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Enquiries: BK Schreuder

TO: Principals and Teachers of Public Schools

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

Dear Colleagues

AWARENESS AROUND COVID-19 RISKS FOLLOWING OUTBREAK IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS

Yesterday, Premier Alan Winde issued a statement regarding the emergence of new Covid-19 clusters and shared a case study to demonstrate how the public's failure to follow the health and safety protocols can have very serious consequences.

Recently, the WCDH was alerted to a cluster of infections in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, emanating from a social event at a night club not related to school, which has affected some of our learners. The contact tracing teams identified 63 cases linked to one venue. 37 of these cases are matric learners from public and independent schools. The schools are liaising with health officials and ensuring that the necessary protocols are followed, and that parents and learners at the school have been informed.

What has transpired is extremely unfortunate and we wish these learners well. However, it is also a very clear and grim warning that we cannot let our guards down in terms of adhering to safety protocols and behaviours both within and outside our schools. By not adhering to protocols, our learners are putting themselves, their families and friends at risk.

It is therefore critical that we continue to emphasise to all our educators, staff and learners, regardless of their age, that they must continue to behave in a responsible manner.

Please emphasise the following golden rules:

- Always wearing a mask
- Maintaining social distancing
- Avoiding large gatherings where there is poor ventilation

- Washing hands regularly.

While the very thought of contracting or further spreading this virus should put any person on alert, there are other consequences as well. It can result in the further disruption of schooling and missing class lessons, assessment tasks and examinations.

For a Grade 12 learner the implications of missing a National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination are enormous. Should a candidate test positive for COVID-19, they will not be allowed access into examination venues and will not be allowed to sit for an examination for a 10-day period or until confirmation is received from a medical practitioner. This means that the candidate will only be able to complete their NSC in June 2021 (if that examination does indeed take place – as you know, it was cancelled this year due to Covid-19 lockdown). Given that we are just weeks away from the NSC examinations – is any social event worth it?

Our learners need to understand that the short-term benefits of a social event, be it a party, close contact sports event or a large family gathering, could have dire consequences. As the WCDH has warned, the best defence to this virus is our behaviour and therefore we need to ensure that we all take personal responsibility for our behaviour both in and out of school. I call on all parents to play a constructive and responsible role in the lives of their children and to support all our learners in staying healthy by avoiding unnecessary exposure at social events outside school hours.

We have gone through so much this year. We have all worked so hard to try and keep our learners safe at school. I believe the efforts made by our schools in adhering to safety protocols has contributed to minimal multiple infections within schools. The behaviour seen at schools needs to be extended to outside the school gate.

While the “super spreader” event in the Southern Suburbs is a lesson for all of us regarding our continued behaviour, it is also a clear alarm that this virus is still very much with us.

I wish you all the very best as you prepare for the final rounding off of the year. I hope that all parents will support us in this difficult context.

Yours sincerely



BK SCHREUDER
HEAD: EDUCATION
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