

Dear Junior School Parents

You will have heard that the Minister gave the go ahead this week for schools to reopen on 1 June, and also stated that independent schools will be able to do introduce the phasing model that best suits their context and which ensures they adhere to COVID readiness conditions and protocols.

I acknowledge that this news will elicit mixed feelings for both parents and girls. On the one hand there is the excited anticipation of returning to your much loved school and reuniting with friends while on the other hand there is possibly the fear of leaving your 'safe bubble' from the past two and a half months and the worry that you might contract the virus if you do return to school. And added to these worries, is that you know that different systems will be in place and how will you be able to prepare for your first day. I want to reassure you all that these are normal and healthy responses and that you are not alone. The staff are prepared for your arrival and will be available to support and guide you as you settle in to school again. Girls, we've missed you and can't wait to engage with you face to face again.

The decision has been taken to phase the grades back slowly and to gradually build to our rotational model of online and contact days. This will ensure that we can run a thorough orientation day with each grade as they are re-introduced to the physical school environment. This timetable model is one of the options set out in the Department of Basic Education guidelines published this week, and we believe is best suited to the needs of our community and the physical environment of our school.

When can boarders return?

Grade 6 boarders should return on **Sunday, 31 May**,

Grade 7 boarders on **Monday, 1 June**, and

Grade 5 boarders on **Wednesday, 17 June**.

Details of the reception of Boarders will be sent by Ms Mbandlwa.

It is essential that we know exactly who to expect.

- ◇ This means that we ask for parents of boarders from other countries who are unable to return at this stage, and those who have decided that their daughter will not return at this stage, to let the boarding office know in writing, before **Wednesday, 27 May**.
- ◇ All parents are to please complete this [Form](#) by **Wednesday, 27 May**, to indicate if their daughter(s) will be returning to school when her grade is phased in or not.

What to expect on your first day back at school?

- ◇ Mrs Jennings, Mrs van der Merwe, Sr Annika and the form teachers for the grades returning will be waiting at the Pedestrian Gate from 07:00 to welcome you back and to guide you through the screening process that will happen every day when you arrive at school.
- ◇ Due to the strict screening protocols that we need to follow, we are unable to welcome a girl into the school before 07:00.
- ◇ Parents should not exit cars. Visitor access to the school will be strictly controlled. The safety of the your daughters and the staff is our first priority.
- ◇ Girls will stand along the three paths leading into the Junior School, on the physical distancing markers to guide their position as they wait to enter the school.
- ◇ Girls must please come to school wearing their own mask and on arrival they will be issued with two school masks.
- ◇ Before your daughter's first day back at school, you will receive a questionnaire that must please be completed by you, in consultation with your daughter, which she will hand to her teacher when her temperature is taken with an infrared thermometer. This process will be followed daily as part of the screening protocol.
- ◇ Your daughter will then sanitise her hands.

- ◇ After completing the screening process, all girls will move to their allocated area on the school playground where they will be greeted by one of the teachers from their grade.
- ◇ Physical distancing must always be practiced, and masks must always be worn, except when eating.
- ◇ Once all the girls coming to school that day have arrived, the teachers will allocate the girls to their classrooms. Each class will be split across two classrooms to accommodate the physical distancing requirements.
- ◇ Assembly, form time and Chapel will be broadcast or shared with the girls in these venues until such time as we can host these services in our Chapel.
- ◇ The girls will follow the Distance Learning timetables during the day and any girl who has chosen not to return to school will follow the same timetable and lessons at home. We are working on the technology that will allow us to broadcast lessons to girls who are unable to return to school.
- ◇ Girls will remain in the same classroom for the day and teachers will move venues.
- ◇ Girls and teachers are required to sanitise their hands at the start of each new lesson and when they enter and exit the bathrooms.
- ◇ All girls at school will have a supervised break from 09:30 to 10:00, each in their own allocated area. The Intersen Phase girls will have a second break from 12:00 to 12:30.
- ◇ Foundation Phase girls must be collected from school at 12:00 when their academic day concludes and Intersen Phase girls must be collected at 13:15. No aftercare or extramurals will be offered in this initial phase of reintegration. Due to the strict protocols that we need to follow, we are unable to look after girls in the afternoon.

We plan to receive your daughters back at school in the following phases. Please understand that at this stage we can confirm the first week's arrangements and will communicate weekly as information is made available to the School regarding the status of the pandemic.

<p>Mon 1 June</p> <p>Gr 6 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Tues 2 June</p> <p>Gr 7 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades, including Grade 6, to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Wed 3 June</p> <p>Gr 6 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades, including Grade 7, to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Thurs 4 June</p> <p>Gr 7 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades, including Grade 6 to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Fri 5 June</p> <p>All grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>
<p>Mon 8 June</p> <p>Gr 6 and Gr 3 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Tues 9 June</p> <p>Gr 7 and Gr 2 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Wed 10 June</p> <p>Gr 6 and Gr 3 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Thurs 11 June</p> <p>Gr 7 and Gr 2 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Fri 12 June</p> <p>All grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>
<p>Mon 15 June</p> <p>Gr 6, Gr 3 and Gr 4 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Tues 16 June</p> <p>YOUTH DAY</p>	<p>Wed 17 June</p> <p>Gr 6, Gr 3 and Gr 4 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Thurs 18 June</p> <p>Gr 7, Gr 2 and Gr 5 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>	<p>Fri 19 June</p> <p>Gr 7, Gr 2 and Gr 5 to return to school.</p> <p>All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.</p>

Mon 22 June	Tues 23 June	Wed 24 June	Thurs 25 June	Fri 26 June
Gr 6, Gr 3, Gr 4 and Gr 0 to return to school. All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.	Gr 7, Gr 2, Gr 5 and Gr 1 to return to school. All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.	Gr 6, Gr 3, Gr 4 and Gr 0 to return to school. All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.	Gr 7, Gr 2, Gr 5 and Gr 0 to return to school. All other grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.	All grades to continue with the Distance Learning programme at home.

Tuck shop

A reminder that day girls will not be able to order hot lunches. If you will not be sending your daughter to school with her own lunch, then orders can be placed with the tuckshop. **Further details will be shared next week on the D6 Communicator regarding the pre-order system.**

Aftercare News ~ Mrs G Wöcke

In this time of distance learning we are continually learning how we can offer our girls support while they learn at home. We have opened up our Aftercare as part of the distance learning process. The aftercare teachers will be available in the afternoons from 13h30 to 15h00. Your daughter will have the opportunity to check in with one of the aftercare teachers once a week. The teachers will set up a meeting using the Teams platform. This is an opportunity for your daughter to chat about her day, the things she enjoyed and anything that may have been a problem over the past few days such as poor connectivity. We are sure that you and your daughter will find this opportunity to connect with the teachers a valuable one. It is not a compulsory activity. Everyone will be included in next week's schedules and girls who choose not to participate week on week, can just let their allocated teacher know and she will then not be included in future meetings.

Physical Activities News ~ Coach Neo

Physical activity improves focus, school performance, sleep and energy levels. Those who undertake in physical activity enjoy improved relationships and a more positive body image. As the Physical Education department we have included programs for your daughter to keep her active. In addition to the normal PE lessons we have included extra activities that will help your daughter to stay active throughout the week while still participating in the prescribed lesson. In the coming weeks we will be adding fun tasks which will encourage your daughter to be active while doing online learning. The Intersen Phase activities will be loaded weekly onto their Phys Ed Teams and the Foundation Phase activities can be accessed on their Phys Ed programs for that week which will be loaded on SeeSaw. We encourage parents to motivate our girls to get moving while learning.

Dress Code:

Dress code is winter uniform or school tracksuit. No blazers are to be worn as these are difficult to wash daily.

Distance Learning Portal

The timetables and weekly schedules are available on the Distance Learning Portal on the school website or directly via this URL:

<http://www.stmarys.pta.school.za/distancelearning>.

The schedules are loaded weekly on a Friday afternoon and should be referenced in conjunction with the grade's timetable.



Please note that on the Friday before your daughter's first day back at school a new timetable will be shared on the portal. This new timetable will be followed by all the girls, whether they are back at school or at home.

Communication sent this week

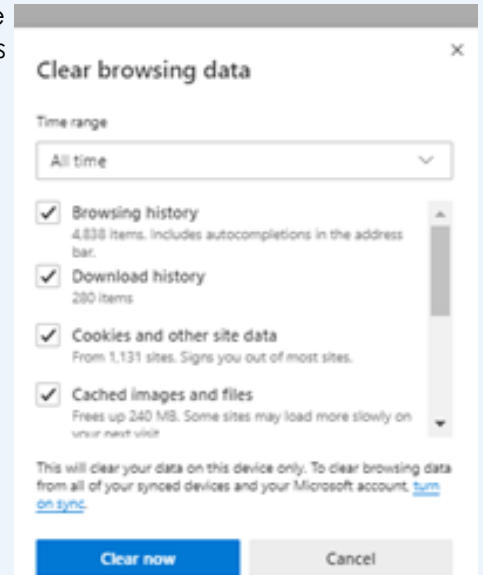
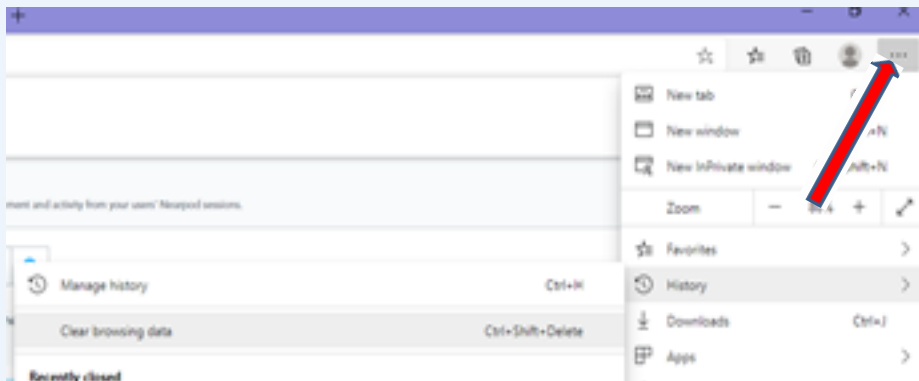
- ◇ Flu vaccination letter - D6 Communicator
- ◇ Grade 2 and Grade 3 FAL Groups and Timetable - D6 Communicator and emailed to parents.

DISTANCE LEARNING - HELPFUL TIPS TO KEEP RUNNING SMOOTHLY ~ Mrs A van Wyk

1 Browser History

As the girls are working online their browser history should be cleared every week. This will prevent malfunctioning of apps such as Seesaw and Online applications:

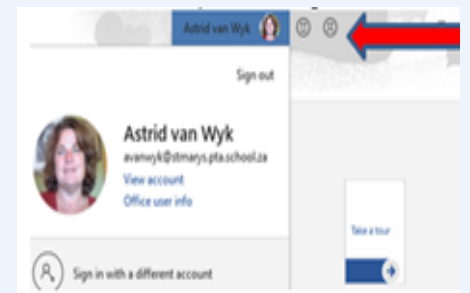
- ⇒ Click on the ellipsis (...) in the top right of your browser
- ⇒ Find History and click Clear History



Make sure that the time range is All Time and then click Clear Now

2 Outdated browsers and Office 365 versions

This prevents the girls from achieving the full efficacy of the Microsoft platform. Please see the Parent Guide with tips on how to update browsers. Office 365 can be installed directly from your daughter's Office suite online alternately please contact Mr Viljoen for assistance. Furthermore, remember that girls have to be signed into their account in MSWord as well as in Teams if they are working on their desktop application of the app, in order to submit their assignments successfully.



3 Seesaw

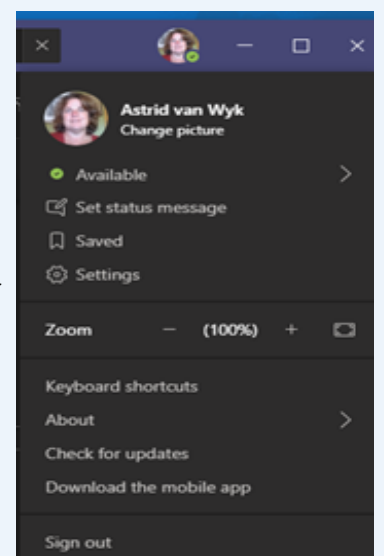
Seesaw is improving on their capabilities and have encouraged us to update their Class app to the 7.3 version. If your daughter is using a device with the app please make sure you have the latest update of the app.

4 ClassNoteBook updates

The girls were given a short tutorial on how to update ClassNoteBook check that your daughter has run the update if she is using the desktop app of ClassNoteBook. This updates ensures that your daughter receives the distributed pages correctly and efficiently.

5 Teams

Lastly please run a weekly or biweekly update of the Teams desktop application.



PARENT FEEDBACK ON WELLNESS WINDOW ACTIVITIES ~ The Counselling Centre

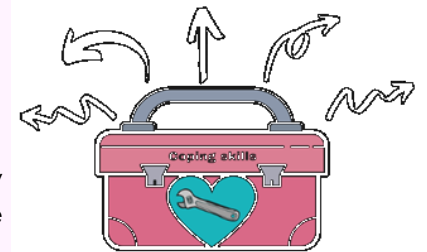
As a school community we understand the value and importance of wellbeing and self-care. As an extension of the wellness activities and social emotional learning experiences normally provided at school, an optional Wellness Window activity has been provided to the grade 0 – 7 girls each week. Your continued support and involvement in your daughter's life is an invaluable asset in her ongoing development. As such, we will provide weekly feedback and tips on implementing some of the relevant skills shared in these activities, at home.

This week, we focussed on the use of different coping skills. Coping skills are tools and strategies for managing our feelings and moods.

Before jumping straight into the use of a coping skill, it is important to acknowledge, name and validate what we observe e.g. "I can see you are feeling very _____, we all have big feelings sometimes and that is alright."

Once you can see that your daughter feels acknowledged and validated, you can move on to trying or suggesting a coping skill. During this time, we are all being placed in new situations which may provide us with ample opportunities to practice and apply newly learned coping skills.

Some of the basic coping skills shared with the girls this week, include:



1 Deep breathing techniques:

Taking 5 to 10 deep calming breaths can have a big impact on any one's emotional response to a given situation. A visualisation can also be added, for example:

- ◇ Pretending to be a dragon, breathing in cool air and breathing out all the hot feelings inside
- ◇ Pretending to sniff a big bunch of flowers and letting the breath out slowly or
- ◇ Pretending to be holding a warm cup of hot chocolate, breathing in the smell and blowing out slowly (as if cooling the hot drink).

2 Connecting with others:

Reaching out for emotional support by connecting with others can be a very important tool to use. This connection can be sought either physically, for a hug and reassurance, or emotionally, by seeking time to talk things through.

3 Grounding:

This technique is aimed at assisting an individual in grounding their emotions. This is done by focussing their attention on becoming more aware of their surroundings and their body, by using different senses e.g.: focussing on 3 things they can see, hear, smell, taste and feel in the moment.

4 Being active:

Being physically active can assist with the release of excess emotional energy and help relieve some frustration, not to mention the various benefits of the endorphins released when being active.

5 Refocussing/Distracting:

When experiencing a big emotion, it can be helpful to redirect focus and energy towards an enjoyable activity. Focussing on a favourite activity, creative craft or a familiar hobby can be useful in channelling emotional energy more positively some examples could include reading, listening to music, dancing, drawing or writing, building or creating.

Kind regards


ALISON JENNINGS (MRS)
PRINCIPAL: JUNIOR SCHOOL

Stay connected via the School's Social Media platforms:

Facebook - <http://www.stmarys.pta.school.za/>

Instagram - @stmarysdsdgpta