

Uccle/Berkendael

Brussels, 20 April 2021

To:

Brian Goggins, Director, European School Brussels 1

**SUBJECT: Proposed Half Days of school in June 2021**

Dear Mr Goggins,

The EEBI APEEE takes issue with the proposed measures related to the end of school year calendar and asks that the management reconsider their proposals in keeping with the European School regulations and good teaching practice.

In particular, the APEEE points to the proposal to hold half-days of school for nursery to S3 students starting from as early as 22 June, in order to make it possible to hold class councils during regular school hours. (As we understand it, the school will also finish one day early for these pupils — on 1 July, instead of 2 July as stated in the official calendar.) Moreover, we are concerned about plans to cancel completely the last part of the school year (timing not yet announced) for S4-S6 pupils. At the meeting on 12 March, APEEE delegates specifically requested that the school look into moving S4-S6 exams to the latter part of June — a measure which should be possible this year given the cancellation of the Bac Oral exams. This would give classes additional time to prepare for their B-Tests in a year that has been full of disruptions and irregularities for students and staff alike.

We probably do not need to recall that the measures proposed by the management are in direct opposition to the Rules of the European School as well as the APEEE's longstanding position on 180-days of school (See: <http://www.uccleparents.org/apieee/prises-de-position/180-jours-de-cours/?lang=en>).

In support of our case, we draw attention to:

- **General Rules of the European Schools Annex 1, Rules Concerning the Schools Year (p. 57)**: “The school year may not begin before the second working day in September. Locally recruited teachers will start working on the first working day in September, that day being used for the General meeting, extraordinary Class Councils (appeals), testing of pupils etc. **The school year must consist of 180 working days for pupils (181 in leap years)**. The last day of the school year must be the same day in all the European Schools and will be 7 July or thereabouts.” (our emphasis)
- **General Rules of the European Schools Article 17, Convening and Chairing of Councils (p. 11)**, which covers inter alia Class Councils: “Councils shall meet outside school hours.”



- **Decisions of the Board of Governors December 2010** confirming decisions from January 2007 on the Length of the School Year in the European Schools (2010-D-173-en-4): “From a formal viewpoint, to grant the schools the possibility of suspending lessons in the secondary cycle during the days required for the Bacca-laureate oral examinations at the end of each schools year...”

In short, the school has no legal basis for holding class councils during what should be regular school hours nor for cancelling school for upper secondary students when no Bacca-laureate oral exams will be held. In our opinion, these latest proposals are in keeping with a worrying tendency in recent years to shorten the number of teaching hours and days of the school year against the spirit and text of the rules<sup>1</sup>. We note in particular that the key role of the Administrative Board in determining local calendar measures has not been respected. We find such proposals particularly worrying this year given that the COVID pandemic has already led to significant disruption in students' education. Primary and early secondary parents are also concerned that they are again being asked to look after their children during their working hours when children should rightfully be in school.

We thank you for your continued work and look forward to a timely response.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Máthé  
President EEBI APEEE

Copy:

*Susanne Künster, Deputy Director for Secondary*  
*Tom Claes, Deputy Director for Maternelle and Primary, Berkendael*  
*Simona Cajhen, Deputy Director for Maternelle and Primary, Uccle*

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1 Here we note for instance the lack of organised replacement activities at end of school year in contradiction to BoG recommendations as well as the worrying replacement for S5 students in March of a week of school with off-campus work experience, when the COVID pandemic made work experience placements for most students all but impossible.