



Newsletter 12/2021

29 June 2021

Dear Parents

So, the education world has changed, yet again!

### School Absentees

On Wednesday last week 66 children were absent from school. We had noticed already the week before that more and more children didn't come to school or went home early. By Friday 108 children were off, and yesterday 224 children didn't come to school.

### Changes to schooling made yesterday

- All schools need to close by Friday, 2 July at 12:30. In the gazette the statement says 'from 30 June' so we are adhering to that. This means that the final day of teaching will be today, and school will close at the usual time, 13:30, 14:00 or 15:00 depending on the grade.
- The Minister of Education announced yesterday that schools **will reopen on 19 July** instead of 26 July. This effectively means no extra holiday – the two-week holiday has just been moved forward by one week. I know it will inconvenience you, as it does me! If you have planned to go on holiday in this week, please continue to do so. Planning will be available as it has been this past week, and no tests will be written during this time.
- The holiday programme will still be available: for the two weeks of school holidays.
- **Should school not return on 19 July, PNPS will still be on holiday for the next week as planned.** Work for an extended school closure will be available from 26 July should this be necessary. We will update families while school is closed if any further information is received.
- All staff will be at school until Friday 2 July. For the two weeks after that, some will be on holiday, some working from home and others present at school.
- **After sending the voice note at 10:00 yesterday, we realized that some families still haven't got the note at 17:00 yesterday afternoon. We are therefore creating a PNPS Parent Information Whatsapp group which the school will be able to use to broadcast information should this be necessary. Please ensure that you click on this link to join the group so that you are not left out should info be sent from now until school opens. The link to join the group is: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/KxrTO3gGEBj1GGYtRhSHWs>**

### Holiday Programme

There are very limited spaces available for a few days of our July Holiday Programme. Numbers in brackets are the spaces available. Please book your space as soon as possible if you still need to do so. Here are the dates for:

#### **Senior programme grades 2-7:**

Week 1: Mon 5th (9), Tuesday 6th (3), Thursday 8th (6) and Friday 9th (3)

Week 2: Monday 12th (2), Tuesday 13th (3), Wednesday 14th (4) and Friday 16th (6)

## **Junior programme grades R & 1:**

Week 1: Monday 5th **(2)**, Tuesday 6th **(2)** and Thursday 8th **(1)**

Week 2: Only Friday 16th **(2)**

## **Return to school by all primary school pupils 26 July**

Early in June the Minister of Basic Education announced in a Disaster Act Amendment that she expected all primary schools in the country to return all pupils to full time schooling from 26 July. Schools were also told, however, that all existing Covid safety protocols, including the legislated 1 metre minimum distancing, needs to be met! On Tuesday 15 June, President Ramaphosa changed the country to Adjusted Level 3 and on Sunday to Adjusted Level 4.

After much research and discussion, the Management Team took their recommendations to the SGB. This was decided and a letter has been sent to Brent Walters, the Head of Education, Western Cape to recommend that:

- Grade 2 to grade 6 pupils will continue to come to school 4 days in 5. The day at home will continue to be used for projects, revision, oral preparation and reading.
- **School will start at 8:15 in term 3**, adding an extra quarter hour onto the school day. This means that parents will need to drop their children between 7:45 and 8:15. Red Roots pupils can continue to be dropped until 8:30, however.
- This extra time will be added to extending breaks and to create breathing time in the day.
- The sports hour for grade 3 – 7 will start at 14:00 and end at 15:00 as this term.
- Grade 1 and 2 sport will be completed before they go home as before.
- The Adjusted Level 3 Restrictions of a maximum of 50 people indoors and 100 outdoors, don't apply to schools. However, last week we moved the grade 6 pupils into their 2 bigger venues to allow the art room to be used in the future as space to divide the 70 grade 7 pupils, should this be necessary. The 2 grade 6 venues still allow for adequate spacing between desks. Level 4 restrictions mean schools are closed so this will only apply if we return to Level 3.
- All Covid safety protocols will remain in place in term 3, obviously: mask wearing, social distancing of at least 1 metre, sanitizing, temperature taking and ventilation of learning spaces. We will however only have 3 classrooms, the hall occasionally or passages available daily for taking breaks from the classrooms during bad weather. Should you therefore be concerned about this, you could choose to keep your child at home on those days. Work missed will be available on the weekly planning, but staff will not be able to catch up individually with children who are absent.

One of the reasons we can't bring all the pupils back full time is the social distancing of 1 metre inside with the timetable returning to normal, and the second reason is staffing. In the past two months, only on one day was nobody absent, and on most days, we missed 5 staff. At least 3 staff daily were absent because they were isolating – either because their 'cold symptoms' could be Covid related, or one of their family was sick and the family member had tested positive.

We have now agreed that the hall will be used for any grade who has a staff member isolating; this will allow 2 teaching staff to manage 3 classes without another staff member assisting. The teachers of the grade at home and the learning support department will continue to cover staff absence in the rest of the school.

Please go back and read the history of our Covid response in previous emails. A reminder that:

- We divided our 2 classes per grade into 3 because only 21 children fit into a regular PNPS classroom if desks are separated a metre apart.
- Instead of having 2 teachers per grade we now have 3 staff, leaving only the admin, finance, operations and learning support departments not in classrooms for a full day.

- Learning support continues to support all staff and pupils daily so cannot be used fulltime in classrooms.
- The hall is used as a classroom and a space for breaks in wet weather so cannot be used as a fulltime teaching venue for a grade. When a staff member is isolating, their grade moves into the hall so that 2 staff can cover 3 classes.
- The only daily few spaces at school are the 3 classrooms of the grade at home, the passages, the outside grounds and a bit of the aftercare a percentage of the time. These spaces are needed for ventilation as every class needs to move out of their classroom space every about 1 hour twenty minutes. When the weather is good the outside spaces are obviously the best place to be.
- The school has created classroom space everywhere: the front of the school, the Quiet Quad, the field, the lineup quad and the staff carpark. Few of these are available in rainy weather, however.
- In the past, PNPS always worked longer hours than other schools as we added assemblies, EMS, 3 arts and culture options and more technology subjects to our timetable. The number of hours our children have been at school in 2021 has been longer than ever before for some grades: grade R to 2 should be at school 23 hours, grade 3 25 hours and grade four to seven 27, 5 hours. This means that Red Roots, grade 1, 2 and grade 7 have been at school far longer than required, and grade 3 is at school for the right amount of time, even though they are at school 4 days out of 5. The grade 4, 5 and 6 pupils who are at school less than usual are using the trimmed curriculum and are ahead of where they need to be.

We also want you to know that PNPS is still committed to getting all our children back to school daily. We are hoping that this will happen in term 4 this year as the Third Wave should have passed by then, our staff should all be vaccinated, and the weather should be conducive again to learning outside.

### **Staff**

Last week it was announced that all people associated with schools will be vaccinated over the next 2 weeks. On Thursday we received a call in the middle of the morning to tell us that some of our staff could be vaccinated if we wanted them to that day. In total, 35 staff managed to get the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Friday was rather hectic as we had 15 of those staff off sick and another 8 went home during the day. We managed, in good spirits too! We are expecting all staff to be vaccinated by Thursday 8 July. We are so blessed to have this opportunity as even our facilitators, music teachers and tuckshop staff have access.

### **Reports**

Reports will be sent home electronically again during next week and should be printed and returned on the first day of next term. Please discuss the report with your child and set achievable goals for the rest of the year. Please be positive! **(Grade 6 & 7 parents – remember to make copies!)**

### **Codes on reports**

All our pupils are coded on a 1 to 7 scale, in line with the new curriculum documents nationally.

Code	Description
7	Outstanding achievement
6	Meritorious achievement
5	Substantial achievement
4	Adequate achievement

3	Moderate achievement
2	Elementary achievement
1	Not achieved

On the 1 to 7 scale, the expected code for any child who is achieving adequately is a 4. Anything above that then is better than expected, and anything below that is less than expected. To be given a 7 is very unusual – this means that the child is performing so well that they could be doing this section at the next year level! Please don't stress your children out about getting a 7 – very few children achieve that at Pinelands North. Please also don't be stressed out by friends or family whose children are receiving 7s at their schools. Be thankful that the level of education at Pinelands North is such that children seldom receive the highest codes - have you considered that marks or codes are relative? It is not the child who is exceptional necessarily which receives a code 7, it could be many other things – the standard expected at the school could be too low, the teacher might not be assessing properly, the tests/exams might be too easy, the teacher might not want parents to fuss so marks could be inflated, and the list goes on...be thankful that Pinelands North has **very** high expectations of your child and so when they go to high school, their marks almost always go up in every subject...better that way than being at a school of low expectations and then getting into high school and the real world with a shock...

If you are concerned about the codes your child has received, or you don't understand this system, speak to your child's teacher – that is the best way to find out what is expected at each level.

### **Super Survivor**

Although the weather was cold and sometimes wet, the children had such fun running, jumping and skipping through the obstacles the grade 6 pupils and Josh King put together. I was really glad I wasn't a parent receiving these dirty clothes at the end of the day! Thanks to the parents who sent oranges for the children and those who sent muffins to be sold for the Solidarity Fund.

### **2022 School Budget**

- The Governing Body has already been planning for the budget meetings to be held early next term. Any parent who wishes to be part of this process may do so – your commitment would however be the full process and so you will need to attend all budget preparation meetings between the first one until the ratification of the budget on 24 August. Contact Makhosi Ncube, the Treasurer, at 021 531-6245 if you are interested.
- Our annual budget meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 28 September at 19h30**, after the annual AGM at 19h00.

### **Library**

- A reminder that all Library books are due before the end of term. If anyone is unsure about having any outstanding books, please email your query to Caroline Eriksen at [library@pnps.co.za](mailto:library@pnps.co.za)
- We have recently restocked our library, focusing on the purchase of modern Afrikaans books to encourage reading in a second language. We are very excited about the books we have found and look forward to feedback from our pupils and families. In an endeavour to purchase even more new books, we would like to offer you the opportunity to sponsor the purchase price of one of these books. To see details of the book titles and the prices, see attached Google form. You can sponsor a book by adding your child's name on the attached form and making payment into the school account. Your child's name will appear in the sponsored book as an acknowledgment of your support. For ease of reference, payment can be made to:

Pinelands North Primary School

Nedbank, Pinelands

Acc 1047018306

Branch code 104709

Reference 'Lib' and surname

Link: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PIJ1mLpgLcg1N-vullw8SAnsI2Suxy9gVTvsu\\_6CHwM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PIJ1mLpgLcg1N-vullw8SAnsI2Suxy9gVTvsu_6CHwM/edit?usp=sharing)

### **Parent interviews**

Teachers will be arranging parent interviews for the first week of term 3. Please look out for the Google form should you need to make an appointment.

### **Facilitators' Course**

After a very successful course last term, we will be running another, starting on 31 July and ending on 14 August. The classes on 31 July and 14 August will be face-to-face, with the other classes in between hosted via Zoom. You don't have to want to be a facilitator to do the course – you might be a parent who wishes to support your own children far more at school or during the afternoons, or you might want to be teacher aide at a school. This course will assist with skills for both of these. Send an email to [events@pnps.co.za](mailto:events@pnps.co.za) for details and application form.

### **Early Act**

- During the cold and wet winter weather, let's be mindful of those without shelter. During the holidays, please take some time to go through your wardrobes. On the first Friday of next term, we will be having *Triple J Day*. Pupils can come to school on the day wearing their jolliest jersey over their uniform and bring another item to donate. Warm items for donation can include jackets, jerseys, beanies, gloves, scarves, duvets and/or blankets.
- From next term, Food Fridays will only be happening *every second week*. We will continue to sell large and mini pizzas at R40 a pack and rotis at R30 a pack.
- We will also start selling delicious jars of honey at R70 each.

### **Uniform Shop**

Don't forget you can order school clothing online at any time using the email address: [uniform@pnps.co.za](mailto:uniform@pnps.co.za). Payment can be done via eft and clothes will be delivered to your children in their classrooms.

### **Internet and cell phone safety**

The following advice to parents may be of assistance:

- Wait as long as possible before you give your child a smartphone with an internet connection. Early primary school is way too soon!
- Personal computers with an internet connection should be set up in the home's shared spaces (eg kitchen / living room), preferably in an open area where other family members walk past regularly.
- Use filters and monitors such as ShieldMyTeen, Net Nanny or K9 which block most pornography and violence.
- Talk to your child about sexting, cyberbullying and safety on social media and dating sites.
- Check your child's phone in their presence. If you have the right to meet their friends in real life, you have the right to meet their online friends and to make sure they are who they say they are.
- Insist on knowing your child's passwords. If they are changed, you need to know about it.

- Have regular discussions with your children about the dangers of social media and the internet.

Be very careful of your own use of social media. Your example is worth far more than rules.

### **FEDSAS Management**

Paul Colditz, the CEO of the Federated Association of School Governing Bodies, is retiring in October after 23 years! Paul started the organisation in Bloemfontein and was instrumental in creating the South African Schools' Act. He has assisted our school on numerous times in the past and his organisation's advice has been invaluable over the years. Thank you for your tireless work on behalf of schools over the years, Paul.

The Management Committee of FEDSAS has appointed the Deputy, Jaco Deacon, as the next CEO. Jaco has also been a part of our extended school community for years, and both he and Paul attended our staff Long Service awards ceremony a few years ago. Congratulations Jaco!

### **Solidarity Fund**

- A special thank you to staff members who have been clearing out their cupboards and selling their secondhand clothes, scarves, jewellery and handbags to other staff in aid of the Solidarity Fund. A few thousand rand has come in during the past month for this alone.
- If you have any secondhand items like these that you would like to part with for the Solidarity Fund, send the items to Erica and we will let you know how much you added to the fund.

### **And finally...**

- Are you a second or third generation PNPS family? Have you told us your story yet? I am currently writing the school history and would love to hear from you. Thanks to the family members who have already responded. Please email Erica at [admin@pnps.co.za](mailto:admin@pnps.co.za) to let her know if you are, so we can arrange to take a photograph, and if you'd like to put pen to paper, I would love to hear your memories...when were you at the school, who do you remember and why, what made school a good place to be, why are your family still with the school? Those are some of the things we'd love to hear, but anything else too!
- Thank you to those families who regularly respond to our call for assistance. Just this morning we received a bag of fabric, 3 brand new board games and a bag of vegetables for the ducks!
- Thanks to the ever-growing number of parents who advertise Pinelands North so positively 'out there'! We are continually receiving tweets, blog posts, emails and letters from all of you...and we usually sit with tears in our eyes as you tell us your positive experiences of school, of children and of staff members who have made an impact on your family's life. Thank you for letting us know!

Yours sincerely



Ann Morton  
Principal

## SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMUNICATING WITH OUR CHILDREN

Hello all! After the end of Term 2 I am sure conversations took place in every household about each child's academic progress. I often hear it said, that the reports are a valuable tool, not only for plotting a child's academic journey, but for sparking conversations which allow us to gain insight into their lives at school.

So often, when our children get home at the end of the day they shrug off their overloaded bags and flop on to the sofa or go tearing off to play, ready for a brain break. When we, their parents, eagerly ask them about school, they shrug and say, "Fine," or...if we are very blessed...they dig a crumpled note out of their bags and say, "Oh, you have to sign this."

This year, as the mother of a teenage son, I suddenly found myself experiencing a whole new range of one-word answers. "Fine" became a grudging, "Same," or "Long," or my personal favourite, "Why?"

Hungry for a better way to reconnect, I formed a pact with this beautiful, silent, mysterious, giant who has replaced the little boy I used to invent stuff with. (A giant who, I might add, still transforms into a chatty, animated creature at 11 o'clock at night, when the rest of the household is sliding into sleep.)

We agreed that I had license to ask him about four basic topics each day when we reunited after school, and that he would have to answer them with at least *some* level of effort.

In return, he would ask me the same question and listen to my four responses, so that he got a handle on the day I had just experienced. This has grown our ability to treat one another gently and gauge one another's head space, as we settle back into home life. We negotiated about the framework for this and agreed on the following: **Tell me the best bit, the worst bit, the most interesting bit and one relationship story from your day.**

As simple as this framework seems, it invites the other person into your space and often offers things up, which would otherwise, have remained dormant. It has also formed an early warning system and helped me to make interventions on so many issues which would have been impossible to resolve at 11 p.m.

I would love to invite school families to create a similar framework, while your children are still in primary school, so that later, when the teenage years kick in, and those "PRIVATE" signs go up both on their bedroom doors and in their eyes, our beautiful children can find their way back to us daily, by following a simple thread of words.

**Suzi Cinderey**  
**Previous Head of Aftercare**