

Term two is our busiest time at Jeppe

A word from
the Headmaster



Jeppe High School for Boys



There have been extensive changes made aimed at making our boarders feel more at home

Dear Jeppe parents,

As we conclude our fourth week of Term two 2, I am sure that parents of the younger boys have begun to realise why this term is traditionally the busiest of the year and, for those parents of the senior boys, they have been reminded, after a two-year Covid-enforced absence, just how busy life at Jeppe can be.

While this newsletter is primarily focused on highlighting all the developments, improvements and operations in our four boarding houses, the first in a series which puts the spotlight on certain aspects of our school, it is also an opportunity for me to communicate a number of thanks, well wishes and general information.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge and thank all those parents who hosted boys from Westville Boys' High School over the past weekend during our annual winter fixture.

The feedback from the Westville community - boys, parents and staff - was extremely complimentary regarding the fixture and, in particular, the manner in which they were hosted and looked after by the Jeppe families.

As mentioned in my headmaster's welcome in the programme for the day, it is wonderful that over 1 200 boys were able to compete not only on the rugby field and hockey Astro, but also in activities as diverse as debating, chess, squash, cross country, tennis and mountain biking.

Competing against boys from other provinces, and making new friends and sharing experiences, particularly after a two-year Covid-enforced absence, is one of the many benefits and joys of



attending public boys' schools such as Jeppe and Westville.

This weekend and next weekend we are again at home, first against Pretoria Boys High School and then King Edward VII School (during our annual Old Boys Reunion Weekend) and we look forward to the ongoing support from both boys and parents in these wonderful traditional derbies.

From a staffing perspective, I would like to welcome three new staff who joined us at the beginning of this term - Mrs Charlene Fynn has joined our front office reception team upon the retirement of Mrs Birkett whilst Ms Nthabiseng Maimela has joined us in the Mathematics department upon Mrs Jones' emigration, at the end of last term, to teach overseas. Lastly, Mr Justin Fourie joins us, from Muir College in the Eastern Cape, in the Geography department and in Oribi boarding house. I am sure that the community will echo my welcome to these staff members.

From an academic perspective, June exam timetables have already been issued to the boys and they should be

hard at work in their classes preparing for these exams which commence, for the senior boys, in just over a month's time (the junior grades start a week later and will benefit from a week of concentrated exam revision).

Continuing in an academic vein, it was with much excitement that we broke ground on the new Innovation Centre and Art Block earlier this month - a R14 million project funded by the Old Boy community which will give further voice to the academic focus and technology innovation at the School.

Lastly, I'd like to wish our Muslim community Eid Mubarak - we trust you will have a joyous and spiritual time at the beginning of next week as you celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr on the culmination of the month of Ramadaan.

Kind Regards

Dale Jackson

“A welcoming place where the boys are safe and happy and are able to develop to the best of their ability”

– Mr Bryan Hillock, Director of Boarding

Boarding school life has changed quite dramatically in recent times at Jeppe – it’s no longer a case of being in the hostel because you have to be, but rather one of choosing to go into boarding because you want to.

That’s the message from Mr Bryan Hillock, the school’s director of boarding, who explains that our hostels are meant to be a home from home, a welcoming place where the boys are safe and happy, and able to develop to the best of their potential. The physical structure of the houses has to support that concept.

“There have been a number of recent changes to the boarding houses, some of them were essential because of obsolescence and wear and tear, while others were made because we need to create an environment that they boys are happy in.

The first and, to date, biggest project was upgrading of the ablution blocks in all four houses. “There were soem basic plumbing reasons for doing that,” Mr Hillock explained, “but it was also done because in the past privacy seemed to considered be less important than it is now. So, the communal showers were replaced by individual stalls and the toilets were revamped. Then there are new floors, and tiled walls, making the hostel bathrooms more like those



bathrooms they the boys have at home.”

There have also been a number of upgrades aimed at greater sustainability, Mr Hillock explained. “The lower three houses are all fully on borehole water now, and we are looking for ground water at the moment so that Oribi can also go that way. There are also invertors in all the hostels, capable of proving lights and charging facilities in times of loadshedding. That capacity is going to be doubled soon.”

In line with making the hostels pleasant places to live in, a lot of time and money has been spent on creating and upgrading communal areas for the boys to relax in. The common rooms have been revamped and outside areas

with lawns and benches have been provided. The quad at Oribi has been revamped, creating an outdoor relaxation area for the boys.

The dormitories at Tsessebe are being renovated, and the intention is to do the same in all the houses in the near future. One Tsessebe dorm has been completed and its design, according to Mr Hillock reflects the new boarding philosophy at the school.

“The emphasis is on privacy and independence, so the old idea of long rows of beds, and limited cupboard space has been replaced by self-contained modular units consisting of an elevated bed with a large cupboard and a study desk below. Eventually we will do away with common prep rooms for homework sessions and the boys will be encouraged to apply self-discipline and work independently,” Mr Hillock explained.

Enough funds have been raised by the Tsessebe old boys to renovate another two full dormitories. Similar fundraising projects will soon begin in the other houses.

“We are grateful to the old boys and other donors who are making all if this possible,” Mr Hillock said. “They are helping us to transform the Jeppe boarding experience, for the benefit of the boys.”



“The changes have been made in line with placing the well-being of the boys at the center of what we do”

– Mr Peter Murison, Deputy Headmaster: Student Affairs

The changes that Jeppe’s boarding houses have undergone in recent years have not all just been physical.

That’s the word from Mr Peter Murison, Jeppe’s Deputy Principal: Student Affairs, who says that the school’s boarding offering has changed to keep it in line with the demands that come with placing the well-being of the boys at the centre of what the school does and providing an environment that they can thrive in.

“It’s become a bit of a cliché, but we really do try to provide a home away from home for our boarders,” he said. “The changes to the infrastructure that have been completed, and those in progress, reinforce that, but to achieve that, there also has to be a change in attitude and operating procedures on the part of the hostel staff.”

Hostel staff, while there are set procedures that have to be followed, are also encouraged to bring something of their own personalities to the job. “It’s about relationships,” he said. “We want house masters to let their own characters come through, to create the sort of living environment that they would be happy to



live in themselves.”

There is no simple, single solution because people and situations are all different, Mr Murison believes, but treating people the right way is the key and special things can happen when you do.

“The hostels are part of the bigger school – they are the same boys, and the house masters are teachers, so the school systems apply in them, and the support of the school is essential if we are to keep on improving.

“We depend on the support of the headmaster, the staff, the parents and the old boy community. Old boys are our best marketers, it’s so important that they spread the word about what it meant for them to have been in boarding at Jeppe.”

Tsessebe, Sable and Oribi are houses of the school and the tutor system that applies to all six houses works particularly well in them. “To have the tutors and their tutor groups living under the same roof enriches the process greatly,” Mr Murison said. “In fact we try to mimic some of the things that happen in boarding in the dayboy houses. So, for example, the early morning house tutor group meetings are an attempt to replicate the hostel breakfast, which is a place where communication ahead of the day takes place.”

The nature of boarding schools have changed in recent years, with more weekly boarders who go home on weekends. “At Jeppe, termly boarders are in the minority now, yet we find the hostel boys are still as passionate about their hostel lives and their houses.

“The aim of the upgrades is to build on that.”

