



Dear Parents, Old Boys and Friends of Michaelhouse

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## Rector's Message

It was such a pleasure to see the boys out in the sunshine and enjoying themselves so much over the past weekend at their **sports practices** and also at the **Societies Fair** held on Friday afternoon. Each society had set up a table in the Main Quad where the boys signed up for a club or society. These range from the Reading Society to the Inventors' Club and the Flying Club; other societies include: African Affairs, Agricultural Society, Barista Society (Coffee), Catholic Society, Chess Society, Conservation Club, Cycling Society (MTB), Debating and Public Speaking, Deep Sea Fishing, Film Appreciation Society, First Aid Society, Fly Fishing and Trout Club, Flying Club, Inventors' Club, Investors' Club, Chapel Choir, Orchestra, Marimba Bands (Competition Band, Performance and Junior), Performance Arts, Photographic Society, President's Award, Problem Solving Society, Philosophy and Politics Society, Readers' Society, Scuba Club, Sports' Archives Society, Snell Society, Social Awareness Society, Surfing Society, Theatre Tech Society, Toastmasters (Seniors only) and Wordsmiths' Society.

We want the boys to develop or maintain interests outside academic and sporting activities and so it is **compulsory for boys to be a member of at least one club or society** and, of course, to attend their meetings. You may like to ask your son which societies he has joined.





Boys enjoying the Societies Fair

Inevitably we have had to **alter some aspects of this term's calendar** to include certain activities and, equally, we have had to postpone others: an event which we usually have in the first quarter is the Matric Ball but, with all the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, it has been decided to postpone this until later in the year. As previously indicated, the Prize-Giving event due to take place on Wednesday 17 February will now need to take the form of an in-House assembly, rather than an event which is open to parents and the swimming gala this Friday evening will also need to be an in-House event.

I also want to indicate that, with boys going home for half-term next weekend, it is **not realistic to expect them to have another test for Covid-19** prior to their return to school **if** they have, essentially, been at home with you and are not unwell at any stage over the weekend. If, however, they do go to events where they meet with a range of people or are unwell, then we would please ask you to be responsible about ensuring that they are tested so that they don't return to school and have a negative impact upon others. You may have to keep them back for a day in order to give effect to this. Covid-19 is still very much with us, but we have made good progress as a country and we want to continue to move towards a "more normal" situation in which hopefully the usual activities, including inter-school events can take place. Boys who return to school carrying Covid will set us back significantly in this regard. We have to rely on you, as parents, please to see the big picture



and, if in doubt, please err on the side of caution in not returning them to school until they have been given the medical go-ahead.

The weekend after half-term will be a **closed weekend** with no leave outs and we will assess the position relating to further leave out weekends after half-term.

Later this term we will be introducing **Affective and Social (AS)** Tracking for all boys. Essentially this is a pastoral assessment and tracking tool and involves an on-line assessment, completed by the boys, twice in each academic year. We are hoping that this will provide an additional and important part of the pastoral jigsaw as it enables us to track each pupil's social-emotional development and, proactively, to give boys the right pastoral support at the right time and in the right way. In other words, AS tracking should enable us to identify pupils who need a little more pastoral sign-posting earlier than has been the case. The questions for the online assessment are non-invasive, neutral and accessible since AS tracking is not seeking to measure explicit risks such as anxiety or self-harm, but rather biases in the thinking of pupils; AS tracking calls these *steering biases* and these can be early indicators of future risks even though they may not be visible in our day to day observations of boys. Tim Jarvis, our School Counsellor, has pointed out that the assessment does not profile or box pupils, but rather tells us where each boy is so that we can be proactive and precise in our pastoral sign-posting. We aim to be in a position to do the first online assessment before the end of this term.

Following on from issues related to the pastoral dimension, parents and boys are reminded that Michaelhouse subscribes to the **Guardian App** provided by the Guardian Group. This app which can be downloaded allows boys or parents anonymously to report concerns that they may have relating to practices like bullying, or to discrimination and drug use, to name a few, to the school authorities. The school is then able to investigate these reports and where feasible/necessary take appropriate action. The App is part of our desire to eliminate unhealthy practices at Michaelhouse and assist in the resolution of incidents.

I also want to mention, at this stage, particularly with our new parents in mind, the approach we adopt with regard to the **misuse of drugs and, in particular, cannabis**. As I have outlined in the past, Michaelhouse has a very clear and firm policy in relation to drugs and substance abuse. Put simply, in the event of boys becoming involved in cannabis or other drugs, some of which are even more harmful, they must expect to leave the school. Our stance, therefore, may differ from other schools with regard to marijuana/cannabis and I want you to be aware of this. I raise these points because I know that the smoking of marijuana/cannabis and the taking of other drugs is rife at many of the parties to which our teenagers go and, as a result of this, there may be a view amongst some of our young people that "everybody does it" and they may question the "fuss" that is made over this, especially since they will argue that the Constitutional Court has legalised the use of marijuana/cannabis by adults in private. Those keen to trade on the "mixed message" will tend to play up the relative dangers of other substances and the decriminalisation in certain circumstances of





the use of marijuana/cannabis. I am also fully aware that some medical research may have set out to disprove the negative effects of marijuana/cannabis and also to demonstrate that it might be helpful to some people in certain conditions, but this is countered by a longer-standing medical view of the harm it causes especially at the time when the brain is developing. This harm relates to memory loss, the inability to concentrate, poor processing speed and the increased risk of psychosis.

Depression and schizophrenia can be caused by the use of marijuana/cannabis. There are a number of studies that support this view. For example, Dr Mark Porter, writing in *The Times* on 20 August 2013 said that “although the safety profile of cannabis compares favourably with other drugs, both legal and illegal, it still exacts a considerable toll on the health and well-being of some users.

Cannabis is bad for your brain. Numerous studies have linked the drug to serious mental illness, with recent research suggesting that schizophrenia is up to seven times more common amongst regular cannabis users (those who have smoked more than fifty joints). And the younger you start, the more susceptible you seem to be. Like many doctors I have lost count of the number of teenagers I have seen who have developed serious mental illness after taking up weed.

Neuroscientists suspect that younger teenagers (those under sixteen) are particularly susceptible because the brain continues to develop and mature during the early teens – something that has only been discovered recently. Drug abuse and the chemical changes it induces are thought to influence this final phase of brain formation, increasing the risk of the type of functional changes and the sort of neuro-transmitter imbalances that are associated with conditions such as schizophrenia.”

He goes on to say that “one of my biggest concerns with regular use is what it does to your drive and enthusiasm. It turns every day into Sunday at a time of life – during school, university or the first part of a new career – when that drive and enthusiasm is essential if you are to achieve your potential.” He says, in the same article, that the vast majority of people who experiment with the drug will emerge unscathed, but he indicates that it can leave a permanent scar on the brain and could have telling consequences.

In my role as a Head of various schools, I have noticed, in particular, the lethargy that has set in amongst some pupils and the impact of that on their overall development (I hasten to add that those pupils will have been tested as a result of the expectation of staff that they have been involved in the use of drugs). I simply want to return here to the issue that marijuana/cannabis/other drugs are most definitely considered unacceptable at Michaelhouse and that boys who bring a substance of this nature into the school and/or use it here or test positive to its use must expect to lose their place at Michaelhouse. I thought that an explanation of the clear boundaries that exist in this regard at this stage would be helpful to parents. I will engage with the boys on this specific issue at our next assembly.



## Congratulations & Individual Achievements

### *Academic Awards*

Congratulations to the students who achieved an Academic Award based on their results from the end of the 2020 academic year:

### *Honours*

**Ryan Baker, Alexander Brits, Danilo Ceronio, Kwande Dhlomo, David Ferguson, Mitchell Flanagan, Kameran Jinnah, Jadin Jordaan, Ross Keep, Ntumbuluko Mdluli, Callum Porrill, Alexander Vermeulen, Reuben Baldry and Tristan Hoyle.**

### *Colours*

**Jack Edmonds, Maqhawe Hoohlo, Luke Hooker, Simon le Vieux, Keemal Ramnath, Connor Sesink Clee, Joshua White, James Asherson, Benjamin Frost, Joshua Hadley-Grave, Adrian Hill, James Kennedy, Lusanda Mrasi, David Nienaber, Alejandro Sartini-Kruger, Letlotlo Sekatle, Frederick Waller and Peter Woodland.**

### *Half Colours*

**Murray Behn, Jacques du Preez, Jon-Luke Ferreira, Matthew Gibson, Hilton Giles, Dominic le Sueur, Matthew Marx, Aiden Mason, Cameron McLean-Banks, Jason Morby-Smith, Thomas Nel, Karl Rindfleisch, Dylan Roberts, Arden Scholtz, Joshua Stevenson, Anthony Turner, Andrew Davis, Oliver Gauntlett, Mvelwenhle Guma, Joshua Heafield, Lekgotla Kebonang, Mayenziwe Nene, Skulule Ngejane, Ross Rhodes, Tomas Szudrawski, Christopher Townshend and Benjamin Turner.**

### *Sports*

Congratulations go to the following boys on being selected as Captain and Vice Captain for the 2021 sporting year:

<b><u>Sport</u></b>	<b><u>Captain</u></b>	<b><u>Vice Captain</u></b>
Basketball	<b>Jason Makhele</b>	<b>Dominic Le Sueur</b>
Canoeing	<b>Jack Edmonds</b>	<b>Chase Leisegang</b>
Cricket	<b>Adrien Fischer</b>	<b>Alexander Vermeulen</b>
Golf	<b>Joseph Price</b>	<b>Mitchell Flanagan</b>
Hockey	<b>Jason Williams</b>	to be considered at a later stage
Squash	<b>Richard Upfold and Kameran Jinnah</b>	
Swimming	<b>Benjamin Lister</b>	<b>Graham Hoal</b>
Tennis	<b>Adrien Fischer</b>	<b>Tom Tom Walters</b>
Water Polo	<b>Zubin Randeria with Jason Morby Smith as Club Captain</b>	<b>Daniel Johnson</b>



## Careers Guidance

Michaelhouse is partnering with Bryce Dekker and his company '**DirectionDD**' to make sure that we are **supporting the process of decision making ahead of university applications**. Collectively we want to help your son make the most appropriate choices for himself whilst playing towards his unique strengths and talents. Following on from an initial group of career assessments with Bryce last year, we are now able to offer further dates this February and again in March. After the assessment, Bryce will meet with your son one on one to unpack the assessment results, identify possible careers and provide options relating to tertiary choices and entrance criteria. All A Block parents have already been emailed a letter with details of this initiative and how to book for this. Please email Caryl Ballance [CarBal@michaelhouse.org](mailto:CarBal@michaelhouse.org) for further information.

## University Applications

From March onwards **university applications** will start in earnest for our A Block boys. All applications are completed online and all necessary school documentation for such applications can be obtained on request.

As we are unable to entertain university visits at the moment, the Counselling Department will run a number of voluntary workshops to assist the boys with these applications should they require it. We will soon be emailing a letter to all A Block parents with further information regarding the university application process. Please contact Tim Jarvis [timjar@michaelhouse.org](mailto:timjar@michaelhouse.org) or Herman Visagie [hervis@michaelhouse.org](mailto:hervis@michaelhouse.org) if you have questions in this regard.

## Strong Mothers – Strong Sons Course & Distance Parenting Course

Just a reminder that we are running our '**Strong Mothers – Strong Sons**' course online this term. The course will be presented by Megan de Beyer from Cape Town and Tim Jarvis from the Michaelhouse Counselling Department, and will comprise 6 lectures running every Wednesday lunchtime from 12:00-13:00. The course will commence next week on Wednesday 17 February. Further information and booking details have already been emailed out to all parents.

We will also be running a short '**Distance Parenting**' course for both fathers and mothers of our newer boarders. All E Block parents will shortly be receiving more information on this. However, if any other parents are interested in this, please contact Tim Jarvis [timjar@michaelhouse.org](mailto:timjar@michaelhouse.org)



## Travel Guidelines for Parents – Deputy Rector: Pupils

Please see attached a Travel Guideline letter to Parents (Annexure A) from Allan Laing, Deputy Rector: Pupils.

## Half – Term Transport Bookings

Please find attached, as a separate document to this newsletter, the details of the teachers travelling on the various buses over the half-term weekend. (Annexure B)

A reminder to parents to please ensure you place your bus bookings for the Durban and Johannesburg buses timeously via the portal and inform **Nirvana Naicker**, the School's Transport Co-ordinator, of any flight details and airport drop-offs/collections.

We should also mention here that, with the demise of Greyhound, the Kalamazoo company will be used more extensively for our transportation of boys. Our Operations Manager, Marius Henn, has inspected the vehicles and found them entirely satisfactory.

Nirvana can be reached for any queries at:

Email: [opsadmin@michaelhouse.org](mailto:opsadmin@michaelhouse.org)

Tel: 033 234 1170/060 562 3954

## Conclusion

I wish to thank you for all your messages of support and appreciation as we have moved from our online provision to having practically all the boys back at school. Have a good week!

With my best wishes

**ANTONY CLARK**  
RECTOR