



Jeppe High School for Boys

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Headmaster: D. J. Jackson
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16th July 2020

Dear Jeppe Parents,

This week's edition of the Headmaster's Weekly Letter is coming out slightly earlier than normal as there is much to communicate in a fluid and evolving schooling environment and we felt it was in parent's best interests to communicate today rather than waiting until Friday afternoon.

As per my letter on Tuesday evening, after over five COVID-19 free weeks we had our inevitable first case earlier this week when one of our educators tested positive. Unfortunately, I can now confirm in this letter that a further educator has also tested COVID-19 positive. Both educators, who believe they contracted the virus in the community and not at school and who work in separate departments, and who did not have close contact with each other in the past two weeks, remain relatively well with only mild symptoms and are now in isolation. Both their classrooms received a deep clean and sanitisation (in addition to the daily deep clean done on all classes in use) on Monday afternoon.

As communicated in my letter on Tuesday as well, the Gauteng Department of Education supported us in our desire to keep the school open due to our daily sanitising of classrooms, constant wearing of PPE and adherence to all the various COVID-19 policies and procedures. This has been the correct decision as schooling has continued, undisrupted, throughout the week.

Fortunately, to our knowledge, we do not have any boys who have returned to physical classes who are currently COVID-19 positive although a number are in isolation due to parents and family members testing positive or awaiting test results.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those Jeppe families who have been impacted by the virus, who have lost loved ones or whose family and friends are currently COVID-19 positive.

There has been a lot of speculation in the press, and various statements made by unions and education role players, this week regarding the potential closure of schools as the pandemic reaches its peak and the number of infections continue to rise. The Minister of Education, Mrs Motshekga, has indicated that she will make an announcement on Sunday, after engaging with various roleplayers and we will communicate with parents thereafter should any significant changes to the current school calendar be implemented.

From my perspective as headmaster, I remain convinced that sending children back to school remains the correct choice and have personally seen the positive impact on my own four children who all returned to school in the past month. It has been pleasing to see, from attendance data for our Grade 10 - 12 learners and surveys from Grade 8 and Grade 9 parents, that in excess of 95% of parents have chosen to send their boys back to school.

I was also buoyed by an article by respected education commentators Nic Spuull and Professor Servaas van der Berg, published this week, wherein they again emphasised their unequivocal view, backed up by scientific data, that children must return to school and that not doing so could have profound long term impacts. Read the article by clicking [here](#)

I do believe that there is value in the Department of Education considering bringing the September holiday period forward and thereby extending the current August holiday which, officially, is less than a week. This approach would result in schools being closed for 2-3 weeks during a significant part of the remaining period of winter whilst also allowing educators and staff at schools like Jeppe, who have worked extremely hard in a nineteen week term, to have a break at a time when community infections are at an extremely high level.

As communicated to the Grade 8 and Grade 9 parents in a detailed letter sent yesterday, we look forward to welcoming the Grade 8 and Grade 9 learners back to school on Monday, 27th July. This will be preceded by a day of orientation next week, the details of which were contained in yesterday's letter. Please could I ask that Grade 8 and Grade 9 parents familiarise themselves with the letter, the details for orientation next week and the indepth procedures and protocols for when boys return as from the 27th July to their academic lessons on campus. It is also vital that parents fill in the form indicating whether their sons will be returning to school. At time of writing, only just over 60 Grade 8 and 100 Grade 9 forms had been submitted. Please note, all Jeppe forms must be completed when logged into a Jeppe Email account (which all students have) in order to protect the integrity and security of the forms.

Grade 8 and Grade 9 boarding parents are also reminded to complete the form sent in the separate letter which they would also have received yesterday.

Please note that, from an academic perspective, we will still be issuing reports, for all grades, at the end of Term 2. In addition, please be aware of the following provisional dates for tests and examinations in Term 3:

- As previously communicated, matrices will write their Preliminary Examinations from Monday, 31st August until Friday, 18th September
- Grade 8 - 11 boys will also write a "Test Week" from Monday, 7th - Friday, 18th September. Due to social distancing requirements, limitations on venues and capacity restrictions as per government regulations, boys in these grades will follow the "Alternate Day" model even when writing exams with entire grades writing one day off and one day on (Note that grades will not be split 50/50 but each individual grade will attend on any given day so as to ensure the integrity of the examination).

This "Test Week" will replace cycle tests in Term 3 and will allow boys to prepare for their year-end exams under rigorous test conditions and after each grade has had the opportunity for classroom contact time.

*Turning **black** and **white** into **gold***

In closing, I thank all parents, boys and staff for their continued commitment to education. I commend our Jeppe community on their ongoing courage and bravery in the face of adversity and for their positive attitude and desire to overcome.

Every Jeppe boy should have started the year with many goals across all spheres of their life but, above even those, one commitment to themselves - that they were going to give their very best in all that they do. While circumstances may be both challenging and, at times, unpredictable, the endeavour and grit remains in our hands. Keep up the good work, young man - home or at school. We are in this together, and together we will keep going.

Yours in health and education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Jackson', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Dale Jackson
HEADMASTER