



10 June 2020

Dear Parent of Learners in Grades 8, 9 10 and 11

As published in the Government Gazette dated 1 June 2020, the date for return of Grade 10 and 11 learners is 6 July and the date for return of Grade 8 and 9 learners is 3 August.

We have recently received documents from the Department of Education outlining the scope of work for the rest of this year. However, we are awaiting information on the final teaching and assessment plans for Grades 8 to 11 and will communicate our future plans once these have been finalised.

In recent times, the phrases “trimming of the curriculum” and “the combined 2020/2021 academic years” have been used in documents and reports. It is important that you understand the implication of these phrases for teaching and learning. I will explain this by way of an example. A learner is in Grade 11 in 2020. On account of the shortened academic calendar, s/he will not be able to complete the full curriculum for the year resulting in some topics being “trimmed” for this year. However, in 2021 it is expected that this learner will complete the “trimmed” topics and also complete the prescribed curriculum for Grade 12. Essentially, all learners will be doing more work in 2021 than they would normally have done in that grade.

However, if your son is in Grades 9, 10 or 11, he will not have the same challenge as his peers at other schools. He will be reaping the rewards of us having started the 2020 academic year in November 2019. This strategy has given your son a 4-week advantage over his peers. In addition, we have made remarkable progress in covering content during the lockdown period. Put together, these two initiatives allow us to complete all the work that was originally planned for the 2020 academic year resulting in your son having a “normal” workload for 2021.

The roll-out of our online programme was structured with the following criteria in mind: it must be effective and no learner must be left behind. We are proud of what our learners and teachers have achieved over these last 10 weeks, bearing in mind that online learning and teaching was as new to our learners as it was to our teachers. I wish I had the space to share the stories with you.

Initially, we put out work that could be self-taught. We did this so that learners and teachers became familiar with the idea of communicating through Google Classroom or through email. Having become comfortable with this mode of communication, we moved on to online assessment tasks. These tasks were designed primarily to ascertain how much of the online work learners understood. The need to provide feedback on assessment tasks and, more importantly, the need for face-to-face contact with our learners in the period when the Level 5 lockdown was extended, saw us extend our programme to include online question-and-answer sessions using Google Meet. In order to maintain engagement with our learners, we asked teachers to continue presenting accessible topics from terms 3 and 4.

More recently we got to the point where we were able to teach more cognitively demanding aspects of curriculum to our learners. A remarkable observation is that the number of learners engaging in these online sessions is growing every day. We also record these lessons and make them available for learners to access in the future.

The plan of action for the foreseeable future is that teachers will continue to post work on Google Classroom and host online teaching sessions according to the timetable that was published recently. These lessons will be recorded and made available to learners. In addition, teachers will host question-and-answer sessions during the week by mutual agreement between teacher and learners. Attendance at these question-and-answer sessions is optional.

Our primary aim in launching the online programme was to ensure that your son's education was not hampered by the lockdown. We also had very little time to put the structures together - it was like building an aeroplane as it was flying. We have learnt that it has become difficult for parents to track their son's progress in the online programme and have addressed this issue by adding the **Guardian feature to Google Classroom**. This will allow you to receive weekly updates on your son's progress in Google Classroom. We believe that this will be an important enhancement that will benefit you, as parents, immensely. Further information will follow soon.

Once again, we are extremely grateful to all parents who have encouraged and supported their sons during this time.

Your son's success is as important to us as it is to both you and him. We will endeavour to provide him with all the support to ensure that he achieves his academic goals for 2020 and beyond. We thank you for your support through these challenging times.

Yours faithfully

LESLIE CHAIN

**DEPUTY HEADMASTER AND DIRECTOR OF ACADEMICS**