



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Report: Riviersonderend Primêre Skool



School: Riviersonderend Primêre Skool
Address: 27 Price Street, Riviersonderend, 7250
Circuit: C3
District: Overberg
Province: Western Cape
Category: Public Ordinary (No-fee)
Principal: Mr J Duminy - Ms D Middleway (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:

4 Outstanding

3 Good

2 Requires improvement

1 Inadequate

Main Findings



1. Teaching and Learning

1.1 The teachers maintain a safe and positive learning environment 1

Evaluative commentary

All classrooms comply with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guidelines for social distancing, with desks or tables spaced at least 1.5 metres apart. Social distancing is observed while learners are entering, sitting, and leaving. The timetable has been modified appropriately to reduce movement and the concentration of learners and staff in confined spaces. Time is not used effectively. Only Grade 7 learners are currently at school. The grade is divided into four groups, with two groups attending on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and two groups attending on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Hence, Grade 7 learners attend school on five days during a 10-day cycle. The lessons are run consecutively for three hours, without any break. This avoids contact amongst learners at break times. As only Grade 7 learners had returned to school, more time should have been allocated to teaching and learning. Teachers are present and teaching.

Concerns, problems

The elimination of break times means a three hour stretch of teaching and learning. While social distancing is observed, the lack of fresh air and movement for the learners is a concern.

1.2 The adaptation of classroom teaching practice in the light of Covid-19 ensures that teaching and learning are of high quality 1

Evaluative commentary

Teachers found the revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) resourceful. However, the reduction in instructional time will impact negatively on the completion of the revised curriculum. The school opted to exclude History, Geography and Creative Arts on the timetable to maximise instructional time in the remaining subjects. Even with the exclusion of the three subjects mentioned, the total teaching time is only 15 hours in a ten-day cycle. The school should have taken advantage of the return of only one grade to extend the teaching and learning times so that learners can complete more work. The size of the teaching groups has been reduced and the teachers are able to use the increased opportunities to assist learners. An example was cited of a learner who required support but because of the smaller classes now, his work has improved substantially.

Concerns, problems

Instructional time is not used to its maximum even though only Grade 7 learners are present. The curriculum will not be completed. Assessments will be based on what has been taught and, hence, there will be gaps in learners' knowledge as they progress to the next grade. In the learner interviews, some said that they currently do not work as hard as before the lockdown. The decrease in instructional time was given as the reason.

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

Evaluative commentary

The school has effective systems in place to ensure that learners' work is marked, and feedback is given by teachers on a regular basis. Learners were allocated files, and this is the only item that they bring to school. These are sanitised daily, and worksheets are given to the learners. Learners complete the worksheets at home, and these are marked when they next attend school. Teachers sanitise the worksheets before and after handling them. There are effective measures in place for learners with comorbidities who have applied to stay at home. Every Monday, their parents fetch work from the school. This arrangement includes learners who have applied but are still awaiting confirmation. Teachers support learners not attending school and deliver the work packs if parents do not fetch them from school. Teachers show good awareness of the needs of vulnerable learners who are at school. The school recognises and receives good psycho-social support for vulnerable learners from the district and various organisations. The learner support teacher is in weekly contact with a local doctor, the clinic and municipality to get updates on Covid-19 in the community. The teachers had a workshop on "Mindfulness", and many use the same techniques with their learners. Vulnerable learners attend school on days when assessments are taking place.

Good practice, innovation, imaginative solutions

The “Mindfulness” programme enables the teachers to understand the techniques to use for psycho-social support for themselves and their learners.

Concerns, problems

A few learners have not received any work despite attempts from the school to reach them.



2. Behaviour and Safety

2.1 The school’s environment is disciplined and purposeful and its ethos is positive 3

Evaluative commentary

Learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff demonstrate comprehensive and willing compliance with the WCED Guidelines necessary to keep everyone safe. They show an understanding of the reasons for these measures and the importance of always following the safety protocols. This includes purchasing reusable coveralls that staff wear when dealing with learners in class, during screening and escorting them from and to the gates. A few staff members who could have applied to work from home because of comorbidities opted not to as they felt that the learners needed them. During classroom visits we observed focused staff and learners.

2.2 The school is safe, and protects and cares for its learners and staff well 3

Evaluative commentary

The school’s procedures for managing Covid-19 are effective. Classrooms, offices, and ablution facilities are cleaned and are sanitised as often as four times daily. An assistant is present when learners use the ablution facilities to clean the cubicles and control access. Screening is effectively done from the time the learners enter the gate and their classrooms. Learners line up in front of their classrooms. Teachers ask learners the screening questions and take their temperatures before they are allowed access to their classrooms. The school has clear and appropriate procedures for responding to suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19, which are understood by staff and learners. There are two isolation rooms, one for learners and one for staff. Procedures for controlling authorised visitors’ access on the premises and for screening visitors are implemented effectively. Unauthorised visitors are not allowed to enter the premises. The preparation and serving of food for learners on the National School Nutrition Programme are safe and hygienic. The learners receive porridge upon arrival, but they take lunch home. Learner transport is available, but very few learners use it currently. There is sanitiser available on the bus and seats are demarcated to indicate where the learners may sit.

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 2

Evaluative commentary

The SMT has a clear plan for complying with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and the WCED Guidelines. The Temporary Revised Education Plan is inadequate as it does not provide enough teaching time. Orientation and instructions for learners, teachers and non-teaching staff were effective, providing clarity and reassurance. The orientation sessions included presentations as well as receiving hard copies. Each classroom has laminated Covid-19 related posters and measures necessary to avoid catching the virus. SMT members monitor the safety of learners and staff who are reminded daily about wearing face masks and social distancing. They accurately identify risks and explain the action taken to mitigate them. Although the SMT said that it promotes good learner attendance, approximately 20% of the Grade 7 learners has not yet returned.

3.2 The SMT acts effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school..... 2

Evaluative commentary

The SMT provides good guidance and effective support for teachers to understand and implement changes to the curriculum, assessment, and general education matters. Although the Foundation Phase teachers have not yet returned, the departmental head responsible for the phase is in constant contact with her team regarding the latest adaptations. The SMT facilitates the input provided by subject advisers by providing effective guidance to the teachers on the organisation of teaching and learning. It has already adapted the changes to assessment requirements. SMT members visit classrooms and observe lessons to support teachers in adapting to new requirements. The learner support teacher is actively involved in assisting vulnerable learners and assists teachers with remedial intervention strategies. Despite attempts by teachers to assist learners at home or asking parents to fetch work, there is concern that too many learners are not reached.

Concerns, problems

There are many learners at home who have not done any work throughout the lockdown.

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

Evaluative commentary

The SMT works together most effectively to ensure the school functions well. The staff with comorbidities contribute if they stay at home. It was reported that the principal visits the school regularly and is in daily contact with the acting principal to ensure that the school maintains its functionality. An assistant has been employed to assist with the work of the teacher who is absent with a comorbidity. All staff are allocated work fairly to ensure the safety of all. Despite their anxieties, staff are committed and put in extra time at school. Cleaning resources are used efficiently, and the stock is frequently replenished. The SMT attempts to empower teachers to acquire eLearning skills. Workshops were held on the use of online resources. However, most of the learners and their parents do not have access to online platforms.



4. Governance, Parents and Community

4.1 The governing body fulfils its key responsibilities well 2

Evaluative commentary

The governing body has a good understanding of Covid-19 and supports the school well. The governing body members are readily available to assist with cleaning and screening. They are aware of the school's needs and approved extra Covid-19 related purchases. Although changes to the Finance Policy have been discussed, the governing body has not yet reviewed the policy or other Covid-19 related policies.

Concerns, problems

The governing body must review school policies related to Covid-19.

4.2 The governing body fulfils well its functions with regard to the school's finances within its legal mandate 1

Evaluative commentary

The governing body is aware that expenditure has increased but is not able to say how the budget has been reprioritised. The governing body appointed additional assistants to help with cleaning. There has been no discussion or analysis of future income and expenditure.

Concerns, problems

The budget has not been reviewed despite the additional purchases and appointment of assistants.

4.3 The school engages effectively with all stakeholders

Evaluative commentary

There is evidence that learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff are encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions to the SMT on the school's management of Covid-19. The school tries many methods of communication with parents, including newsletters, word of mouth and social media. However, the response from parents is not always satisfactory. The school maintains effective links with the district office and circuit manager and reaches out to other district support services and local public health officials. The subject advisers give support and hold virtual meetings with teachers. Support comes from the district psychologist, social worker, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), BADISA, and the South African Police Services.

Concerns, problems

The lack of response from a few parents is a concern.

Recommendations

1. The timetable must be reviewed to include more teaching and learning time.
2. The SMT must intensify its efforts to bring learners back to school.
3. Learners must be reminded, daily, to comply with social distancing and wear face masks when they are not at school.
4. The governing body must review and revise policies in the light of Covid-19.
5. The budget must be reprioritised to reflect the additional expenses and to forecast future income and expenses.