



Jeppe High School for Boys

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Headmaster: D. J. Jackson
GDE Registration No.:130633

18th January 2021

Dear Jeppe parents,

I trust that everyone within the Jeppe community had a well-deserved, and much-needed, break over the festive season and that, whilst festivities may have been curtailed due to the increased number of COVID-19 infections and consequent amendment in government regulations necessitating a return to a Level 3 lockdown, it was nevertheless a wonderful time spent with family.

Whilst many parents, educators and learners may have been hoping to put 2020 behind them and to return to some level of normality at the beginning of 2021, this is clearly not the case and the first few months of the year, in particular, are likely to be dominated by COVID-19 related challenges - as evidenced by the announcement by the Department of Education on Friday that the re-opening of schools will be delayed until Monday, 15th February.

Notwithstanding the complexities of the "second wave" and the evidently more infectious COVID-19 variant, I remain convinced that schools are the safest place for learners and believe that our 2021 planning and existing COVID protocols and policies mean that Jeppe High School for Boys is ready to accept all learners, both day boys and boarders. However, we understand the reasoning for the delayed re-opening, and the efforts to reduce the impact of the second wave on the healthcare system, and whilst disappointed not to welcome boys back to school next week, are supportive thereof.

As seen in 2020, Jeppe High School for Boys are fortunate to have the infrastructure, experience and trained staff to allow us to continue learning remotely and online and our intention is therefore to commence with the academic programme, for Grades 9 - 12, as from Monday, 1st February so that, as in 2020, the boys do not fall behind in their academic endeavours and are able to continue with academic work until schools re-open on Monday, 15th February (Sunday, 14th February for all boarders).

Heads of Department, Heads of Grade and educators will be meeting next week to discuss the schedule of work, and timetable, for remote learning for the period 1st - 12th February and this will be communicated via the Heads of Grade thereafter. In addition, Mr Jackson, the School Management Team (SMT) and Heads of Grade will be meeting online with each grade on Friday, 29th January to communicate academic expectations during the period of remote learning and answer any questions that the boys may have.

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

These meetings will take place as follows (with Google meet codes to follow in due course):

- Friday, 29th January at 9AM - Grade 9 learners
- Friday, 29th January at 10AM - Grade 10 learners
- Friday, 29th January at 11AM - Grade 11 learners
- Friday, 29th January at 12 noon - Matric learners

Grade 8 learners, who are obviously new to Jeppe and have not been exposed to our online learning platforms and methodologies, will not be required to participate in online learning from Monday, 1st February. Instead, as communicated in a separate letter to the Grade 8 parents, the Grade 8 Orientation camp, originally scheduled to take place prior to the re-opening of school from Wednesday, 20th - Friday, 22nd January, will now be rescheduled to take place in the week of the 8th - 12th February.

The delay in the re-opening of schools and the increased Level 3 lockdown status as a result of the second wave and consequent increase in positive infections will have an impact on a number of events that had been planned over the course of Term 1. These events, and the impact thereon, include:

- The **Grade 8 Induction evening**, an important event in the life of all Jeppe boys and one that is remembered and treasured by parents and boys alike, will obviously be delayed and will now take place in February and potentially on a split "house basis" so as to ensure we are compliant with COVID-19 regulations regarding a limitation on gatherings. Once again, more information will follow in this regard during the course of the Grade 8 Camp and Orientation.
- The **Grade 12 and Grade 9 Information Evenings**, originally scheduled for Monday, 1st February and Wednesday, 3rd February respectively will now take place in an online format on the evening of Tuesday, 16th February and Thursday, 18th February respectively. Further information will be sent to Grade 12 and Grade 9 parents and learners in this regard in due course.
- The **Matric Dance**, originally scheduled for Friday, 12th March, has been postponed to later in the year as, according to current COVID-19 regulations, this event will not be able to be legally held. The revised date will be confirmed to all matric learners once the Department of Education has published the revised school calendar and an alternative date has been booked with the venue.
- The **2020 Academic Prize Giving**, originally scheduled to take place during the school day on Wednesday, 10th February, has been postponed with the new date to be communicated in due course.
- The **extra-mural sporting and cultural programme** is likely to undergo significant change compared to the scheduled activities, fixtures and tours publicised at the end of 2020. Whilst the government has not yet gazetted any amendments or directives to extra-mural activities in schools, it is highly likely that there will not be any inter-school fixtures or school tours until the end of the first term at least. We are, however, hoping to be able to continue with inter-house activities, practices, online events (particularly in the cultural space) and general fitness-related activities and are formulating plans in this regard whilst awaiting further directives from the Department of Education.

We were all incredibly sad to hear of the tragic passing of one of the matric markers who was based at the marking centre at Jeppe High School for Boys during the recent weeks. The marker was an isiXhosa educator and was involved at the marking at Jeppe but was not, as was misreported, an employee of the school. The loss

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of all lives during this difficult time is incredibly sad and our thoughts, prayers and condolences go out to their family, colleagues and friends.

Please note that, while the reporting seemed to be quite misleading at times across various media platforms, the educator did not pass away while at the marking centre, but was rather unfortunately found deceased at their accommodation, having previously tested positive and moved into isolation. We wish to assure all parents and members of the community that Jeppe has maintained our outstanding COVID sanitisation process throughout the marking period - including sanitising every venue every morning throughout the 12 days of marking. Following the tragic passing of the educator, the relevant areas were fogged and sanitised once again and, upon conclusion of marking this week, the Gauteng Department of Education will be fogging all classrooms used for marking.

In closing, whilst we sympathise with parents, many of whom were desperate to send their boys back to school after almost two months at home, and are just as disappointed as the boys themselves who were keen to get back to school, see friends and get on with the excitement of a new school year, we firmly believe that this two week delay will be a temporary setback and that, due to the remote learning which will take place during this time, as in 2020, the boys will not be academically prejudiced.

The delayed start of the school year will no doubt have come as an upsetting blow to many who hoped that 2021 would leave the pain, anxiety and uncertainty of 2020 behind it. This is unfortunately not the case and, in truth, I suspect we all knew it would never be the case. Still, despite the lingering issues and trials, the hopes and desires which accompany the dawning of a new year do not need to disappear. The new year, despite early challenges, still holds wonderful opportunities for all our boys and for us as a school.

Whatever one's own views on the decision to delay the opening of school our task is to once again navigate these waters as responsibly as possible and with our ultimate purpose in mind; serving the best interests of the boys in our care. We intend doing just that and have every confidence that 2021, the 131st in the history of our wonderful school, will be a challenging, successful and victorious one.

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