



THE RIDGE SCHOOL



From the Headmaster's Desk

May 2018 #6

Dear Parents

With only a few days having passed since the beginning of the 2nd Term, it is still not too late to welcome you all back to The Ridge for what promises to be another wonderfully engaging, busy and boy-centred middle term. I trust that the April holidays have not faded too quickly from your memories and that it provided ample time for everyone to take a few days out of respective schedules to relax and to enjoy some family togetherness under a balmy African autumn sky.

Staff News

⇒ It is with mixed feelings that I share the news that Michael MacFarlane (Direct of Pastoral Care and Head of Grade 6) has been appointed to the position of Deputy Headmaster of St John's Prep School. He has been with us here at The Ridge since January 2015 and has certainly made his mark as a respected and popular subject teacher, a boy-centred educator and a fine Water Polo coach. Mike takes up his new position at the start of the 3rd Term this year. We congratulate him on his promotion and wish him, his wife Lindsey and their two children every success as they open this exciting new chapter in their lives.



⇒ We are delighted to share the news that Ryan Bezuidenhout (Grade 4 class teacher and Head of Cheales House) and fiancé, Marlise Coetzee were married in Mexico during the April holidays. We wish them many happy years together and God's richest blessings as a married couple.



⇒ It is wonderful to be able to share the news that Candice Fletcher (school psychologist) and her husband Raymond have been blessed with the birth of their first child. Their son, Gray Syga Fletcher, came into the world on Monday afternoon this past week. Hearty congratulations to his mum and dad who are, understandably, ecstatic.



Junior Prep Upgrade Progress Report

Having completed the demolition of the old Junior Prep during the course of March 2018, the building contractor began preparing the surface bed and digging the holes for the footings and foundations of the new structure.

Unfortunately the contractor encountered a number of unexpected difficulties during this process including:

- ✓ Excessive hard rock, some of which had to be jack-hammered out (thanks to the staff for putting up with the excessive noise of these operations);
- ✓ Discovery of unknown underground drainage pipes;
- ✓ Old concrete foundations and slabs left in the soil from previous builds.



These, together with all the rain experienced in March and the first part of April, have meant that the contractor is approximately 10 days behind schedule on certain aspects of the programme, and 4 days behind schedule on the programme as a whole. Despite this, he is confident that he can make up the lost days during the next phase of the project and remains comfortable with the end of the year still scheduled as the completion date.

A consequence of the hard rock encountered is a slight amendment to the floor level, with the ground floor being raised by 170mm.

The increase in the VAT rate from 14% to 15% has had a significant effect on the projected final costings, however this will be recouped by a saving on the manufacture and installation of the lift.

Aside from building works, the project team has begun the process of appointing sub-contractors for electrics, plumbing, doors and windows, lift manufacture, joinery and landscaping amongst others. In addition, the team is attempting to include as many sustainable solutions in the building as is economically feasible. The end result is likely to include the re-cycling of grey and rain-water as well as a significant solar electricity supply.

With the uncertainties (other than the weather) now behind us and with the hope that the rainy season is over we anticipate that the project will run according to schedule and on budget until completion.

Our Ridge Transformation Journey:

During the action-packed and busy 1st Term the Board of Governors, the Transformation, Diversity and Antiracism sub-committee, the Exco team and the school staff were intently involved in realigning all of the school's transformation strategies and related action plans. Some of what we introduced and initiated has already been shared with parents in earlier newsletters. During the next few weeks we look forward to sharing our 10 Point Transformation and Diversity Plan with the parent body.

Communication Channels

We have heard from reliable sources that some parents feel that communication from the school on occasions is either not being received timeously by mums and dads, or that it contradicts some of the information, in a particular context, that parents may have picked up elsewhere.

We are continuing to apply our minds to additional ways of improving the communication of information to parents. Joe Kotwal, as Director of Marketing and Communication, is working with all school departments to streamline and manage what and how information is shared, he is always open to suggestions as to possible improvements that can be made.

As most mums and dads will be aware, The Ridge School app does provide a reliable and convenient electronic connection point through which most of our information is sent. I do encourage parents to make use of this app in order to stay abreast of happenings, alerts or special communiques coming from the school each day.

Use of School facilities by boys and their parents after hours or over weekends and during school holidays

A decision was made a few years ago, in the interests of safeguarding school property and being able to keep a check on passing people traffic through the school, i.e. security, and to tighten up on what had become somewhat of a free-for-all. There were justifiable reason for having to make the call at the time.

It is understood that there are a number of mums and dads who are keen to use the school's facilities from time to time and who will do so in responsible and controlled ways. The provision was made, and still exists, whereby parents can simply notify the school to say that they will be using the nets or a field at a given time. Such communication can come in the form of an email to Bennie Du Preez as Director of Sport, to me as headmaster, or, alternatively, on arrival at the school to inform the guards at the main entrance so that they can record related comings and goings. Your cooperation in this regard is appreciated.

A Final Word

Sue Palmer is a writer, lecturer and broadcaster on the subject of child development and education in the modern world. She has written a number of best sellers in this, her area of expertise and, with her home in Scotland, has been described as being one of that country's 'new radical thinkers'.

In her excellent book, *21st Century Boys*, Sue Palmer speaks about the crucial part that family values ought to play in helping to protect, direct and empower this next generation of boys. From the chapter entitled 'Battery-reared boys', she says the following under the heading of Family Values:

"It's in the family that boys have always learned – through the usual routes of imitation and repetition – the skills, values and attitudes that underpin their behaviour in the wider world beyond the home. Deep-seated attitudes of life, learning and social responsibility are caught, not taught. And in order for their sons to catch them, parents have to spend time in their company, not merely during holidays or so-called 'quality time', but in day-to-day incidental contact. Unfortunately, in an S-type world where personal relationships are accorded little value, spending time with one's children often seems less important than providing consumer must-haves like the latest technological gadgetry, or expensive extracurricular activities such as sports clubs and music tuition.

It's also in daily, personal contact with their children that adults themselves acquire the essential balance of warmth and firmness needed for authoritative parenting. Parents can't be truly warm with their sons unless they spend time tuning into their needs and interests, listening to their point of view, sharing experiences and ideas. Nor can they set and maintain firm boundaries for behaviour unless they're actively engaged in their son's daily life – monitoring his manners and making sure he sticks to agreed routines, such as mealtimes and bedtime rituals. If a boy's locked away in a virtual world, such authoritative parenting is impossible."

At our opening assembly of the term I took time to share on the concept of 'Tuning In'. This brings to light the importance around being able to focus attention on the smaller details of daily experiences; in so doing, we begin to appreciate the value embedded in the application of doing the really little things really well.

In the light of Sue Palmer's reminders, I would encourage mums and dads not to lose sight of the importance of making time to intentionally engage with your boys in ways that draw them into your spheres of influence so as to catch your values and principles for living, and so learn from your example.

I wish you a wonderful term ahead with your boys as you enjoy being part of all that will enrich and bless their young lives here at The Ridge.

Warm regards and best wishes



Richard Stanley
Headmaster

