



Jeppe High School for Boys

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Dear Jeppe parents,

As many parents will have noticed from various media articles, daily reporting statistics, communication from schools and informal discussions with friends and family, the past week has undoubtedly seen an increase in the prevalence of COVID-19 positive cases in the community, and specifically in schools.

Further evidence of the increase in infections is reflected in the fact that the headmaster of Afrikaanse Hoer Seunskool (Affies) informed me this morning that they will, unfortunately and with much regret, have to postpone our rugby and hockey fixture next weekend due to a COVID outbreak at their school.

Whilst Jeppe has remained relatively unimpacted to date, particularly in comparison with some of our fellow private and public boys schools in Gauteng who have had to cancel sporting fixtures or place entire grades into isolation, we have nevertheless returned our first known positive case this term when I was alerted by a parent of a Grade 12 learner late yesterday afternoon that her son had tested positive. The young man, who is a day learner and not involved in any sports team at the moment, is believed to have contracted the virus in the community and not at school and has thankfully remained asymptomatic. His classmates and any close contacts have been informed of the positive test.

With rising infections nationally and the much talked about “third wave” apparently imminent, it is highly unlikely that this will be our last positive case in the coming weeks and is, once again, a timely reminder of the importance of maintaining protocols both within and outside of the school.

From a protocol and policy perspective, please be aware that unless an educator or learner meets the definition of a “close contact” (defined as someone who spends 15 minutes or more in an enclosed space less than 1m apart from a COVID positive individual AND without a face mask on), they are not automatically required to self-isolate when in contact with a confirmed COVID positive case. We will, however, endeavour, within the bounds of confidentiality, to inform both learners and educators in classes, sports teams or boarding houses when a positive case is identified (please note that, where there are those who meet the definition of a close contact, we are obligated to inform them of the details of the positive case in the contact tracing process).

From an extra-mural perspective, we will continue to monitor the situation closely but are hopeful that, despite likely postponements and disruptions in fixtures, we will be able to continue playing sport whilst always ensuring the health and safety of staff, coaches and boys remains of paramount importance. Where a boy in a team tests positive it will not automatically lead to the cancellation of a practice or match but will depend on whether any close contacts have occurred (as per the above definition). However, as per an internal memo from the Gauteng

*Turning **black and white** into **gold***

Department of Education, where three or more positive infections occur in a team, grade or class, this will most likely result in the cancellation of a match and the possible isolation for that team, class or grade.

To ensure the safety of our staff, coaches, boys and opposition and in order to mitigate the risk of having to suspend or cease extracurricular activities, we once again implore parents to follow the COVID-related winter season policies that have been previously communicated and which are again attached hereto. These regulations, and the associated policies, are legislated by the government and have been agreed to by all the boys' schools in Gauteng. I was extremely disappointed to hear that our security guards were verbally abused over the past weekend by certain parents who wanted to enter the school premises to watch their sons, in contravention of these regulations and despite our extensive communication thereof.

These regulations exist for the health and safety of your sons and so as to ensure they are able to continue playing sport for as long as possible - please adhere to them.

Whilst we will endeavour to stream as many games as possible so that parents can "see" their sons in action, I do also understand the desire of parents, who park outside the perimeter fence of the school alongside Roberts Avenue, to see their sons perform live. Whilst we have no jurisdiction to stop this practice, I do wish to remind parents to be vigilant from a safety perspective and to continue to practise COVID protocols as I am concerned that a surprise visit from the Department of Health or Gauteng Department of Education will view this practice in a dim light and potentially impact on our ability to continue playing sport.

It is imperative that, as a community, we remain ever vigilant and ensure that we all continue to adhere to all COVID protocols, and that serious consideration is given to minimising social engagements and interactions outside of school, particularly those that involve larger groups.

If we do not adopt a cautious approach we may find ourselves having to postpone or cancel our extracurricular program and depriving the boys of this much needed outlet. We also need to preserve the face-to-face teaching option as our priority and to ensure we do not, if at all possible, move back to online teaching due to an enforced school closure.

Lastly, please also note that, unrelated to COVID, two senior staff members have been impacted by cancer-related medical diagnoses over the past week. The affected classes and boys have been informed and whilst we have the required internal expertise and experience to step in for these educators if required, it is highly likely that a timetable re-scheduling will take place as from next week to mitigate any potential disruption. We ask for your understanding in this regard and for your thoughts and prayers for these teachers and their families as they walk a difficult journey in the coming weeks and months.

Lastly, as the holy month of Ramadaan comes to an end later this week, I would like to wish all our Muslim families a joyous celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr. Eid Mubarak!

Yours in health and education,



Dale Jackson
HEADMASTER