



# Jeppe High School for Boys

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24th July 2020

Dear Jeppe parents,

Up until yesterday evening, this past week had been an extremely positive one for the School. Not only did we welcome back the last of our grades to return to school, the Grade 8s and Grade 9's, for their orientation but we also received the good news that the two educators who had previously tested positive for COVID-19 have both now almost fully recovered and (until yesterday evening) were expected to return to school on Monday. In addition, those educators who were either in isolation or had gone for COVID tests have all received negative results and were all expected back at school next week. Those boys who are isolating or who previously tested positive are either asymptomatic or displaying only mild symptoms, whilst no boys in the boarding houses have, to our knowledge, contracted COVID-19 whilst at school.

The decision to keep the school open when positive cases occurred has, in hindsight, been the correct one as we complete our seventh week of uninterrupted teaching with no known infections in our boarding houses and no known school-transmitted infections.

Unfortunately these positive steps and the progress that has been made was interrupted last night when the President announced that all public schools would close, with immediate effect, for up to four weeks (with exceptions for matrics and Grade 7 learners) from today until Monday, 24th August.

The Governing Body Foundation (of which Jeppe is a member) stated in their media release that *"neither education nor COVID-19 were the main factors in influencing the decision. It was a political matter"* and I believe there is some truth in this statement. I continue to believe, very strongly, that, with limited exceptions (such as underlying health issues and family members with comorbidities), it is in the academic, emotional, social and health interests for children to be at school. The educational, medical, scientific and health evidence in this regard remains, in my opinion, irrefutable with yet more articles by education commentators ([click here](#)) and scientists, ([click here](#)) earlier this week and following last night's announcement, affirming this view. Our own experience at Jeppe indicates that children and adults are not contracting COVID-19 through school-related transmissions but rather through exposure in their communities and I firmly believe that the protocols and processes we have put in place at Jeppe are assisting in reducing, not spreading, the virus.

Whilst I remain convinced of the merits of children remaining in school, there are some positives to the closure of schools, most notably for staff and boys who have been tirelessly working online and physically at school without any meaningful break since Tuesday, 31st March and are thus in need of a well-deserved rest.

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

There remains a great deal of uncertainty regarding the remainder of the school year, and much more detail and information is required from the government regarding various pronouncements made last night. Once further clarity is provided, we will communicate with parents with our decisions, as always, being guided by what we know and believe to be in the best interests of all our boys - from a health, social, emotional and academic perspective.

Our matric students and all teachers will take an academic break from Monday, 27 July, until Monday, 17th August. This three week break is due to the significant volume of work already done, both online and over the last seven weeks on campus, by our matric learners and their educators and their resultant clear need for an extended break. Matric boys will not be expected to do any academic work during this period but will hopefully take the opportunity to relax and rejuvenate in preparation for their prelim exams which are still provisionally scheduled, subject to confirmation of the structure of the remainder of the school year, to commence on Monday, 31st August.

As directed by the government, all remaining grades will return to school on Monday, 24th August after a four week holiday break. Boys in Grade 8 - 11 will not be expected or required to complete any academic work during this period (unless they have fallen behind and have outstanding work). Grades 8 - 11 will remain on the 'Alternate Day' system when they return with communication around Group days and timetables being distributed the week prior to their return. Should changes to these arrangements be possible, for example should we receive the go-ahead to bring our juniors (who were all desperately disappointed to be denied the opportunity to return to school on Monday after a successful orientation week) back to campus earlier, we will communicate that directly with parents.

Regarding the president's statement around the academic year being extended into 2021, we await further clarity on which grades this may potentially affect. It remains our belief that our students, in all grades, will be academically prepared and ready to complete the academic year this year and I believe strongly that it will be in their best interests to do so, and will motivate strongly for this to occur. Further information will follow once clarity has been received from the Department of Education.

As parents are aware, unlike the vast majority of other schools, it remains our intention to issue Term 2 academic reports. Initially scheduled to be released on 7th August, the full report will now only be published in the week of Friday, 21st August, prior to all grades returning to school. The abrupt closing of schools today has meant that the very necessary process of moderation and analysis of marks in each grade and each subject, and the finalisation and editing of tutor comments will not be able to take place next week. That said, Monday's academic deadline remains in place and parents will be able to view all marks and assessment comments on the parent portal on Ed-Admin next week, should they wish to do so.

Please note that, with the enforced August closure and the September break likely to fall away as a result, subject to confirmation from the Department of Education, it is likely that we will revert to a three term school year in 2020 meaning that the final report will be issued at the end of the school year.

The sudden end of term means our youngest Jeppe men in Grades 8 and 9 will now not be able to enjoy returning to campus next week and for that I genuinely apologise as I know, from engaging with them over the past week, how excited they were to return. It genuinely was fantastic to have the junior boys on campus this week and I am grateful, despite the fact that it was just for one day, that we were able to

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engage with the boys. These young men have long Jeppe careers, filled with house events, drama activities, sports seasons and much more, ahead of them and it is important they remain motivated and positive as they await their return to campus.

In times of uncertainty and adversity much is revealed about a person's character and a community's culture. Difficult times are rarely fair and certainly affect people disproportionately. This is true of the pandemic which we as a nation currently face, as it is for us as a school community. These are challenging times but they are times which I remain convinced we will overcome as best we can. That is the character of Jeppe men and of the Jeppe community. Young men who will give their best, will adapt and will remain brave despite the obstacles which we currently face. We are a community that works hard, cares for each other and which endures. We know what we are working for as a school and a community, and we know that it is worth it.

In closing, as we head into this enforced break, I think we can all look back with much pride at our accomplishment and achievements over the last "term" and the manner in which the school community - learners, parents and staff - have approached the unique challenges presented by COVID-19. We have successfully returned all grades to school and teaching and learning have continued, with great success, in extraordinary circumstances. Many challenges no doubt await us but I am more confident than ever that school is a safe, healthy and positive environment for our boys and that we will successfully complete the 2020 academic year.

To those families who continue to be directly impacted by the virus, you remain in our thoughts and prayers and I trust that all in the Jeppe community will return safe, healthy and ready for the final term of what has most certainly been a most interesting year.

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**