

BRYANSTON

11 March 2020

Dear parents,

Foreword from the Headmaster

I would like to thank you for your continuing support of the School's response to Coronavirus. It is an unprecedented event and, as you will be well aware, there is an ever increasing array of sometimes contradictory advice. Our aim remains the same: to take sensible, fact-based precautionary measures in order to try to limit the spread of the virus, while equally trying to avoid overreaction or the adoption of a siege mentality. We are neither complacent nor blasé, rather determined to remain calm and to continue to operate, mindful of the fact that teenagers are, by age, in the lowest category of risk. The challenge is to balance the many and varied aspects of a Bryanston education, while ensuring the primacy of the health of all members of the School community. Precaution should not be confused with risk.

I am very grateful to Peter Hardy, the Second Master, for his continuing work to condense and assess the rapidly evolving advice and guidance. He will continue to communicate regularly with you. Once again, thank you for your support. It is much appreciated.

Mark Mortimer

11 March 2020

From the Second Master

Further Government statements have been issued in relation to Coronavirus (Covid-19) early this week. In addition to this there have, of course, been the significant changes announced in relation to Italy in the last few days. The Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, commented; "Subject to the primary goal of keeping people safe we will seek to minimise social and economic disruption." and he also commented; "We are mindful of scientific advice that reacting too early or overreacting carries its own risks". In the light of current Government advice, the School is continuing to operate as close to normal as possible. Further advice can be obtained from the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

The School continues to take guidance from Public Health England and the Boarding Schools' Association. Taking this into account, we are asking pupils who have travelled from Category 1 countries to wait 14 days in the UK before coming onto the School site.

Government advice for countries within Category 2 requires self-isolation if any symptoms, however mild, are experienced. Families who are resident in Category 2 countries or who are travelling to or through those countries during the Easter holidays, need not carry out a 14 day self-isolation period when they return to the UK at the end of the Easter break. We will only permit pupils to return to School if there are no symptoms present in the individual at that time. A list of the Category 1 and Category 2 countries can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk>

It is worth highlighting that this list is likely to change further during the next few weeks and prior to the start of next term if the current pattern of confirmed cases continues to rise in Europe and stabilise in parts of Asia. In addition, there is no way of predicting the advice pertaining to the UK in the coming weeks, i.e. advice is likely to change and the School's position may change in response. Further communications will be sent to parents as and when the position changes. If your child is returning to School from being overseas during the Easter holiday and you are uncertain about the School's position, please communicate with your child's Hsm initially.

As I indicated in my letter of 6 March 2020, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Bryanston. The three pupils mentioned who were tested for the Coronavirus have produced negative results. As advised previously, it was deemed to be a sensible, precautionary measure to test those pupils. In the same letter, I indicated that due to a number of pupils having high temperatures, we carried out tests for seasonal 'flu. Those tests have also come back and the results confirm this is indeed the case. (Please refer to the letter attached.) We are continuing to advise pupils that good hand washing is the most effective way to avoid the spread of infection. If your child has the symptoms of seasonal 'flu and is at home, please keep them away from school until they are free of symptoms and have not had a fever for at least 24 hours.

At this stage it may be helpful to outline that the School has every intention to remain open and to operate as close to normal as possible. We would close if we were given a direct instruction by either Public Health England or the Department of Education (DfE). Even if these severe measures were taken, we are investigating the possibility of looking after a limited number of our boarders who may be unable to travel home overseas at Easter. In addition, several other UK boarding schools and other organisations are running organised revision camps and are also able to support pupils who are unable to travel at Easter. We feel it is important to highlight the options in the UK, especially for those pupils due to take public examinations next term. Our strong advice to parents with pupils who are undertaking public exams is that they should not travel to any areas where there is a risk that they may not be able to return to the UK. In doing so, we hope it allows parents to make sensible and informed decisions with the best interest of your child as the priority.

In addition, in the exceptional circumstances that the School is instructed to close at any point, we can reassure you that Bryanston is well placed to offer additional support to pupils. Our eCharts are invaluable for tracking academic progress, and these will be updated every week. Microsoft Teams is our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and this is very well set up should children or teachers have to be absent in the school day; online assignments will be set by staff, and returned, marked, via Teams.

In addition, until we hear otherwise from the Government we, like all other schools, are planning for GCSE, A level and IB examinations to follow the published timetables.

Please see below comments from Bryanston's Exams Office:

Notice from Bryanston Exams Office

With Coronavirus in our minds and the public examination season due to begin in earnest after the Easter holidays, a reminder from our Exams Office that part of the national contingency plan includes an allowance for moving an examination date(s) in the case of any major local or national emergency.

*The final date of this contingency period is **Wednesday 24 June 2020**.*

*This essentially means that if an Awarding Body (exam board) decides that it has become necessary to move an exam or series of exams to an alternative date, it may move it/them to any appropriate date **within the period up to and including 24 June 2020**.*

*This action would, of course, be a last resort, but means that students taking A Level and GCSE examinations this summer **must be available** up to and including 24 June.*

The regulatory bodies have stressed that any candidate who misses an exam which has had to be moved will receive a 0 mark award for that paper. Therefore we are reiterating our advice to candidates that they should not book any holidays during this period until all of their exams have been completed.

Depending on the Awarding Body, should a candidate miss more than 60-75% of the qualification for any reason, then they will not be eligible to receive an overall grade.

Given the uncertain situation at the moment, we would again recommend reviewing any holiday travel plans for public examination candidates over the Easter period.

Please be reassured that we are continuing to monitor the position carefully and we are making a number of contingency arrangements to deal with various scenarios. The School will continue to do its best to communicate with parents in what is a challenging and fast-moving situation.

Yours sincerely,

P J Hardy
Second Master