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ST GEORGE'S
PREPARATORY

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Coronavirus COVID-19 Letter 10: School Re-opening

Dear Parents

Wow, it is hard to believe that we have come to the end of Term 2 2020, which no doubt will go down in the archives of St George's Preparatory as an unprecedented time. History certainly has been made these past three months as we have not only completed our virtual tour of the country but achieved so much more this term. Again, our support from all our parents over the duration of this term cannot be appreciated enough, as well as that of the Staff and of course most importantly all our boys and girls. We are all exceptionally proud of everything we have achieved during these challenging times. We certainly have learnt this term that we cannot solve today's challenges with yesterday's logic and I am pleased that we are a school that rises to embrace innovation.



Since our last correspondence, we are still in the throes with what we can and cannot do with regards to bringing various Grades back to school. ISASA and NAISA, who represent Independent Schools, are still in negotiation with the Department of Basic Education and are awaiting confirmation as to the correct process to re-introduce Grades other than Grade 7 and 12 in Independent Schools. Having said that, there also seems to be contradictions between the various district offices and some Independent Schools have been granted permission to open other Grades whilst others have not.

We, however, are very confident that we will be able to have the return of our Grade 7, 1 and R year groups on 6 July 2020. This coincides with the second rollout date for state schools and at that point all Grades other than Grade 4 and 5 will be able to return to state schools. The final date when the Grade 4 and 5 groups will be allowed to return to State Schools is 3 August. Our intention at this stage is to commit to the original plan of getting our Grade R, 1 and 7 pupils back on the 6th of July and have a second and final re-introduction of all the other Grades both at the Pre-Preparatory and at the Preparatory school the following week on the 13th of July.

Upon a full inspection of the campus as well having successfully completing our risk assessment, it was apparent that if we were to have every child back at school we would need to use up every possible square meter of our Campus and place pupils in other facilities less conducive to learning to successfully meet the required social distancing requirements. We also would need to spread

classes over many classrooms in certain Grades and this would pose not only facility challenges but also staffing issues as some groups would then have an intern or an assistant teacher allocated on certain days. As an example: our current Grade 1 classes at capacity with the required social distancing measures could only accommodate 8 to 9 pupils using double desks as single desks and in some cases two children at a double desk with a sneeze screen between them per classroom with little space for the teacher to move. This would mean that we would have to spread them over a minimum of 5 classrooms and two additional staff members would be required.

The COVID-19 Response Team feel that we as a school need to plan for the full return of all our Grades and take a long term view at our re-opening strategy rather than a focussed phased approach, of returning every Grade every day at staggered points. After much deliberation, research and consultation, as well as observing what has worked and what hasn't worked in state schools and Independent Schools both locally and internationally, we have decided to open the school using a "platoon" system. Our current reality and infection statistics are certainly suggesting that the required social distances and restrictions on large group gatherings will be with us for quite some time, particularly here in the Eastern Cape.

We have taken the decision that we will split each Grade into a red team and a blue team according to the alphabet, as this would allow families members to have all their children at school at the same time. The blue team would attend on campus classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of week one and Tuesday and Thursday of week 2 and alternate thereafter. So each child would have 5 days of School in the Home and 5 days of School on Campus over a 10 day cycle. By doing this we will be able to accommodate children in their own classes with their same teachers during the school day. The first week of term, 6 July to 10 July we will see the Grade R, 1 and 7 Red and blue teams returning and as mentioned the other grades would return in their respective teams from July 13.

What are the advantages of using a "Platoon" system?

- The pupils remain in their same classrooms.
- The pupils will have their same classmates albeit a smaller group.
- The pupils will remain with their same teacher.
- All siblings of families attend school on the same day.
- The school can be managed and isolated in smaller pod groups and possible infections can be managed more effectively in designated areas.
- The proven concepts and methodologies of the "flipped classroom" can be successfully implemented by marrying both at home and at school strategies.
- Assessments, both formal and informal would take place during School on Campus days and our usual School in the Home program would complement this.
- The quality of instruction and teaching and learning would be of a far higher standard.
- We could successfully provide the time required for wellness programs for the children.
- The obvious physical space and use of existing space would allow us to provide as "normal" a program and environment as possible.
- The reduced footprint on the Campus would also obviously reduce the risk of infection.

- It is a tried and tested model and is being successfully implemented both locally here in Port Elizabeth, nationally and internationally.
- It also provides a learning experience and environment less foreign to the children and offers the security of home for the anxious pupils.

1. Preparation of the School Campus

Prior to the return of children and staff to school our school buildings will be deep-cleaned and disinfected including classrooms and especially sanitation facilities.

We will ensure that our school will be cleaned by our cleaning staff at the end of each day and all surfaces that are touched more often will also be cleaned in the morning before the teachers and pupils arrive.

We will put specific, detailed plans in place to ensure that daily cleaning routines are maintained after children leave the campus. Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities twice a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids.)

In order to ensure compliance with these procedures, a duty checklist will be in place and the Head of Catering and Housekeeping will assume full responsibility for the process to ensure it is completed effectively and timeously.

2. General Hygiene

A plan (including signage) will be available to enforce the sanitisation of hands and the wearing of a masks (minimum requirement three layered cloth mask) will be at the designated entrances for staff, pupils and visitors (essential visitors only) entering the school premises.

All common play areas will be closely monitored as to what can and cannot be used by the children.

All pupils will be taught in the same classroom all day and the staff will move to the class venues.

We will have hand-washing stations with soap in every bathroom and at the entrance of the bathrooms there will be a no-touch hand sanitizer station. We will place alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitiser) in every classroom, at entrances and exits, in common areas and staff rooms.

Stringent social distancing measures will be monitored by teachers during lessons and at all time in between lessons, including during break.

We will space pupil seating in all classrooms at least 1.5m apart.

We will promote and demonstrate regular hand-washing and positive hygiene behaviour and monitor their implementation. We will explain and practice these hand-washing and sanitizing routines with pupils until they become a habitual routine.

Pupils and staff will sanitize their hands routinely as follows:

- Upon entering the school at designated temperature-screening stations.
- At the commencement of the school day in the first teaching venue.
- After break or any outdoor activity before entering the next teaching venue.
- Upon exiting the final teaching venue of the day to go home.

We will ensure trash is removed daily from our school and disposed of safely by an approved external contractor. We shall file the disposal certificates for evidence keeping.

3. Temperature Screening

Access to the school property will be through designated access points to ensure that all persons entering can be screened. These access points will be documented and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be emailed to all parents. No parents will be permitted to enter the school premises. Our children will be tested and only once the child's temperature is in accordance with the guidelines, will we permit the child to proceed to the sanitization station.

We will have staggered starts for the various sections of the school, these will be distributed with the final Standard Operating Procedure.

Pupils and staff with a temperature of 38°C or above will not be permitted access to school property and must be asked to leave and or move to a designated isolation area pending immediate return to a self-isolating facility away from the school site.

On arrival, all staff and pupils will be screened on a daily basis for symptoms of COVID-19, including a symptom check and temperature assessment.

Temperature reading stations will be set up at the designated entrances to the school

The temperature reading of every individual will be recorded.

4. Personal Protection Equipment for Pupils

We will not provide pupils with face masks. Parents will be required to provide two face masks for each child and place one in a zip lock bag with their name on the front. These will be kept in the class room for the duration of the day if later required. The minimum requirement will be a three layered cloth facemask cleanly washed daily.

If you wish to order a facemask though the school further details will follow in the SOP.

All pupils and staff must wear face masks on entering, during and exiting the school campus.

We fully understand the further challenges this will represent for all of us, but are confident that given these unprecedented times, we need to seek alternate solutions that ultimately best suit the well-being of our pupils, their families as well as the St George's staff. Our greatest interest will always be both the emotional and physical well-being of all our community on campus at all times.

We will be sharing further information, the Standard Operating Procedure, videos etc during the holiday and during the build-up for our return to school. Again, we thank you all for the enormous support, sacrifice and commitment given to St George's Prep this past term.

May we wish you all a very well rested and deserved mid-year break from the rigours of School in the Home! Stay safe, rest up and God bless.

Yours sincerely



Alex Hall: Headmaster



Peter Pitsiladi: Chairman of the Governing Council