



Pinelands High School

Newsletter: Vol 2: 2009

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Dear Parents/Guardians

I hope that the start of the term has been a good one and that your child has settled into an effective and productive routine, balancing work and play. Just over one month has passed already and if routines have been established you will find life so much easier on the home front!

Many thanks to all the parents/guardians who attended the various evening meetings. Your feedback to the Tutors, Grade Heads and to me has been largely positive and I thank you for that.

Academic Issues

The extra Mathematics classes, offered free of charge to all PHS learners every afternoon, have been going extremely well - particularly with the senior learners. Valuable work is covered and the learners report that the exercise has been enormously helpful to them.

Our junior learners have yet to make effective use of this opportunity though and I strongly urge parents to insist that their Grade 8 or Grade 9 child goes to extra Maths when they have a chance. It would be extremely foolish to waste this opportunity to consolidate work that is vital to their future success in Mathematics.

Code Reviews

The school undertakes a full policy review process every two years for the various Codes of Conduct. You will be invited to take part in this process which will be led by *Mr Overett*. Please avail yourself of this opportunity and take the chance to be heard on any issues you have regarding our Codes.

Until such time as the review process is over, the existing Codes remain in place and will be rigorously enforced.

Staff Issues

We said farewell to *Mrs Pam Buttle*, our IT Administrator for almost 10 years. She has left to assist her husband in the ministry in Wellington and we thank her for the many hours of work she put in to our school, planning and managing the biggest budget in the school (outside the salary budget), preparing many reports and statistics and even crawling in and out of ceilings to lay computer cables! We wish her all the very best for this new chapter in her life.

We have promoted *Mrs Hendrika Meyering* to the position of IT Administrator and have appointed *Mr Piet Joubert* to the position of Technical Assistant in the IT Department. We congratulate *Mrs Meyering* on her promotion and wish her well for the future.

We also welcomed *Mr William Mguphane* to our support staff team. *Mr Mguphane* will be assisting with the maintenance and painting of the school as part of our classroom upgrade project.

Mr Warren van der Westhuizen returns to PHS after being employed as our Lab Assistant in 2007. *Mr van der Westhuizen* now carries the portfolio of Media Co-ordinator and will fulfil the vital role of managing the sound and lighting equipment at the school.

Absenteeism and Late-coming

I have been very pleased with the absentee statistics which are averaging just over 3% relative to the set target of below 5%. I am not so pleased with the late-coming stats. Far too many children are late for school and I remind parents of their responsibility to get their children to school on time each day.

We have set targets of below 1% per day which are easily attainable if the learners take this seriously. At this stage, the Grade 8s and the Grade 10s are leading the way with their good attendance, followed

closely by the Grade 12s.

Achievements of learners

Our congratulations go to three of our learners who achieved what many of us may never achieve - to summit Mount Kilimanjaro. *Benjamin Hall*, *Terence O'Brien* and *Daniella Billet* all managed to stand on top of the highest peak in Africa. While they are extremely fortunate to have this opportunity to attempt the mountain, they are to be highly commended for taking this chance and succeeding.

Congratulations also go to:

Kyle van Rooyen (selected for the SA U18 Ice Hockey team)

Bryan Leibbrandt (selected for the second time for the WP U19 Tennis team)

Iman Jonas (WP Life Saving team)

Luke Leonard and *Rudi Kruser* (selected for a WP U14 Invitational cricket team to play against a touring team from the UK)

Fund Raising

One of the easiest ways for us as a school to raise funds is through the MySchool supporter programme. Simply by swiping your MySchool card at one of the MySchool partners you will ensure that Pinelands High receives a portion of your purchase from the suppliers themselves. Currently we have over 200 families on the programme. If you do not have a card, please consider joining the programme by contacting *Mrs Deborah Torrington* at school.

Medication at school

The staff at school may not, for obvious reasons, dispense any medication to your child. If your child needs painkillers for any reason, we cannot give them these in case they suffer an allergic reaction. Similarly,

we cannot dispense copious amounts of sticking plasters or other sanitary products due to the cost involved.

If your child is on chronic medication that they need to take while at school, they may bring a bottle of their medication to school, clearly labelled, and we will keep it safe for them.

Phoning the School

Please do not telephone the school for details regarding sports practices, close of day times and other such matters. The learners have all this information at their disposal and it is their responsibility to convey this to you. The Front Office is inundated by phone calls from parents which prevents them from doing what they should be doing. If your child is a reluctant communicator, please drum into him/her the need for better planning and communication with you.

Clothing

Please check the washing instructions carefully on school clothing. The tracksuit, for example, cannot be left in the washing machine for long periods of time as the dye may run. Please consult the label if in any doubt.

Parents' Prayer group

A group of very supportive parents gather every Wednesday morning from 09:00 - 09:45 for fellowship and prayer. Their prayer (which is from a Christian perspective) is based on issues surrounding the school and on the community needs. You are more than welcome to join this group if you so wish merely by being at school at this time.

Vision for PHS for 2009

Last year I shared, via newsletter, my personal vision for the school as presented to the staff at the start of the year. The response from parents was very positive indeed and I have decided to do the same again this year. I have highlighted some of my aims and goals for our school below:

Staff Issues

- ▶ to keep staff turnover below 10%
- ▶ to look after our new teachers effectively
- ▶ to encourage teachers to study further

- ▶ to keep administration demands to the absolute minimum so that teachers can concentrate on their main role of teaching
- ▶ to promote the role of the Tutor as each child's "Champion"

Classroom Management

- ▶ to have all teachers in class, on time, teaching
- ▶ to have all students in class on time
- ▶ to have the classroom experience enhanced for the student by constantly encouraging teachers to do their best

School Discipline

- ▶ absenteeism below 5% per day and late-coming below 1% per day
- ▶ to run an effective DT system as a means of changing behaviour
- ▶ to have NO SGB disciplinary enquiries (ie no serious misconduct)

Academic

- ▶ for the Matrics of 2009 to obtain 100% pass rate with 75% Bachelors rate
- ▶ to test all our students on an international benchmarking test to enable us to track academic progress effectively
- ▶ to enhance our reputation as a top academic school
- ▶ to encourage performance in competitions and olympiads
- ▶ to get all students doing the correct academic course
- ▶ to prepare all students for tertiary education in a well-advised course of study
- ▶ to look at IT and Drama as possible future subject options

Estates

- ▶ to improve response time for repairs and maintenance
- ▶ to have all our classrooms upgraded by 2011
- ▶ to improve the noticeboards in the school
- ▶ to improve the litter situation

Sport and Culture

- ▶ to be in the top three in the WP in hockey
- ▶ to provide an artificial surface for practise in hockey
- ▶ to involve teachers more in the sports programme through their support of the students

- ▶ to continue our excellent tradition of musical and dramatic productions
- ▶ to look at creating a full symphony orchestra within three years

General

- ▶ to source further, sustainable income for additional academic programmes at the school
- ▶ to improve and update the website
- ▶ to have a successful election process for the SGB

It remains my desire to have our school as the school of choice for all Pinelands residents and for us to be the leading co-educational school in South Africa. Many of our programmes are unique to us and the ethos of the school is special indeed.

Personal thoughts

I have started teaching Grade 8s again through our programme of IT support and the Principal's Period. In that time I chat to the Grade 8s who have an opportunity to speak directly to the Principal on matters they feel strongly about. I have thoroughly enjoyed the time thus far and find the Grade 8s delightful - refreshingly honest and open to new ideas. Their enthusiasm for school and for life itself is infectious and I would love for us to be able to keep this going as they continue through their teenage years!

I wish you well over the next few weeks and remind parents/guardians of the many assessments that are coming up that will make up your child's mark for the first term. Please make sure she/he hands in all work and is well prepared for each task.

Please also refer to the attached Calendar of Events that highlights the activities for the rest of the term.

Regards

Tony Reeler
Principal
20 February 2009