



14 January 2011

Dear Parents

### **Welcome**

It is my great pleasure to write at the beginning of the year to all parents and pupils, to extend a very warm welcome to HeronBridge in 2011. I am absolutely confident this will be a successful year in the College and so, to that end, I wish a happy new year to all. I trust the recent (now past!) holiday period was a good one for all and that the Christmas celebrations were particularly meaningful.

I greet particularly those families joining us for the first time. May your experience of HeronBridge College be positive always. I ought to single out and make special mention of those whose children are starting their high school careers in Grade 8 and also those whose children have reached their final year, Grade 12. All our pupils are particularly important to us, but these two Grades are somehow special.

It is our pleasure to welcome staff new to the College:

Mr André Black	Afrikaans
Mrs Candice Burger	Technology
Mrs Yolanda Fourie	Mathematics
Mrs Susan Lawson	Mathematics (joining us only in February as a replacement for Mrs Marais when she is on maternity leave)
Mrs Sonja Weideman	Afrikaans

These teachers join a staff of fine professionals already committed to our College and profession, never mind our pupils. I trust all teachers will be fulfilled this year in their teaching and happy to be part of the HeronBridge College staff.

### **Introductions**

The Deputy Heads are Mrs Helen Braithwaite and Mr Keith Wilke.

The Grade Tutors are:

Grade 8	Mrs Powell	Mr Andrews
Grade 9	Miss Russell	Mr Hulse
Grade 10	Mrs Talbot	Mr Hall
Grade 11	Mrs Klein	Mr Janneker
Grade 12	Mrs Wood	Mr Wilke

The Grade Tutors serve in a supervisory role in their respective grades. They are the initial conduit for all parent liaison and so I invite parents to make use of their services when needed. They will



each be on hand at the upcoming Parent Information Evening and so that will be an ideal time to make their acquaintance.

The Subject Heads are:

English	Mrs Wood	Geography/SS	Mrs Powell
Afrikaans	Mrs Fourie	Accounting/EMS	Mr Hall
Mathematics	Mrs Klein	Visual Art/A&C	Mrs Smit
Science/NS	Mr Janneker	Computer Studies	Mr Bradley
Biology	Mrs Letord	Technology	Mrs Burger
History/SS	Mrs Williams	Life Orientation	Mr Muddiman

The Subject Heads will be able to advise within their fields.

I trust everyone knows of our Chaplain, Rev Ingo van der Merwe. He has rendered an invaluable service to our College community for a number of years now. I think the outreach and missions programmes he has run have been particularly effective and that these have become critical to what we are as a Christian school. Please note that he is available to pupils and parents should any wish to meet with him at any time. Appointments can be made through the College Office.

Mrs Marilyn Fell, already one of our teachers, has now been appointed to work, with our Chaplain, in the field of outreach and mission. This has become such an important emphasis for us that it requires a specific director. Those who know Mrs Fell will no doubt agree with me she is the ideal person for the job. An immediate effect is that mission has become a designated extramural activity.

The College Learning Support Therapist and Counsellor is Mr Douglas Andrews. He leads our counselling department, including overseeing the academic support programme in Grades 8 and 9. Appointments for him can also be made through the College Office.

Miss Joyce Tholo has joined us in the reception of the College Office (replacing Mrs Butler, who has moved to the Preparatory school) so hers will be the lovely voice you hear when phoning the College.

The Head Councillors this year are Tatum Morley and William Samson. We have every confidence in them and their Councillor team, that they will lead the pupil body strongly.

### **2010 Grade 12 NSC Results**

We are extremely proud of the 2010 Grade 12's as regards their IEB results. To summarise, they achieved the following rates:

- 100% pass
- 100% access to tertiary education
- 91.5% university entrance (54/59 candidates)
- 111 distinctions
- Subject averages up on the IEB averages in 13 instances

Particular congratulations go to Gemma Bentley, the Dux Scholar, who achieved 9 distinctions (English, Afrikaans, Geography, Life Orientation, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Mathematics Paper 3, Advanced Programme Mathematics, Physical Science) and an average of 86%. She could hardly have done better!

The Top 10 all achieved averages of 80% and higher:

1	Gemma Bentley	86%	9 distinctions
2	Chris Black	83%	7 distinctions
3	Frances Sewell	82%	7 distinctions
4	Stephanie van der Plank	81%	7 distinctions
5	Ross Arkert	81%	6 distinctions
6	Sydney King	83%	6 distinctions
7	Cheree Swanepoel	81%	6 distinctions
8	Stacey Fellingham	80%	5 distinctions
9	Shannon Cloete	80%	5 distinctions
10	Sarah Elliott	81%	5 distinctions

(The order above does not follow only the averages achieved, as some wrote more subjects than others).

We believe these results speak volumes for the high academic standard of the College. It is of course our first intention to have all our pupils pass the examinations. Much is made of the overall pass rate in the Press. However, I don't think this is the most important criterion. The IEB examinations are rigorous and are not passed simply by attending a good school. It is possible for pupils in good schools not to make the grade. That is a reflection on them themselves rather than their schools. However, it is always gratifying to have them all pass and so it is a great pleasure for us to have had this happen again in our case. This is a regular situation for us and we are pleased it has continued this year.

The important factor for me is the tertiary qualification rate, university entrance to the fore. Situated where we are in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, the vast majority of our pupils go on from school to study further. Most of them enter universities around the country; a good proportion enrol for various diploma courses. The fact that every single one of our pupils has qualified to study further is of great significance. It says HeronBridge College has not only taught them well for leaving school, but has done so with the intention of providing them with future opportunities. We are confident they are all well-prepared for advanced studies in the tertiary sector.

This does not simply happen. It comes as a result of excellent teaching and diligent application by the pupils. Our excellent pupils have to work hard, under the guidance of their excellent teachers, in order to pass as well as they have done. I extend my most sincere congratulations to each pupil and each teacher on this exceptionally good achievement.

As a school, a third important aspect for us is the subject averages. We do not yet have a full reckoning from the IEB and will receive that report (on a question-by-question basis in every paper) in February. We shall then be able to ascertain exactly how well we have done in the various aspects of every subject. At this stage, we are pleased to be well above average.

The academics are but one part, arguably the most important part, of the College's programme. These excellent results parallel the high standard set in 2010 in the co-curricular sphere. We are now able to look back on a most successful year, in all areas of school life. The balance between academics, sports and cultural is so important. We are sometimes criticised for emphasising one or more of these components above the others. We don't think we do and now I'm confirmed in my opinion we have the balance right. We have achieved outstandingly well in all three of these arenas and that makes for a holistic programme and well-rounded young people.

We need also to take cognisance of the fact that these academic results have come in context of the Independent Examinations Board. We believe the IEB is the premier examining body in our country and so write under its auspices. Their examinations are well set and challenging. Importantly, they are skills biased and require more than the simple regurgitation of facts. The consequence of that is our pupils are now familiar with a good academic regimen and so are well prepared for tertiary studies. As I congratulate them and their teachers on these fine results, I wish all our new graduates continued success in the future.

### **Digital School**

The Digital School we launched in 2010 was sufficiently successful for us to continue the emphasis in 2011. I wrote to you at the end of last year about further innovations this year, viz. the introduction of Facebook and Twitter in lessons. I shall write to you specially in this regard in due course. The Media Centre is being converted into a digital Hub and will be opened in a month or so.

I confirm our invitation for pupils to laptops/notebooks/netbooks in class and for the keeping of notes. Some pupils benefited enormously in this way last year, others seemed to lose their enthusiasm for it as the year went on. We believe the regular use of computers in the normal environment will teach invaluable life skills, so we would like to encourage pupils to take advantage of this opportunity offered to them. We have made suitable arrangements regarding the safe keeping of computers, though we stress pupils must take responsibility themselves for looking after their computers. We do have safes installed in the Sports Complex for keeping computers and cell phones in the afternoons.

The most successful component of DigiSchool was the DigDays. These continue this year. We have upgraded the Moodle platform, now working on Moodle II, and its enhancement has improved our system.

I do emphasise that no pupil will be disadvantaged by not having a computer. We would obviously prefer all to participate fully but respect what this could entail for parents. Also, the College will continue to be open on DigiDays to accommodate those who prefer their children to be present at school then.

### **Parents' Information Evening**

I invite you all to attend our annual **PARENTS' INFORMATION EVENING**, scheduled for **Thursday 27 January 2011, 19h00, in the Auditorium**. The evening will provide you with opportunity of meeting the teachers, being briefed on the expectations of each Grade and of meeting the respective Chairs of the PTA and PCF. We look forward to hosting you and to enjoying a meaningful time together. Please make every effort to attend.

### **Outreach: The Mellon Housing Initiative**

We launched this initiative to the pupils in the final Assembly of last year and I wrote at the same time to all parents. You should then be familiar with this as our focus for the year. We plan to participate, as an entire school together, in a single project: building houses in Tembisa. We have been allocated the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March. On the 18<sup>th</sup> we'll celebrate! The Mellon Housing Initiative (a non-profit organization) has a continual building programme. We'll be divided into 20 teams of 10 each on each day and will join their professional teams to assist with their building. On each day at least two houses will be completed (the process in each having been started by others before us) and we'll see them being handed over to their new owners. This is a genuine community project, one we expect to touch our own hearts as much as the house recipients'. Our involvement comes through the kind influence of one of our parents, Pastor Alan McCauley of Rhema Church.

The exercise obviously requires funding (for building costs, transport, shirts, safety equipment and meals). We are determined that the entire College should participate and so we have decided not to charge each pupil but for all of us together to raise the total amount. The bar is set at R650.00 per participant, pupils and staff alike. This totals R270 000. We have challenged the pupils to each raise the R650 required by doing whatever they each can. Raising more will assist those unable to reach that target. Sponsorship would certainly help! I appeal then to parents who can assist us in this regard through their contacts or companies, to liaise directly with either me or Ingo van der Merwe. We do have a sponsorship appeal letter that could be of assistance.

We assure everyone that none of the money raised will be used for any administrative costs and none will be kept in the College. It will all be entirely for the project.

Donations can be made to the following College account, marked:

BLD Project plus the child's or sponsor's name:  
HeronBridge College  
Bank: First National Bank  
Branch: Fourways Mall  
Branch Code: 251655  
Account number: 62028152958

I would appreciate knowing of sponsorships raised for the cause so that I can be in contact with such kind donors.

I have had such positive feedback from so many people since we launched the project that I am convinced our College community will get behind the initiative; indeed, is behind it already. I ask all to please volunteer in whatever ways they can to make this a most successful venture.

### **Uniform**

I appeal to parents to assist us with maintaining the uniform standards. The regulations are well known and we expect the pupils to adhere to them. I am cheeky enough to say to parents that your children walk out your front doors before our pupils walk in our front gate. If they leave home in the mornings with their uniform right, half the battle is won because they then enter school dressed appropriately. We'll send them home after school looking similarly good!

I need to emphasise we shall not agree to relaxing the uniform regulations to accommodate any of the various adornments that become popular at different times. The current trend is Power Balance bracelets. There is debate about the efficacy of these but, regardless of opinion on that, they are not acceptable to us from a uniform point of view and so will not be allowed.

### **Medical Certificates**

We require medical certificates to attest to absences for Standardised tests, Cycle Tests and Examinations. Unfortunately we were pressured on various occasions last year to accept doctors' notes indicating only they had had illnesses reported to them. Please understand the importance of all these tests to the academic programme. These are the tests that enable us to maintain our standards and so we shall not budge on the absentee requirement. The wording of our stipulation is as follows:

Absence from any examination or standardised test by any pupil in the school must be supported by a medical certificate confirming a doctor's consultation on the day. Medical

certificates which record only a report to a doctor will not be accepted. Unsubstantiated absence from any examination, cycle test or standardised test will result in no marks being awarded in the instance. Should a pupil be genuinely ill, parents are requested to telephone the school at the earliest opportunity, and to ensure the necessary medical consultation through the course of the day.

I appeal to parents to support us in this regard.

### **Co-curricular programme**

The co-curricular activities start immediately. I want to emphasise that we view these as being not only vital to our overall curriculum but also for pupils' health. We expect every pupil to choose activities in every term, both sporting and cultural. We ask parents for their support in this regard and request transport arrangements be made to accommodate the demands of the programme. A notice detailing the various activities of the first term was published this week. We invite parents to watch their children and our teams whenever they can do so.

### **Eco-Schools Project**

HeronBridge has participated for three years now in the Eco-Schools project, run under the auspices of the Foundation for Environmental Education. This is an international programme, in some 46 countries. In our country it is managed by the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa. The intention of the project is to improve environmental management in the local context. HeronBridge has now been classified a Green Flag school, previously achieving Bronze and Silver categories. The flag will be presented to the College in a ceremony next month. This speaks enormously of our commitment to the environment. I commend all pupils and the staff team that has spearheaded this initiative on their success here. May we continue to be good stewards of the earth. One of my favourite authors on the subject of environmentalism, Loren Wilkinson, has coined the phrase 'earthkeepers.' I trust that is what we all are, all our lives.

### **HeronBridge Community Church**

We extend a warm invitation to all to attend the services and activities of HeronBridge Community Church. This is an independent, evangelical church – right on our doorstep! Sunday morning services, incorporating suitably exciting programmes for children and teens, are held weekly at 09:00 in the College auditorium. Please do not hesitate to contact the church (079 034 1545 or [heronbridgechurch@gmail.com](mailto:heronbridgechurch@gmail.com)) if there is ever anything that can be done to serve you.

So, the new school year has already started. The potential of it lies ahead. In trust it will be only good in our College and in our families of the College. I wish then all pupils and their families a blessed year.

Yours sincerely



D Klein  
College Head