

6 October 2020

Dear Parents,

As we have opened school for face to face learning it is almost inevitable that we will have cases where our students and our staff test positive for COVID -19.

We have received confirmation that two members of our staff have received positive tests for COVID -19 late on Sunday evening, one a teacher and the other a member of admin staff, both at the high school. The said teacher, and members of his immediate family, immediately went into isolation from Saturday as per advice from their doctor and had also gone into quarantine with immediate effect in accordance with our Health and Safety protocols.

As Head of this institution, I need to deal with this information with great sensitivity so that all parties interests are well protected, including that of the school and such matters needed careful consideration before being placed into the public domain. It is unfortunate that some from within our own school community have taken the lead in this matter to provide parents with half- baked information which deepens the pervasive mistrust that I am trying to correct in this community.

The affected teacher has not been in close contact with students because he teaches senior classes and most of them are currently on study leave. The colleague has provided me with names of staff that may have been in close contact with him for contact tracing purposes.

I have been in contact with the potentially affected members of staff and explained the required protocols to be followed.

We have deep cleaned and sanitized all affected spaces including the hostels.

I have shared this communication with the District Office of the Department of Education and also reported it to Mrs Kaudi who reports all cases to the COVID -19 Nerve Centre in the North West province.

The admin member of staff was turned away from school and sent home after recording a high temperature during screening last week Monday on the 28th September. She later took a test in the week which returned positive on Saturday afternoon. In real terms, she has not been in contact with members of the school community for almost 9 days now and she works in an office by herself where there is little or no contact with other members of the community. However, we are still engaged in the process of contact tracing with people she potentially could have made contact with.

No other member of the Academic nor support staff has tested positive to my knowledge to date this term, nor has any student from the International School of South Africa. Should any member of staff test positive from the contact tracing as result of close contact with the said staff members, the ISSA community will be immediately informed, so that contact tracing of those students and staff who potentially could be affected can be done to implement the correct protocols.

Parents I wish to make the following comments around the space we are currently occupying:

- Parents we are trying to manage this space as responsibly as we can. We can assure the school community that our Health and Safety protocols follow the legislated requirements and our level of COVID -19 readiness is geared towards keeping staff and students' safe at all times.
- Furthermore, it is important that we act sensibly and that we do not engage in unnecessary hype or panic.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

+27 18 381 0330 +27 18 381 0330 issaprimary@issa.co.za



"If it's important to the child, it's important to us."

SECONDARY SCHOOL

+27 18 381 1102 +27 18 381 1187 admin@issa.co.za



- Going forward we will be hearing of many more cases in this regard, in our schools and workplaces. We need to remain vigilant as we continue to deal with this invisible disease.
- Going forward we need to try and operate within the framework of this pandemic in a responsible way until a vaccine is found.
- You would have noticed that workplaces and schools are no longer opening and closing with every suspected or confirmed case as was in the beginning of Lockdown because we need to operate within this reality as challenging as it may sometimes be.
- However, if any parents feel anxious and wish to keep their children at home to continue with online learning, please feel free to do so but please inform their teachers.
- You have the right to make the best decision for your children.
- If you have any concerns related to COVID -19, please direct them to me immediately.

Parents I wish to draw your attention to an excerpt from the Standard Operating Procedures by which we are also guided at the International School of South Africa as stipulated by the Department of Basic Education. Please familiarize yourself with these stipulations. In particular, refer to clause 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

The Concluding Statement reads as follows:

NB. "Keeping learners at home or closing schools is a serious decision which may restrict the learners' ability to acquire education, amongst other considerations. The decision to direct learners to stay at home, because of possible exposure to, or infection with COVID -19 should be justified by the available scientific evidence and must be directed by the accountable health authorities."

I wish to apologise for the delayed response by myself and the inconvenience this has caused at this time. I wish to assure you that I will keep you fully informed of any new developments over the next few days.

As we continue to navigate uncharted waters, I wish to thank those parents that have raised their concerns with me around this issue in a courteous and respectful manner. I continue to ask for your patience and understanding as we deal with these matters in a transparent and cooperative manner.

I conclude by saying that we may not name or stigmatise anyone who might be suffering from this illness. It is thus important to show compassion, empathy, respect, and support for each other during times like these.

Please do not hesitate to call me directly should you need any further clarity and thank you again for all the support I receive from you.

Yours sincerely



Bruce Wells
CEO/Headmaster
International School of South Africa

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF SOUTH AFRICA



Private Bag X2233
Mafikeng South, 2791

Cnr. William Dick Avenue &
Nelson Mandela Drive
Libertas, Mahikeng, 2745
Republic of South Africa

www.issa.co.za

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