



BEDFORD COUNTRY SCHOOL

PLANS FOR 2021

Restoring a balance between Body, Mind and Spirit

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark reality the state that our world is in. This can be seen in the different ways individual people and institutions have dealt with and are still dealing with the disaster. The mental health issues facing many families across our country and the world, is of great concern and have increased at an alarming rate. This will not go away anytime soon...

We have the wonderful privilege here at Bedford Country School to be able to offer the joys of country living in a safe and secure environment – something that many other schools and families are craving for. On top of this, we are also an Independent School which leaves us with a lot of room to change our curriculum to suit our current needs. This combination can act as an incredibly powerful tool in the development of our children.

In this document, I have set out the plans we have for BCS over the course of the next year. We are due for the next strategic planning session and this will happen in the first term of 2021 once our new Governing Body members have been appointed. As in the previous 2 strategic plans we have done (2009 – 2014 and 2015 – 2020) this will help steer our course and help us to make the right decisions for the sustainability and prosperity of our beloved school. You, as parents, will be directly involved in this strategic plan through a questionnaire/survey that will be sent to you before the time.

In the meantime, please see attached our proposed changes in our school day and extra-curricular activities for 2021:

PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHOOL HOURS WILL BE EXTENDED ON FRIDAYS TO LEAVE US WITH ENOUGH TIME TO BRING ABOUT THE POSITIVE CHANGES, AND AS FOLLOWS:

PRE-SCHOOL & GRADE R: 8AM – 12:45PM (Monday – Thursday) 12:15 on Fridays
GRADE 1 - 3: 8AM – 1PM (Monday – Thursday) 12:30pm on Fridays
GRADE 4 – 7: 8AM - 2PM (Monday - Thursday) 1:30pm on Fridays

We are going to do a trial run to start 8:30am in the colder months: June, July and August as we saw so many positive things come out of starting at 9am during the pandemic this year. We have many parents who live very far away and this will also give them an opportunity to travel when it's light.

INTEGRATED LEARNING

Pre-school and Grade R – 3 have long since followed an integrated approach whereby the languages, maths and life skills (which include art and music) are theme related and form part of the “bigger picture”.

An Intermediate Phase child (Gr 4 – 6) and Senior Phase child (Gr 7) usually have their day chopped up into the languages, maths and content based subjects, like geography, history, the sciences, etc. All of which have wildly different topics. However, children should be able to see the world as an integrated whole and not a world of different parts.

PLANS: The Intermediate and Senior Phase classes will also now focus on one core theme at a time. A 1½ hour theme lesson will be done daily and will not only focus on teaching learners content knowledge but also on developing critical thinkers through team work and collaboration. The content of each theme will be covered through written work, craft activities, artwork projects, practical experiments, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) challenges and computer work. Questions will be posed to the learners and problem-solving promoted. Day excursions and field trips will also be planned according to the specific theme of a class.

For the duration of each theme the members of the class will work together to set up a display board and table of relevant objects and artefacts of interest. Children will be encouraged to contribute towards these displays and to share their knowledge and findings with their classmates.

Our topics will be based on the topics set out in the Natural Science and Social Science CAPS documents, but we will put our own unique spin on it!

See the table below for a list of the topics each class will be looking at in TERM 1:

GRADE 4	GRADE 5	GRADE 6
Living things and their habitats	Plants and animals on earth	Photosynthesis – plant factories
Plants, plants everywhere	Life cycles	Food and nutrition
Our local history	Hunter gatherers and herders	Mapungubwe: An African Kingdom
Home, sweet home - settlements	Africa - mapwork	The world - mapwork

It is important to understand that we will not be changing the curriculum as such, but rather improving the way in which lessons are delivered in order to maximise learning and to develop valuable and much needed life skills.

Children will complete formal and informal assessments, tasks, tests and projects as part of each theme in order to obtain marks for their reports. Report marks will remain separated in Maths, English Home Language, Afrikaans First Additional Language, Natural Science and Social Science.

This approach is very similar to enquiry-based learning which is in line with many successful international curricula.

READING

We cannot put the emphasis enough on how important it is to read fluently and with understanding. Children who cannot read with understanding, struggle to complete tasks as they cannot comprehend what is required of them – a skill that becomes more important as our children start writing exams in Grade 6.

But it goes even deeper than that... A child who reads a lot (even if forced to do so), will eventually read fluently which will in turn lead to reading for enjoyment and a love for books.

Although we have an active library programme in which teachers in which children are guided to take out books, not all our children actually have the opportunity to read the books at home.

PLANS: The whole school from Pre-school to Grade 7 will have at least 10 – 15 minutes of quiet time every day during the school day of either being read to by their class teacher or reading their library book on their own. This will bring a sense of peace and quiet across the school buildings and it will be a time to look forward to.

TECHNOLOGY

Never before has technology been so widely used as during the pandemic. It has also given us the opportunity to relook at whether what we are offering here at BCS in terms of computers, is still relevant. At the moment our Busy Bees to Grade 7 children all follow the highly acclaimed South African developed Knowledge Network programme in which they learn to work on programmes such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

PLANS: After the visit from JEVA robotics however, we realised that our older children from Grade 4 and up are ready to engage in aspects such as coding and programming. It is of course important to have a highly skilled facilitator in this area as it is a highly technical field. Nina Fettroll is this person. Please see below a letter of introduction:

I have a special interest in maths and science based subjects. I have a degree in Astrophysics from the University of Cape Town. During my studies I did, among others, courses in Maths, Applied Maths, Computer Science, Physics and Astrophysics. I was exposed to a number of programming languages throughout my years at University, including Python, MATLAB and Java and in conjunction with a range of different IDE's (integrated development environments). Python became my preferred language of choice for applications in Maths and Physics, and I used it almost daily in my final years of study.

From my experience I have seen that computer programming is a highly valuable skill and useful in so many areas. So when Ammie approached me about introducing a coding/computer programming class at BCS I immediately thought it was a great idea! The idea is to start by introducing children to the basic ideas and concepts of computer programming through fun and interesting lessons. Starting off with a visual block interface such as Scratch, is user-friendly for children and has plenty room for fun and creativity. Working with the class teachers, lessons can be built around the current themes/content of other classes providing an integrated and useful subject, and at the same time exposing the children to the wide array of applications of coding. Following a sequential approach, the visual block interface can lead to the introduction of text based coding for the higher grades.

Our Grade 4 – 7 children have been using our computer room on a regular basis and will continue to do so while completing projects and tasks. This will be under supervision of their class teachers.

MUSIC

Music has always formed a very important part of our school and it's been really hard to not have class music the past few months because of COVID-19 restrictions. Hopefully all will be well next year so that we can resume our music classes.

Our Foundation Phase teachers are able to do their own class music and will be focusing on percussion (marimbas, xylophones, etc), recorder and singing.

Our Intermediate Phase children will be focusing on playing the marimba and other percussion instruments under the guidance of Berdine Lombard. We are very keen to get a choir together again as soon as restrictions have been lifted.

Private piano lessons are encouraged if a child is academically strong and has a piano at home. Arrangements can be made for boarding house children to practice at school.

ECO-SCHOOLS

All indications are that with the world population growing at an unprecedented rate, land will become scarcer and therefore food production will become imperative. Our children will have to learn how to produce their own food or at least know where it comes from to make intelligent choices.

PLANS: All our teachers and children will be involved in eco-schools next year, whether it is by growing something in their classrooms or outside, exploring their environment by investigations or combatting pollution. This will take part as a natural part of their school day and will be integrated with their themes or separately.

Not part of Eco-Schools, but something we think is an important life skill is First Aid. Sim King has been a certified level 2 First Aider since qualifying as a Biokineticist in 2005 and will be taking our Grade 6's for very important First Aid skills which will hopefully stand them in good stead.
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COMMUNITY SERVICE

Our children cannot exist in a bubble. The world has become a global community where borders are blurred and often obsolete. As many traditional jobs are threatened by a technological take-over, "soft skills" will be front and centre when it comes to job opportunities and personal well-being. Effective communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, empathy for others, creativity, leadership, and many more will be needed in a harsh world where you have everything you've ever wanted or needed literally at your fingertips.

We need to make our children aware of the world around them – it is our job to show them the good and the bad so that they can develop an understanding and a drive to become involved in their communities and make a positive difference.

PLANS: All Grade R – 7 children will be involved in a community service project chosen by their class teacher and themselves. Each project will run for the duration of a year or beyond, depending on what it is. The class teacher will take full responsibility for this, but will involve other role players such as parents, community members and business owners. Suggestions are welcome!

SPORT

The goal of sport at primary school is 3 fold – not only is it necessary to expose children to different kinds of sport, but also to emphasise the importance of team work (an important “soft skill”) and maintaining a healthy lifestyle beyond school.

Our offering at the moment includes a summer and winter programme.

The **SUMMER PROGRAMME** includes: Tennis, cricket, swimming (Term 1), athletics (Term 4) and cross country.

The **WINTER PROGRAMME** includes: Rugby, netball, hockey and cross country.

Our **FOUNDATION PHASE (Gr 1 – 3)** will have sport on Mondays and Wednesdays between 1pm and 2pm.

Our **Intermediate and Senior Phase (Gr 4 – 7)** will have sport on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 1pm and 2pm.

School swimming from will be done within the school day by coaches and teachers.

We are also proposing an extra tennis team practice for our older children once/week, especially before an upcoming match. A day and time still needs to be decided upon.

CONCLUSION

It is so important that you, as Dads, Moms and Caregivers, play an active role in our school. As I’ve said so many times before – a school where parents, teachers and children form a perfect tri-angle is a happy space and can only thrive (see how everything works in 3’s?!)

Your support is always so much appreciated and we will need it now more than ever as we start the new school year with a refreshed energy and new ideas.

I believe that we are on the right track and with the combination of a few changes + also keeping the things that work, we will put BCS into another bracket altogether and on a new path in terms of education post-Pandemic.

Ammie Pringle
January 2021