



15 March 2020

Dear Michael Oak Community

URGENT COMMUNICATION REGARDING COVID-19 VIRUS

The College of Teachers and Board of Trustees held an emergency meeting on Sunday 15th to discuss the implications of the Corona virus. We considered the available information and the responses that have been taken by governments and schools.

As you will appreciate, the situation is very fluid and changes hourly. We know that COVID-19 is an asymptomatic illness, meaning that people carrying the virus can be infectious without knowing it. This creates massive challenges in managing its curtailment. One of the key responses globally and locally is to practise social distancing and, in some cases, quarantine. A crucial goal of these actions is to slow the infection rate so that public health systems don't become overwhelmed.

As a school, we are mindful that we should act in the interests of children, staff, parents and the broader community and that we should do our bit to limit the spread of COV-19. We know that this has implications for both parents and teachers and the decision has not been taken lightly.

Given the potentially substantial risks, it has been decided that Michael Oak will close early this term and that the last school day will be this Tuesday, 17 March, at normal school closing times.

Over the next two days the school will continue its hygiene practices as rigorously as possible. We will ensure that teachers cease physical contact with pupils such as hand shaking for greetings. We will be ensuring that teachers communicate effectively with students around the risks and we ask that parents do the same. We have also cancelled all large gatherings at the school until further notice.

The school is following the World Health Guidelines on international travel and we ask that all international travellers, and those in contact with them, self-quarantine at home for 14 days after their return. In such cases, parents are required to notify the school immediately by e-mailing pschneider@michaeloak.org.za and your class guardian/teacher. Michael Oak will not be accepting any exchange students into our school until further notice.

The Faculties will meet on Tuesday afternoon to finalise distance learning methods appropriate for different age groups. These will then be communicated directly to you by your class teacher or guardian. In respect of this, we ask that you ensure that your communication details are up to date.

If you feel the need to keep your children at home over the next two days, we support that decision and ask you to inform the school and your class teacher/guardian.

This decision has been made out of our commitment to the well-being of our school community and out of our civic responsibility to our fellow citizens. We believe that this action will contribute to limiting transmission as research indicates that the next two weeks will be critical for slowing the spread of this virus.

At this stage the expectation is that school will resume on Wednesday, April 15th for the second term. We will be monitoring the situation closely and will communicate timeously as required.

We know that these are unusual times and we ask that we all do our bit to not sow fear and panic. Rather, let us share responsibility and act collectively.

We thank everyone in the school community for your support and understanding.

Kind regards

Michael Oak College of Teachers and Board of Trustees