A busy vibrant term for our cultural activities

Dear Jeppe parents

As we draw near to the end of a very busy Term 2 extramural programme, and the school turns its attention to the mid-year exams, we thought it appropriate to issue another mini newsletter, this time focused on the cultural offerings at Jeppe High School for Boys, an appropriate topic given our first ever annual Cultural Festival which concluded yesterday evening.

This newsletter highlights the various cultural activities which have taken place during the recently-celebrated Cultural Festival and term. Our Chess 1st team lead their highly competitive league, the Dramatic Arts performance of Jump! has reached the final of the GRADS festival, the debating teams are competing in the Championship rounds and our Pipe Band remains unbeaten thus far this year.

Such is the busyness of the second term at a school such as ours that much has happened since our last mini newsletter less than a month ago and it would be remiss of me, despite the cultural focus, not to make mention of these activities:

Our annual old boy reunion took place on the weekend of the KES home fixture and feedback received from old boys, parents and members of the Jeppe and KES communities, called it a wonderful, uplifting and inspiring weekend that showcased all that is positive about public boys' schools education in our country.

In very few places in the world will you find over 40 schoolboy rugby and hockey fixtures taking place in a spirit of collegiality and friendship with thousands of spectators supporting the 1st team hockey and rugby games.

That incredibly positive weekend was followed immediately by the Aitken, Boden and Top 8 (under-16), the premier hockey tournaments in Gauteng, and the hosting of the Highland Gathering at the school on the same weekend.

The Jeppe hockey club once again demonstrated why they are the standard-bearers in Gauteng, with the 1st XI retaining the coveted Aitken trophy for a record-extending 6th time in succession while the under-15 Boden team also retained their trophy (named after legendary Jeppe educator, Warren Boden), repeating the rare double that was achieved in 2019 (the last time the competitions were held). The Highland Gathering was also a massive success with a fantastic crowd attendance and the Jeppe Pipe Band once again coming 1st in their category (as they have done the entire season).

As if this were not enough, the school then undertook perhaps the most complex logistical and practical arrangement of them all when, last weekend, over 700 boys embarked on a bus trip (13 busses in all!) to Northwood in Durban for our annual exchange to compete against the boys from KZN in activities as diverse as rugby, hockey, e-sports, mountain biking, tennis, squash, debating, public speaking, chess and cross country.

For those of you who've experienced the stresses of organising a holiday for your own family to the coast, you can well imagine the extraordinary logistical challenge in taking 700 boys on a 48-hour whirlwind trip, particularly when monsoon-like rain is added to the equation. I was extremely pleased when the last bus (barring three boys who were injured and returned the following day) arrived at Jeppe at 2.30am on Sunday morning and the last of the wet, tired and bedraggled boys (and staff) could head home for a well-deserved rest.

While many schools choose not to take on the challenge (and cost) of such tours, weekends like these create lifelong memories, friendships and experiences and, for this reason, despite the work, cost and stresses involved for staff (and parents), these exchanges should be fiercely preserved, and held onto, into the future.

I would like to pause and pay special tribute to our boys, parents and staff who have been simply incredible to date this year, and particularly this term. We received many compliments, some of which appear later in this newsletter, from both the Westville and Northwood communities following the hosting of the Westville boys by the Jeppe community and the behaviour and manners of the Jeppe boys at Northwood. Both the Westville and Northwood communities have been blown away by the Jeppe hospitality, hosting, manners and generosity - thank you!!

The Jeppe staff have also been truly fantastic over the past few weeks with virtually all staff involved in either the sporting programme or the extensive cultural offering, in addition to their academic classroom responsibilities, boarding house commitments, tutor group oversight and pastoral care of our boys. It is thanks to our invested, committed and passionate staff and supportive, loving and present parents that our boys continue to be such fine young men and ambassadors for our school.

After the fixture against Affies this weekend, our senior boys (Grade 10 - 12) will commence their mid-year exams on Monday. The juniors will enjoy a further week of exam revision classes within a specially designed timetable so as to give them every opportunity of performing in their mid-year exams which they will begin writing on Monday, 6th June, following the conclusion of our final Term 2 rugby and hockey fixture against St Stithians on the afternoon of Friday, 3rd June. I wish all boys the best of luck for these exams.

Enjoy this short, but action-packed, newsletter which details much, but certainly not all, that has happened over the past few weeks. Thank you for the role that every parent, learner and staff member has played in an exciting, successful and fun term to date.

PS I managed to get through an entire "headmaster's welcome" without once mentioning Covid - for the first time in over two years - evidence, if ever any was needed, that the school is swiftly returning to much-longed for normality!

Kind Regards

Dale Jackson

The first annual Jeppe Cutural Festival was a great success and there's more to come in the years ahead

Jeppe broke new ground last week when it hosted the first week-long cultural festival at a local school.

The activities ran from Sunday to Thursday last week and included a range of cultural activities including a pipe and marimba band display, an art exhibition, chess, choir, dance, debating, writing, e-sports, monologues, one-act plays and public speaking.

The concept is the brainchild of director of culture, Mrs Bronwen Kemp, who was delighted that it all came together after two frustrating years of Covid-disruptions and cancellations.

"We are fortunate at Jeppe to have the full support of the school management, who allow us the space to run a rich and varied cultural programme," she said. "We had the backing of the school and community and a number of volunteers for this project.

"There are a number of successful sporting festivals during the year but nothing similar for cultural activities, Mrs Kemp said. "We wanted these boys, who are so committed and who put in so much time, to also experience an extended festival where they meet and interact with learners with similar interests from other schools.

"I think we achieved that. The enthusiasm of the the boys who participated and the standard of work on display was amazing to see.

"The festival was not intended to replace any formal league, competition, or festival already on the calendar but rather to add an opportunity for our schools to engage in friendly competition and to showcase their skill while enjoying the pride of representing their school with and against schools with a similar ethos.

"It was a celebration of the talent within our schools."

The 2022 Jeppe Cultural Festival was the first step and the intention is that it will become an annual fixture on the schools extra-curricular calendar, and that it will hopefully develop into a national event in years to come.

"We want to create a culture of culture," Mrs Kemp said. "This year is a start, and the interest is certainly there."

Among the many highlights of the week was the guest appearance one act play, The Five-Minute Men, on Sunday evening. It was written by Matthew de Bie and performed by a cast of old boys, directed by Ryan Naamdhew.

"We were delighted to have the group of old boys involved," said Mrs Kemp. "They were all stalwarts during their time at the school and did a lot to get performing arts established as a serious activity at Jeppe.

The opening of the art and photography exhibitions by Dr Tiffany Hugo was another highlight.

This is what she said: "I am beyond proud to have opened the exhibition of art, photography and creative writing at Jeppe High School for Boys this evening. Thank you to St Benedict's College Bedfordview, King Edward VII School and St Alban's College for your contribution to this incredible display of creative talent."

"The definition of culture references ideal conditions for growth, and it is our vision hera at Jeppe to provide as many spaces as possible for our learners to become the very best versions of themselves.

"We know that this festival will grow in years to come and we are grateful for the support that we got in this, our inaugural year," Mrs Kemp said.

The cast of Five-Minute Men with Mrs Kemp and Ms Dietrich.

Top: the festival opening breakfast.
Bottom: the massed marimba bands.

Around the festival .....

Four pipe band gathering wins in a row

When Jeppe's pipe band won the Jeppe Highland Gathering two weeks ago it was the fourth competition of this kind that they have won this year. In fact, according to master in charge of the band, Mr Ross Olive, we have won all four staged so far – the Pipe Band Revival Gathering in Pretoria, the Vaal Highland Gathering, the South Coast Gathering, and now our Jeppe Highland Gathering where, as hosts, we were hoping to do well.

Stephen Hutcheon, the band captain, explained how the judging works at these competitions. "The pipers and drummers are evaluated separately, and there is one judge that looks at the entire ensemble," he said.

Aeden Southee, the pipe major said the bagpipers are judged on their startup – striking the e-note in unison and holding it consistently, then on keeping the tempo and on the quality of their sound.

"The co-operation between the drums and pipes is important as are the overall dynamics of the band," he explained.

Stephen and Aeden have both been in the pipe band since grade 8 and they love it. "I started drumming at the age of six," Stephen said, "when I arrived at Jeppe and there was a pipe band I immediately joined up and it's been a great five years."

In other news .....

Mrs Antionette Sithole, the sister of Hector Pieterson was the guest speaker at our Freedom Day Assembly

Jeppe boys made a good impression on the tour to Northwood

This year's old boys reunion was three-in-one, making it the biggest ever

Twenty-nine Jeppe players were selected for Southern Gauteng provincial hockey teams

Six Aitken Trophy wins in a row for Jeppe as Jeppe takes the Aitken/ Boden double again

The contribution of the Jeppe cheerleaders was recognised at a Headmaster's Tea