

EEBI Admin Board – 23 September 2020
Parent Agenda Points

1. Call To Reinstate Bilingual L2 Classes. enlarged

The APEEE urges the school to reconsider its decision on the organisation of L2 and to continue with bilingual classes, while offering enrichment to advanced regular foreign language learners.

- The bilingual classes have run successfully in our school for more than a decade. They started as a bottom-up initiative by the language teachers to facilitate teaching and appropriate learning for all students while taking account of the learning needs of those at the two extreme ends of the spectrum (beginners and bilinguals), regarded as qualitatively different to mainstream L2 learners.
- The Report on the Enrichment programme 2019-2020 (*Report*) recognises that our school has a significant population of students with native/near-native proficiency in their L2 [bilingual students] with learning needs that are fundamentally different from those of foreign language learners and they should ideally be taught in a separate group.
- Whilst the APEEE welcomes the enrichment initiative, the pilot showed that it doesn't meet the needs of students with native/near-native proficiency in their L2 as regular classes are designed for foreign language learners. Enrichment leaves a considerable number of students at a disadvantage compared to the system previously in place, and they are not given enough opportunity to develop their full potential. The APEEE reiterates that management must ensure that neither those who need extra support nor those with native or near-native proficiency lose out under the reorganisation of L2.
- The European School Rules oblige the schools to take into account students' differing abilities and don't prevent bilingual groups. As noted in the *Report* it is up to the individual schools to identify bilingual students and devise a way of adapting the class situation to provide a suitable education. Having a bilingual stream amongst the L2 classes has had no budgetary impact.

The APEEE supports the proposal to rethink the European Schools' approach to language learning in order to better take into account the differing needs of students in the special circumstances of the European Schools. However, this will take years and will come too late for currently enrolled students. Pending a systemic solution allowing bilinguals to have two dominant languages (L1s) as suggested in the *Report*, the APEEE urges the school management to adopt a pragmatic approach whereby separate bilingual L2 EN/FR groups are continued alongside the mixed ability groups and the enrichment for advanced foreign language learners.

2. Renewed Request to Develop an EEBI Child Protection Policy and Supporting Structures. enlarged

In September 2019 and February 2020, the APEEE formally requested at the school Administrative Board that the school to develop a Child Protection Policy in accordance with European School

requirements. The document on Child Protection (ref. 2007-D-441-en-5) approved by the Board of Governors in May 2008 requires that:

- [Policy] “...each school has to develop its child protection policy and put procedures in place (taking account of local legislation as well) and this policy is to be communicated to parents whose representatives should be involved in creating the document. Publication and dissemination of the policy on child protection would be vital to ensure ownership of the policy and compliance of all members of the school community.”
- [Liaison] “...the school is required to designate a senior member of staff as the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection – the head teacher or someone nominated by the head teacher – to liaise with the authorised National Agencies on specific child protection measures, and to be a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns.”
- [Education/Curriculum] “Schools should educate children through the curriculum programmes in the fields of the danger of emotional, physical and sexual abuse as part of Relationships and Sex Education as well as the negative effects of smoking, alcohol consumption and drug abuse as part of the Personal and Health Education programme. Schools also should educate pupils on good behaviour on the internet and safe internet use in order to avoid cases of web-bullying or false accusations, etc.”

We believe that an overarching Child Protection Policy is essential to ensuring a safe, secure and protected environment in which our children can grow and learn.

EEBI parents eagerly await the development of an EEBI Child Protection Policy, the appointment of a liaison and a curricular programme for addressing “high-risk topics”. A working group was promised by the EEBI school management in February 2020 but put on hold due to COVID-19; parents believe that this work should be taken up and prioritised during the coming school year.

Importantly, the policy will serve as a gateway to a set of procedures, support structures and interventions around a range of issues of high concern to parents: use of mobile phones/screen time, cyber bullying, drug use, mental health, and relationships/sexual education; it will also help guide the work of the APEEE’s Well-Being and Legal Working Groups and allow us to more closely align our programmes with those of the school.

Drug Prevention: Parents would like to draw particular attention to the fact that EEBI ended our relationship with our external Drug Prevention Programme provider in September 2019, and thus the school currently has no comprehensive programme in place. To ensure the continued safety and well being of our children, the APEEE asks the school to work with us to relaunch a comprehensive Drug Abuse and Addictions Programme in the 2020-2021 school year. At the same time, we urge the school management to continue its productive work with stakeholders to update the *Guidelines for the Care and Prevention of Addictions* (as formally requested by the APEEE in January 2019) to bring it firmly in line with Belgian legal requirements and current expertise. Ideally a finished policy could be sent to the December SAC and approved by the school’s Admin Board in January 2021.

Finally, the APEEE urges the Office of the Secretary General to guide and harmonise the work undertaken in the Brussels Schools related to Child Protection.

3. Safeguarding Pedagogical Continuity during COVID: ensuring educational provision to all members of our community. enlarged

Parents ask the management to ensure continuous teaching for all pupils in the school, whether on site or at home. We have had months to analyse and plan a response to the coronavirus, and we believe that solutions for all pupils must now be rolled out.

- Vulnerable/affected pupils: The school should ensure teaching to pupils of all levels (MAT-S7) in case of vulnerability or quarantine/self-isolation. In particular, the school must require a systematic use of TEAMS modules in all classes to allow pupils not on site to keep track of each course, and synchronous and asynchronous streaming of classes should be rolled out as part of a coherent programme. Regular personal contact with teachers should likewise be assured.
We also believe that it is essential that physically absent students who can follow distance learning are not counted as absent under Article 25 of the General Rules.
- Quarantine of classes/levels: The school should put in place a plan for each sub-cycle allowing a smooth transition to and from online learning for individual classes or levels that are put in quarantine. The plan should take into account that individual teachers may or may not be quarantined, and could be teaching from school or home. It should therefore include arrangements for pupils *in situ* to receive remote teaching.
- Change of risk level: The school should also put in place a plan to assure smooth transition between risk levels. This should consider possible hybrid arrangements for different sub-cycles in case social distancing or bubbles are required and a developed distance learning programme in case of full lock down.

Parents understand that the school management and Central Office were caught off-guard by the outbreak and the structural changes to our teaching programme that it entailed. We feel lucky that we as a system had the foresight to roll out TEAMS in previous years and that we have a strong pedagogical team in the Central Office to guide our distance and hybrid learning efforts. We believe that we are now in a position to reap more benefits from the guidance and structures already in place.

4. Proposal for Level/Sub-Cycle-Specific Distance Learning Strategy and Enhanced Quality Assurance Mechanisms. enlarged

At its 28 April meeting the APEEE Board agreed to ask the school management to develop a Distance Learning Strategy, as suggested in the *Distance Learning Recommendations* produced by the Central Office (2020-03-D-11-en; version 6 published in September 2020). The strategy should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and should:

- include a common daily structure/routine and harmonised practices using commonly-agreed tools (i.e. TEAMS modules) for each level or sub-cycle;
- ensure pedagogical continuity in a range of situations (see point 3 above);
- go hand-in-hand with improved quality assurance based on tools (technical or other) allowing targetted quality assurance and quick identification of problems, including in particular better tracking and replacement of teachers absent from online courses;
- take into account that parent access to TEAMS is currently limited;
- include the development of a code of conduct concerning the use of TEAMS.

We are optimistic that the school management has agreed in several meetings (14 May with APEEE Bureau ; 7 July SAC ; 2 September with APEEE Bureau) that such a strategy will be developed, and we believe it will also help address issues with *harmonisation between sections and cycles* and *optimal use of teaching time* that were identified in the 2018 Whole School Inspection.

We were happy to see a similar objective set by the Central Office in the “Common Priorities” section of the *APSP 2020-2021*: “Based on the quality assurance document of the task force the schools will provide updated policy on distance teaching and learning and will establish minimum standards in this respect...” also to be accompanied by on-boarding procedures for newly-arrived pupils, a staff training plan, and the identification of teaching staff champions.

We are curious about the state of play on this strategy and timing envisaged for its completion; we would ask for assurances that its inclusion in the 2020-2021 annual plan will not needlessly lengthen the timeline. We strongly believe that this strategy should be in place as soon as possible in case any classes or levels must quarantine and would ask if the Central Office might provide Best Practice examples from other schools in the system to guide our efforts in this challenging time.

BYOD: we have also noted that several other European Schools in the system are developing a Bring-Your-Own-Device Programme, particularly to support distance and hybrid learning but also to facilitate the introduction of GeoGebra in S5 this year. We are wondering if EEBI will develop a BYOD programme, and if so, what timing is foreseen.

5. New Marking System and National Equivalence Tables. **enlarged**

Parents would like to hear about the state of play on the New Marking Scale. As we understand, an evaluation will be prepared already for end of October. It would be important to analyse how current S6 scores at Uccle compare with previous years – if possible correcting for the effects of COVID – and breaking down results by language section and subjects studied. We were pleased to see that the “Common Priorities” in the APSP 2020-2021 included the instruction on the New Marking System to “Ensure detailed **information** is provided to pupils and parents;” and we would be happy to have more specifics on how this will happen; we might suggest short written reports to the Secondary CE.

Parents have a particular concern that many Member States have not yet adapted their equivalence tables to reflect the new marking scheme as agreed for the European schools by the Board of

Governors. Even worse, some Member States such as Germany and Denmark have adapted their equivalence tables in a way that seriously disadvantages the students and violates legal obligations. Parents very much appreciate that Commissioner Hahn has recently written to Germany, stressing the legal problems with its conversion and asking that the German measures are reviewed.

We would be happy to receive an update on how many and which member states have undertaken the equivalence table updates expected. In general, parents consider it essential that the OSGES and the Commission continue to remind Member States of their obligations to adapt their equivalence tables in a non-discriminatory manner. It would be important to hear the thoughts of both parties on how concretely national ministries can be convinced to honour their obligations.

6. Overcrowding in the Brussels Schools and Proposal for Populating the Evere Site. restricted

In October 2019, the APEEE approved a joint statement with the other Brussels European School APEEEs deploring that the Belgian State had neither delivered on its 2010 promise to provide the needed infrastructure for a fifth school in Brussels by 2015 nor given any assurances to have a site ready by a specific date in the future.

At Uccle, parents worry about the impact of overcrowding on pedagogy (particularly in the secondary cycle) and the risk to children's safety—only exacerbated during COVID-19. At the same time, many of our Berkendael families must live with "uncertainty" and are compelled to reapply to the system before entering secondary. As the secondary campuses fill up and the Berkendael campus grows, the uncertainty only increases. We were thus heartened by the Belgian government's offer of a temporary primary campus at Evere scheduled to open in 2021.

Current Proposal for Populating Evere: The proposal currently being considered to integrate the new Evere temporary primary site into the Brussels European School structure has nevertheless left us with two main concerns:

- the proposal does not contain clear measures designed to make space for the Evere and Berkendael primary students in the already overcrowded secondary campuses at Woluwe and Uccle—i.e. either by building additional secondary capacity OR by depopulating the primary at these sites and re-purposing existing primary infrastructure for secondary use.
- the proposal does not take into account the temporary nature of the two sites over the longer term, meaning that any measure proposed may be “undone” in as little as 5-6 years.

EEBI parents believe that any plan to populate the Evere site should take into account the impact across the existing Brussels schools and particularly on the families of Berkendael as well as the availability of secondary infrastructure over the coming years. Importantly, the current proposal should already foresee how the proposed Brussels school structure will eventually accommodate the fifth school.

We would like to know how the Commission, Central Office and the school management will ensure that the proposal sent to the Board of Governors offers a stable long-term solution and equitable treatment for all pupils in the system, without any analysis of potential impact or

contingency planning. We would also ask the Commission to continue to fight for the delivery of a full fifth school, if possible before 2026, and for the permanent gift of the Berkendael site.

7. Working methods: governance and consultation hindered by lack of procedures and documentation. restricted

The APEEE understands that the school continues to work under particular pressure with the outbreak of COVID and a management and coordination team constantly in flux. Nevertheless, we also continue to have concerns about the internal working methods and stakeholder consultation at EEBI.

Again, we were happy to receive the invitation, minutes and agenda for this meeting of the EEBI Administrative Board in advance and we have witnessed a real effort in recent months to better plan meetings; we thank the management and support staff for this. We are still worried that the school management has been unable to circulate the section of the *APSP - Annual Pedagogical School Plan (2020-2021)* which lays out its own local objectives/priorities for the year in time enough to allow for a fruitful internal consultation and discussion. This was an established practice at EEBI in the past, and we are wary of losing it. We urge the school to put in place more standard procedures to ensure that meetings are adequately prepared and key documents well in place on schedule.

In general, as stated in February 2020, the APEEE believes that the Autumn Administrative Board should be provided with a more complete set of pedagogical data (including, *inter alia*, anonymised secondary results and detailed absence and replacement data) in order to inform its decisions and to help it perform its role to ensure the quality of education. The Administrative Board requires information not just about the costs of the system, but of the pedagogical results achieved—i.e. the value for money. We would ask if there has been any progress on our earlier request to expand the set of pedagogical data provided. If not, how can we constructively move this forward.

Finally, we have been happy by the management's new impetus to create dedicated stakeholder working groups to provide feedback to governance bodies and, despite the obvious delays due to COVID, we are optimistic about the possibilities in this. Still, parents believe that a lack of documentation received in advance of meetings compromises the general consultation process. In general our consultative bodies do not yet have a clear role in the development of the school's policies and programmes. We believe this remains real governance issue and hope that the school direction will take measures to improve the situation. One concrete step that we can propose is to convene the awaited working group to Update the CE Rules of Procedure.