



Reference: COVID-19/202020523
Enquiries: BK Schreuder

Dear Principals, School Management Teams and Teachers of all public schools

(For information: School Governing Bodies)

(For information: Independent Schools)

FURTHER GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I want to thank principals and SMTs for the work done during this last week to prepare school sites and be ready for the return of all teachers on Monday, 25 May 2020.

Thank you for the commencement of the thorough cleaning of schools and for the essential planning that had to be done: planning for screening of all staff every day, planning for orientation of staff on their first day of return, planning for the establishment of health and safety committees (as part of the SGB) and planning for the social distancing of learners and the eventual plans for when schools cannot accommodate learners with social distancing anymore.

In the week ahead the focus will be on readying the school for the return of Grades 12 and 7 learners on 01 June 2020: plans for the daily screening of learners, orientation of learners around Covid-19 and new ways of behaviour and movement, teaching them to take responsibility for their own safety, and final preparations for curriculum delivery from 01 June 2020.

In preparation for the safe return of teachers and learners, schools have reported that more than 80% had received materials for cleaning by the 18th of May 2020. Delivery of temperature scanners and masks for all staff were concluded yesterday. Those singular schools that were not available to receive the deliveries of masks and scanners should contact their district offices immediately.

The first tranches of additional materials (sanitisers, bleach) have been delivered to the majority of schools and this will continue. Sufficient masks for Grades 12 and 7 learners will reach schools by Wednesday, 27 May 2020. Masks for the rest of the learners will follow as from the first week of June.

It is absolutely essential that principals take accountability for the readiness and safety of schools. I want to thank principals and SMTs that have embraced this important responsibility. The way schools are led and managed will, of necessity, be different to pre-Covid-19 and I cannot emphasise enough the importance of ongoing health and safety precautions every day, in the interest of all teachers and learners.

Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guidelines

In support of the huge task that principals and SMTs have to perform in leading, planning and preparing for the safe return of learners, we had already circulated the first five guidelines in a series of guidelines and we also distributed documentation received so far from the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

The first set of WCED Guidelines A-E, on how to manage Covid -19 in your school, were sent to you on Sunday, 17 May 2020.

The following guidelines are attached to this letter for your attention:

- **F - WCED Guideline: School feeding**
- **G - WCED Guideline: Psycho-social support**
- **I - WCED Guideline: Managing learners with comorbidities**
- **J - WCED Guideline: Safety of Learners on the Learner Transport Scheme**
- **K - WCED Guideline: Managing hostel safety during Covid-19**
- **L - WCED Guideline: Managing Covid-19 cases in schools**
- **M - WCED Guideline: Roles and responsibilities of SGBs**

In addition to these documents, the WCED has also drafted the following:

- **H - WCED Guideline: Managing safety of staff with comorbidities**

We are hesitant to publish this guideline yet, as we await uniform position on this matter from the DBE.

The WCED is also currently drafting guidelines on managing the Curriculum:

- **N - WCED Guideline: Managing the curriculum.**

Guidelines H and N will be distributed as soon as possible.

It is absolutely imperative that all principals, SMTs, teachers and non-teaching staff study the guideline documents thoroughly and act accordingly. In the interests of everyone's safety it is important that everyone knows the contents of those guidelines. Furthermore, if there are any

discrepancies between WCED Guidelines and DBE Guidelines, the WCED documents should be accepted as the guide until further clarity is given.

We apologise that it has taken some time to circulate the translated versions of these documents. It is a huge task given the amount of work and tight timeframes involved. We will send the translated documents out as they are completed.

I am, unfortunately, not able to give clarity on when the next grades will return. We are awaiting the decision from the DBE. The WCED has indicated our concern with the late return of the Foundation Phase as this foundation of learning is key in gaining competencies for learning in later years. We trust that our inputs are being considered in this regard.

Teachers with comorbidities: Interim Measures

I am aware that teachers with underlying comorbidities are anxious because they have to return to schools on Monday, while National direction from DBE is awaited.

This matter was again discussed with the Provincial Teacher Unions in our regular meeting this morning. We are agreed in the view that we ought to find a way in which teachers with comorbidities can continue working gainfully under enhanced safety conditions, such as working from home.

As many teachers in this position have already submitted medical history reports to their principals the WCED has decided to allow those teachers not to return to their schools on Monday, 25 May 2020, pending further discussions with the DBE. We would want to be able to inform teachers who find themselves in this position, of the WCED's processes this week, before learners start returning to school.

In the meantime, we request teachers with comorbidities to submit an application for a **concession** to their principals accompanied with a full medical history report from their medical practitioner, as well as a **plan** as to how they would propose that they might continue to work from home. These reports and plans should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than Wednesday, 27 May 2020 (even if the medical report is still outstanding). Principals must submit those documents with a recommendation to the District Director by Thursday, 28 May 2020, for WCED consideration, accompanied by a plan as to how the school will manage such cases of working from home.

We sincerely hope that we can finalise this process as soon as possible.

Budgeting

We are very aware that all schools will be under pressure and financial constraints going forward. Consequently, SGBs will now have to play an important role in reprioritising the school's budget. It is also important that schools ensure that funding is set aside for the replenishment of usable sanitisers, disinfectants, and cleaning materials in an ongoing way as the material provided by the WCED, in tranches, becomes depleted.

Tip

Whilst we are trying to procure small dispensers for hand sanitisers, they are almost impossible to procure in bulk currently. However, a principal made a brilliant suggestion recently: he asked his parents to collect all empty spray bottles and send them to schools when learners return, to help with the decanting of hand sanitisers in the interim.

Hair and uniform policies

There has been some public debate around hair policies and the fact that learners have been unable to go to a hairdresser or barber due to the Covid-19 restrictions. While we understand the need to ensure that our disciplinary procedures stay intact, I would appeal that schools be reasonable in this time and accommodate cases where learners' hair does not meet the requirements of the hair policy.

In addition, as the WCED is supplying two free masks per learner, parents cannot be compelled to purchase masks from schools, even if they are in school colours and have branded logos. Again, we appeal for a reasonable approach if schools require a learner to wear a specific colour.

I want to thank all principals, SMTs and non-teaching staff who are working hard to prepare their school for teachers on Monday, and learners on 01 June 2020. I am receiving wonderful feedback on the initiatives many of you are taking to ensure safety and physical distancing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BK Schreuder', with a horizontal line underneath it.

BK SCHREUDER
HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 2020-05-23