



from Tom Lawson MA (Oxon), Headmaster

25 September 2020

Dear Parents,

Just a brief letter this time to touch base and update you on the progress of the term so far in relation to the Covid situation. It seems a good moment to reassure you that we see no material changes to our continued operation arising from the Prime Minister's briefing on Tuesday night. Hopefully the measures the government has put in place will restrict the growth of Covid cases to keep us safe here in Eastbourne. I can confirm for you that figures I obtained last night from the health authorities show a rise in positive cases in the area but they are still very low by national standards. We are fortunate to live in a green and spacious area, with the 'blue health' benefits of our coastal location; even as the weather turns from the glorious sunshine we have had for the last two weeks, our pupils' lifestyle here aids their safety.

While we have had several coughs and colds that necessitated the temporary isolation of groups of boarding pupils, I am pleased to report that we have not had a single positive test result among pupils and staff to this point. As things progress, I think it will happen this term and we are well placed to safely support and manage the isolation required by contacts in that instance.

We have been working very hard to find a workable private testing solution to avoid further frustrating delays experienced by those waiting for test results under the national scheme. It transpires that the machine that some other boarding schools are using faces regulatory problems that were not anticipated by the early adopters so we continue to evaluate both on and off site options to put in place the best possible protection for our community.

I am grateful to our MP Caroline Ansell who has been supportive in getting the town's mobile testing station up and running in Devonshire Park which will operate temporarily next week, and in due course, we hope, permanently at that location. With Caroline's help I am hopeful that we will have drop-in access to it as well as the site serving priority workers and increasing the overall efficiency of the local system.

I feel great sympathy for parents in Hong Kong who must be very concerned following the addition of the UK to the list of countries requiring 14-day hotel quarantine on arrival there. Hsms have already been very helpful in working through half term plans for pupils to stay in the UK, preferably with guardians, or remain in school accommodation. For Christmas, we will consider all options, including allowing pupils to leave early, in case this regulation remains at that time. The unhappy news of this rule is very fresh and I anticipate that we will be able to share further information and advice in the coming weeks.

Naturally there is a heightened level of anxiety from pupils and I continue to encourage all to share their burdens with the adults charged with their care. It is completely understandable as many face beginning-of-term exams at the same time as conditions of general uncertainty about what the next six months will bring. As I walk about, however, I generally see friends reunited and happy faces pleased to be back at school – I wish you could share in my joy from this sight; it is what young life should be about.

With very best wishes,

Headmaster
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