



Dear Parents, Old Boys and Friends of Michaelhouse

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Rector's Message

Good schools, like other good organisations, are always looking ahead and our planning at Michaelhouse for 2021 is well underway. We embrace the year ahead, our 125th anniversary, with optimism and the particular hope that many of the events which we so prize in our annual calendar will be able to be enjoyed and the sense of community which is so important to us restored.

With the departure of **Alan Adlington-Corfield** for Kenya at the end of the year, we have appointed **Win de Wet**, currently Senior Academic, to the **position of Deputy Rector: Academic**. Win has taught at Michaelhouse since 2002 and very successfully led our Economics Department for some 14 years before moving into her current role. She has variously been in charge of tennis and has coached hockey, having played the latter at a level just short of the highest one nationally. We wish her every success in this new and challenging role.

At the same time as being innovative and embracing change, looking to the future and shifting our paradigms, we are also conscious of our deeply held values which are the bedrock of our school in important ways. As life becomes more online and digital, the value of human interaction is ever more important; people who spent time in isolation from others over Covid-19, for example, will affirm how the simple pleasure of meeting with friends and family was heightened by that isolation. There is a balance to be struck between increasingly individualised learning and access to mentors, between the focus on the skills which enhance employability and the benefit of a broad, classical education which teaches young people to think about the actions or inaction of people through the centuries. The immediacy of practical matters must be balanced with spiritual growth.

The paradoxes above are evident in the internal makeup of teenagers: teenagers want to stand out at times, but not do so at others; they want to lead, but they also want to blend into the background. Schools need to be multidimensional if they are to be successful and to



understand the differing characteristics of teenagers if they are to be attractive to parents and young people: to value the importance of team work and of individualism, to comprehend that what drives one person will not necessarily appeal to everyone, to offer a range of opportunities and diversity, but to promote an excitement about belonging to the whole. Such a school tends to look at who people are and how they are developing, expecting a measure of difference and yet also placing importance on the contribution to the welfare of others and to the banner under which all members of a school stand.

In concord with the initiative to create an alignment for all boys with the ethos of Michaelhouse, once again last week we welcomed Karabo Che Makoape to our school. As I have previously indicated Karabo will, as in independent facilitator, guide us over the next 12 months as we undertake our 'journey'. Karabo spoke in a compelling fashion to the whole staff about the value of diversity and also guided the second meeting of the **Transformation and Diversity Advisory Committee** which meets under Mr Sibusiso Ncamani as chairperson. Karabo was also due to speak to the entire school, but our only current potential meeting place for everybody is in the amphitheatre and, with the A Block writing their trial examinations in the Indoor Centre, it would not have been appropriate to ask Karabo to speak to the school in the cold, driving rain.

Mr Sibusiso Ncamani adds that "The Transformation and Diversity Committee held its second meeting on 1 September. The meeting was in a discussion format, and the agenda examined four overarching topics: feedback on specific incidents, racist aspects of class set works and how to approach this phenomenon in the classroom, thirdly, aspirational statements for our draft policy and, lastly, specific areas that foster greater diversity.

The meeting started off with feedback on incidents that had been brought to the Chairman's attention regarding racial and cultural insensitivity. Among these was concern about certain pupils imitating Black African accents. The consensus from the meeting was that this conduct is offensive and does not have a place at Michaelhouse.

The second item was an enlightening discussion on a proposed set book that contains racist slurs. The context of the novel in question is *Apartheid South Africa*, so while racist language is offensive, does it still have a place in the classroom to enable students to delve into the experiences of Black South Africans during this era? The discussion was two-pronged, considering whether such books should be prescribed at school at all, or whether, given their value in understanding the past, they should be read with the offensive words referred to by the first letter of the word. There were varying opinions, and the Committee determined to return to the discussion at a future date after taking time to deliberate on the differing views and the current climate.

The third item was led by Karabo Che Mokoape, who focused on the development of a Transformation and Diversity Policy for Michaelhouse. He asked the members of the Committee to come up with aspirational statements that in their view would set Michaelhouse on course to become a fully transformed school. The feedback was positive and will be collated into a working document for further discussion.



The final part of the meeting asked the Committee to give thought to identifying opportunities to conceptualise and implement initiatives that foster greater diversity and inclusivity. We explored opportunities around more inclusive catering in the school, as well as the naming of buildings and sports facilities, which might also reflect the names of people of colour and/or those who had provided extraordinary service to the school.

The meeting closed after rich discussion on the items raised, and the general sentiment after the meeting was that we are taking positive steps towards a more culturally diverse vision for Michaelhouse.”

Our journey in this area continues. So, too, does the Journey of the C Block. Here are some photographs most of which I took when visiting some of the groups yesterday.





Departmental News: Visual Arts, Mrs Jenni Clinton-Parker

The Michaelhouse Visual Art School, while thought to be a fairly scary place by a number of the uninitiated, is actually a safe and vibrant hangout for the gentle boy, the quirky boy and the artistically-blessed boy; no surprise there... Yet what may surprise you is that it is also a home-base for a number of scientifically-minded – Top-20 academics, first team sports fanatics and IT gurus. Our past learners have gone on to be farmers and surgeons, engineers, architects, graphic designers and animators, businessmen and accountants, world debaters and Stanford University graduates. We believe Visual Art is a subject that can be taught successfully to anyone who has the motor skills legibly to write his name, the curiosity to ask questions and the gumption to look beyond the obvious.



Visual Art is a subject that develops problem-solving ability and out-of-the-box thinking. It helps with the motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making, risk-taking, and inventiveness. It teaches boys about the importance of developing time-management skills and patience, how to take the time to be more careful and thorough in how they observe themselves and the world. Visual Art as a subject provides challenges for learners at all levels as can be witnessed by the vast array of practical work on exhibition in the Schlesinger Theatre Foyer Gallery and, these days, online.

Mrs Candice Smith and I work in an open studio environment where boys are free to interact with and learn from either of us and each other across grade hierarchy. We have experienced Matrics asking D and C Block photography whizzes to help them by taking source photographs for them and vice versa. In the light of this, we were both not a little anxious at the thought of moving online at the beginning of lockdown.

While the teaching of practical art from a distance posed a fair challenge, we had to practise what we teach in terms of being flexible. The move went far more smoothly than we had anticipated. The senior boys worked on concept development and research in their visual journals for the practical component, the D Block had fun with digital photography and the E Block learned how to draw-by-video-prompt: Candice's new-found flair at creating video tutorials can be seen all over YouTube and Facebook. We have also discovered wealth at our fingertips as international art galleries like MOMA and The Louvre opened their virtual doors to the public. Art theory has become alive as students now regularly wander through YouTube videos of Chartres Cathedral, the Acropolis and the Vatican City, look at Vincent's Sunflowers and Monet's Waterlilies in their gallery homes and listen to many artists themselves discuss their work. What we learned when we were forced out of our comfort zones has enriched our physical classroom teaching. This said, it was with a rather large sigh of relief that we were able to again gather together in person from June/July (albeit from behind masks, screens and gallons of sanitizer) as there is still nothing to compare to sitting one-on-one with a boy grappling with his take on the madness surrounding him and helping him make sense of it by turning it into an artwork. The Matric IEB practical examination topic given to the boys the day before lockdown began is 20/20 Vision... rather a more apt topic than I suspect was ever planned!

My personal big take-away from this bizarre year has been the discovery of the potential of the online gallery platform through my curating of Culture Week 2020's Virtual Art Gallery which can be viewed here <https://tinyurl.com/y36jmcg2>. Seeing what is created at senior school level is quite eye-opening. Watch this space for news of our upcoming Virtual B and C Block Michaelhouse-Treverton Exhibition and our Virtual Matric Art Exhibition openings.

Message from Tim Jarvis, School Counsellor

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London, is the author of a ground-breaking new book, [*Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the*](#)



[*Teenage Brain*](#), in which she explains the development of the brain during the precarious, enriching and crucial years of adolescence. Here are some of her thoughts:

Why, as a society, do we demonise our teenagers?

You wouldn't get away with it, on social media, were you to mock women or a certain race, or elderly people with poor memories. But it is, strangely, acceptable to mock and demonise teenagers. As a society, we don't like it that our children, who used to do what we said, are rebelling, becoming independent. It is difficult to handle that, and one way of handling it is to mock them.

What goes on in the teenage brain?

When I was an undergraduate 25 years ago, we knew nothing about how the human brain develops. I was taught that the brain is fully mature by mid-childhood. Since then, we have developed MRI scanning that allows us to look inside the living human brain and track how it functions in terms of structure and activity across the lifespan. We now have a rich, detailed picture of how the human brain develops, and what it shows is that what I was learning in my textbooks was completely wrong. The brain continues to develop through childhood and adolescence and even into the 20s and 30s in some brain regions. White matter increases, grey matter decreases. These changes are thought to be caused by important neurodevelopmental processes that enable the brain to be moulded and influenced by the environment.

What needs to change in education?

First, we must acknowledge that this is a young science. There is evidence that the circadian rhythm, the body clock, shifts at puberty by a couple of hours. Teenagers need to go to bed a couple of hours later than adults. They can't make themselves go to sleep earlier just because we want them to – and when we force them to get up for school, it is the middle of their biological night. School needs to start later. Teenagers are exhausted by the weekend and catch up on sleep – they have a shifting time zone, a phenomenon called “social jetlag”. Evidence suggests this is not good for cognition or mood.

Why do some adolescents take more risks than adults?

When you take a risk, the brain's positive reward system gets activated. In adolescents, that activation is higher during risk-taking than in adults. It is true for non-human adolescents, too. Adolescent mice take more risks. They also drink more alcohol when they are with other adolescent mice.

Why does mental illness often kick off in adolescence?

We don't know. Three-quarters of mental illnesses appear before the age of 24. Depression, anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia. It's a period of vulnerability. Changes are happening at the same time, a confluence, a perfect storm: hormonal changes, neural changes, social changes and the pressures of life suddenly increase. The changes in the brain mean it is particularly plastic and susceptible to environmental stress. The pressure of schools and exams is increasing. As an adolescent, your mind and cognitive capacity is developing so you're able to reflect on life, the future and your place in the social hierarchy in a more



sophisticated way. You're starting to look like an adult. People expect you to behave like an adult, too.

What is your hunch about the effect of technology on the teenage brain?

This is, again, a new field. Those of us who work in this area assume it affects the teenage brain – but is it all bad? There is a lot of scaremongering around. We have to be careful about *newspaper articles that talk about an increase in depression in adolescence* and relate it to more access to phones and social media, because that is merely a correlation. We do not yet have causal data to prove that link. But I must admit, I do use my own phone far too much. As adults, we worry about our children, but what about using our phones in front of them? My children tell me off – I hide my phone from them.

Do some people stay teenagers for ever?

When I give talks to adults and state that the end of adolescence is when a person has a stable independent role in society, half the audience starts laughing as if to say: “I have not got there yet.”

This article is used with permission of Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore. It is an edited version of a piece that first appeared in *The Guardian*. You can read the full article here <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/mar/25/sarah-jayne-blakemore-secret-life-teenage-brain>

Congratulations and Individual Achievements

Computer Applications Olympiad (CAO) 2020

During March, 11 Michaelhouse boys participated in the Computer Applications Olympiad First Round Open Division. Certificates were awarded to the participants with above average scores. Congratulations to the following boys who achieved certificates:

First Name	Surname	Grade	House	Certificate
Reuben	Baldry	10	West	Gold
Tapiwa	Chikwanda	12	Mackenzie	Gold
Michael	Brown	12	McCormick	Silver
Alejandro	Sartini-Kruger	10	Pascoe	Bronze

Programming Olympiad 2020

At the beginning of August, 42 Michaelhouse boys participated in the Programming Olympiad First Round. Congratulations to the 10 Michaelhouse boys who qualified to participate in the Second Round on 19 August: **Nathan Bau, Tapiwa Chikwanda, David Ferguson, Mitchell Flanagan, Luke Hooker, Ross Keep, Ntumbuluko Mdluli, Arden Scholtz, Max von Klemperer and Timothy Whitaker.**



Congratulations to **Tapiwa Chikwanda** (pictured below), who was chosen as one of the 13 finalists nationally out of 329 participants to participate in the final round in Johannesburg on 27 September. This is an incredible achievement as Tapiwa was also invited to attend the final round in 2019. We are very proud that Tapiwa has been chosen to represent Michaelhouse at the Finals this year and wish him every success.

In 2019, Tapiwa won the Gold medal and the IITPSA trophy in the Finals of the Computer Applications Olympiad. In addition, he was the first Michaelhouse learner to be chosen for the Finals in both the Programming Olympiad and Computer Applications Olympiad in one year. He chose not to participate in the Programming Olympiad as he had other commitments.



Canoeing

In the Jock Claassens Memorial race the following boys competed and the results are as follows:

U18 – 1st Sam Butcher and 2nd overall, 3rd Jack Edmonds and 12th overall, 5th Matthew Millward and 16th overall, 6th Murray Behn and 21st overall and 10th Max von Klemperer and 41st overall.



Rap, Rhythm and Poetry Society News

The society entered two boys into the Mandela Day Competition and they were both awarded prizes for their outstanding pieces. These boys are also Dramatic Arts students who used their performance skills for this piece.

Congratulations to Letlotlo Sekatle and Xihluke Marhule for their powerful tributes.



End of Term Transport

On Friday 18 September we will be closing for the Michaelmas Holidays. School transport is being arranged for Johannesburg (Zoo Lake), Bloemfontein, Durban (Pavilion) and King Shaka/Oribi Airports to depart Michaelhouse at 08h30. All bookings for these trips can be made through the usual transport booking portal and must be made by the end of this week, 11 September.

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

The staff member accompanying the Johannesburg Bus on 11 September is Mr Bernie Whitaker.



Outside Coaching/Tutoring and Police Checks

Very occasionally parents make an arrangement to have their son receive special coaching or tutoring, for example in a sport or subject. If parents wish to do so, the matter must please be referred to an appropriate senior teacher at Michaelhouse as we need to ensure that the usual police checks are in place, as is the case with all teachers and coaches who work here. If you are unsure to whom the matter should be referred, kindly contact my Executive Assistant, Angela Jonsson.

D Block Subject Choice Guidance

Please be aware that our School Counsellor, Mr Tim Jarvis, is dealing with a large number of enquiries on this topic from boys and parents at the moment. If you have e-mailed him with regard to this, he will respond to you as soon as he can before the end of term. A reminder that subject choices are to be submitted by D Block parents on-line by Thursday 17 September.

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.

With my best wishes

ANTONY CLARK
RECTOR