



Reaction to and APEEE position on the Communication on Continued Measures for European Schools in Brussels of 20 October 2020

CA 65/2020

Brussels, 27 October 2020

Dear Ms Sciberras,

On behalf of the members of the EEB3 APEEE Management Board and its Educational Advisory Committee, we welcome the measures announced in your communication of 20 October, which will start to apply as from 3rd of November. The measures reply to most current worries on the Covid-19 situation in Belgium and in our school, as expressed by a large number of parents within all sections. Our internal consultations will pursue, as the situation evolves. We agree that measures must be based on a constant analysis of the situation in Brussels and in our school. Moreover, measures must be based on scientific evidence.

We underline the benefits of onsite teaching and learning and welcome that face-to-face teaching will continue in the School, with enhanced measures in place to prevent the circulation of the virus.

We welcome the adoption of a rotation system in Secondary, as this avoids the splitting of classes, for 1 day online learning per week in S1-5 for a period of 5 weeks as a good first temporary solution to reduce the daily physical presence by 300 students. We stress the importance of regular monitoring of these measures and agree that further changes may be needed depending on how the situation evolves. The 200% increase of positive Covid-19 cases among pupils in last week demonstrates that we have to remain extremely vigilant. We welcome that an evaluation of the measures will take place by December, including the rotation system in S1-5, and we invite the School to involve both students and the APEEE in the regular monitoring. In this context we also suggest convening an extraordinary SAC meeting after the All Saints' holiday period.

We regret that parent representatives across all European Schools in Brussels were not consulted on the precise configuration of these measures, although they also impact directly on the management and the financial situation of the APEEE services. We stress the importance of regular monitoring and corrective evaluation of any measures.



In addition to those announced in the communication, we call for the following:

- To frequently ventilate classes and to measure air quality through appropriate means;
- To explore the possibility of wearing masks for Primary pupils, as we record a relatively higher infection rate in that level, especially during moments of circulation in the school and at moments where groups are mixed (L2, European hours) and to suspend the activities of the choir; to reduce unnecessary mixing of Primary and Nursery pupils in general; to ensure that the breaks' sequence follows a more staggered approach to ensure social distancing as much as possible;
- To work together with the APEEE on the measures to preserve class bubbles in the canteen as much as possible by adapting, if possible, the service and courses' timetables and/or to provide lunch to the nursery pupils in their classes;
- To keep students from S1-3 in their L1 classrooms, and review the current system by making the teachers change classrooms instead, thus reducing student crowds in corridors;
- To enforce the use of masks by adults and students of Secondary at all times and to wear them correctly covering both nose and mouth, also when there exists a distance of 1.5 meters; possible sanctions should be considered if these rules are not respected;
- To avoid congestion, to the extent possible, in all spaces through adaptation and redistribution of common facilities, such as lockers, as well as by streamlining the entrance/exit of large groups the canteen, labs, libraries and other rooms of common use;
- To care for vulnerable students, their families as well as teachers and their families, in order to ensure quality teaching and equal treatment for all (the results of the APEEE survey on this matter contain useful suggestions)¹;
- To give automatically access to online teaching to all Secondary students in quarantine as well as to those in vulnerable family situations and to ensure adequate teaching for those in Primary, without them having to ask each teacher to grant them access;
- To ensure that teachers in preventive quarantine, who are not sick, schedule and give daily online lessons from home via Teams;
- To provide all necessary information and teaching material on SMS and TEAMS and to ensure a regular exchange between students and teachers in periods of quarantine/vulnerability;
- To ensure that all technological conditions for quality hybrid education for students in quarantine and vulnerable students are met, including the provision of appropriate devices to teachers (such as Bluetooth headphones) and the immediate resolution of any school-based connectivity and uninterrupted transmission problems in remote teaching;
- To change policies regarding quarantine of siblings: we demand that all siblings of pupils/students in quarantine as well as children of parents in quarantine are also quarantining, and we fail to understand why this is currently not the case;

¹ <https://www.apeeeb3.be/article/results-apee-e-survey-vulnerable-families-continuity-teaching-and-learning-during-covid-19>



- To improve and clearly communicate the school quarantine and tracing policy in order to state periods and conditions of absence from the school and to identify all high-risk contacts of a confirmed Covid case (i.e. not only siblings), thereby ensuring that they are placed in quarantine without delay, as indicated in the Belgian protocol.
- To change policies regarding quarantine of classes in Secondary, thereby extending it beyond L1 classes, in view of the fact that depending on the class level many courses (up to 80%) are taken outside the L1 group of pupils;
- To reconsider information policy towards individual parents; currently the information parents are receiving remains too abstract, not always telling other than that their child was in the same class as a positive case; we request that more targeted and individualized information is provided; moreover, we demand that such communication is consistently provided also to any other groups beyond the L1 class that are equally concerned (such as students in L2 courses) by following the template provided in Annex²;
- To inform the school community by means of a dedicated web space on the school website about Covid-19 updated rules and measures, including quality assurance in internal spaces' cleaning;
- To strongly encourage the exit of Secondary students and school staff through Loge 3 as much as possible, especially on Wednesdays, to avoid a too high flow of parents entering and pupils leaving the School premises through Loge 2;
- To preserve the S7 BAC and Pre-BAC on-site exams as well as those in higher Secondary classes
- To maintain flexibility for the organisation of classes after the school holidays, where appropriate, to allow for a safe return to school.

We would like to thank you personally, the wider School management, the teaching staff and all supporting staff for having made schooling possible during this difficult period. We look forward to a positive and structured dialogue in SAC with regard the implementation and possible review of the announced and possible additional Covid-19 educational and safety measures.

On behalf of the APEEE Management Board and its Educational Advisory Committee,

Tassos Papadopoulos (APEEE President)
Koen Nomden (APEEE VP for educational affairs)

² A template with a minimum information is provided in Annex to this letter.



Template

(Minimum information to be provided to parents in the school's letter of vigilance):

Number of positive cases / persons in preventive quarantine per class/course:

Classes/course (L1 + other courses)	Number of positive cases	Number of persons in preventive quarantine	Class/course in quarantine (yes/no)

Date of the delivery of the test result(s) and last day in school of positive cases:

Period of quarantine: From until ...

Possible exception and conditions for an earlier return to the school:

Negative test: YES - NO

Medical certificate (confirming the return): YES – NO