

16 January 2012

Dear Parents

### **Welcome**

It is with pleasure that I write to all parents and pupils at the beginning of the year, to extend a hearty welcome to HeronBridge in 2012. I have no doubt whatsoever this will be a successful year in the College and so wish a happy new year to all. I trust the past holiday period was an enjoyable one for all and that your various celebrations of Christmas were meaningful.

I greet in particular those families joining us for the first time. I hope your experience of HeronBridge College will be nothing but good. If I may, I mention especially 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 of course important to us, but these two Grades are somehow different.

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

Mrs Carey-Ann Dellbridge	LO, Counselling
Miss Kayleen Justus	Accounting
Mr Gerrie Scheepers	Afrikaans
Mrs Samantha Wilke	History
Mr Jeffrey Willems	Chaplaincy, Co-curricular
Mrs Susan Lawson	Mathematics (once again assisting us for the first term while Mrs Yolanda Fourie is away on maternity leave).

These teachers join a seasoned staff 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. Having mentioned Mrs Fourie, I congratulate her and her husband on behalf of all in our community on the birth of their son, Adriano, during December.

### **Introductions**

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

The Grade Tutors are:

Grade 8	Mrs Moore	Mr Beyneveldt
Grade 9	Mrs Powell	Mr Muddiman
Grade 10	Mrs Muddiman	Mr Hulse
Grade 11	Mrs Talbot	Mr Hall
Grade 12	Mrs Klein	Mr Janneker

The Grade Tutors supervise their respective Grades. They are the initial conduit for all parent liaison and so I invite parents to contact them when needed. They will each be on hand at the upcoming Parent Information Evening and so that will be an ideal time to meet them.

The Subject Heads are:

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

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

I'm sure most people know our Chaplain, Rev Ingo van der Merwe. He has rendered stalwart and significant service to our College community for a few years now. I consider the outreach and mission programmes he has run to have been particularly effective, often life-changing for the pupils, and that these have become vital 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. We are pleased to announce that Mr Jeffrey Willems has been appointed to work alongside him in what is an expanding chaplaincy.

The Head Councillors this year are Farai Mubaiwa and Warrick Gower. They lead the Councillor team which is responsible for the spirit in the pupil body and liaison with the staff.

### **2011 Grade 12 NSC Results**

We are exceptionally proud of the 2011 Grade 12's as regards their IEB results. I did circulate a report to all parents in this regard in January, so you will be aware of the details. That report is available from the College Office and is on our website, should any still wish to access it. I say only that the results speak loudly of the high academic standards of our College. They reflect so well on good teachers and good pupils. Well done all!

### **Digital School**

We continue with an emphasis on using the digital technology available to us in teaching. It would perhaps be better for me to re-phrase that to refer to using digital in learning! I wrote at the end of last year of the enhancements to come in our DigiSchool. Again, that newsletter is freely available and on the website. I'm pleased to tell you that since then we have:

- upgraded the network structure to cope with a greater demand from the classrooms;
- enhanced our Moodle usage, including server storage offsite;
- purchased more Kindles for The Hub;
- purchased a class' worth of iPads and a class' worth of notebooks;
- negotiated licences for MathOnline (a visual mathematics programme from Canada) in all Grades;
- conducted teacher training on blended education and collaboration.

The initial response from teachers and pupils has been terrific. The iPads are being used constantly, meaning virtually every lesson, and the notebooks are being used for both more serious research and by pupils in the afternoons. Teachers have embraced the opportunity to collaborate with one another, leading to some exciting lessons already and some definite plans for the future.

I wish only for more tablets and notebooks. I said last year that we would be unable to fund a sufficient number, made an appeal consequently for parents to supply their children and for pupils to bring their own equipment to school. The emphasis overseas, as I saw it last year, is BYOD: Bring Your Own Device.

Teachers are hounding me for more tablets but we are unable to supply more within the legitimate constraints we face. I would appreciate knowing if anyone has contacts whom I could approach for sponsorship or to enable us to source computers for pupils on bursary.

Possibly the most successful component of DigiSchool has been the DigDays. These continue this year. For those of you for whom this is new, DigiDays focus entirely on using computers. Teachers assign work, distribute it via Moodle and have it returned to them by the pupils on completion in the same way. We model what we perceive to be true of so many professions, that sometimes product is more important than presence. Many people work without going to work. So, on DigiDays pupils are not required to be at school. We ask parents to indicate to us that they are happy to supervise their children at home or know they will be working with friends. For those who cannot do so, or who simply prefer their children to be present at school, we supervise pupils in the computer rooms, where they then do their DigiDay work. We have trained all Grade 8 pupils and others new to the College on how to use Moodle.

The first DigiDay is early this year, **Friday 20 January**. Mrs Parmenter will be distributing a letter requesting names of those we can expect to be present at school on the day.

We continue to ask that pupils bring cell phones to school. We operate a system for distributing messages via cell phones and use them variously in lessons. In part, we use Twitter and Facebook. Other innovations are in the pipeline.

I do emphasise that no pupil will be disadvantaged by not being able to bring a computer to school. We would obviously prefer all to participate fully but respect what this could entail for parents. We have suitable arrangements in place for keeping valuables (cell phones, computers and tablets) secure. I addressed the pupils in the very first Assembly on this, so they know the details. I did stress to them that the safekeeping of their valuables was their prime responsibility, but we do have various safes for the purpose.

Equally, we do not require parents to purchase expensive computers for home. DigiDays require internet access and an ability to use the Microsoft Office suite.

### **Parents' Information Evening**

I invite you all to attend our annual **PARENTS' INFORMATION EVENING**, scheduled for **Tuesday 31 January 2012, 19h00, in the Auditorium**. (A different date was advertised on the School Communicator. Please ignore that and accept my apologies for any confusion created). 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.

### **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!

## **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 last week. We invite parents to watch their children and our teams whenever they can do so.

## **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, 2012 is underway and the new school year is in full swing. I trust, no, I pray, it will be good in our College and in the families of our College. May God be gracious to bless us all and our College.

Yours sincerely



D Klein  
College Head