

8 Park Drive,
Port Elizabeth, 6001

E-mail: prep@stgeorges.co.za
Tel: +27(0) 41 585 4825
Fax: +27(0) 41 585 1638

Campus Head Mr Alex Hall
(B Prim Ed, UPE)
www.stgeorges.co.za



ST GEORGE'S
PREPARATORY

13 April 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19)- Letter 5

Dear St George's Family



It really does feel rather strange writing this letter from my dining room table at home today. I am wanting to say, "I hope you all have had a wonderful Easter weekend and time together with your family", which seems rather odd given our current reality which is giving us just that and clearly far more time than just a weekend. So perhaps wishing you all sanity may be a better bet? (Clearly I am kidding) I recently read this article and thought is wise to share, "[The Parents are not alright](#)" and it reminded me that we are not in this alone! Officially we would only be starting school on Wednesday, although it really has not been a holiday for most of us I am sure. We took the decision to re-open our doors on Monday 20 April, prior to the President's announcement that lockdown would be extended by a further two weeks. There are no doubt still many questions on your minds at the moment with what the immediate and extended future will hold for us all during this global pandemic.

I would like to address hopefully three questions/concerns with regards to school which I am sure you are all thinking about, namely, Distant/Online Learning for all our pupils, the school calendar and school fees.

Distant Learning/Online Learning

We had envisaged that this would be a reality following trends overseas so we spent time as a staff prior to the announcement discussing and planning what our process going forward would be. On the Tuesday and Wednesday prior to lock-down we practically prepared for school closures and we ensured that the first two weeks of the following term would be ready for online learning in the event that we would not open. We have taken a three-pronged approach as the age of our children obviously determines the extent of self-directed learning our pupils will be able to cope with.

Our Pre-Prep children, Grade 000 -Grade R, will have lessons and ideas around learning through play shared with parents by our Head, Mrs Haywood, and staff. Our Junior Prep, Grade 1-3, have had learning packs prepared and ready for the first two weeks. The distribution of these learning packs would have taken place after lockdown on the 17 April, sadly this is not possible, and so we will need to rely on email distribution to parents.

Our Senior Prep, Grade 4-7 pupils, all use iPads as an educational tool and are already using [Google Apps for Education \(GAPE\)](#) and have a Google account. They have been actively involved with [Google Classroom](#) for the past 2 years so we will continue to use this as our distant learning platform. Our staff are all currently attending webinars to further skill themselves with distant learning best practice. We have already used [Google Meet](#) for online conference meetings with the staff during the lockdown and we will be able to use this wonderful tool to connect with our pupils in real-time and also face to face meetings (very similar to Skype and Zoom), albeit it virtually! It really is important to be able to make the emotional connections with the pupils at this time as well and not to just distribute worksheets. Your various Heads of Department will be in touch with all parents as we venture further into our distant learning.

In all three phases, Pre-Prep, Junior Prep and Senior Prep, we will be focussing primarily on Numeracy and Literacy ie. Mathematics, English and Afrikaans. For the Senior Prep we will dedicate time to the other learning areas to a lesser scale. This decision has been taken through listening to the guidance of schools over-seas that have been distant learning for some time already as well as other schools locally that started their distant learning prior to us as their school calendars started Term 2 earlier. The Children will be given a new time-table from their base class teachers and a basic briefing on Friday 17 April in the Senior Prep via an invite on Google Classroom to join a Google Meet. Learning support, Extra-Curricular Activities and the Music department will communicate separately to share the programmes that they will be running during this time by Friday 17 April.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact any of the staff via email ([Staff email addresses](#)) as email would be our preferred method of communication. I am sure you can all appreciate and respect that WhatsApp could become rather intrusive and responses could be lost or forgotten in busy feeds for our teachers. All the staff will be frequently checking their email and will respond as timeously as they possibly can. Please bear in mind that many teachers are parents as well and are having to also attend to their own children's online learning and the added responsibilities at home. We also would like to encourage our senior Prep children to try take as much ownership for their learning as possible. This certainly is an ideal time to develop skills of collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking without having to always involve their parents. They can connect with their peers via Google Meet and email and their teachers as well including Google Classroom. Our various Heads of Departments will be corresponding via email with further details on Friday 17 April.

School Calendar

Please note that the Department of Basic Education will determine the term dates for the State Schools and we will be informed accordingly to what our rights and responsibilities will be as an Independent School. At this stage we will remain to our term times and holidays and will give weekly feedback as to what school events will continue and which will be postponed or cancelled once we return to school. We are obviously very dependent on both national and provisional legislation and we will amend our calendar within these confines.

School Fees

As with many businesses, very few of us could have predicted the enormous impact Covid-19 would have had upon the economy. We are fully aware that this will no doubt place great pressure on many families as we face the weeks/months ahead and the impact that will become more and more evident for us all as time passes.

We are very mindful of this as a school and request that parents continue to support their school fee commitments as fundamentally we all will need a healthy school for our children to return to once our futures are back to whatever the new normal will be. We are obviously busy investigating our operational cost savings, income loss from other income streams no longer being received as a school, as well as possible solutions to assist families if the need arises. The trust takes this responsibility very seriously and this process can only be finalised once we have greater insight as to the impact and duration of the lockdown.

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all our teachers for the commitment and absolute enthusiasm they have displayed to face and tackle the challenges that lie ahead. As with all uncharted waters we will no doubt make mistakes, learn as we navigate in sometimes stormy conditions BUT we will always remain steadfast, holding our course in order to deliver the very best we can for all of our boys and girls. We also thank all our parents for your unwavering support of our special school and we look forward to partnering with you all as we, "Slay this Dragon". In the words of our school song:

"Jesus, Lord of our salvation
For thy warrior, bold and true
Now accept our thankful praises
And our strength do thou renew
That, like George, with courage dauntless
We may all our foes subdue"



With Courage and Prayer we will overcome these times and be stronger for it, this I know to be true of the St George's spirit. Stay safe, stay home and God bless!

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Hall'.

Alex Hall