



BEESTON HALL SCHOOL

31st December 2020

Dear Parents,

With the unfolding situation since the government's Covid-19 announcements after the term ended before Christmas, we have delayed several times our communication about arrangements for restarting. Just as well, what with a rising R-rate, Norfolk now in Tier 4, many updates since then, including webinars on Thursday, then – with further government information - updates we have been attending this morning.

With the much greater transmissibility of the new Covid-19 variant, the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff remains more important than ever. We are charged with maintaining this while providing on-site education for pupils, within the government guidelines, alongside the demands of setting up a testing regime which may well be in place for up to six months. Naturally we are proposing to undertake lateral flow testing for staff and pupils in Years 7 and 8, which in itself depends on the delivery of sufficient numbers of tests on Monday 4th January. It is a large undertaking and any variant from this requires clearance from insurers. This, in turn, requires us to have completed training, stress-tested our own lateral flow testing and amending our risk assessments, all of which must be signed off.

Assuming all goes to plan we are in a position to welcome children from Reception to Year 6 back on Thursday morning and boarders in Year 6 and below from Wednesday afternoon, at 4pm, or at 2pm if they wish to participate in pre-season training. As things stand, Year 8 boarders may return on the evening of Sunday 10th January (7pm) and Year 7 on the evening of Sunday 17th, with day children the following morning in each case. From the start of term (Thursday 7th January) we will provide remote learning for these pupils, along the lines of timetables attached. We are pleased that Year 8 qualify as an exam year group (allowing the relatively earlier return) but this will be disappointing news, of course, and if we are able to negotiate earlier starts we will update, but without flouting government guidelines we are not able to improve on this at present. (Of course, as before, vulnerable children and children of key workers are able to attend school on a hybridised 'remote in school' system until the return of their year groups.)

With the inevitable surge in cases which are likely as the term restarts, we are sure that exercising caution is absolutely essential and therefore if you have any doubt about the health of your children, or transmission risks they have encountered over Christmas, might I ask you show the same caution. Similarly, might I ask you to accept the same need for flexibility that may well become necessary, as agencies (senior schools, amongst others) change dates, deadlines and entrance procedures at short notice, as amply demonstrated

by HM government's delivery of new information last night. Notwithstanding, we are all prepared as we can be and confident that we can do as required.

Led by Nurse Alison, trained Beeston staff will carry out and process lateral flow testing on staff and children in Year 8, and Year 7 in due course, which requires two tests, 3 to 5 days apart. Families should bring their Year 8 children in on Wednesday afternoon and wait the 30 minutes while the test result comes through, and then do the same on Saturday 9th, so we can complete this initial testing. We will share a schedule of staggered arrivals for Wednesday 6th, with more detailed information, early next week. However, for this to happen parents need to read the following documents attached:

- 1. C19 testing and information for parents, including registration form to return**
- 2. Privacy Notice for NHS for COVID-19 Mass testing**
- 3. C19 Pupil Consent Form**

Please complete and return these (electronically) as soon as you are able.

The **FAQs**, issued by ISBA, and also the **NHS Schools and Colleges Guidance** (23.12.20) are also attached for further information if you wish, though there is a key 'go to' for brief information about the testing process viewable in the **NHS Key information for parents** PDF, also attached. This is helpful information for parents of all prep school pupils since it is simply a matter of time before we will be extending the testing regime throughout the prep school age pupils.

We remain wholly committed to ensuring children can return to, and enjoy, school in as normal a way as possible, as they did (mostly) last term. The strict Covid-19 regime we have had in place since September, such as regular hand-washing, face coverings and social distancing, will remain and we will enforce (such as restrictions on car sharing), though there may have to be modifications of some activities, as a result of issues with staffing or premises.

As before, the full gamut of frustration, to uncertainty, to anxiety will be in flow across the community. I would sincerely ask all parents to reassure children (especially the examinees of Year 8) that their nerves and uncertainties will be mirrored by all their competitors and, though many exam and scholarship arrangements may be subject to change, we will weather this with the best preparation we can, with a reminder that they are the very best amongst 13 year-olds - robust, willing to meet challenges and adapt. Lessons for life coming earlier than expected!

Notwithstanding, please let me know if you have any concerns; though, in the interim please enjoy the remaining days of this Christmas break. As I am sure you are tired of hearing, we will get through this and the Beeston spirit of doing so together can, I am sure, hold firm!

Happy New Year when it comes!

Best wishes,

Fred de Falbe