



**Interparents interventions at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Joint Teaching Committee on 5 June 2020**

**Consequences of COVID-19 – Follow-up of the Board of Governors and Preparation of the 2020/21 school year**

## **II. Measures taken to improve distance teaching and learning**

### **1. Recommendations on distance learning**

*Interparents would like to congratulate OSG and the individual schools for striving to meet the urgent and unforeseen challenges presented by COVID-19 with regards to Distance Learning. While much progress was made during the lockdown period, there should now be a serious evaluation of lessons learned in order to raise and harmonize standards across the system going into September.*

*During the lockdown period, students' experience with teachers has ranged from exemplary to completely absent. It would be necessary to evaluate and identify the reasons for any absences, in order to provide training, support or resources. While an adjustment period was acceptable, anything that does not meet the standards set by the OSG should no longer be tolerated.*

*Interparents appreciates the Recommendations document, and welcomes the Memorandum which lays out the requirements for Distance Learning. Parents need to be made aware of the basic requirements, in order to ensure quality and equal treatment of all students across the system. Now that these documents have been developed, it is important to share them with parents.*

*Looking forward to September, parents would also appreciate a clear definition of Distance Learning in terms of approach, strategy and targets. A system-wide Distance Learning Policy should be a public document available to all stakeholders. In the coming months, schools should also produce local policies incorporating requirements and recommendations from the central Distance Learning Policy.*

*Finally, Interparents feels that before moving forward it will be essential to evaluate the effect distance learning has had on the attainment of this year's syllabi aims: this must be assessed in a detailed manner, class by class and subject by subject, in order to identify any gaps that will need filling.*

### **2. Recommendations to Parents on how to Support Learning at Home during suspension of obligatory regular attendance of pupils'**

### **3. Guidelines concerning the pedagogical use of online video, audio and chat meetings and data protection**

### **4. "Helpdesk" and networks organised by the Pedagogical Development Unit**

*Interparents welcomes these initiatives from the Pedagogical Development Unit. The Digital Learning and Teaching team could even be expanded to include student "champions" to provide peer-to-peer support. How can the identification and sharing of best practice be further formalized and communicated? Specific directives or guidelines could perhaps be communicated directly to teachers by OSG via Sharepoint.*

*We have hopes that Inspectors will also complement the work of the OSG by identifying subject-specific distance learning champions, and sharing DL best practices from within the ES system and across the various national systems. These champions should also be involved in adapting the syllabi for hybrid learning.*

*Teachers should be given the opportunity to express what has worked well and which challenges they've faced - this could be achieved through a self-evaluation form and/or level/department meetings in June. It is essential to use these last weeks of the school year to take stock of what has worked well and what needs improvement. Where are the urgent needs in each school? This will make it possible to conduct more formal trainings during the pedagogical days in September and to have compliance methods in place for the new school year. Would schools be allowed to set up a system for self-evaluation of teachers and training in June?*

## **5. Educational Support**

*Interparents thank the Central Office for having organised quickly an exchange of good practice and experience between the schools and the support coordinators.*

- *Anabela Gracio, the new support coordinator at central level, arrived at the right time and already proved her value.*
- *There is a need to ensure distance learning for educational support. This implies a need to include in the central guidance attention to special needs pupils in the class setting online (or in situ with specific restrictions) to make sure that individual or group support lessons continue as much as possible. From what we know, despite improvement over time, there have been and still are gaps in provision.*
- *If schools will move to system of shifts, ISA pupils should get priority treatment and, if preferred by parents, be allowed to come more often to school to participate in class and support lessons.*
- *Distance learning/Teams can be particularly difficult for pupils with certain executive functioning issues (ADHD, ASD, some DYS) and those having normally the help of a support assistant. Others do better but it really depends on the individual pupil and circumstances. In any event, it is important to make all information accessible in one place.*
- *It is important to make special allowances for therapists operating under tripartite agreements. This can, for instance, be dedicated access to Teams.*
- *While we greatly value the efforts made by OSG, schools and teachers, we feel that there should be some guidance from OSG to schools to clarify the key issues regarding the educational support provision in these particular circumstances and to ensure that the educational support policy and procedures are followed such as:*
  - *organisation of virtual Support Advisory Group meetings at the end of the school year,*
  - *general line should be to continue educational support with the same hours in the next school year*

- *transition from P5 to S1*
- *flexibility as regards deadlines for external reports or requests for special arrangements, notably for the BAC phase. Good communication is key; which includes having updated, compliant and accessible school guidelines in all schools.*
- *For the future, it is important to have a full range of support structure. In this regard, in the view of Interparents, progress to clarify the role of support assistants and to integrate other specialists via a modernised statute will be very important.*

### **III. Follow-up of the Board of Governors**

- 1. European Baccalaureate Session 2020**
- 2. Follow-up with respect to Nursery/Primary and Secondary Cycle (S 1 – S 6)**
- 3. Locally Recruited teachers' evaluation**

*Before we start, we wanted to underscore that we all have the shared responsibility of ensuring that our children are educated to a good standard, even in these difficult circumstances. This has entailed (and might well continue to) major adaptations in the life and working practice of all parties: teachers, parents, students and of course management at all levels. We hope that today's meeting is the starting point to a longer discussion on the best means of organising the months ahead for the whole community. Our interventions should be taken in this spirit.*

*While parents can understand the urgency to address end-of-year assessment and particularly the 2020 Bacc at the April Board of Governors, we feel that the lack of adequate consultation in the lead up to the Board of Governors meeting and in the follow-up weakened the results.*

*With regard to assessment and formal evaluation, we hope that going forward, there is adequate risk assessment with planning undertaken well in advance. We would underscore that consultation with stakeholders in various bodies and working groups can only strengthen proposals. For this reason, we strongly support the Task Force proposed and hope that they work closely with the working groups and committees already in place.*

*Looking at decisions already taken:*

1. *For the **Baccalaureate**, it is felt that the formula arrived at for calculating the Bacc result (doubling the C mark) did not reflect a key aspect of the Baccalaureate: the relative weighting of different courses in the final mark. This meant that the choice that students had made to specialise in certain subjects was not fully honoured, and in the end a high weight was given to two-hour options, complementary courses, PE and labs. This may impact the end results.*

2. **Moderation:** Parents remain anxious about the possible moderation of Bacc results this year, and believe that if not managed correctly, moderation could violate students' right to legal certainty, inevitably leading to formal complaints. We believe that in no case should moderation imply a reduction of marks. Parents would also hope that the methodology you have chosen includes analysis and comparisons made with previous years--and not only based on overall averages but also broken down by school, section, options studied and gender. INTERPARENTS would ask for transparency regarding any moderation process so that parents have access to the criteria that are used.
3. **Autumn Session of Bacc:** Regarding the extraordinary Bacc session in Autumn, it is our understanding that the current marking scale should apply no matter when the exam is held. We also ask that contingency measures be planned in case the exam cannot be held at the scheduled time in situ.
4. **With regard to the S4-S6 students,** the decision to double the first semester B marks has been controversial with parents across the system. It is felt that at best doubling the mark does not adequately reflect the progress students may have made throughout the year and at worst it may mislead university admissions officers. INTERPARENTS hopes that OSGES and the schools continue to make best efforts to mitigate any potential negative consequences.

We appreciate:

- the memo that you have circulated informing teachers and class councils of the importance of reflecting progress over the second semester in end-of-year marks, while also being sensitive to the difficulties students faced during the months of social distancing;
- the possibility now offered for students to receive a declaration upon request attesting to the duplication of the marks on the transcript.

We should remember that these marks will stay on record well beyond the current crisis period, and eventually admissions officers may cease to take the current circumstance into account. For the S6 students, it is also worthwhile to recall that this same cohort will be the first to take the Baccalaureate under the new marking system...so they risk being doubly penalised.

#### **IV. Re-entry strategies of 13 European Schools**

Parents understand that we can't predict what the national rules will be starting with September. Most likely the situation will be different depending on the MS. Among Interparents delegates we have reflected on all possible scenarios: From a full reentry to school to a total closure. In between there are many options:

- *there could be different ways how social distancing requirements are enforced which leads to different maximum students numbers in class, which means the need for rotating of students per day or per week*
- *there also could be different ways of how stable so called bubbles are composed. Bubbles is the term used actually in the european schools in Brussels in primary where social distancing in a stable class is not needed anymore between students and there is only the requirement that one bubble is not in contact with another bubble.*
- *or there could be a mix between the bubble approach and a social distancing approach depending if it is for younger or older students*

*We ourselves have come up with at least 6 different scenarios. And there may be more! So we understand that this is not an easy task to plan for it and that ultimately it is the responsibility of the school directors to comply at minimum with what local rules say,*

*BUT, it should not be that schools remain closed just because the school had no means to prepare for all these challenges and*

*On the other hand, schools should not just open partially (maybe just because of political considerations, in particular pressure coming from the institutions) without a thorough understanding of what this partial opening entails for the teachers, the vulnerable teachers, the students who are rotating, the vulnerable students.*

*The central office could therefore provide some guidelines adapted to our quite complicated system which reflects all possible scenarios imposed by the local rules. It should also indicate possible solutions which accommodates in the best possible way, the educational and socio-psychological needs of the students.*

*Should we not define what - from a logistic and pedagogical point of view - triggers (partial) re-opening and closing?*

*Should we not also develop guidance and coordinate assistance for any safety question?*

*We think we should also use this time to explore how school capacity could be expanded to allow a maximum of schooling.*

*Be it:*

- *Investment in technical equipment in the classroom,*
- *filling the football fields with prefabs, gaining teaching space in other large spaces at the school...*
- *or extending the timetable.*

*We hope we can develop proposals, also thinking outside the box.*

*Finally, just a further challenge, in case some students decide to take their bac in autumn, how will you find a common slot which complies with the different local rules in September? And will as a consequence the school stay closed these days at least for secondary?*

...

**Interparents:** agree the intervention of the Commission and with secondary deputies about the importance of the secondary timetable...agree that this needs to be considered in detail. Happy to hear teachers will put more emphasis on L2 in the coming months. We don't think parents are asking for a full program for DL, but continue at least using Teams for managing assignments and sharing docs. We would not expect full lessons, but some availability of teachers for students staying at home.

## **V. Impact on the 2020/21 school year**

### **1. Impact on teaching and learning**

*Parents believe that it is important not to talk about essential and non-essential subjects. All subjects are relevant. The syllabuses must be adapted by inspectors and teachers in order to allow all students to attain learning objectives within a hybrid or distance learning context.*

*The learning standard should not be lowered nor the scope of the curriculum be narrowed. All courses should be delivered at the same or comparable standard through one of the available channels. Art, music, PE could be taught via workshops or project based. Some teachers have come up with creative solutions, best practices should be shared between the teachers per level and subject within the whole system.*

*Parents believe it is important that the standard of learning and evaluation is assured. Automatic promotion should not be an option next year, but instead we must ensure that all students receive the curriculum and are fairly assessed.*

*Beyond this, it will be important to broaden the testing modalities laid out for secondary B tests, taking into account that the situation may continue into the next school year. Maximum flexibility should be ensured by derogating existing rules if necessary in order to enable the appropriate evaluation of students even under a distance learning and hybrid learning regime.*

*Nevertheless, INTERPARENTS believes that for formal B tests, in situ exams should be carried out as a priority--and within the constraints of social distancing rules. Contingency plans should include the possibility to reschedule exam sessions and as a last resort, options for sitting exams online should be set out. For the last scenario, best practices for online examination in member states should be examined.*

*In the case of Bacc exams, the possibility to change the timing and/or conditions of the preBacc exams and Bacc exam itself should also be envisaged as part of contingency planning.*

*The development of a formal evaluation programme for S4-S7, with all contingencies laid out and potential legal issues addressed, and including formulas used to calculate final*

*marks should be part of the mandate of the Task Force to be ready by September. The timing is particularly important for students in the Bacc cycle.*

*For younger students and non-B-test assessment of S4 to S7 students, alternative age-appropriate online assessment methods should be developed as part of annexes to syllabuses, ideally these should also be in place by September.*

*Regarding QA, a Quality Assurance framework for Distance or Hybrid Learning must be developed which is not based on parent or student feedback but on actions proactively and routinely undertaken by inspectors and school management. Such a framework can only be developed based on clearly articulated distance and hybrid learning standards and expectations.*

- *The Pedagogical Developments Unit has already begun to develop minimum requirements (see the recent memorandum), but it should be the job of the Task Force should flesh this out into a full Distance Learning Policy that will meet the needs of pupils from nursery through the Baccalaureate.*
- *Monitoring: means should be developed to monitor the work being carried out by teachers online, whether through self-evaluation or online monitoring of activities.*
- *Training in online tools and methodology, Support for teachers and Best Practice Sharing will also be important in assuring high quality delivery of the syllabuses.*
- *Finally, the WSI and teacher inspection regime should be adapted with checklists updated to include Distance Learning elements.*

## **2. Impact on staff(ing)**

*Parents share concerns about the potential impact on staffing, whether this be related to recruitment or the result of staff sickness, vulnerability or self isolation. We hope that schools have sufficient funds to hire replacement teachers if needed. We believe that it is absolutely essential to assure that teachers are in situ in classrooms whenever possible from September, particularly in the primary cycle, and no effort should be spared in identifying and installing teachers. There may be more flexibility for the secondary cycle, where remote online teaching may be a possibility during difficult or transitional periods.*

## **3. Impact on the budget and other areas**

*INTERPARENTS would like to thank OSGES for the recognition of the potential for a material budgetary impact due to pandemic. Whilst it is challenging to see exactly what the costs of these could be, we recommend that a budgetary committee be convened to agree a process by which a COVID-19 fund could be set up that schools could apply for in order to ensure that the arrangements for the upcoming academic year are optimal.*

*In our view the list of potential additional COVID-19 costs could be:*



- **Teaching costs** to ensure in situ and distance learning continues; Substitute / replacement teacher costs to cover for vulnerable or quarantining teachers with in situ; Assistant costs for additional supervision of pupils within the school
- **Equipment costs** to support live streaming, materials for teachers to pre record sessions and their own virtual teaching needs (eg laptops, cameras, WIFI)
- Potential **infrastructure changes** to ensure social distancing measures can be respected; Adaptation and improvement of hygiene facilities in the schools
- **Additional admin support** for school management and OSGES; expert advice on distance and hybrid learning
- **Additional training** costs for teachers
- Potential loss of **CAT 3 fees**

We are quite sure there are other areas that we have not considered in our analysis.

To summarise, we would strongly recommend developing a process to manage the additional financial demands on our school system and presenting this to an **extraordinary budgetary committee** which in our view should take place prior to the start of the new academic year.

## VI. Mandate for a task force

The mandate should include:

- Risk assessment and planning for potential scenarios for 2020-2021, including input on secondary time tables.
- Remote learning policy to be uploaded in OSGES website, including measures for Educational Support. Any policy should take into account the well being aspects of distance learning for the whole school community.
- Updates to syllabuses as needed, to accommodate remote or hybrid learning scenarios, including alternative age-appropriate online assessment methods to be ready by September.
- The development of a formal evaluation programme for S4-S7, with all contingencies laid out and potential legal issues addressed, and including formulas used to calculate final marks.
- Distance and hybrid learning training regime and best practice sharing.
- Development of a robust quality assurance framework for distance and hybrid learning, including tools and methods for monitoring online teaching; self-reporting templates for teachers; and updates to inspection checklists.
- Legal aspects should be considered, including ICT charters signed by pupils, parents and teachers.
- **Staffing, training, infrastructure, equipment and budget needs going into 2020-2021**

***We believe that an extraordinary Budget Committee should be called, and those issues to be treated in the BC should be prioritised in the first weeks of the Task Force. Again, this would be: Staffing, training, infrastructure, and equipment.***

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***Language tests:***

*We are giving positive feedback. We are happy with the proposal, we think that having a presence of an adult is a good practice. If this can work, it is worth to make this more permanent. The same measure could be taken with kids entering in P1. Salut to Ms Malik for the information she provided.*