



The Settlers High School

2 June 2020

Dear Parents

We trust that you and your children are safe and that you are coping with the “new way of life” at home. We also hope that the learners have followed the weekly Academic Maintenance Plans to the best of their ability while at home.

We have been communicating with only Grade 12 learners and parents for the past week, but we feel that it is important to address two very important issues with all parents and learners.

I. COVID-19 POSITIVE STAFF MEMBER

On Monday afternoon, 1 June, we have received the news that our principal, Mrs Gallie, has tested positive for Covid-19. Mrs Gallie has been ill at home since last week Wednesday and she is in our thoughts as we wish her a speedy recovery.

We are sharing this information with you to keep you informed, but there is no need for panic. All protocols stipulated by the NCID has been followed and due to the measures in place at our school, Mrs Gallie had no close contact with any of the staff members and she has followed the safety guidelines faithfully – hence her decision to stay at home when she felt unwell.

Please be assured that the safety of our children and staff members remains our priority. Therefore, it is important that you are informed of the protocols prescribed by the Education Department, as well as the Department of Health – especially with regard to the differences between “close contact” and “casual contact”. The following extracts from this protocol (see the complete *Addendum L: WCED Guidelines Managing COVID-19 Positive Cases in Schools* attached) refers:

- 6.1 *Anyone with **close** contact with a confirmed Covid-19 case must be identified and requested to stay at home for a period not exceeding 14 days from the date of exposure while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school. (Close or direct contact e.g. a handshake or hug. Just being in the room with no direct contact is regarded as casual contact with no risk.)*
- 6.2 *All **casual** contacts (no direct physical contact) should continue to attend school.*
- 9.1 *All those staff members who were in **close** contact with the infected person are required to self-isolate at home for a maximum of 14 days from last contact. (Direct contact e.g. a handshake or hug. Just being in the room with no direct contact is regarded as casual contact with no risk.)*

Based on these guidelines stipulated in *Addendum L: WCED Guidelines Managing COVID-19 Positive Cases in Schools*, “close contact” is defined as physical contact with an infected person, living with an infected person or travelling in a closed-up car with an infected person. Mrs Gallie was not in close contact with any staff member. She also exercised all the necessary precautions. She wore a mask and visor at all times, exercised social distancing and stayed home once she was not feeling well. Although the scientists tell us that the virus

Please turn over page

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only remains “alive” on surfaces for 24 hours and no one has been into her office since Wednesday last week, we used an external company to deep clean the offices, as well as the ladies’ cloakrooms as a precaution.

Staff have been informed and we are all monitoring the appearance of any symptoms closely. We asked the WCED why it is not necessary to close the school unlike shops and police stations. They say that in a shop or police station the entire building is closed for deep cleaning but as we can trace the movements of teachers at this stage, we need not close as we can deep clean her office without impacting any other parts of the building. Offices or classrooms are also smaller spaces than a big shop and, as there are windows that can open for ventilation, it is safe for use within a much shorter period.

All the documentation we have received basically implies that if the safety precautions of hand hygiene (sanitising and washing), wearing a mask and social distancing is adhered to, we can protect ourselves. The other problem is that testing will only be done if the person presents with symptoms.

We have also been in constant contact with our circuit manager, Mr King, as well as the director of Metro North Education District (MNED), Mrs Horn, to guide us in handling this situation correctly and safely.

2. OPENING OF SCHOOLS

We are also aware that there is confusion and concern regarding the Western Cape Education Department enforcing different dates from the announcement made by the Minister of Education. We have raised these concerns and were informed that education in South Africa is regarded as a provincial power, hence the reason for the different dates. We are, therefore, bound by the decisions of our Provincial Education Department. The minister of basic education also mentioned in her address that schools who are properly prepared and ready must remain open.

83% of our Grade 12 learners attended school today and they completed their orientation programme regarding the “new normal” at the school. We are only waiting to hear from 30 Grade 12 learners who did not attend school as yet. We trust that our matrics will use the remainder of this year to enable their future plans for 2021.

We also expect all our Grades 8 to 11 learners to ensure that they continue to work according to the Academic Maintenance Plans as best as possible. At this stage, we have already published 7 maintenance plans guiding the learners on their daily work. All the worksheets and video lessons are available on the Google Classrooms for each subject.

We look forward to the day when we can be together as a school family again.

Yours sincerely



L HALL & H SMUTS

Deputy Principals