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ST GEORGE'S
PREPARATORY

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Dear Parents

What a wonderful 3 days we have had seeing some of our pupils back on Campus and Moms and Dads at the various drop and goes. The children seem to be happy in what has become the clichéd “new normal”. I personally will not be using this term as to be quite honest, nothing is normal as we all navigate our way through this pandemic. The school is far from normal but we are making sure we are doing everything in our power to make it a happy, enjoyable and safe environment for all our boys and girls. It was very reassuring to hear from many of our seniors that their first day back at school was better than they expected. The happiness they showed to be together with their peers and staff members was incredibly heart-warming. I do believe our staff in every department of the school have worked tirelessly to provide a wonderful return to school for all our boys and girls. We are really looking forward to bringing back all the other Grades on Monday next week.

I would like to thank in particular our COVID-19 Response Team (Nick Mowbray, Itumeleng Mafalala, Andrew Stamper, Ryan Hartel, Lanette Pienaar and Monaheng Sililo) not only for the time that they have given the school, but also for their advice and wise council during these challenging past few months. It has been great to have many sets of eyes checking all the details that are required at a time like this. The school is looking superb and no stone has been left unturned to ensure the safety of our boys and girls. I felt it wise to communicate today as whilst we can control the “controllable” within the confines of the school, we have little to no control of what happens once the staff and pupils leave our gates.

No doubt many of you are reading the numerous posts, articles etc circulating in the press and in particular on social media. We are living in a time where perhaps we just don't know what to believe and what not to believe anymore and to quote a certain world leader, “fake news” also seems to be running its course. The truth is, however, that the pandemic in the Eastern Cape is escalating and currently at a rather daunting rate and the Nelson Mandela Metropole has been identified as a “hotspot”. There is uncertainty about the readiness of our medical care system and its capacity to deal with the potential numbers that are anticipated. Bearing this in mind, I would like to appeal to our entire community to support each other by firstly encouraging social distancing (no play dates - we know it is difficult), staying at home, hand washing, hand sanitizing, the wearing of correct masks covering both mouth and nose and the correct completion of our daily screening before children come to school. Please do not send you child to school if they are displaying any symptoms or are even slightly unwell. No child wants to be sent to the isolation room.

Currently we have had 2 pupils who were positively diagnosed with COVID-19 during the lockdown period and both have been medically cleared and followed the correct quarantine protocols. Four staff members have been tested as they had come into contact with positive cases. Only one staff member has tested positive and is obviously still in quarantine and will only return to work when medically permitted. We also have a number



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of staff members working from home or not at work as they have certain comorbidities or underlying conditions and we need to protect them.

Please take note of the following protocols from our Full Covid-19 Management Plan below that can be found, [using this link](#):

5.3. Management of COVID-19 cases in a school

Extra precautions should be taken with pupils and staff with pre-existing medical conditions, or staff over the age of 60 years with one or more chronic illnesses, as they are at higher risk for a serious COVID-19 illness. It is advisable that such pupils and staff should be allowed to work from home, where possible.

5.3.1. Action to be taken when a child or pupil appears ill or displays symptoms associated with COVID-19

When a child/pupil appears to be sick or displays symptoms of COVID-19, such as dry cough, high fever, respiratory distress or shortness of breath, or report a sore throat, the procedure below must be followed:

- a) **Isolate** the pupil and keep them separate from other pupils and staff until they can be assessed by a health professional.
- b) Provide the pupil with a **face mask** if they don't already have one on.
- c) **The parents or guardians of the child/pupil must be informed immediately.**
- d) Call the facility manager of the nearest health facility, the NICD toll-free emergency hotline for COVID-19 (0800 029 999) or the provincial officials whose details are listed in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020.
- e) The school will be advised on any further actions to be taken.

5.4. Action to be taken when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed

- The school will be contacted by the relevant public health officials to discuss the case, to identify people who have been in contact with the infected person and advice on any further actions or precautions that should be taken.
- If a school has not been contacted regarding a possible case of COVID-19 in the school, the administrators must contact the relevant provincial official whose details are listed in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020 or the NICD toll-free emergency hotline for COVID-19 on 0800 029 999 for referral to the relevant contact.
- Public health officials, with the assistance of relevant staff, will conduct a risk-assessment and give recommendations on the management of children/pupils and staff.
- In most cases, closure of the school will not be necessary. The decision to close will be school- and context-specific, and must follow the procedure in Section 5.9 below.

5.4.1. Action to be taken when a child/pupil may have been exposed to a suspected/probable case of COVID-19, or a suspected case for whom testing for COVID19 is inconclusive as reported by the laboratory

- If a child/pupil has been in contact with a **suspected** case of COVID-19 in a school, no restrictions or special control measures are required until the laboratory test results for COVID-19 have been received.
- There is no need to close the institution or send other children/pupils or staff home.

5.4.2. Action to be taken when a child/pupil may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19

- All close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are required to **quarantine in their homes for 14 days** while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school.
- Pupils who are not contacts of a confirmed case should attend school. Family and friends who have not had close contact with the confirmed case do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities such as reporting to school or work, unless they begin to develop symptoms.
- Pupils who have interacted with a healthy contact of a confirmed case, specifically, should not be excluded from school. A person who comes into contact with the healthy contact of a confirmed case, is unlikely to result in transmission.
- All case contacts who become symptomatic will be immediately tested by health authorities for COVID-19 and if they test positive for COVID-19, active contact tracing and self-quarantine of all contacts will be implemented.

NB. *Keeping pupils at home or closing schools is a serious decision which may restrict the pupils' ability to acquire education, amongst other considerations. The decision to direct pupils to stay at home, because of possible exposure to, or infection with COVID-19 should be justified by the available scientific evidence and must be directed by the accountable health authorities.*

Whilst as a nation we are relaxing many of our restrictions and lockdown levels, we need to bear in mind this is very much economically driven. If lockdown was based on infection rate and medical statistics, we probably should be back to level 5 here in the Eastern Cape but we understand that that really is not viable. The responsibility NOW falls on the individual and our communities to take the necessary measures and to act and behave like responsible citizens and to conduct ourselves in such a manner that we protect each other. Our African philosophy of uBuntu (*Ubuntu is essentially about togetherness, and how all of our actions have an impact on others and on society*) certainly does resonate at this time with all of us.

May you all keep safe and feel confident in the knowledge that your children are in very good hands at St George's.

Kind regards



Alex Hall

Headmaster