

Reference: COVID-19/20200803/01
Enquiries: BK Schreuder

To Principals of all Public Schools

(For information: School Governing Bodies)
(For information: Independent Schools)

Dear Principals

AMENDED REGULATIONS (2 AUGUST 2020) AND REVISED SCHOOL CALENDAR

Late last night, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) issued an *Amendment of Directions* in terms of Regulation 4(3) of the Regulations made under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act 57 of 2002), published in *Government Gazette* No. 43578 of 02 August 2020, regarding the re-opening of schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 (please see attached).

A number of amendments have again been made, which may require some clarification.

Let me first address the school calendar dates. On Saturday, 01 August 2020, the new revised school calendar was published, but not yet gazetted, as is required.

Please note that while the calendar states that Term 3 starts on 24 August 2020, there is a phased return to schools starting from today, 03 August 2020.

Please also note that Grades 5 and 8 learners, as well as Grades 4 and 5 learners at schools for learners with severe intellectual disabilities (SID) only return on 31 August 2020.

The new school calendar dates are as follows:

Term	Dates	Grades and staff required to be present at schools
Term 3	24 August–23 October 2020	Grades 12, 7 and Year 4 learners and teachers, as well as the Principal and School Management Team (SMT) to be at school according to the dates below. Note: Grades 5, 8 and schools for learners with SID: Grades 4 and Grade 5, will only return on 31 August 2020.
Term 4	02 November–15 December 2020	All grades and all staff.

According to the new calendar, the school year will be completed on 15 December 2020 for Grades R–11 learners.

In a separate media release over the weekend, the DBE stated that the 2020 Grade 12 examinations will also be completed by 15 December 2020. The marking process is scheduled to be concluded on 22 January 2021, with results released on 23 February 2021, if all goes as now planned. The revised National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination timetable has yet to be distributed.

I would like to remind you that all Grade 12 learners and teachers are physically to be at school every day from 03 August 2020 (except for formal school holidays), until they start their final NSC examinations. Gr 12 learners must not form part of the planned alternating schedules of schools to enable physical distancing.

Under the current school “break”, as announced by President Ramaphosa, the following learners, teachers and non-teaching staff must return to school on the following dates:

Dates	Grades and staff required to be present at schools
03–07 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 12 and schools of skill (SOS): Year 4. • Grade 12 and SOS Year 4 teachers and teacher support staff. • The principal and the SMT (as required). • Non-teaching staff, as identified by the principal and the SMT.
11–14 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 7 learners. • Grade 7 teachers and teacher support staff. • The principal and the SMT. • Non-teaching staff, as identified by the principal and SMT.

17–21 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers, non-teaching staff to report for duty to prepare for the return of the remaining grades. Grades 7, 12 and SOS Year 4 learners and officials will already be at school.
24 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners in the following grades, years or schools will return to school on 24 August 2020: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades R, 1, 2 and 3. Grades 4 and 6. Grades 9, 10 and 11. SOS: Years 1, 2 and 3. Schools for learners with severe and profound intellectual disabilities (LSPID): Years 1, 2 and 3. Schools for learners with SID: Grades R, 1, 2, 3 and final year (occupational). Schools with autistic learners: Junior group (below 13 years), senior group (13 years and above) and final year (18 years and above). The school must ensure compliance with the health, safety and social distancing requirements in accommodating this group of learners. The Temporary Revised Education Plans would therefore need to be adhered to.
31 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades 5 and 8. Schools for learners with SID: Grades 4 and 5.

Please note that **Grade 7 learners and teachers** must, according to these amendments, return on **11 August 2020** and NOT 12 August 2020, as previously stated in my letter dated 24 July 2020. At the time, we were complying with the revised school calendar as published on 11 June 2020. Due to the release of the new revised school calendar, the date has subsequently been changed. We were in support of keeping the initial date, but now have to comply with the latest amended calendar. Please make sure that your parents and learners are informed as soon as possible.

We also note that **Year 4 in Schools of Skills** are to have returned today, **3 August 2020**. Relevant schools must please make the necessary arrangements immediately to cater for this very late notification so that these learners return to school as soon as possible.

The new amendments are very clear with regards to when all teachers and non-teaching staff must return to school. **All staff** should be back at school by **17 August 2020**.

Although schools are on a “break”, all officials are considered to be on duty and may be required to assist with official duties as and when required or determined by the principal and the SMT. This includes instances such as for screening, the splitting of classes, oversight over the school nutrition programme,

Deviations for phased return

All schools that applied for a deviation on or before 27 July 2020, may continue to deviate from the phased return to school, without providing further notification to the Head of Department.

All schools that did not apply before 27 July 2020 for a deviation, must apply in terms of my letter on the deviation from phased return for public schools sent out on 04 July 2020.

Exemption from public school attendance

The options for parents to oversee the learning of their children at home due to high-risk comorbidities or concerns over COVID-19 remain available. Any parent who wishes to exercise these options should consult *WCED Guideline 1(a): Exemption from public school attendance* and return the required documentation to their school. (The Guideline and forms are available at <https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/back-school/>.)

The DBE's amendments now include another option. In sub-direction 6(1)(c) it states:

- “(1) A parent, caregiver or a designated family member may choose not to send a learner to school for reasons that may include—*
- (c) a preference for the learner receiving learning and teaching instruction through the online or virtual platforms provided by an independent institution which is not related to the school that the child is registered at;”*

Should a learner wish to remain registered at their public school but be exempted from public school attendance while they pursue learning and teaching instruction through the online or virtual platforms provided by a different independent institution during the national state of disaster, they may now apply to do so. They can apply using *Annexure 1(B2) – Application for exemption of a learner without a comorbidity from school attendance*.

Another amendment in sub-direction 6(1)(d) states:

- “(1) A parent, caregiver or a designated family member may choose not to send a learner to school for reasons that may include—*
- (d) a preference for the learner receiving learning and teaching instruction through the online or virtual platforms provided by the school;”*

In this option, the learner does not have to apply for exemption. However, this possibility only applies in very few cases where online and virtual platforms are currently available and the school has indicated that it is able to provide online and virtual teaching full time. Schools offering this option must register to do so by writing to the Head: Education (attention Mr Clinton Walker at Clinton.walker@westerncape.gov.za). In such cases, the parent must inform the

school and verify that they have the facilities and equipment to support such learning. It could also only apply to certain grades within a school.

Schools must therefore inform parents if this option is available. But a parent cannot demand that this service be made available. Learners will have to adhere to the online timetable, as they would do when physically attending school.

Please note that parents wishing to keep registered learners out of school, for whatever reason, are expected to continue to **pay school fees**, as applicable, for as long as a learner is registered as a learner of that school.

Attendance Registers

All schools must maintain daily attendance registers, as has always been required. If a learner is not physically at school, they must be marked as absent. The school must, however, maintain records of those who have applied for exemption or have opted to stay registered at the school but are taking part in online and virtual instruction. Learners taking part in online and virtual instruction from the school, must be recorded separately.

Wearing of masks

The WCED has provided two cloth masks to every school for every learner and staff member. These have been delivered some time ago. It is the responsibility of every principal, according to the amended Directions, to inform the WCED timeously if there are not enough masks to meet your requirements.

It is also your responsibility, with the Compliance Officer, to ensure that every learner and member of staff is wearing a cloth **mask** every day. Please continue to advocate the proper use of masks. They **must** be over the **nose and the mouth**.

National School Nutrition Programme

As indicated by the President, as informed by me, and as reaffirmed in the new amendments, the National School Nutrition Programme will continue to operate throughout the break period so that all learners or their parents can collect food directly from schools.

I would like to thank you for your patience in this ever-changing environment. While I have no doubt that the revised school calendar has caused some disruption to planning, I am hoping that there will be no further revisions this year. We, as a sector, have to ensure that we stabilise our schools and remain functional. It is now imperative that all schools settle down as quickly as possible and focus on the dual purposes of ensuring safety of learners and staff, while ensuring

that learning takes place as optimally as circumstances allow. Your leadership, planning and oversight over these matters will assist greatly in settling anxieties. The more you succeed in ensuring your school is a functional school in the ten indicators shared earlier in the year, the more learning will take place and the safer the school will be, as we follow health and safety protocols strictly.

I am pleased that we now have some clarity about the plans for the months ahead. While infections are decreasing in the Western Cape at the moment, I am sure that we will still need to deal with people that get infected. Let us please remember and apply the necessary protocols and measures that are in place to manage such cases efficiently, as we have been doing over the past few months. Let us all commit to work hard to ensure that our schools are as safe and secure as possible so that the best quality teaching and learning possible can take place. I also again appeal to you to do everything possible to limit the anxiety projected on our children. The best way to do that is if all adults (parents and teachers) are as positive as they can possibly be and by getting stuck in to teaching, so that learners focus on learning as much as they can in the time left this year.

While COVID-19 infections are on the decline, we must not be complacent. Please continue to ensure that the health and safety of our learners, teachers and staff at schools are prioritised and that we continue to lead with a positive mindset. I am fully aware of how difficult and challenging a task this is. But I am humbled by the example set by the majority of our schools and teachers by far. Thank you for that!

I sincerely hope that you have had some time off during this past week and that you are ready to tackle the rest of this year.

Yours sincerely

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

BK SCHREUDER
HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 03 AUGUST 2020