



# THE RIDGE SCHOOL



## From the Headmaster's Desk

March 2018 #4

### Dear Parents

On the morning of Tuesday 20th February, all Ridge boys and members of the teaching and coaching teams enjoyed the first of this year's **Care-to-Learn experiences**. In keeping with recent years, Moeketsi Motsepe had linked up with Mandy Bailey and Janet Wilson from Salvazione in order to plan for a morning of fun and games for the children from the two schools.

This again offered our boys a valuable opportunity to connect with and learn from and alongside children who represent a very different part of our Johannesburg community and for whom life's daily journey is so often so much more of a struggle. The day was dedicated to building social cohesion and relational contacts.

Our Grade 4 and 7 boys and teachers were treated to a 'robot-building' exercise with a difference. Using clean, recycled plastic, discarded stationery and a few rudimentary motors and batteries, the children were tasked by Janet and her team to work together in their groups to make functional, propeller-operated robots. Loads of fun was had by all.

Back here at The Ridge, the Salvazione children and our boys worked in class groupings:

- The Grade 0's enjoyed the wonders of library, reading, iPad story-telling and play time on the jungle gyms,
- The Grade 1, 2 and 3 children were put through their paces with a variety of fun and games, exploring of the Zulu culture and some traditional games as well,
- The Grade 5 boys and girls spent a valuable hour and half in the library engaging with and learning from various research and exposure to books activities,
- The Grade 6 children spent time in our Science and Innovation Centre getting to grips with beading and dancing.



## The Grade 5, 6 and 7 Camp and Excursion Season

As we look forward to our half-term weekend, our more senior boys can also eagerly anticipate the build-up to their camp excursions which take place at various stages during the course of next week. As a school we are again acutely mindful of the need to make sure that we do everything in our power to cover all bases in the interests of looking after the boys. In preparing for and planning towards these outdoor experiences, Heads of Grade have focused on a number of key areas:

- ◆ Risk Assessment profiles have been conducted and completed,
- ◆ The arranging of safe passage to and from the respective camp sites - more on this later in this newsletter,
- ◆ Focusing attention on providing watchful and preventative supervision of the boys at all times without creating too much of a claustrophobic, straight-jacketed atmosphere,
- ◆ Making sure that all 'creature comforts' are carefully thought through and are taken care of but without removing the important 'roughing it' element that such adventures allow for,
- ◆ Working with respective camp administrators to come up with an outdoor experience that will add real value to what is intentionally designed to be an extension of the boys' learning programme.

In addition we have taken steps to improve our *Code of Conduct for the Effective Supervision, Safety and Security of Ridge Boys on School Camp* document. A copy of this document can be found on our Ridge App. The senior camp administrator at each of the three camp sites has been personally contacted by me and each has agreed to sign off on the document. Every member of the accompanying teaching teams have been given copies of the document and we have conducted special meetings that have allowed for some important Q and A time.

Mums and dads will understand, too, that we are working hard to make sure that our Ridge lads recognize and understand the role that each will need to play in being able to make the most of his own and others' camping experiences. All boys will be expected to be considerate in their choice-making, demonstrate kind and caring behaviour, have a positive attitude – thus making an effort to get as much out of the 'away from home' adventure, and work together with others to generate spirit and unity.

The boys are really looking forward to what is an important extension to learning opportunity for each of them and we, as accompanying members of staff, can anticipate being able to facilitate another boy-centred time away.

## Outsourcing of Bus Transport

It has become standard practice for members of The Ridge management team to meet with key personnel from the school's transport provider in order to firm up on and fine-tune expected areas of service delivery, passenger and vehicle safety, and all that pertains to an ongoing service level agreement. To this end a meeting was held here at The Ridge on the morning of 8th February with senior members of the STA Bus company.

STA Bus is a family run business and has been around for over 40 years. Their manufacturers meticulously maintain all their vehicles and they have a national network of service and breakdown backup centres for supporting their large fleet of busses running nation-wide.

Every vehicle is thoroughly checked on a weekly basis, serviced every six months or every fifteen thousand km, and is given a full road worthy certification twice a year. On site mechanics from the MAN service and maintain the vehicles as and when necessary on a daily basis.

Safety checks are conducted on every bus prior to it leaving the depot each day. In addition, Terrance Phakathi, who is our security supervisor here at The Ridge, has been tasked with personally inspecting each bus before our boys are allowed to embark.

Some other pertinent facts about the busses our boys and others travel on:

- ⇒ Only new tyres are used and not re-treads
- ⇒ Every bus has seat belts on every seat
- ⇒ Top speed is governed to 100km/hour
- ⇒ A new 'drive risk' system is being introduced to monitor driver habits and alertness
- ⇒ Permits to drive on all SA roads are in place
- ⇒ STA Bus run a specific fleet of busses specifically for independent schools

Their skilled recruitment department handpicks the drivers. The drivers all have experience and have had their heavy-duty licenses for over five years. STA Bus is the only bus company to have been given operational clearance by the government for another twelve years.

The teachers / coaches accompanying the boys are expected to make sure that the lads are strapped in at all times whilst on the journey and are expected to spread out so that they can monitor boy behaviour from the back, in the middle of the bus and at the front. The boys themselves are expected to listen to instructions, to cooperate and to be seated at all times en route to their destination.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

## **Ridge Carpark Safety**

It has been noted on a few occasions that some drivers in the form of parents or caregivers are using their mobile devices whilst navigating their vehicles through the Woolston Road carpark.

There is no doubt at all that such behaviour puts others at significant risk, not least of whom are our Ridge boys. I am making an earnest plea for all drivers to please adhere to safe driving practices in and around the school property.

## **Transformation, Diversity and Anti-Racism**

Following on from what was briefly reported on in my newsletter of a few weeks ago, I am able to report that the Board's TDA subcommittee has again been working hard to find appropriate ways to advance the transformation journey and so to build on the momentum achieved last year. We are in the process of fine-tuning a 10 point road map that will set out a clear path to follow, clarify realistic and reachable priorities into the year ahead, and that will give depth and meaning to the targets that we have set for ourselves. We look forward to being able to keep parents abreast of all progress that we are making.

## **Trading Places**

We have enjoyed two Trading Places meetings during the past two Wednesday mornings. Both have provided for a relaxed and convivial sharing and discussion platform designed to allow mums and dads to air their views on so many of the challenges and opportunities that we are tackling under the broad headings of transformation and inclusivity. Moeketsi Motsepe and I take down many of the ideas shared and the concerns raised with the intention of being able to pass these on to the TDA sub-committee. Some ideas coming through from the two meetings were:

- ✓ Finding ways to lead our boys into healthy discussion around social issues
- ✓ Being sensitive to, investigating and doing something about so much that might constitute subliminal and institutional racism as well cultural bias here at The Ridge;
- ✓ Raising awareness and confronting some of the often offensive 'vocabulary' that one hears being used within the school's community;

- ✓ Intentionally finding ways of addressing the hidden hurt that is associated with a 'macho culture' in our all-boys schools;
- ✓ Continuing to empower our boys in ways that will enhance a climate of critical thinking;
- ✓ Encouraging respect for difference and the appreciation that "one's way is not the only way".

## Junior Primary Upgrade

The demolition phase is now complete. This means that we can look forward to the contractor kick-starting the actual building phase, in earnest, in the days immediately ahead. This will herald in a welcome time of relative quiet following what has been an understandably noisy and somewhat disturbing demolition operation.

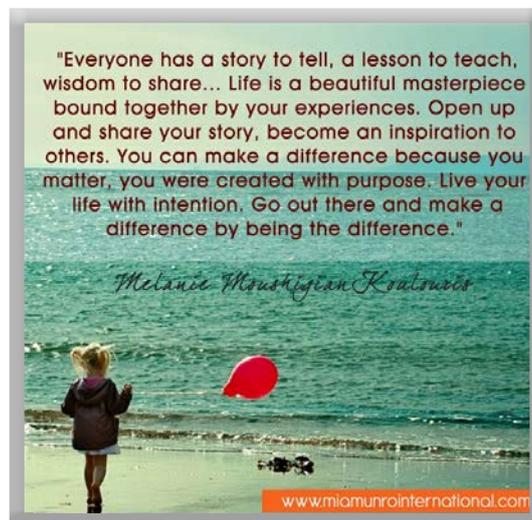
All communication channels between the school and the building contractors remain open as together we continue to monitor noise levels, large vehicle movement, safety and security issues, and anything else that might be raised as potentially having an impact on the operational integrity of our daily school life.

## A Final Word

In the context of working towards our theme for the year, 'Being the Difference', we are working hard to provide our Ridge boys with a half-full, rather than half-empty, mindset, and particularly when it comes to giving the benefit of doubt to another person.

We are so conscious that in society at large, all too often people look to find fault and to pre-judge. As such, we have an important role to play in helping the younger generations into a more conciliatory space. A place from where, having listened to another person's story, one is able to respect their point of view, understand something of what is giving rise to their thinking and to recognise the opportunity we can take to learn from them. In essence, a bridge-building exercise, from where the boys can learn to acknowledge and build another person up rather than break them down, just through putting out a hand of friendship.

Best wishes and kind regards



Richard Stanley  
Headmaster