



Reference: COVID-19
Enquiries: BK Schreuder

Dear Principals, Teachers and Members of School Governing Bodies

I am aware that there are concerns about COVID-19, commonly referred to as the Coronavirus, and many questions are being asked. This letter aims to give current information and guidelines and to clarify the actions to be taken under certain conditions. I am in constant contact with the health authorities in the province and we are monitoring the situation daily as provincial top management (consisting of all the Heads of Departments in the province). I have no doubt that circumstances will change over the next few weeks/months and I will keep you updated as the situation changes and the need for alternative actions may arise.

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Western Cape will be isolated and all known contacts identified, tested and isolated. As leaders of your school you must continue to urge your school community to remain calm and not to panic or overreact to the situation.

The Western Cape Government, working with the national government, is monitoring the situation closely and will take the necessary preventative steps should the need arise. The Western Cape Education Department will keep schools informed of any developments that may affect them. There is currently no information that warrants the closing of schools and schools must continue to operate as per normal. I will not hesitate to close a school or group of schools, should the need arise. At this time, based on the current evidence and advice, there is no such need.

It must be noted that a school in the Western Cape can only close on the instruction of the Head of Education in the province. If such a need arises, I will inform the school(s) concerned after consultation with the health authorities and the Provincial Minister/Cabinet. Therefore, no school may close without the permission of the Head of Department.

We urge all schools and families to continue to practice the preventative measures publicised by the Western Cape Department of Health, as per my earlier letter to schools, especially regular handwashing, sneezing into your elbow or a tissue and not shaking hands. This must continue throughout the school holiday period.

As for travel to other countries, the national government has not imposed a travel advisory. Therefore, a restriction on travel cannot be enforced at schools. However, I advise that any schools that have planned tours to high risk countries/areas should reconsider this, engage

with their governing bodies as well as the parents of the learners concerned and make a decision based on the risk and the country/area they are planning to travel to.

Schools reopen on 31 March 2020 and I advise that if any learner is showing severe symptoms, he/she should consult a health care practitioner immediately or contact the dedicated COVID-19 hotline on 0800 029 999. They will advise on whether the individual learner should self-isolate and consult the health authorities if there are any further potential risks.

In the event that parents or a learner return from abroad, they should be carefully observed for up to 14 days to see if any symptoms develop. Should a learner be in contact with a **confirmed** case then (and only then) it has been recommended that this learner should stay at home for a two-week period.

We are continuously engaging with health authorities and will communicate with schools as necessary.

In the meantime, it is recommended that teachers be proactive and plan the school work to be done over the next two months or so. Should it become necessary to close a school or schools for a period of time, teachers would then be prepared to share information about the work learners must do at home and possibly even use such an occasion to utilise eLearning opportunities effectively. I will share more about this should the need arise.

Please see the attached circular from the Department of Basic Education. This circular is intended to help the administrators of primary and high schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among learners and staff and to remain alert, but also to understand that currently the risks are low.

I hope you all enjoy your school holiday and I look forward to tackling the second term as we all strive to ensure quality education for every child, in every classroom, in every school in the province.

Yours sincerely

SIGNED: BK SCHREUDER

HEAD: EDUCATION

DATE: 2020-03-13