

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE APEEE BRUSSELS I

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QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS FOR SCHOOL DIRECTOR MR BRIAN GOGGINS

Contents

Questions On The Extension Of The Christmas Break.....	2
Questions On Distance Learning.....	4
Questions On Covid-19	6
Questions On Teaching	7
Questions On Educational Support.....	8
Questions On L2	8
Questions On Exams/Bac	9
Questions On School Trips/Project Week	9
Questions On The Future Of The Brussels Schools	9
Questions On Communications.....	9
Questions On Berkendael	10
Other Questions.....	10
Questions On Services (Already Conveyed To The APEEE Services)	11

QUESTIONS ON THE EXTENSION OF THE CHRISTMAS BREAK

1.

On which basis has the decision of distant learning period be taken for the period from 7th to 17th of January 2021?

2.

To explain the argumentation for taking this decision of the 10 days online schooling around the Christmas Holidays. It is questionable in terms of effectiveness, it is not recommended by the Belgian Authorities who have experts that decide and online schooling offers poor education to Primary pupils (esp) and adds a heavy burden to parents.

3.

Question on the decision of online schooling around the Christmas Holidays. How was that decided, the Belgian Authorities recommended? Why traveling is put above the education. Do you realise the burden put on parents who work with online schooling. Also, it is widely appreciated that online schooling does not offer quality education to pupils esp in Primary. Do you re-consider this decision? will you apply the same for all school holidays this year? which means another 3x of 10 days online schooling?

4.

Will the school review its decision to postpone coming back to school in January?

5.

In the current moment the governments and specialists are advocating for the reduction of social contacts and travelling while they are supporting that for primary students lockdown is not a solution. Contrary to this reality you decided to apply in Christmas e-learning horizontal measure quarantine, what message do you think is transmitted with this decision which in reality facilitates travelling penalising the children who want to attend school. At the same time I remind you that until recently for an absence of 2 days a doctor certificate has been required.

6.

Je demande des explications sur la fermeture de l'école 4 semaines en décembre/ janvier. Fermeture les 21 et 22 décembre sans justification : si certains parents souhaitent partir plus tôt en vacances et que leurs enfants soient absents deux jours de l'école, ce n'est pas une raison pour priver les autres enfants d'école. (en vous rappelant que ce que 'l'enseignement en ligne' n'est pas adapté à de jeunes enfants). Fermeture du 7 au 17 janvier : je ne comprends pas les arguments de la direction et suis en désaccord avec ceux-ci. À ce stade, la majorité des familles que nous connaissons ne savent pas si elles vont pouvoir se réunir avec leurs familles pour les fêtes de fin d'année. Par exemple, nos vols ont été annulés pour nos vacances de Noël. De plus, l'Espagne où nous devrions nous rendre impose des tests PCR pour tous les passagers aériens. Or, la politique de testing de gouvernement belge ne nous permet pas actuellement de faire un test. Finalement, le gouvernement espagnol a limité à 6 personnes – enfants inclus – la présence sous le même toit. Nous ne pourrions donc pas nous rendre visiter

notre famille. Notre cas n'est qu'un exemple de la situation à laquelle sont confrontées la majorité des familles, une proportion significative d'entre elles ne rentrant pas dans son pays d'origine pour ce type de raison. En conséquence, de nombreuses familles resteront à Bruxelles pour les congés de Noël et donc nous ne comprenons pas pourquoi l'école serait fermée à partir du 7 janvier. Nos enfants seront doublement pénalisés : congés à Bruxelles puis 10 jours à la maison, soit 4 semaines à Bruxelles sans se rendre à l'école. Je pense que la direction des écoles européennes n'a pas pris en compte ce facteur dans son raisonnement. En espérant que vous annulerez ces mesures de fermeture, merci d'avance pour votre réponse.

7.

Dear Mr Director, many parents feel that the interest and well being of the children are not taken as the priority. The children were away from their classes for 3 weeks in November and again will be for a month at the end of the year. This is, despite all the great efforts of the teachers, much stricter than Belgian rules. Why is there such a divergence ? Have our schools registered more severe cases of contamination than Belgian schools ?

8.

Tous les pédiatres disent que la présence des enfants en classe notamment des plus jeunes en maternelle 1re et 2e primaire est absolument essentielle pour leur bon développement. La Belgique n'a pas imposé l'enseignement en ligne pour les élèves de maternelle et de primaire. Pour autant début janvier nos enfants et nous parents allons subir de nouveau une période d'enseignement en ligne alors que celui-ci est impossible pour les élèves de maternelle et de 1re et 2e primaire et extrêmement aléatoire pour les élèves de 3e 4e et 5e primaire. Il est de la responsabilité de chacun de garder comme priorité absolue l'enseignement in situ de nos enfants, priorité qui selon de nombreux parents doit surpasser le confort d'aller passer 2 semaines à l'étranger alors que notre pays hôte le déconseille fortement. La décision des 4 EEBs de passer en enseignement en ligne du 7 janvier au 16 janvier est à ce titre inacceptable.

9.

After Christmas break, Belgium authorities will remain open schools. Why not European School don't follow this approach as it has been decided follow on line lessons?

10.

The choice to go for distance learning is not adequate for maternelle and primary kids. School is an essential service, a basic right of kids and society and as such the EEB should provide onsite teaching whenever the Belgian authorities allows it. Why the school is not doing its best to stay open and put pupils well-being and the school pedagogic duties as its priority? The Belgian government has decided to prolonge the school year during the summer in order to catch up with lost days. Homeschooling is not school and distance learning is not teaching.

11.

L'école s'était engagée à suivre les recommandations du gouvernement Belge quant aux politiques liées au coronavirus. Cela n'a pas été le cas. L'école a été fermée une semaine de plus que les écoles belges à la Toussaint. L'école envisage de fermer deux semaines en décembre et en janvier avec comme unique objectif de permettre aux parents qui le désirent de partir à l'étranger. Cette dernière décision va directement à l'encontre des

recommandations du gouvernement Belge (qui invite à ne pas voyager) et de l'intérêt des enfants (qui est d'être scolarisé). Pourquoi une telle décision ?

12.

The BERK school closure until Jan 18 and relative distance learning has been very controversial. How do you take in consideration the string criticism received ?

QUESTIONS ON DISTANCE LEARNING

13.

Would it not be possible to divide classes in secondary school in half and teach them onsite-homeschool them by rotation_

14.

What is your assessment in terms of training needs for teachers and pupils to ensure an effective and balanced digital transformation of our school? What are you envisioning in the medium term for our school in the medium term (i.e. presumably beyond this crisis period)?

15.

What is the school policy on screen-time exposure of pupils? Is it measured, monitored and regulated at all? What are the guidelines for teachers? Ultimately, what is in your opinion the added value of having children exposed to video lectures for lessons that can be taught by human interaction with the teacher and among students? What do teachers do in the time that they save from not having to prepare the content of the lessons that are replaced by Youtube or other video lectures?

16.

Is it possible to have less screen time for children (chalk boards rather than electronic boards, no TV/videos etc in the garderie).

17.

Monsieur le Directeur, les objectifs des cours d'ICT ont-ils été adaptés à l'usage des outils informatiques et à la prévention dans leur usage? Les enseignants ont-ils reçu (ou vont-ils recevoir) une formation sur la conception de séquences pédagogiques à distance (merci de nous préciser)? Y aura-t-il une commission de travail sur l'enseignement à distance (et l'exposition aux écrans) réunissant des représentants de l'ensemble de la communauté scolaire, y compris le personnel de santé? Je vous remercie. Bien à vous.

18.

On distance learning and guarantying the continuity of a learning process:

The lack of coordination was also very visible and disturbing in organisation of distance learning as well where each teacher was left free to organise it (or not).

1. Would you see any need for some central organisation/common timetable for the online classes to follow?
2. Would the school intend to provide any coordination between teachers and coordination of hours, methods of communication and planning of meetings?
3. Use of Teams in primary – would you consider that Teams is a right tool for the primary school? From our experience, the kids in primary are not able to use it autonomously nor are some of the teachers. Teams is complicated and difficult to use, especially for kids below 10 yrs old. Also teachers seem to have problems with teams and some use calendar and filing or assignments, while others do not. Possible other tools can be considered – like zoom, which are easier and more natural to use.
4. Whatever the tool, only ONE tool should be used, not in combination with sms and email and other electronic means. Otherwise it is impossible to co-ordinate. The idea should be that kids can do that all alone and not with constant help of parents. Would you see any need to manage that and consider any guidelines to teachers in that respect?

Practical proposal to follow would be: Online classes via teams or other tool should be organized every day for the full normal duration of the school day, not only in the morning as was the case. Classes can indeed be divided into smaller groups, but in such a case if one group is online the other(s) should be requested to work offline.

19.

On adaptation to the situation/reorganisation and reflection on the hybrid learning:

1. Given the persistence of crisis and risks related to in situ classes, would you consider any forms of Hybrid learning? These could take a form of the core classes AM in situ and additional classes like L2, European hours and other PM at online from home? – This would allow to follow the Belgian rules on respect for core bubbles and limit the unnecessary risks, which is not the case currently. Is there any reflection ongoing on that by the management of the school?
2. Would you see any need to adapt the hours to a new challenges? – given that the canteen is closed and periescolar activities are suspended, would you see a need to revise the timing of the classes, in particular a long break? As the kids have nothing to do during that time, they cannot have a hot meal and we need to limit the contacts to minimum, maybe it would be reasonable to re-organise the classes as well in a full respect for the safety rules?

The practical and safe solution to reflect on can be the below:

- Classes can end at 14hs instead of 15:30 and buses schedule should be adapted, or
- Have in situ classes in the morning (language and mathematics) and online classes for L2, ethics / religion, European hours, art etc. Bus schedule will need to be adapted.
- No point in mixing kids for L2 classes, so L2 should in any case be organised online.

QUESTIONS ON COVID-19

20.

Please describe the concept of COVID measures for January / February 2021; How do you ensure a good ventilation in the classrooms?

21.

Why in an European School you have chosen the minimalistic approach to comply with Belgian minimal standard instead of benefitting from the best practices in Europe and follow the advices of the ECDC?

22.

Pourriez-vous préciser les raisons pour lesquelles les EEB ont pris des mesures sanitaires (fermeture des établissements, fermeture de la cantine) plus restrictives que celles exigées par les autorités compétentes, ce qui a pour conséquence directive de discriminer les familles qui fréquentent les EEB par rapport à celles qui fréquentent d'autres établissements? Quelle est la place laissée à la concertation avec les parents d'élèves et les enseignants dans ce processus de décision?

23.

There is a number of parents in the school community that fall into a group of high risk for severe complications due to covid-19. I am one of them (having a heart disease). Those families have to cope everyday with anxiety and stress related to possible infection of a pupil by covid-19 at school and bringing the virus to the vulnerable parent. The consequence for those families can be dramatic, including possible death. Now, there is a hope of getting out of crisis due to vaccines that have high efficacy and promising results that could halt pandemic. Belgian government announced that vulnerable groups would be vaccinated as priority. Therefore, the difficult situation can be considered as temporarily affecting school community and effects on education of children may not be life long and permanent. Moreover, most of parents work in EU Institutions. The EU Institutions recognised Covid-19 vulnerable groups and granted them special protection such as telework to lower the risk of acquiring the virus at workplace. These vulnerable families are not however granted the same protection by the European Schools. Given the above mentioned, could school align its policy on vulnerable groups with EU Institutions and enable a temporary distant teaching (online connection to the classroom) to the pupils who have a vulnerable parent at home?

24.

In the light of the current Corona crisis we understand the decision not to let parents enter the school and close the Ch. de Vert Chasseur gate for primary students. However, this is very inconvenient for parents (e.g for parking). Besides, it is especially for the P1 students who were not pupils of the kindergarten of the European School important emotionally important that the father or mother can accompany him till the meeting place. Therefore: once the Corona crises is over we advocate for both the reopening of the Ch. de Vert Chasseur exit (also for primary students) and for the right to enter the school to bring P1 pupils to the meeting point or pick them up after school. Will this normal procedure be again introduced after the crises?

25.

How the school is planning to control the ten-day quarantine for students returning from abroad?

26.

On safety and lack of management of the crisis by the school at central level:

Based on the first experiences it was evident that there was not enough leadership about the crisis management at central level and adaptation of Belgian rules to the big school like Europeans ones. Risk related to the big international school like European one are not the same as local Belgian school. After these negative experiences:

1. Would you see a need to adapt the Belgian rules to the size of European Schools? European Schools have independent status and do not need to follow Belgian rules without a closer safety reflection on their specific conditions. The size of these schools is much bigger (approx. 4000 in Uccle) than regular Belgian school and children mix much more. Would you see a need to reflect on the specific safety conditions for the big Uccle school and to take specific measures? E.g. limiting the bubbles to strictly necessary and the core classes? No mixing of kids for additional activities e.g. European hours?
2. Is the school ready to reflect further about the safety and adopt it to the size and specific conditions and in which form and based on which assessment? As said above, Belgian rules can serve as guidance, but do not fully fit the specific context of the European School
3. Can the parents have something to say about the imminent health risk that we are taking?

QUESTIONS ON TEACHING

27.

Why is there no "Préfet d'études" to align teachers and the method they use? Some teachers do a superficial "fast track" in their subject (mostly sciences) without paying attention to pupils who do not follow, concentrating on the one or two pupils who are gifted for the subject. The pace and the method are crucial. Is the teaching to be conducted from a national perspective or a EEB perspective?

28.

P1 SWALS Slovene have only 30 mins per day of Slovene language. It is impossible for the children and the teacher to have a focus and deliver the lecture within such timeframe. Is there a possibility to have longer hours (say 45 minutes), though not every day?

29.

Some of the parents have stressed that due to some various reasons some of the teachers are not fulfilling their class timing (sick leave...). How is this lecturing time to be compensated?

QUESTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

30.

In the past weeks several families have expressed their concern about how the school is dealing with Educational Support in Berkendael. As an example, the EEB1 has adopted a very strict approach (compared to other schools such as Ixelles or Woluwe), when it comes to allowing third parties entering the school to provide specialized support. The different circulars that have been sent by the Belgian authorities do not exclude that specialists such as speech therapists, or others, can still enter the schools even under red code. However, Berkendael is not allowing that this support, despite being provided under official conventions signed by school, is provided. Could you please explain why this decision has been taken and when will the school allow this support to children in situ as in other schools?

31.

It has been raised by parents that the procedure to approve Support is taking too long, and also there are cases where the school finally offered a level of support not in line with the needs of the children (as described in the official reports the parents submitted). In a specific case, the child's report is pointing towards Intensive support, but the school is instead offering General support, not full time and also shared between 2 children with potentially different needs.

1. What should the parents do in such a case, to make sure their children can receive the appropriate level of Support?
2. As parents' reps, how can we best contribute to a quicker resolution of these issues?

QUESTIONS ON L2

32.

For L2 classes in Berkendael: would it be possible to know how many classes per level do we have in the school and its composition (how many children from which language sections)?

33.

Mr Goggins, can you please explain why you have decided to put an end to the long established practice at Uccle of grouping Secondary English L2 classes according to the level of English of the pupils, when this was an initiative of the teachers themselves long before you came to the school, the APEEE has called on you to reconsider this change and parents and pupils alike are perfectly happy with the status quo? To my knowledge the pilot of so called enrichment classes did not show itself to be superior to the status quo. If you do not listen to your own teaching staff, or the representatives of parents, whose interests do you think you are serving by this change?

34.

Mr Goggins, you like to talk to young people. Have you over the last year ever took time to talk and to listen to bilingual students? Would you be willing to go to the bilingual L2 English class in S3 and listen to students' what they like about it and why they are worried about next year? Would you be willing to listen to bilingual students in mixed ability and enrichment L2 classes to see how challenging it is for them to progress and stay motivated, and to see in

what a challenging position are teachers in managing the huge diversity and heterogeneity in the class?

35.

Would it be possible for the EEB1 to provide native English speakers to teach the English enrichment classes?

QUESTIONS ON EXAMS/BAC

36.

What are the contingency plans for the S7 December exams, pre-bac and bac?

QUESTIONS ON SCHOOL TRIPS/PROJECT WEEK

37.

Remboursement voyages scolaire 2019: Pour nos trois enfants, nous avons payé un voyage à Londres et 2 voyages en classe de mer. Nous avons reçu la semaine dernière le remboursement de 1 voyage en classe de mer seulement. Est-ce que le processus de remboursement est toujours en cours? Merci

38.

It seems that the traditional project week has been cancelled this year. Do you consider the option to organise a "virtual project week", possibly in hybrid format, with online debates and presentations on societal issues, such as e.g. in the area of democracy, culture, science, climate change, economy, nutrition, international relations etc.?

QUESTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE BRUSSELS SCHOOLS

39.

Which is the state of play regarding the new site in Evere, and how could this affect the school in Uccle?

QUESTIONS ON COMMUNICATIONS

40.

Thank you for the valuable e-mails we receive from school management. We appreciate your efforts. Could these e-mails be shorter in the future? Sometimes we don't have time to read everything received. Thank you.

QUESTIONS ON BERKENDAEL

41.

Proposal regarding the attachment of the Berkendael site to EEB1-Uccle site: what is the current situation? Can we expect that the children registered in 2021/2022 will automatically go to Berkendael?

42.

La communication de l'école Berkendael autour du dépôt des enfants en voiture parle de « Kiss and Drive ». Il n'y a pas de « Kiss and Drive » à l'école Berkendael : il y a le trottoir sur lequel marchent les enfants et leurs parents et sur lequel les voitures vont et viennent. Cette situation est très dangereuse. Pourquoi ne pas créer un « Kiss and Drive » sur des places de parking situées dans la rue ?

OTHER QUESTIONS

43.

Les vacances sont arrêtées chaque année en décalage total avec les vacances des écoles belges, injustifiable. Enfin si, c'est justifié partout et par ceux qui le défendent en arguant qu'ainsi les parents peuvent acheter des billets d'avion moins chers. Est-ce là le fondement pédagogique sur lequel se base une école pour prendre une décision censée d'abord être dans l'intérêt de l'enfant? Peu importe que l'on prive les enfants de la possibilité de faire des stages sportifs et culturels organisés par des clubs et associations belges, peu importe que l'on s'autorise à déconnecter complètement les enfants de leur lieu de vie et de leurs amis de quartier belges, peu importe que la majorité des parents dont les deux travaillent aient payé le coût organisationnel, peu importe pour les parents de familles recomposées avec des enfants dans les deux systèmes, et peu importe pour l'aspect rétrograde sur le plan de l'égalité des genres sur lesquels de tels systèmes ont été fondés. Pourquoi mettez-vous tant d'adresse et d'entêtement à punir les enfants en les coupant sciemment de leur lieu de vie et de toutes les activités qu'ils peuvent y faire? Les règlements ne vous obligent pas, pourquoi poursuivre ce système décalé absurde, dépourvu de toute logique, punitif et au fort relans machistes ? Enfin pouvez-vous nous dire de combien d'hommes et de combien de femmes est composé le comité qui décide des dates de ces vacances?

44.

Regardless of the weather, children have to wait in front of the school for half an hour (coming with early bus) in the morning, without even a roof. Why can't the school be open and proper supervision provided inside the buildings? What can be done to protect the children from bad weather and possible sickness?

45.

Unlike other European schools that start later and finish earlier, the school days are artificially stretched with long breaks. Is there a possibility to shorten the daily timetables?

46.

Swimming pool has insufficient number of hairdryers for the number of children, leaving children with wet hair, prone to fall sick. We understand that it has been repeatedly requested to increase their number by the parents. Why such a simple investment significantly improving the wellbeing of children cannot be done?

QUESTIONS ON SERVICES (already conveyed to the APEEE Services)

47.

When it would possible to eat hot meals in the school?

48.

At the moment, under red code, the canteen service provider in Berkendael is not serving meals for primary, only for nursery, so children in primary should bring their own (cold) meals. There is neither the possibility of reheating food. If the red code situation persists, is the school considering any other type of alternative solution, such as e.g. food to be brought in trolleys from the canteen to their classes, microwaves, etc/, so that children in primary could eat hot served food/reheated food from home?

49.

Quelle est la proportion de produits biologiques à la cantine et prévoyez-vous de réduire l'apport en viande afin qu'un jour sur les repas soient soit du poisson soit végétariens??

50.

Is the school ready to help in the transition towards electric school buses with providing charging infrastructure (bus operators would pay for use)?

51.

When will the canteen service resume? Why was it not organised to provide students with cold meals or sandwiches delivered to their classrooms? What alternative other than throwing the problem to the families are you able to come up with?

52.

Dear Director, congratulations for the great job the school is doing. My two questions are: Is there a way to reduce drastically the amount of sugar given to our children in the canteen and the Garderie OIB (sweet yoghurt, donuts, etc). Thanks a lot!

53.

Question regarding opening of the canteen: can we expect that the canteen will reopen any time soon, preferably in January so that the children could have a warm meal at school again?

54.

Why have all extracurricular activities been cancelled while they are allowed according to Belgian rules and maintained in other schools. An analysis would be welcome to cancel only the ones with close contact (i.e. judo, aikido) or with specific risks (i.e. singing) but those activities in which kids do an individual activity sitting at their desk should be maintained, especially now that it is very cold to stay for hours outside. Question 2: why can't kids from P1 eat in their little canteen like the kids from Maternelle? Thank you

55.

The food provider for Berkendael ignores requests to reduce/eliminate the enormous amounts of sugar in their menus (particularly in the afternoon snacks). The APEEE and the Parents Association for OIB Garderie have contacted them without success. Can the school do something about it given that the Berkendael canteen is with the same contractor?