back home as soon as is possible if he is to get better and not infect others.
- Last year the period we spent with fewer leaves was better from a Covid point of view and we believe we may need to adopt a similar approach initially, to try and create a 'bubble' as far as possible, once the boys are back at school. We would intersperse these blocks with slightly longer half-terms in between.
- Academically, we have decided to record all lessons so that boys who are unable to attend in person, or who may be in a different time zone, would be able to access the lesson when it is possible to do so. This way we will manage the challenge that occurs when there is a hybrid teaching model on the go.
- We implore you and your sons to avoid all social engagements between now and the start of term so as to limit the risk of boys contracting Covid and passing it onto their peers at school. It is recommended that you leave home only to go to work and to the shops.

Should any of our plans change or need to be updated, we will notify you immediately. May I suggest you book flight tickets with a flexible date option, in case we are forced to make changes. Should international flight availability make it difficult to comply with any of our suggested dates (i.e. he needs to arrive a few days earlier or later), then please communicate with your son's housemaster so that arrangements can be made to accommodate him.

We are aware that this is an uncertain, anxious and frustrating time for all our families, but one of the many things that 2020 taught us is that our community is collaborative, resilient and resourceful. We will no doubt endure this next hurdle together.

Kind regards,

George Harris
Headmaster