

28 July 2010



ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE

Dear Parents

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The buck stops here. (US President – Harry S Truman)

At Assembly last Tuesday I spoke to the boys and staff on accountability and taking responsibility for one's actions. We see parents very much as partners in educating your sons and we attempt to keep communication open and to inform you of your sons' progress at school. Communication is now much quicker and easier than it was thirty years ago when there was a single ticky box call phone outside the tuck-shop and you received a terse four-line letter from your son on lined paper written after Evensong on a Sunday night. Now virtually every boy has a cell phone, a page on face book and you know pretty much what is going on in your son's life. Gone are the days when he was beaten by his Housemaster for often fairly trivial offences and you knew nothing of it, or the apocryphal stories about how in our day we did not tell our parents about punishment at school because we knew that they would double it up when we got home. In short, parents left the disciplining of their children to the school and were largely supportive of the process. As you are aware, disciplinary procedures and processes have become much more complicated and time consuming. Serious offences are now dealt with in disciplinary hearings and the school has to prove guilt before applying appropriate sanction, which for a Headmaster's Offence, could range from school gating through to expulsion.

We live in an age where there is often a failure to accept responsibility. Some parents are quick to deny that their son has been involved in any wrong doing, or they tend to trivialize it, or worse still, place the blame elsewhere.

"It's not his fault. He has ADHD".

"It's not his fault. He is in a bad peer group."

"It's not his fault. He has received poor coaching."

Amongst the boys there is also a conspiracy of silence, and misdemeanours committed by friends are often hidden behind "brotherhood".

One of the great traditions of boys' schools is the honour code of owning up and as an individual taking responsibility if you have committed a wrongdoing. Whilst I realise that it is every parent's fundamental right to try and protect their child, it does not help your son if you are taking responsibility for his actions or trying to make excuses for them. Part of being an Andrean is to take responsibility and to be accountable, to learn from one's mistakes and to move on.

"It's not my fault"

It's not my fault I got drunk, you see.
So you can't put your finger on me.
Get those who went and gave me the beer.
Let the lawyers earn their fee.

It's not my fault I'm a gambler you see.
So you can't put the finger on me.
Get the guys who went and placed my bets.
Let the lawyers earn their fee.

It's not my fault I can't get to college you see.
So you can't put the finger on me.
Get the teachers who failed to teach me well.
Let the lawyers earn their fee.

It's not my fault I'm delinquent you see.
So you can't put the finger on me.
Get the ones who urged me to break the law.
Let the lawyers earn their fee.

It's not my fault I do drugs, you see.
So you can't put the finger on me.
Get the blokes who went and sold me the stuff.
Let the lawyers earn their fee.

Anonymous

Quoted from **Learning Leadership Book 4** by Dr Tim Hawkes,
The King's School, Parramatta, Australia, 2005)

STAFF

Our congratulations go to **Mr Graham Creese** (OA) on his appointment to succeed Mr Wayne Joubert as Housemaster of Armstrong House. Mr Creese has a long association with the House having served as Assistant Housemaster in residence there from January 2006 until January 2010. His father, Mr John Creese, was on the staff from 1995-1989 and was Housemaster in Armstrong. Mr Creese has been on the College staff for eight years and has been an integral part of the success of water polo at the school. He is also an outstanding teacher of Science and fully committed to a number of different extra murals. His organisational skills are superb and he enjoys a good rapport with the parents and the boys. We wish Mr Creese great success in his appointment to this important post.

Our congratulations also go to **Dr Mellony Graven**, our Director of Mathematics at SAC and DSG, who has been appointed to the First Rand Foundation Chair of Numeracy Education at Rhodes University with effect from January 2011. Dr Graven has brought great energy to the Maths Centre and has done a great deal to promote the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy across the two schools and in workshops to the broader community.

ACADEMICS

Outcomes Based Education

You will no doubt have seen the announcement during the July holidays that the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, is going to scrap the widely criticized Outcomes Based Education System and will be introducing a new education curriculum. We don't believe that the changes will be dramatic in terms of teaching and learning at St Andrew's. We also know that you can introduce whatever you like in the Education System in South Africa but unless there is a fundamental commitment to teaching and learning, basic discipline, effective timetabling, and positive management and leadership in schools, nothing is really going to change. The power of the largest Teachers' Union, SADTU, remains extraordinary, there is no system of inspection or appraisal and unless this yoke is removed, we will not become competitive as a nation. We will continue to trail other countries, and I include many other countries in Africa, in every measurement of international teaching standards in the key areas of Maths, Science and English. There is nothing inherently wrong with the system of outcomes and many teachers have taught using an outcomes based approach over many years. Hopefully, however, the changes will relieve teachers of a good deal of administration, the endless slog of assessment according to many different rubrics and standards, and the considerable work imposed by the portfolio system. This will also be a huge relief to the vast majority of pupils.

EXAMS

The boys are about to start their exams and we are uncertain what impact the long winter break will have on their academic performance. I remind you that we see the handing back of exams and going through papers as an important part of the exam process. Please do not see the end of the exams on Friday 13th as an opportunity to take your children home for the holidays. I am beginning to receive requests for early departures and I will only accede to these if there are valid reasons.

Some other points to note, please:

- If parents have houses in Grahamstown, their sons must please not frequent the houses when there are no adults resident in the houses. When parents are in town, boys need to sign out, as per normal, to visit their parents at their houses.
- Boys must not be transported in cars with inexperienced drivers, particularly not other school boys or girls. Matrics who board full time, even if they have driver's licenses, are not allowed to drive around during term time. If boys need to use cars, the parents must communicate with the relevant Housemaster, and keys should be kept by the Housemaster. Day boys who have their parents' permission to use their cars may under no circumstances transport other boys or girls.
- Friday sleep outs are only allowed under special circumstances, as Friday is a normal school day with prep and other school activities. If there is a special circumstance, parents should contact the Senior Housemaster, Mr Stephen Ireland, and the boy's Housemaster well in advance for permission.
- Application and renewal of Study Permits for over-border pupils need to be applied for 4 months in advance. Boys without valid study permits may not attend classes or be admitted in the Houses.

CONCLUSION

The boys appear to be full of energy and we have not had to contend with the flu epidemic that we had last year. The extra mural results have been excellent and we have two more fixtures left, Dale this coming Saturday, and then Kingswood in two weeks' time. We look forward to these traditional Derby games and we hope that many of you will turn out to support the boys in King William's Town and in Grahamstown.

Yours sincerely



PAUL EDEY
HEADMASTER