



Dear Parents, Old Boys and Friends of Michaelhouse

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## Rector's Message

One of the major events in the Michaelhouse calendar is the **C Block Journey** which, all things being equal, starts this Saturday and continues for 13 days. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> such Journey and many accolades should be bestowed on Paul Fleischack who, amongst other responsibilities, leads our outdoor education with skill, empathy and huge enthusiasm. We are also extremely grateful to upwards of 25 other members of staff, including the four group leaders, Ryan Strudwick, James Fleming, Ollie Hugo and Peter Stevens, for their expertise and commitment to ensuring the success of the venture. For Peter Stevens, it is his 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive C Block Journey and, since he retires at the end of this year, it must be his last. We thank him for his enormous contribution over the years including his relaying to the boys the history associated with the terrain through which the boys walk, cycle and paddle.

Many schools have a similar programme, but few have the prospect of venturing into some of the most beautiful and interesting parts of the entire world as we are privileged to have on our doorstep in the Drakensberg.

Having been associated with similar ventures elsewhere, I am aware of the impact that it makes on the young men who, in many cases, have to 'dig deep' to sustain themselves well outside of their comfort zones. Over the past couple of days, I have asked some of the A Block what they recall of the C Block Journey and here are a couple of verbatim responses:

“When you have done C Block Journey you become a senior boy. It is the doorway to the senior years at Michaelhouse.”

“It is the biggest growth experience I have had in my time at Michaelhouse.”

“I got to know some boys as never before. The biggest challenge is not the summiting or having a sore bum from cycling, but the solitude.”

“I remember that it was quite emotional getting a letter from my parents.”

“C Block Journey gives you time think about your life away from any distractions such as social media.”

# Rector's eNews

2 September 2020

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MICHAELHOUSE

Though we are aware of the Michaelhouse code and strive, probably intermittently if the truth be known, towards integrity, humility, courage, compassion and service to others, we are all aware of how we fail, most often, in terms of attaining those characteristics or qualities, but the experience of a C Block Journey engenders and develops the best attributes in boys; these may be exhibited, for example, in helping a friend in difficulty, undertaking a new activity such as cycling which could be a real challenge, or appreciating how insignificant one is in the greater scheme of life when standing beneath Giant's Castle and looking up.

So, as the C Block boys leave us on Saturday morning for their Journey, we wish them well and trust that they will be conscious of areas in which they need to develop further personally and that they are also able to celebrate their undoubted strengths.





A complete change of subject takes us to our **Speech Day** which is due to be held on Friday 9 October. We have had to consider how best to enjoy this event with no more than 50 people able to assemble for such a celebratory gathering and I wanted to let you know as soon as possible about our thoughts on this so that you do not make arrangements which then have to be changed. At present, we are planning this event to include only the prize winners and a very small number of staff along with the Chairman of the Board. There will be somewhat shorter speeches than usual and the event will be live-streamed to all parents, Old Boys and other interested parties. As I have said, I wanted to avoid your making arrangements for this occasion and then needing to change them, but we will also be alert to the outside possibilities of national norms changing in terms of the number of people who are able to gather for such an event.

## Departmental News: Life Orientation, Mr Herman Visagie

Life Orientation is a compulsory subject for every student in South Africa and offers a great opportunity to address and discuss some exceedingly important topics that often fall by the wayside. Life Orientation, at its core, deals with relationships-from the relationship with yourself and your peers to the relationships you have with the wider community and the environment as well as every relationship in between.

As with most subjects, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented its challenges, but luckily Life Orientation used Moodle before the lock-down as a means of communication which made the transition to online fairly easy. The real challenge for us as a department, however, was trying to find a way to address the more sensitive topics that, more often than not, require face-to-face discussions. We tried our best to compensate for this by making Moodle as interactive as possible and feel we have done so with great success.

We are, however, enjoying having most of the boys back and it did not take us long to hit the ground running again this quarter. The A Block went straight into completing their final portfolio task where they had to choose a form of social inequality in their communities and find creative ways to address the chosen issue in their current situation. We were astounded by the proposals we received from the boys and are hoping to start implementing a couple of them soon. They are now in the home stretch and are getting ready for their final IEB Life Orientation examination that is taking place next week Wednesday, 9 September.

The B Block's focus this quarter was on careers and more specifically university or gap year applications. The boys had to choose a degree or gap year in which they are interested and then had to present their choice to the class referring to everything from entry requirements to possible postgraduate and career options. The boys were extremely creative using various platforms to make their presentations from PowerPoint to *PowToon*. The quality of the presentations was extremely high. The boys thoroughly enjoyed watching the different presentations and, in the process, learning more about various tertiary and gap year options available to them.



The C Block's focus this quarter turned to their social and environmental responsibilities and how these two are interrelated. We usually emphasize their environmental responsibility this quarter to set the tone for the much-anticipated C Block Journey where they will no doubt develop a much greater appreciation for the environment.

The D Block looked at subject choices with Mr Tim Jarvis which will help the boys to make a much more informed choice at the end of this quarter while the E Block had a gentle introduction to addiction, with a strong focus on how the brain works when it comes to the interaction with screen time.

Life Orientation is a much-needed subject especially in today's world where the boys are surrounded with so much information affecting how they interact with the world around them. We, as a department, are grateful to be able to help and guide them through this journey by teaching such a rewarding subject.

## **Departmental News: Life Sciences, Mr Paul Snyman**

The teachers in the department, Righardt Kotze, Gerhard Erasmus and I, are ably assisted by Zanele Ndlovu, our Laboratory Technician, who sets up practical lessons and manages the equipment and chemical inventory.

Upon reflection, the online learning process has been a positive experience for staff and boys alike. Yes, the learning curve has been steep but, as the Rector said previously, the staff development which has occurred as a result would have taken years to accomplish otherwise. For the boys, particularly the seniors, time management and working independently have been key growth areas. Gerhard Erasmus, who is our B Block online work co-ordinator, commented on the significant increase in maturity observed from the boys since lockdown started. The C Block recently did an introductory task on essay writing in Life Sciences which demanded a high level of cognition. Righardt Kotze, the C Block online work co-ordinator, also noted the mature approach his C Block class adopted in this task. I co-ordinated the A Block online offering and we were under pressure to complete the curriculum before the Trial Examinations but careful planning and co-operation from the A Block boys ensured that the process went seamlessly.

The practical component of Life Sciences is a key part of the subject. Online learning made this outcome a challenge, but not impossible, to achieve. Some of the A Block boys conducted an online practical investigation in accordance with IEB standards and many boys have used the task as part of their portfolio mark. This quarter, with most boys back, emphasis has been placed on the practical and application side of the subject.

There are, however, some members of our department who have continued as if nothing has happened over the past few months; I refer to the boa-constrictor (pictured below), the Natal tree-frog, the leopard geckos and the fish in the aquaponic plant. These have all been well looked after. A pair of Spotted Eagle owls were seen roosting in the oaks and planes around



the new Admissions Department during lockdown. We were delighted to see the mother sitting on eggs in one of the old plane trees overlooking Meadows, and in the last few weeks, two fluffy grey chicks have been spotted in the nest.



## End of Term Transport

A reminder that school closes for the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Term on Friday 18 September and school transport will depart from school at 08h30. Please ensure that all bus bookings for Johannesburg, Pavilion and Airports are made **before midday on Friday 11 September**, as we cannot entertain any bookings after this date.

For any queries please contact **Mrs Nirvana Naicker**, School Transport Co-ordinator:

Cell: 060 562 3954

Office: (033) 234 1170

E-mail: [opsadmin@michaelhouse.org](mailto:opsadmin@michaelhouse.org)

## New Michaelhouse Website

Please take the time to visit our new website, launched on 1 September, to herald the new season. It offers a visually exciting and navigationally simpler experience along with one or two new functionalities. Look out for our online shop which will be launched on the platform, later in the year.

## Vale

Sadly, Sally Berriman-Evans leaves us at the end of this week as she prepares to emigrate to the UK with her husband, Clint. She has supported and helped five Rectors in her role as PA since joining Michaelhouse in December 1997 and has seen a huge number of boys, parents,



staff and visitors pass through the Rector's Reception. They have always been met with a warm smile, efficiency and, indeed, professionalism.

Sally is a renowned multi-tasker, managing busy and demanding working days with multiple appointments, juggling to make the best use of time, liaising with our various constituents, and handling any number of arrangements including those for important school ceremonies with a sense of humour and great dexterity. More often than not, Sally is the first port of call for returning Old Boys or parents whom she manages to entertain at the same time as continuing to work with the utmost professionalism. I will miss Sally enormously, but look forward to working with Angela Jonsson in the future.

Bon voyage, Sally!

With my best wishes

**ANTONY CLARK**  
RECTOR