



Pinelands High School

Newsletter: Vol 1: 2009

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Dear Parents/Guardians

Welcome back to you all at the start of what promises to be an exciting year for Pinelands High. I hope you had a good break with your children and that they are ready for a year of learning and involvement in their school.

The theme for the year is **Leadership in the Classroom** where we will be focussing on the development of teachers as leaders in the learning environment and students as leaders in their own learning. We also have plans for a major classroom upgrade over the course of the next three years with this year being the first phase of this project. Included in this project are items such as painting classrooms, replacing chalkboards with whiteboards and providing data projectors and interactive whiteboards to those teachers who would like to use this tool to enhance the learning process.

Funding for Mathematics

We received some very exciting news with regard to funding. The Epoch and Optima Trust, the social responsibility arm of Anglo American, approved our proposal for a grant of R441 000 for the enhancing of Mathematics education at the school. This will allow not only for physical resources to be provided out of funds other than school fees but also has allowed us to employ an additional Maths teacher. This means that classes in Mathematics in most Grades will be below 30 and in most cases classes are around 25 students in size. Obviously the benefits to the students of being in a smaller class are enormous.

We are also looking at running programmes in the afternoons for extra tuition for our learners and are in the process of finalising arrangements for that.

With funding comes responsibility and we are very aware of the need for us to justify the faith shown in us by improving our Mathematics across the Grades. In order to have an effective means of judging improvement, we are looking at international benchmarking tests in both Mathematics and English to enable us to diagnose and track performance of each individual student.

Matric results 2008

We were delighted with the performance of the Matric class of 2008 in the first NCS examination. Not only did 100% of the students pass the exam but most of our students were able to gain access to their chosen field of study. Just under 70% of the learners qualified to study further at University with a Bachelors pass and 30% could go on to their chosen course at Technikon in a Diploma course. This means that 173 out of 174 students managed to gain access to University or Technikon, while all passed the exam.

A special mention must be made of the school Dux, *Ebrahim Hoosen* who gained seven distinctions for Matric. This included 99% for Mathematics and 95% for the optional Mathematics Paper 3 on Geometry and Probability Theory. *Ebrahim* came 9th in the Province in Mathematics and 5th in the Province in Maths Paper 3. These are outstanding results indeed and we wish him all the best in his chosen field of study - actuarial science.

The Class of 2009 have some work to do to maintain this high performance

and we will be placing a great deal of emphasis on their academic progress this year.

Staff News

We welcomed a number of new staff to our school this year. These are:

Ms Zainab Adams (B Ed) Mathematics and Maths Literacy
Mr Jamiel Landers (B Sc Hons Sports Science) Life Orientation
Ms Nicola Pearton (B Sc PGCE) Maths Literacy and Mathematics
Ms Shirmelle Power (B Ed) Technology
Mrs Yolande Reiche (B Prim Ed) Afrikaans
Ms Natalie Smith (B A Hons, PGCE) English

In addition, *Ms Jess Clinning* (B Sc Hons, PGCE) joins us in a full time capacity after being our learnership candidate last year. *Mr Pierre de Jager* comes in as the new learnership candidate for 2009. *Mr de Jager* was the school Dux here in 2003 and had the distinction of coming 1st in the province in both Physical Science and Geography in his Matric year.

I am always pleased with a staff turnover that allows new staff and new ideas to come into our school while retaining enough of the older staff to maintain the ethos and culture of the school. In a staff of 53 full-time teachers, a turnover of around 10% is quite acceptable. I trust the Pinelands community will make our new staff feel most welcome.

We also congratulate *Mrs Renee Rix* (nee *Carslake*) and *Ms Alison Dewar* on their weddings these

past holidays.

Sports News

Our cricketers had an excellent set of results in the various games played over the holidays. Two games were played against touring teams from the UK at the start of the holiday. In both matches, PHS was victorious, beating Harrow and Charterhouse.

In their tour to Graaf Reinet in the week before school started, PHS played three matches and won two.

Patrick van Niekerk (Matric 2008) and *Zaakir Kathrada* played for the WP U17 Cricket team in the holidays and were hampered by bad weather in their tournament, only being able to play one match. In that match, *Patrick* scored 80 and *Zaakir* 43 to take WP to victory.

On the golf course, *Daniel Barrett* (Matric 2008) was selected for the SA Junior Golf team after winning 11 out of 13 games at the Junior Interprovincial tournament.

We have certainly produced some excellent sportsmen and women over the years and we have exciting plans ahead for sport at PHS this year.

Important notice for all parents

You are reminded of the Grade-specific meetings at the start of the year. The dates and times are in your child's diary. It is expected that ALL learners together with at least one parent/guardian are present at the meetings.

Further detail will be given to your child via a letter but the dates are mentioned here below:

Grade 12: 27 January
Grade 11: 5 February
Grade 10: 11 February
Grade 9: 9 February
Grade 8: 29 January

Communication with the school

It is vital that we have the correct contact details for you and your

child. Please ensure that these are correctly filled in/corrected on the lists at the Grade meetings. If your details change during the course of the year it is critical that you inform the school. Please also make sure you have medical details with you (medical aid numbers, family doctor's name and number etc).

A few reminders...

It is one of my stated objectives for 2009 to keep absentee rates below 5% on average and latecoming below 10 learners per day. While I do understand that there are times when a child is extremely ill or when a traffic accident or train disruption may cause lateness, however in most cases a child is late because they did not get out of bed on time. Children are sometimes absent simply because they did not feel like school!

In the world of work, high absenteeism is considered in an extremely serious light and I ask that you make your child understand the importance of being at school. If a child is genuinely ill - please be compassionate, but if you suspect they are just having a bad day, that is no reason to keep them at home.

A further reminder that parents may not drop children off, nor fetch children inside the school grounds. This is done to protect our students from possible traffic accidents. All students must be dropped off and picked up outside the school grounds.

We communicate a great deal with parents via sms and email. Please make use of this form of communication with your child's teacher as we find that instant feedback is the most effective means of dealing with situations. All new parents will be given the opportunity to confirm contact details such as the sms number at the Grade meetings.

Uniform issues

I am tired of asking some of our young men to pull their pants up and tie their shoelaces properly! The school uniform is to be worn correctly, not in the same

way as a child may wear casual clothes over a weekend. When your child leaves home, please make sure they are properly dressed for a formal academic environment and not as if they have a date on a Saturday evening. I am delighted that the trend of a few years ago of displaying one's underwear through the wearing of low-cut trousers seems to have gone and it is not cool to do this any more (in most cases)!

Personal thoughts...

I have been delighted with the "buzz" in the school these past two days. While students are excited to see each other, they are generally ready for the year. I am reminded so often why we as teachers do what we do when a child greets us with a friendly smile and chats about things that are important to them. The children at PHS are special young people who really make our day and I thank parents/guardians for their role in their child's upbringing.

I wish you all the very best for the year ahead and trust that it will be a wonderful time for you and your child here at Pinelands High.

Regards

Tony Reeler
Principal
23 January 2009