



# HILTON COLLEGE

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

26 January 2021

Dear Parents,

It feels a touch surreal that our campus will at last be officially open this weekend after the false starts. It goes without saying that the staff and I are delighted that the boys will be back soon!

While we are determined to ensure that boys make the most of the Hilton College campus experience, we do need to put some precautionary measures in place to minimise the risk of infection and further disruption. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this regard.

## **Return times**

As communicated on 23 January, return dates are as follows:

- Grade 12s: Saturday 30 Jan from 09h00 (all Grade 12s back by 11h00);
- Grade 8s: Sunday 31 Jan from 10h00 (all Grade 8s on campus by 11h00). Orientation for boys will begin immediately after parents have left at 11h00.
- Grades 9-11: Monday 1 February from 14h00 (all Grade 9s – 11s back by 18h00). *To avoid congestion between 17h30 and 18h00 we ask that parents drop off their sons a little earlier than 18h00 if possible. New boys in Grade 9-11 will also be returning on Monday afternoon but they will be contacted this week to arrange a suitable time to be welcomed by their Housemaster and tutor.*

## **Scheduled classes**

There will be no academic classes for boys in Grades 9-11 on Monday, 1 February, as they will be travelling back to school on that day. There will be a special in-person programme in place for Grade 8 and Matric boys on Monday. By Tuesday, 2 February, in person teaching will have begun for all grades but special arrangements will be made to cater for out of country boys who have not been able to return. A handful of matrics will miss some lessons on Friday, by special arrangement, but all other boys are expected to be logged into Teams for their classes for the rest of this week.

## **Drop off**

We ask that you do not socialise and linger on the campus after dropping off your sons. With the exception of the Grade 8 parents, who will accompany their son to his dorm to drop off his bags before departing, we request that parents do not enter the boarding house.

**Dress and turnout**

Boys are expected to return to school clean shaven, and in their 'No.1s' as per normal. Please make every effort to ensure that your son has a neat haircut. Should this not be possible then please contact your son's House Manager and she will arrange a haircut on campus, ensuring that the barber follows strict Covid-19 protocols.

**Leaves and half-term**

Exeats (Leaves) have been cancelled until half-term to limit the risk of boys contracting and spreading Covid-19. Half-term will take place from 18-22 February, as originally communicated. Boys may depart after 15h00 on 17 February if they so wish, but you will need to send an email detailing your arrangements to your son's House Manager. Note that if boys are flying home on 17 February, then you will need to ensure that their flight departs after 17h00 from Pietermaritzburg or after 18h00 from Durban – otherwise they should spend the night on campus and depart the next day.

**Testing**

As with so many of the pandemic response measures, preemptive testing is a fraught topic. The school has been inundated with contradictory requests and advice. Many parents are eager for the school to insist that boys are tested this week, while others are equally determined that testing should not take place given the cost and complexity of making arrangements to test for a second time in a month. We have had some medical professionals contact the school to endorse mandatory testing, while others have sent emails complaining that such an approach is impractical (citing several reasons for it not being fail-safe) and possibly unethical (burdening testing centres and making unreasonable demands on parents).

*After much consultation and thought, we will not insist that all boys should be tested again prior to their return to school.* There are only two and a half weeks between our campus opening and then closing again for half term at which stage boys will leave our semi-protected bubble. Taking this into account as well as the cost of a test, the difficulties that some parents will experience in accessing a testing venue within 48 hours of returning to school, and the fact that testing does not guarantee the absence of infected boys on campus, we have decided not to enforce a mandatory testing regime.

One of the measures that most experts seem to agree on is the best way of limiting the risk of an outbreak on campus is for you and your sons to avoid all social engagements until after he has returned to campus. Please stay AT HOME this week.

Personally, I think the doctor who may have the most sensible advice at this time is Dr Seuss:

*"I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind. Some come from ahead and some come from behind. But I've bought a big bat. I'm all ready you see. Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!"*

**Parent-staff meetings**

With the cancellation of the in-person Grade 8 welcome ceremony and the in-person Matric parent programme, along with the possibility of other scheduled parent meetings being cancelled or disrupted, we will be having online information sessions with parents during the course of this term. The Grade 8 sessions will take place this week and dates of sessions with parents from other grades will be communicated soon.

**Deliveries and visits to the main gate**

Deliveries of food (including take-aways) to the McKenzie gates will not be permitted until half-term. Similarly, we ask that parents do not meet their sons at the gate. The Tuck Shop will be open for your son to procure snacks. Should your son need to take delivery of an essential item, then please contact the House Manager to make a special arrangement. Dormitory cake to celebrate your son's birthday can be ordered through the House Manager. Parents of Grade 8s and new boys in Grades 9-11 will have an opportunity to visit their sons for a short period on campus on the afternoon of Saturday, 13 February, should they so wish (details and times to be communicated in due course). We ask that all parents be respectful of instructions given by the guards at the gate – the guards are merely enforcing rules that have been devised by the school.

**Future adjustments to our routine and plans**

It would be naïve of me to offer an assurance that there will not be further Covid-related disruptions this term. During this unpredictable period there is a possibility that small groups of boys will need to leave the campus to self-isolate or quarantine for periods of time. In the meantime, parents, boys and staff will need to do everything they can to limit the risk of infections on campus. The best and quickest way of staying up to date with news from the school is to keep checking the school app. *Please update your notification preferences in the app (found in the My Personal Profile tab) to ensure that you continue to get all relevant communication.*

A document summarising all the procedures and processes that we have put in place to mitigate the risk of further disruptions will be published on the app tomorrow.

Kind regards,

George Harris  
Headmaster