



HILTON COLLEGE

A letter from
the Head

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Dear Parents,

TO BE A LEADING SCHOOL

Toyota's tagline is "Lead the way"; fairly innocuous, perhaps, although in a world of competing challenges it is particularly clever. Their foray into releasing the Prius in 1997 was perhaps ahead of its time; I heard recently that Volvo will desist from making vehicles that are solely petrol or diesel powered by 2019, a sign of the changing times.

A leading school is an audacious goal. It demands being at the forefront of thinking on so many fronts. What an exhilarating challenge.

In academics, I believe we are making significant progress. We are rethinking our Grade 8, 9 and 10 years, such that the delivery of the curriculum is fresh and relevant. Learning must be the primary focus of the classroom; assessment thereof is a part of this process but should not be the only driver in the description of success. Young men must be equipped for a world of peer collaboration and the application of knowledge beyond what you and I were required to be able to master when we were their age. This, when the number of competing 'voices' has increased dramatically, crowding our collective headspace.

I have been reading a book entitled "Make every lesson count" by Allison, Tharby and Lemov. Among a host of recommendations for teachers, two significant elements in a successful learning journey are: firstly, that teachers have high expectations of their students and secondly, that students need to struggle and grapple with their learning.

A number of significant improvements in student achievement have been realised when teachers hold high expectations of all their students. This does not mean that every student will achieve a distinction but it does suggest that every student is held accountable to produce their best work all the time. Our system is not very good at consistently demanding the best; establishing and enforcing a culture of working at an exercise or a project until it is the best a student can produce. Boys tire at the thought of redoing or editing work, an essay or an exercise, until it is completed excellently and to the best of their ability. Boys, in particular, tend to want to work through an exercise as quickly as possible and focus on moving on to the next item on the to-do-list.

One of the practices we will continue to work at implementing in our teaching and learning is developing the skill of improving in learning by holding high expectations of your son in his academics and in his behaviour. The process of learning necessitates an element of struggle and cognitive discomfort such that growth happens in the learning. A significant measure of real learning is in the growth of understanding a student acquires from one year to the next and this needs to be measured in process as well as in result; however, results may not be the only measure, especially in the early years of learning.

The aim is that we are always moving every boy forward by a year's progress at a time. Good schools are able to accelerate this progress through very deliberate teaching and learning strategies, and this is our distinct endeavour.

On the sporting front, we have made significant progress as a leading school. Our decision to embrace professional coaching is a bold one; the positive results we are enjoying in greater levels of enjoyment and participation, alongside pleasing scores, is testament to terrific progress on this front.

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We are seeing a greater number of young men enjoying opportunities on stage, too. This aspect of schooling has never been more poignant as it is today, as our world seems to be reeling from one crisis of extremism to another. The stage, in its diversity, affords young people the opportunity to express their creativity and their learning such that complex issues are afforded far greater clarity of thought, equipping our students with a deeper understanding of the world of today.

Our intention to embrace an encompassing *Global Citizen* thrust, demands of us to grapple and 'lead the way' in the telling challenges of our age. What does a leading school do concerning renewable energy? What does a leading school live and express concerning diversity and tolerance? What does a leading school aim to teach its young people about a way of living such that our planet's resources are managed and maintained?

Cameron Coley, Jacques Monokoane and Stefan Tiaden have just returned from a conference on sustainability in schools, in Cape Town. They were selected from a national pool of participants to participate given their interest and work presented in this arena at another schools' sustainability conference held at Hilton in April. These boys are an example of our increasing intention to include sustainability into as many aspects of school life as possible, and they are helping progress these ideas into best practice on campus.

These are among the exciting questions we have to ask and answer, if we intend to wear the label of being a leading school in today's world. We have to be prepared to relinquish any of our ways-of-being that inhibit ourselves from entering into, and thriving in, the world our young people are inheriting. Despite the magnitude of challenge, there are fabulous solutions that the next generation will develop in the future. Our task is to ensure that their education readies them for this task. Working with young men is a stimulating place to be for this very reason.

In the same way that we have high expectations in learning, we choose to have high expectations in the behaviour of our young men. The practice of learning appropriate behaviour takes years and we cannot expect our boys to get it right at every occasion but by maintaining high expectations, we instill a culture of appropriate behaviour at all times. One of the mechanisms we have as a school is the wearing of our uniform; although some think this to be an outdated mode we believe it is an essential tool in our being able to instill a small discipline that will translate into more important disciplines in later life.

The sum of these practices all support our overall intention of producing young gentlemen who know and choose to behave appropriately and with integrity at all times. We are very cognizant that these outer, somewhat superficial practices are no guarantee of internal motivators that we hope will take root in all our young men, but our belief is that repeated behaviours fertilize the ground for this to happen. Practising diligence in the small things has the design to ensure that the things that hold greater consequence are always lived out with integrity.

To this end I invite your input, as parents of tomorrow's leaders, to ensure we are thinking through many of the possibilities our particular space presents. I will be creating focus areas for parent and Old Boy involvement to ensure that I am leveraging the profound knowledge base that exists beyond our gates, in the interest of leading the way in every possible field of our choice. More on this in the near future.

I am excited to be a part of mapping the future.

Recent developments:

Grade 9 parents may be pleased to know that we are introducing the subject Engineering, Graphics and Design (EGD), to our Grade 10 subject offering in 2018. Particulars will be communicated in due course.

In a deliberate response to the crisis that Woodridge College (outside East London) and Oakhill School (Knysna) find themselves in as a result of devastating fires, the Board of Governors agreed to make a donation to the disaster fund set up by ISASA for this purpose. I am proud of this deliberate act of kindness. I know that many individuals in our broader Hiltonian community have rallied around many in need of assistance at this time, and the practice of giving should be modeled and encouraged.

Speech Day is an important date in our annual calendar. May I ask you to prioritise this day such that you can be in attendance with your son? Once a year, our coming together as a whole community instills tremendous goodwill and propels us forward as we co-create the future we all hope to enjoy. We hope to require fewer busses to ferry boys at the end of this term, given your presence at Speech Day.

The third term brings a change of rhythm and pace. It is my hope that boys will continue to give of their best as they develop every aspect of their person. I hold high expectations of every one of them, and I know that they can choose to live up to this high standard.

Sincerely
George
Headmaster