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## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR SCHOOL DEPUTY

Geoff Quinn

It has certainly been another interesting and unusual start to the term. These different beginnings are becoming more the norm and it has been wonderful to see the way that staff and pupils have become so adaptable, changing from in person lessons to a distance model and back again almost seamlessly.

Covid is however still with us and our Head of School, Penny Mullan, has been one of the many members of our school community affected by this third wave.

The following message was sent by Sr Kathy to inform the school community of Penny's current situation.

*Dear Friends*

*As you may be aware, Penny Mullan tested positive for Covid on 22 July. Since then she has not been at all well, and it will be a while before she is ready to resume her duties. In the meantime, please contact Geoff Quinn or Bronwyn Jansen if you have need. We pray for a swift recovery for Penny, and for all those struggling with Covid.*

*With best wishes*

*Sr Kathy*

While we have shown adaptability as a community we still firmly believe that in person lessons are superior to the distance models we have had to revert to at times over the last 18 months. We remain committed to providing as safe an environment as possible for our staff and pupils.

Pupils and staff will continue to adhere to the Covid-19 protocols in place and there are some key points that might be useful reminders for parents and guardians.

- If your child is ill, even a slight cold or snuffle, please keep them at home until the symptoms have cleared.
- If your child has a close contact with someone who has tested positive they must isolate for 10 days from their last contact with that person.
- If your child has had contact with someone who is awaiting a test result, please keep them home until the test result is known.
- If a pupil who has been at school subsequently tests positive then we will undertake to trace any close contacts and advise them to isolate. In general being in the same room as a positive person or passing them in the hallway is not considered to be a close contact provided all the Covid-19 protocols are being adhered to. Please keep encouraging your child to uphold these protocols at all times.

Issues around Covid-19 are emotional and stressful for all concerned. I would like to encourage all members of our community to act with compassion and respect when dealing with and communicating about other members of our community who have been affected by Covid-19.

The third term is always a very exciting and productive term. Our matrics are coming to the end of their academic journey with their mock exams just around the corner and the grade 11 pupils have started the process for pupil leadership in 2022. Sport and extramurals have started to get going again and we have the St Dominic's Day celebrations to look forward to next week. So it only remains to wish the whole school community well as we move into the second half of 2021.

Geoff Quinn  
Deputy Principal - Senior School



## MESSAGE FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Alison Dunn



**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”**  
~Nelson Mandela

Dear Parents and Guardians

Welcome to our first Newsletter of Term Three 2021. In this letter, I will be introducing to you two initiatives we are focusing on this term with our junior school girls, namely

- Self-empowerment, especially in respect of social interaction in person and in the cyber world;
- Courageous conversations, especially in respect of transformation and social justice.

We would like you, as parents, to walk alongside us in these initiatives. You will receive constant communication in this regard as the term proceeds.

### *The Instrument we put into our children's hands*

While I am very aware that I am the age of many of our children's grandparents, and that I grew up in a very different technological era, I am nonetheless extremely concerned about the power of the cellphone that appears in every child's hands once they reach a certain age – usually during their Senior Primary years. Not only do I question whether the children are ready to own and use such a device, but, more importantly, do they actually need it. Perhaps the question should be: what use does a cellphone provide that is so necessary for every twelve and thirteen-year old child to own one?

I have realized, from experiences that have been brought to my attention over the past few weeks, that while a cellphone is an instrument of communication and knowledge for our girls, a fun device to have and a definite status symbol, it is also an instrument of bullying, meanness and abuse, causing extreme anxiety, obsession, depression and power amongst our girls. I cannot allow this to continue. Something has to be done to take this danger away from our young, immature tweens and teens.

At the first Assembly of the term on Monday, I told all the girls in the Junior School that we are re-enforcing, with very strict sanctions for transgressions, the rule of no cellphones at school for any child on any day for this whole term. No teacher is going to have a “bring-your-own-device” day and only the school ipads will be used in the classrooms when needed by the teachers. In short, children’s cellphones are banned from the school premises right until Thursday 23 September when we break up for the end of term. Any cellphone found in a child’s possession will be confiscated. During school hours the secretaries can be approached if girls need to communicate with their parents, and the After-Care is open until the last child leaves in the evening, with a phone there for emergencies. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason for any child to have a phone at school.

I would like to challenge parents of all junior school children to reconsider the need for your child to have a cellphone. Reconsider the need for her to own one or more Instagram and Facebook accounts, for her to be collecting “popularity ratings” with a goal of more than 1000 followers, for her to be identified as that girl at Springfield who is “liked” by nearly every boy and girl in Grades 7, 8 and 9 at our local schools. Reconsider whether your daughter, at the tender age of twelve or thirteen, should have such a reputation. And reconsider these harsh facts: that you have paid for that device and placed it into your child’s hands, and that all meanness and cyber-bullying that is being either inflicted on or inflicted by your child, is happening when she is in your care, on that device, outside of school hours.

Nonetheless, the school cannot abdicate responsibility for this, as the reality is that our children are growing up in a technological world and desperately need all the help we can give them. We see our role as working alongside parents in this journey, by educating our pupils in judicious use of devices, and by enhancing our curriculum with self-empowerment programmes, lessons, courses and projects. This is already happening in our Life Skills and our IT lessons, and this term we are introducing some exciting new projects.

During the course of the next few weeks, parents will receive communications from Mr Meehan, Mrs Smith, Miss Stubbs and Mrs Cloete on the various programmes being offered for girls at school. We are making a concerted effort for the next six months to educate our girls in cyber use. We ask you to work alongside us and continue this education at home.

### **COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS**

*“It is not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It is our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless.” - LR Knost.*

As a school community we are committed to teach the concept of Social Justice to our learners. This term the pupils will be participating in a self-empowerment programme - **STAND4CHANGE**. Topics to be covered include:

- Self-image
- Own your race
- Domino effect of actions
- Different types of Bullying
- Discrimination and victimisation
- Power of words...

We have a dual role and responsibility as parents and teachers to open up circles of communication in this regard. The conversation we are having at present is: ***How we can celebrate otherness***. Each week class teachers will post the driving question of the week on their class website. We therefore encourage you to have healthy hearty family discussions around the dinner table and build on what is being discussed in the classroom. To further enhance these conversations, storytelling is also a unique way to help to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different races and religions. Follow the link: **Ethnikids** which is a helpful site providing a variety of diverse book titles which you may wish to purchase for your child.

*We are the world  
We are the children  
We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving  
There's a choice we're making  
We're saving our own lives  
It's true we'll make a better day, just you and me*

(The girls joined together in singing this song at Assembly on Monday)

Alison Dunn  
Junior School Principal

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