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2022



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21 June 2021

Dear Parents

Please study the information contained in this letter as this will assist you in understanding why Wychwood Primary, the Department of Health and the Department of Basic Education has responded to reports of COVID-19 as it has.

1. Every single case of COVID-19 (learner or staff member) is reported to the authorities and instruction is given based on **each individual report**. The situation is assessed each time to determine whether or not there is an outbreak and appropriate actions are advised each time.
2. Only the **Head of Department of Education** has the authority to close the school or a section of the school. School closure is not warranted if the infected person has been in the classroom for two days or less.
3. If a cluster of cases is reported (over 25% of a class or school), it may be advised to **temporarily** close a section of the school for environmental cleaning. However, containment can be achieved without closure. As a school we have chosen to **close Grade 7 and Grade 2 until 29 June** as the teachers who are affected by the Covid isolation are mostly from Grade 2 and Grade 7. This will not affect their academic records as teachers are continually assessing children during lessons.
4. We currently have 4 active cases (3 academic staff, 1 support staff) and 4 teachers in self-isolation, 3 youth workers isolating and 2 teachers presenting symptoms. These are the active cases that we have been informed about, which is 1.69% of the school population. We have managed to maintain this low rate by following the protocols of screening, sanitising, insisting on the wearing of masks and implementing social distancing protocols both in and out of the classroom. Natural ventilation is also important as poorly ventilated spaces can add to the risk of infection, so classroom windows are left open.
5. An official from the Department of Health conducted a risk assessment today, 21 June 2021. He has profiled the school as low risk.
6. If there are additional children absent in a class, some parents have informed us that they themselves have been exposed to the virus through situations such as work and have chosen to keep their children at home as a precaution. The school has supported this measure as it is responsible parenting to keep the children quarantined until such time that confirmation is obtained that there is a negative COVID-19 result. It **does NOT** mean that the children have the virus and we need to avoid stigmatising these children or overreacting to their absenteeism.
7. Contact:

7.1 The Departments of Health and Basic Education define **casual or distant contact** as a person who has had contact with a positive COVID-19 case for a short period (15 minutes or less), maintained physical distancing of at least 1 metre and who wore a mask or a shield. This is classified as **low risk**.

Mrs. L. VAN SCHALKWYK (PRINCIPAL)

7.2 **Close or direct contact** refers to a person who has had direct exposure to a COVID 19 positive case for longer than 15 minutes, without wearing a shield or mask, and who maintained less than a 1 metre distance. This is classified as a **higher risk** case. These cases are advised to quarantine for 10 days.

8. Research has been conveyed to the schools that the virus lasts no longer than 30 minutes on paper and that there is no evidence to prove that the virus is spread in this way. Droplets emitted during speech/coughing may contain virus particles that can remain infectious for up to 3 hours.

9. The school is sanitised daily and all surfaces are cleaned and disinfected daily. We also insist that the children do not share food, utensils or stationery. Sneezing or coughing into a bent elbow or tissue is encouraged. We screen every single person who comes to school and **visitors to the school are discouraged**. As a school, **we are implementing every safety measure possible**. No matter what measures the school implements, it will not help the situation if parents are not active participants in enforcing safety protocols from home and supporting the school in what it is doing to protect the children. Thank you to all families who actively support the school.


10. Should a person test positive, he/she can return to school 10 days after the positive test, provided he/she no longer has symptoms of COVID-19. As each person's immunity is different, some may take a bit longer to recover. A repeat test is not required.

11. Should a learner be absent for an assessment, he or she will be expected to catch up the assessments upon his/her return to school. He/she may have to write 2 assessments a day to ensure that all the papers are written within the exam period. These learners will write their exams in a smaller, controlled environment to monitor any concerns that should arise. **No learner will be disadvantaged.**

12. Whilst we understand the very real concern of our parents, we also ask that you remain calm as your reaction will determine how anxious your child is about the pandemic. Avoid listening to rumours and fake news. Accurate information will always be given by the school. We are very proud that a low infection rate of 1.69% is currently the status quo and there is no need for panic.

13. We need to work together to minimise the disruption of teaching and learning. In closing, please know that the school and its staff is just as committed to safeguarding the health and safety of the children as you are. If we all play our role in following the precautions within the learning and teaching space, we will succeed in safeguarding the welfare of the school and all of its stakeholders whilst still providing quality teaching and learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has received numerous enquiries via email or telephone. We will endeavour to respond to all as timeously as possible. Wychwood Family thank you for your support of the school during these new and extremely challenging times.

Yours in Education

  
Mrs L. Van Schalkwyk  
PRINCIPAL