



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Report: Laerskool Darling



School: Laerskool Darling
Address: 10 Kalkoentjie Street, Darling, 7345
Circuit: C1
District: West Coast
Province: Western Cape
Category: Public Ordinary (Fee-charging)
Principal: Mr M Breedt (Acting Principal)



Areas of Evaluation:

	Teaching & Learning	To evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
	Behaviour & Safety	To evaluate the level at which the school creates a positive learning culture, good behaviour, and a healthy, safe and secure environment for everyone.
	Leadership & Management	To evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school.
	Governance, Parents & Community	To evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its key roles and responsibilities including financial duties, and the effectiveness of the school in building good relationships with its stakeholders.

Summary:

Teaching & Learning:



Behaviour & Safety:



Leadership & Management:



Governance, Parents & Community:



Overall performance



KEY:

Outstanding

Good

Requires improvement

Inadequate

Main Findings



1. Teaching and Learning

1.1 The teachers maintain a safe and positive learning environment 4

Evaluative commentary

All classrooms are organised effectively to adhere to social distancing requirements. In addition to the classrooms, the school also uses the hall and a spacious adjoining corridor to assist with screening learners in their different grades. All learners are seated until the process is completed; thereafter, the teachers accompany their learners to the respective classrooms. Learners are divided into two groups per grade that attend school on alternative days. Most groups are fewer than 20 and there is enough space in the classrooms for effective teaching and learning. The groups are divided according to the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Learners said that they are grateful because their teachers engage with them respectfully.

1.2 The adaptation of classroom teaching practice in the light of Covid-19 ensures that teaching and learning are of high quality 4

Evaluative commentary

The Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) were well received and appreciated for being concise. However, a teacher complained that the only downside was the fact that the font size was small, could not be enlarged and there were no memoranda. This was not the view of most teachers interviewed. Teachers mentioned that despite the loss in instructional time due to the daily rotational timetable, the improved pace of teaching and learning ensured that the curriculum was delivered on time. There are hardly any disciplinary issues. The days learners are at home are an extension of their time at school, as they receive a full load of work from teachers. Teachers are also currently using resources more effectively. The pace at which teachers are working is effective. Most learners feel comfortable asking questions in the smaller groups.

1.3 Learners are supported well (in school and at home) so that they learn effectively 3

Evaluative commentary

The school has eight fixed and two roving smart television sets that teachers connect to their laptops to give work to learners. They also use these resources to check learners' work and provide feedback. During hard lockdown, all teachers sent work via WhatsApp. Six learners with comorbidities applied to work from home and 18 applied for home schooling, although some of the latter group have since returned to school. Learners at home receive work packs fetched by their parents on Fridays. A farmer's wife downloaded and printed work so that learners residing on the farm had access to it. Teachers generally provide psycho-social support to learners, especially the Grade 3 teachers. The psychologist from the district office is available to assist learners and has done so.

Good practice, innovation, imaginative solutions

The generosity of the farmer's wife ensured that learners residing on the farm had access to work.



2. Behaviour and Safety

2.1 The school's environment is disciplined and purposeful and its ethos is positive 4

Evaluative commentary

Learners and staff comply willingly with the measures implemented to keep safe. They understand the dangers of the pandemic and the precautions required. We did not get the sense that anybody felt forced to adhere. Despite being vigilant and aware of the seriousness of the pandemic, the school prides itself in maintaining a high standard of teaching and learning. All the teachers were present and actively teaching. In lessons observed, the standard of teaching and learning was impressive. The school maintains a good balance between ensuring the safety of learners and staff and delivering quality teaching and learning.

2.2 The school is safe, and protects and cares for its learners and staff well.....

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Evaluative commentary

The sense of alertness commences from the time the learners enter the school gate and staff are waiting to screen them. All learners arrived wearing face masks. Screening procedures are thorough and the school attempts to always ensure that the learners are never left unattended. We observed a learner who had a high temperature being sent to report to the acting principal. She was placed in the isolation room until her parents fetched her. Learners and staff interviewed know the procedures required upon suspicion of Covid-19 cases. Classrooms, furniture, surfaces, and toilets are cleaned throughout the day. The learners felt safe at school because of the emphasis on hygiene. Unauthorised visitors are not allowed on the premises. All authorised visitors are screened in the reception area before being allowed further access. The gate remains locked throughout the school day. The National School Nutrition Programme is prepared in hygienic conditions. A teacher has been appointed to accompany learners to the area where the meals are served. The school is part of the Learner Transport Scheme (LTS). There are five routes that cover the outlying areas, including Mamre, Atlantis, Yzerfontein and Mooresburg. The school communicates regularly with the bus drivers to ensure that they adhere to the safety requirements. Learners interviewed said that their hands are sanitised when they enter the buses.

Concerns, problems

All safety protocols were not adhered to on the buses.

2.3 (Where applicable) The school's boarding facilities (hostels), cater well for the safety, care and welfare of learners – Not Applicable

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 The School Management Team (SMT) gives clear direction to the school.....

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Evaluative commentary

The school first studied all documentation and guidance provided by the Western Cape Education Department and used that which best suited it to draw up its Temporary Revised Education Plan (TREP). At first, the acting principal held orientation sessions with the SMT and non-teaching staff. The SMT then held sessions with the teachers and some members of the governing body. Later, orientation sessions were held in the hall when each grade returned to school. Information about procedures at school was forwarded to parents before the learners returned. The teachers use the Assembly period on Mondays to do continuous orientation with their learners to avoid complacency from setting in. The Grade 7 learners receive Life Orientation lessons on Covid-19. The Grade 6 learners are engaged in a programme, Growth Mindset, to assist them with issues relating to the pandemic. The SMT, teaching staff and non-teaching staff monitor the safety of all. The major risk identified is that some learners do not adhere to safety measures in their communities. The SMT encourages learners to attend school for the good academic programme offered and because it ensures that all required safety and hygiene measures are in place. Staff attendance is good.

3.2 The SMT acts effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school.....

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Evaluative commentary

All teachers submit their weekly plans to the departmental heads. The acting principal also reviews these. The SMT encourages staff to use innovative methods to ensure that learners receive quality teaching and learning. The interactive television sets are used to promote online teaching and learning. One teacher aptly phrased the innovations as “the pandemic has changed teaching forever”. The SMT monitors teaching and learning effectively. There are regular meetings in the different phases. There are closed-circuit television cameras with sound installed in all classrooms to which the acting principal has access. Software currently used includes Oxford Geography and most teachers also use YouTube resources frequently.

3.3 The SMT ensures that good use is made of all school resources (human, financial and physical)..... 3

Evaluative commentary

Grades 5 to 7 teachers taught the Grade 7 learners on their return to school as there were additional classes. All the teachers are qualified to teach the grade. The teacher with a comorbidity continues to contribute work to ensure the functionality of the school. All staff are fully utilised to assist with screening, cleaning, nutrition, and teaching services. Staff feel that they are treated fairly and to the benefit of all learners. The governing body employs additional teaching and non-teaching staff to assist with various duties. Safety and cleaning materials are safely stored and replenished when supplies are low. Teachers have embraced technology effectively to minimise the challenges of Covid-19 and improving their own skills. Learners find the new, improved approach very helpful and say they learn better. Teachers also formed WhatsApp groups to send work to their learners during the lockdown period. Work packs were prepared for parents to collect from the school every week for those who did not have data at home.



4. Governance, Parents and Community

4.1 The governing body fulfils its key responsibilities well 3

Evaluative commentary

The governing body works closely with the acting principal and supports the school well. Since the beginning of the lockdown, it was part of the initiatives taken to prepare the school to welcome back the first group of learners. It held several meetings to discuss the implications of Covid-19 on the school including the expectations, preparations, and accommodation for the return of all learners. The governing body is committed to paying the salaries of its teaching and non-teaching staff. A Covid-19 Policy was approved by the governing body.

Good practice, innovation, imaginative solutions

The governing body held numerous meetings to date, physically and through WhatsApp groups. At least two of the meetings were called specifically to discuss Covid-19 matters. On the day the Grade 7 learners returned, members of the governing body were at school, monitoring procedures and supporting the staff and learners.

4.2 The governing body fulfils well it's functions with regard to the school's finances within its legal mandate..... 3

Evaluative commentary

Unemployment due to Covid-19 has had a negative impact on the budget. The school is fortunate that it has an investment account and is using the money to pay for additional expenses, including the salaries of staff it employs. The governing body contacts parents often regarding the payment of school fees. There has not yet been a need to review the budget in its entirety.

Concerns, problems

Although the school has some funds available, the acting principal says that only about 30% of parents are paying school fees currently.

4.3 The school engages effectively with all stakeholders..... 3

Evaluative commentary

The learners, teachers and non-teaching staff can give feedback to the SMT. The governing body's Staff feel free to make suggestions should the need arise. The caretaker quoted an example where he made suggestions about draining the water in the swimming pool and how to modify the school's safety and hygiene procedures. Learners felt they had not had the need to give their views as effective procedures are in place. The school has good communication links with parents. Even before the learners returned parents were sent newsletters updating them on the changes implemented. Teachers used WhatsApp groups advising parents how to assist their children with work provided. At first, parents were nervous, but because of the regular updates and their belief in the ethos of the school, they felt comfortable sending their children back to school. The school receives good support from the district office. The circuit manager is in regular contact with the acting principal. The subject advisers held Microsoft Teams meetings with the teachers and provide additional resources. The district's psychologist is available to meet with learners, when necessary.

Recommendations

1. The school must continue to remind learners of the importance of adhering to the safety measures when they are outside the school premises.
2. The SMT must continue to ensure a high quality of teaching and learning.
3. The school must ensure that the safety of learners is always a priority.
4. The school must improve its contact with parents, who, in turn, must be encouraged to send their children back to school and to pay their school fees.