



PINELANDS NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Newsletter 3/2021

16 February 2021

Dear Parents

New school year

Thanks for the feedback from the first day of school yesterday. It is so interesting how diverse the responses were:

The traffic around is terrible.

You guys have thought through every detail.

Thanks for making school arrivals so safe for my children.

Surely you can think of a better way to get all children in to the school and out!

Please remember when you are waiting on the outside in the queues that we are really trying to process the children as fast as possible. We will spend this week tweaking the systems and change the arrival and departure spots next week if the traffic doesn't ease up. You can help us by:

- coming into the roads around the school in the direction allocated to your child's grade.
- making sure the school 'luggage' is on the seat alongside your child and not in the boot.
- saying goodbye to your child as you drive into the drop off zone, not while there.
- asking your oldest child to collect the younger family members (if this applies) and then returning to the spot where the oldest is collected. You will then collect and drop your children at this venue daily.
- Remember too that the hour of sport is a part of the school day, not an optional extra. This means that school ends at 3 on Monday for grade 6 and 7, at 3 on Tuesday for grade 4 and 5, and at 3 on Wednesday for grade 3. Siblings cannot wait for the older ones at sport – they need to be collected or attend halftercare.
- You can also choose to park on the outskirts of the school's drop-and-go route and walk your children to the front or back carpark. Several families started doing this and it has affected the traffic flow positively already.

New term dates for 2021

We finally have the dates for terms for 2021. They are:

Term 1: 15 February – 23 April

Term 2: 03 May – 09 July

Term 3: 26 July – 01 October

Term 4: 11 October – 15 December

We also have now been able to complete our term 1 planner so see attached.

Advertising to the parent body

If you wish to advertise your company and/or individual services, you can do this through our newsletter. Information must be given to Erica with a payment of R200,00 per newsletter insertion, and R200, 00 for flyer distribution, by the Friday before the next newsletter (every second Tuesday from now).

Vision and Mission

New families to our school need to know what it is that we hold dear, so herewith the vision we have for our school, and the mission we are on respectively:

Excellent staff, motivated pupils and participative families working together to provide an inclusive, quality education – making Pinelands North Primary School a leading school on which other schools model themselves.

Pinelands North Primary School –

- provides a happy, healthy, diverse, homely, safe yet challenging learning environment.
- develops the whole child's full potential academically, culturally, socially, emotionally and physically.
- builds a vibrant, reflective and committed staff team.
- encourages committed family support and involvement.
- promotes environmental awareness and responsibility.
- develops co-ownership and accountability among all stakeholders including the wider community and continually improves the range and quality of its academic and extramural activities.

Full school return in term 2

It was decided late in 2020 to build a new 'hall' to assist the school to provide adequate social distancing for all our children to return to school daily. This hall is almost complete on the outside but will be ready for occupation in term 2. The Management Team met last week to view all the options we have so we can evaluate these against the actual daily comings and goings of the school during term 1. This information will be provided to the Governing Body later this term so that a decision can be made about the times of the day, the venues to be used and whether all pupils can attend school every day in term 2. These plans will obviously be subject to a possible 'third wave' of the virus and the medical and scientific information we will have privy to later this term.

Governing Body Elections

Governing Bodies are elected for a three-year term of office, throughout the country. The current Governing Body is in place until a new one is elected. Please see the document on page 10, outlining the duties of Governing Body members. If you are interested in standing for the next three-year term, and have read the attached document, contact Tania, the Business Manager or me for the relevant forms and information. Our online election date is provisionally 23 March 2021, but this will be confirmed once we have the date confirmed by the WCED.

Fees

- Fee remission forms are available for collection from Tania Jansen van Rensburg until Friday. Very few parents have applied in the past but if you **are** in a financial crisis ensure that your application is returned with all supporting documentation, by Friday, **8 March 2021**.

- A reminder that our special fee deal ends at the end of February. For details contact Tania Jansen van Rensburg.
- If you choose to remove your children from our school at any time, a reminder that the bursar needs to be given one term's notice in writing of your intention to do so. This is to cover the costs incurred until the place is filled with another pupil.

Assessment

New families to the school might not know how pupils are assessed at school. Assessment happens throughout the school year and all assessments contribute to each term's report.

At Pinelands North we usually have at least one assessment week per term for every grade and we try to focus our grade 4 to 7 pupils more closely on their studies by calling them examinations in June and in November. A few years ago, it was decided by the parent body, that **no extramurals would be held during this week each term.**

With the COVID regulations currently in place, term 1 will not have a regular assessment week. We currently also don't have extramurals but an extended day to do sporting activities. This means that in term 1 this rule will not apply and assessments will be done regularly throughout the term.

These are the codes we use to assess pupils:

RATING CODE	PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTION OF COMPETENCE
7	80 – 100	outstanding achievement
6	70 – 79	meritorious achievement
5	60 – 69	substantial achievement
4	50 – 59	adequate achievement
3	40 – 49	moderate achievement
2	30 – 39	elementary achievement
1	0 - 29	not achieved

Pinelands North also offers several subjects that other schools don't. When other schools gave up Physical Education, Needlework and Woodwork we chose to make a plan with our curriculum because we believed in these subjects and the value they hold for our pupils. That is why our school will continue to offer Xhosa to grade 1 to 5 too.

Security

A reminder that all gates are locked at 08:30 every morning and after that, latecomers and visitors need to enter through the front door. Please do not leave gates open on entry – rather ask the front office staff to release the catch as you leave, as we are vulnerable if our gates are open. We have not had any dangerous situations at school, but we need to be very sure that it doesn't happen either. Should your child need to be collected from school during the day, please ensure that you collect them from the office and sign them out.

Early Act News

Early Act is very excited to begin this year's fund raising by announcing the start of Food Fridays! Every Friday, Early Act will be selling delicious pizza bases or rotis when you collect your children from school! We will start this Friday 19 February, by selling 3 large pizza bases in a pack for R40. The following Friday we will sell 5 Rotis in a pack for R30. These foods can be purchased with the correct amount of cash from the staff. All the foods are halaal and can be frozen for convenience. The funds raised will go towards the Solidarity Fund and other outside charities. Early Act is also launching an SPCA drive! Collection tins will be placed in each classroom starting on Monday 22 February and will end on Friday 8 March. The class that collects the most money over the two weeks will win a free civvies day! Your support would be much appreciated!

Megan Culligan

School holiday care

This year our aftercare staff will again be running a holiday programme during every holiday. The price per day will still be R60 again this year, with any expenses for the day over and above this cost.

Use of school facilities

Did you know that you can use our school facilities or the Red Roots' facilities after hours? One of the ways schools make additional income is through the hiring of the hall, classrooms, aftercare and fields when they are not required by the pupils. We offer Red School families a special rate too, so if you need a venue for a birthday party, wedding, conference or meeting, why not call Tania Jansen van Rensburg. Currently most of these facilities are used as classrooms during the day so they might not be available this term, but chat to Tania to see if we can assist.

Education outreach programme

In the past few years, the school has given parents additional information through special sections of the newsletter. We have focused on the new curriculum, parenting tips and healthy eating in the past. If you find articles you think other parents would be interested in reading, please send them to me for inclusion in the newsletters this year.

Music

The PNPS music department offers lessons in piano, recorder, guitar, violin, flute, and drums. Should you wish to enroll your child for music lessons, please fill in the online google form, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rtRi8Dd8h_66zh2jq1lIXcQEaJnOGhvftwkQwfSNgo0/edit?usp=sharing, or contact Thomas de Bruin at music@pnps.co.za as soon as possible. One of our music parents commented last year; *"Her zoom music lessons with Thomas de Bruin and Claudia Gottert were so good for her -she really developed well and quickly, and her love for music grew soooo much"*.

Thomas de Bruin

Teacher changes during the year

There are some things that are even out of the control of 'control freaks' like me! Very rarely does a teacher plan to leave during a year when they start at the beginning of the year....and usually the arrival of a baby is the reason for that! So, because we are unable to stop babies from arriving, partners from getting retrenched and moving their families to other parts of the world or country, or stop families splitting up and moving away, we do the next best thing – try to employ the best replacement possible!

Bear in mind though that teachers who are available during the year are few and far between. Even if we look for a replacement in the previous year, and employ them for the time needed, I cannot stand in the way of them getting a permanent job! This means even if we have signed contracts with them, we allow them to pull out if they are offered a permanent position. The ideal would be to have a 'permanent' replacement teacher but we haven't found one of those – this would be a person who gets to know our school, and our special ethos, and returns to us whenever we have someone on maternity leave etc.

Please trust that the Governing Body and the management of YOUR school will keep the changes to the minimum and employ the best available person to teach your child always! Also bear in mind that each grade currently has three staff as each grade is divided into three. If one of those staff is put into isolation, we will really struggle to replace the person 'permanently' for the full two weeks. All our usual 'plug 'n play' staff are currently teaching every day!

Going home after school

A reminder that for the safety of your children, all pupils should have left the school grounds within half an hour of their end of their school day. Aftercare runs a 'halftercare service' which is available should you be held up on a particular day. Contact Toni at aftercare@pnps.co.za if you need this service. Due to the need to effectively clean and sanitize our premises, please collect your children promptly. Should this not be possible, contact Toni at aftercare@pnps.co.za , to make arrangements for your child's care.

Healthy eating policy

Pinelands North is committed to eating healthily and to only selling or giving away healthy foods! This means that our cafe has the seal of approval from the Heart Foundation and that we all, including yourselves, need to be following this. In reality, this means that

- Lunch boxes should only provide the children with healthy bread sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, juice or **unflavoured** water.
- Any 'party packs' that you send for children in your child's class should be healthy – families have sent crunchies, toffee apples, popcorn, gingerbread, muffins etc.

All families might also be pleased to hear that all our face-to-face school functions only provide food that can be eaten by everybody! We have all moved on from the time when people ate separately, and we need our children to learn to be accommodating and inclusive. Here are some healthy lunch ideas:



Whatsapp Groups

There are no parent Whatsapp groups which have been started by the school so there is no reason for you to feel you have to remain on a group if you have been added to a group without your permission. Some grades have started these groups for the benefit of parents but if you wish to withdraw, please do so. If your grade's parents have created one, can I ask that you use it for what it was intended for – to relay information.

Please remember that at PNPS we catch people doing things right.....This includes the staff! These groups are not whinge sessions about teachers or homework. You are welcome to see the teachers, Shereen or me, should you wish to complain about something because complaining to other parents is a real waste of your time. The staff do occasionally create Whatsapp groups for specific sporting activities and those will only give information when necessary.

Medication

A reminder that any medication sent to school for your child to take during the school day **MUST** be accompanied by a letter of instruction, clearly stating the dosage/times for taking the medication. This letter and the medication should be handed in at the front office together with a copy of the script for controlled medication. Please contact Erica if you require clarification.

Please consider the safety of both your child and others by not giving a container of painkillers to your child to keep in their pocket 'in case they feel sick at school'.

MySchool Programme

If you buy from MySchool participating retailers, and show our special card, we receive a percentage of their profit on the particular purchase. Thank you to those parents who support us in this way – the latest amount received was R3236.60!

To those of you who have lost your card, or who haven't had one, please sign up for a card by visiting <http://www.myschool.co.za> and requesting that PNPS is your beneficiary.

Textbooks

Please remind your children how privileged they are to receive free textbooks and readers, and to treat them carefully. At the end of last year, we had to replace 15 textbooks in one grade because they had been so badly 'abused' during the year. The replacement cost of the books comes from your pocket too... In the homework diary you will find a pupil library policy and agreement that needs to be completed and returned by Friday.

Recycling

Our recycling system hasn't started up again since Lockdown last year but that doesn't mean you as a family can't recycle! Please use your local community recycling systems to educate your children about the need for less waste and call us if you have something you think the school might be able to reuse. My husband provides the school with window and door frames, hinges and glass – all things a school would love to use!

'New' ways of teaching 'old' things!

Research into effective teaching says that the most important ingredient in the teaching learning relationship is an excellent teacher! So, don't believe the newspaper articles that say that teachers can't teach 40+ children in a classroom at once! It depends on the teacher whether this can be done! At Pinelands North we are always looking for new or different ways of getting information across and, because our staff are so good, (and our children are so well behaved!) this means that they can literally try anything! In some schools having 60+ children 'learning' together means less learning and more crowd control!

Last year the grade 7 children came back first in June. We assigned them the hall and 4 staff per lesson, thinking that that was what was needed! After a week the staff came to tell me they weren't needed – the children were so focused, keen to learn and enthusiastic about their learning that only one staff member was needed in the hall at a time! I kept checking to see whether this was true and I was blown away by the positive learning experience our staff had created.

When the rest of the school returned, we divided each grade into 3 venues, with the 3 teaching staff rotating between the 3 classes. A few children struggled with this initially because the system was new and they were used to having 'a person' but then they realised they now had '3 persons' they could interact with: each with a different teaching style and a unique personality. This made learning so much more exciting!

So, don't be alarmed when your children come home and say, "We had team teaching today!", "We did Reggio learning today!", "We did Woodwork with the ducks in the front garden today!" or "we combined classes today to learn together!" Every year our innovative staff add more amazingly different ways of teaching to their large repertoire!

Our children love the different methods: they love more time spent together, they find out more about the topic than they would have usually because they have more than one teacher available, they can watch the digital version of the teaching over and over until they 'get it', children who usually would have had only one 'expert' to help them, now have three!

Inclusion Matters

Jacqui Tooke, a parent of the school started a blog post a few years ago under this title. While researching what I wrote in Newsletter 3 last year, I found the article on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter written by Helen, another parent.

Virtual Open Day instead of School in Action 2021

COVID times call for innovative thinking all the time! The learning support department has come up with a new way for all of you, and our visitors, to visit the school virtually! On 3 March you need to be close to your computer: in one-hour sessions between 9 and 13:45, you could view 4 different parts of the school. Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase learning, inclusion at PNPS and a session about what makes PNPS unique, will be on the cards and you will be able to sign up for one or all, and view the school live and in pre-recorded sessions. The links to these sessions will be sent ahead of time so please start telling your family and friends about this opportunity for everybody, whether at home, at work or overseas, to see inside a proudly South Africa primary school during the COVID pandemic!

Leaving a Legacy

Every year we use several different ways to evaluate our school. We have already shared the survey completed by yourselves, but we also asked our grade 7 pupils to look back at the school and tell us what we really taught them over the years. Read some of the delightful responses from grade 7 2020, on page 11 of this newsletter.

Thank You

- Thanks to the families who are sponsoring children, not their own, whose parents/guardians are not able to afford school fees. Any amount, no matter how small, towards these fee accounts is greatly appreciated. Please support our Solidarity Fund if you are able to do so. We are able to provide you with a Section 18A certificate for tax purposes.
- Thanks to the families who are always contacting Tania with offers to 'fund' new additions to our school – two years ago an anonymous donor offered to fund R5000 plus for brand new books for our library, our cricket nets were funded by a parent and a donor offered to fund the building of a shelter over the 'waiting bench' at the back of the school!
- Thanks too, to the parents who offer free services to the school. A parent walked into my office last year to offer a weekly staff massage session. The staff were thrilled about the idea! Even if you can offer any amount of time on a regular basis, we will find someone/somewhere for you to assist remotely.

Can you help?

Our school worm farms need food – if you'd like to help us feed them, send Erica your vegetable and fruit waste, remembering that onions, citrus, garlic and other strong-smelling ones can't be used. Our bunnies and Muscovy ducks also love salad leaves so those could be sent to Erica too.

Yours sincerely



ANN MORTON
Principal



We are heard. We are valued. We are included.

By Helen Joannides

Many voices

As you walk through the corridors of PNPS, you might hear many voices. You might hear a teacher singing a song signalling that it is time for the class to line up; you might hear children laughing and chattering as they walk to break; you might hear a greeting called between two parents; or you might hear the ducks quacking or the rooster crowing. But there is a difference between hearing the sounds of the various members of a school community and their voices *really* being included and heard in a school.

What *is* having your voice heard as a parent at PNPS?

As parents, having our voices heard comes, first, in the clear and open channels of communication between the school and parents. It is always clear who should be approached and the response, in our experience, is always swift and professional no matter how small or big the issue.

A further example of the open approach is the “What do you think?” section of the newsletter which is periodically included. This section asks “What do you as parents of PNPS want that you are not seeing in the school? What are our blind spots as a school? What are we not seeing that you are seeing?” with an invitation to email Ann your response. This is another channel encouraging parents to reflect and provide feedback in a non-complaining way. More often than not, you will be invited to be part of the discussion around the issue and help with the solution.

The school’s open-door policy, where parents are always welcome in the school, is another way parents feel heard. Parents are invited to any assembly – not just the ‘special’ ones. Every opportunity is given for parents (and other family members) to come in and read to a class and to see ‘the school in action’. These are not staged events but rather a window into what happens daily. The transparency around what is happening in the school – being privy to the practice and workings of the school on many levels – enables parents to engage with a wide range of specific issues and have their voices heard in a meaningful way if they feel the need to speak up.

The active participation of parents in the school also goes deeper than observation. Parents are asked at the start of a year what their skills are and what they would consider contributing to the

school. Can you sew? Do you have a contact for printing? Do you have time to cover library books? Can you help redesign our grey water system? Value is placed on a variety of skills, talents and attributes that enable a range of parents to feel valued, be involved, and be “heard”.

What *is* having your voice heard as a child at PNPS?

For the children at PNPS, having your voice heard might mean always being encouraged to show and share your talents, whatever they may be. Whether you are a keen golfer; a chess player; a



budding dancer; a natural scientist in the making; or a kind and caring person, space is made for you to be acknowledged. Maybe you are encouraged to come and teach your class the latest information you have read. Maybe you can showcase your talent at a “Celebrating the Arts” evening or a sports tournament. Maybe your talents and attributes are recognised at an assembly, through an award or, through “Caught in the Act”.

Recently, as more of the Reggio Emilia approach has been incorporated into the Foundation Phase, there has been a concerted effort to have children self-direct their learning more. They figure out what they would like to know and grapple with how to do research. Families and teachers guide and support these efforts. Children sometimes also then teach each other. This approach puts the

children’s voices front and centre.

Having your voice heard also means having an ethos where children feel respected enough to approach a teacher to negotiate their homework or ask whether they can use a standing desk, a ball, a bean bag or have a bird on their shoulder to optimise their learning and equilibrium.

Does it really work?

Surely, in a school community of staff, children and parents that number in the hundreds, not everyone’s views, comments and preferences can be taken into account? People might have conflicting views or different approaches. That is so, and there is no doubt that it is impossible to please everyone all the time or implement everyone’s ideas and suggestions. But, whether or not your input, ideas or skills are used or put into practice, our family’s experience of inclusion at PNPS, through our children and as parents, is that our views, our feedback and our participation has always been acknowledged and taken seriously. This has meant that we have always felt included and we have always felt valued. We have been heard.

Visit <https://pnpsinclusion.blogspot.com/> to read previous *Inclusion Matters at PNPS* posts. Do you have any questions about how PNPS makes inclusion happen? Do you have a suggestion for a topic that you would like to see explored here? Would you like to write a contribution? Please email them to: communitysupport@pnps.co.za

Governing Body Elections 23 March 2021

All schools in the country will be holding elections for their new Governing Body which will serve for 3 years from April 2021. We are planning an online election on 23 March. Each school needs a diverse, knowledgeable, skilled, service-minded, accountable and hardworking Governing Body. It is important therefore that you know what the SGB can do, what you can't do and what is expected of you.

It does NOT mean any of the following:

- That you get paid or rewarded in any financial sense for your efforts;
- That you get to take over the running of the school finances;
- That you get to be the my boss;
- That you get to fire the teachers you don't like;
- That you sit in on team selections, or get to advise the soccer, netball or hockey coaches on who should be in the teams;
- That you can tell me which pupils should have which teachers, or decide which teachers will teach which classes;
- That you sit in on classes to see how the teachers teach;
- That you evaluate the staff;
- That you can micromanage the school in your particular area of expertise;
- That you virtually get to run the school for a couple of years;
- That you turn the school into a business;
- That you get to decide on the formula for the granting of school fee exemptions;
- That you help your children captain a team or become a rep;
- That you can channel a lot of school business towards your own business;
- That you will be able to ensure that your neighbour's child is appointed onto the staff as a teacher or physiotherapist;
- That you get a discount on your school fees;
- That you will be able to make sure that so-and-so's miserable, naughty kids never get into your child's school.

If it doesn't mean these things, then what DOES it mean?

It means many of the following things:

- That you get to be an important player in a special team;
- That you get to partner me in my critical role;
- That you get a bird's eye view rather than worm's eye view of how the school functions and what makes it tick;
- You will get a chance to use your skills and will be given a meaningful role to play in the school;
- That you get a chance to use your social skills as you interact at a meaningful level with parents and staff;
- That you can have a great learning experience in an area in which you have not previously been involved;
- That you get to experience the real challenges and thrills of getting to grips with strategic planning, rather than simple operational planning;
- That you actually have the 'power' to ensure Pinelands North continues to play an important role in education in South Africa.

Budding governing body members need to recognise that the school needs people who can bring skills, perspectives or points of view that are missing from the school and its staff, not people who want to manage or interfere with employees. Mervyn King, of King Reports fame, states that a new SGB member comes onto the governing body with knowledge, skills and abilities but the best way to contribute is not to come in as the one who knows how to put everything right, but rather to come in with an open mind and to discover what needs to be done. A good SGB member can act as a valuable sounding board.

So if you are:

- someone with skills that are in short supply in the school
- a selfless server willing to play a bit-part in a larger cast
- someone who wants to create a good and sustainable education, not just for your own children, but also for other people's children's
- someone who wants to influence the future of the school, then please apply.

Contact Tania or Ann who will help you do the necessary!

Grade 7 2020 Leaving a Legacy

Like we ask our families to evaluate us, we also ask our grade 7s to do so before they leave. Here are some of the lovely responses:

What has been the most important lesson that you have learned in your time at PNPS?

- No matter your skin colour, race or gender, you are all considered family and so give everyone a chance. **Zara**
- Never compete with anyone or compare yourself to anyone. **Thanaa**
- Never bring anyone down, always build them up. **Lara**
- Nothing is as important as treating everyone with respect. **Seth**
- Treat everyone the way you want to be treated. **Daniel**
- Being kind, brave and helpful is more important than intelligence. **Darakhshaan**
- It doesn't matter how many times you try to be number 1, being number 2 is fine because being number 1 can be quite lonely sometimes. **Sipho**
- "Confidence is the best thing you can possess". Before starting at this school I was very shy, but the staff members have left such a good impact on me. This school has given me the chance to finally break out of my shell. **Jorja**

What advice would you like to leave for the future grade 7s?

- Always be willing to try new things and participate in as many things as you can. **Zara**
- Sometimes the work is overwhelming but never give up and always try your best. **Saarah**
- Relax and stop stressing; you will get everything done if you stop worrying about it. **Catherine**
- Never take advantage of anyone and don't let them take advantage of you. **Zimkhita**
- You should always be yourself. Stand up to people if you don't think they are doing the right thing. **Nassor**
- No one cares if you are popular or not. **Emma**
- Kindness begins with the understanding that we all struggle. Everyone is going through something different. The best you can do is be kind. Always be the person you can be. Do more than you're asked, and don't ask for anything in return. Don't silently expect anything either. Never spend your time proving to people that you are great, your actions will speak for itself. Never dull your shine for somebody else. Never chase love, affection or attention, if it isn't given freely by another person, it isn't worth having. And finally, always be kinder than you feel. **Jorja**

What will you miss the most about primary school?

- That if there was something going on in my personal life, I could always go to any teacher for help. **Saarah**
- I will miss the people, my friends, the school events, the way nobody judges you and always helps you when you are at your lowest. **Emma**
- The teachers, my friends and the vibe/aura of the school. **Azra**
- The teachers at PNPS give us more than one opportunity to improve and do our best – that won't happen at high school! **Yusra**
- PNPS is a family, everyone knows each other. I'm really going to miss the routine we have - the feeling of happiness. I am so lucky to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard. I've learnt more than ever at this school. Learning under this atmosphere has been a great experience. **Jorja**