



Headmaster's Address Guild Annual General Meeting

Mrs Sue Gardner and Mr John Gardner, Mrs Dyssell, Past Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr Mathys, Chairman of the Guild, , Members of the Board, Members of the Guild Committee. Parents and staff.

It is brilliant to see such a large turnout this evening. Thank you for braving the cold to participate in this meeting.

Once again, we have worked hard as a school community over the past 12 months to achieve the objectives set out in our strategy. We have come a long way as a result and I would like to talk about some of the progress we have made:

1. Security at school required an urgent upgrade. The project involved the re-fencing of almost the entire 1.4km perimeter. In the process 6 entrances were discarded and a new disc access control system was fitted allowing access to parents and pupils who wish to use the facilities over week-ends or holidays. This has proved very effective in controlling access to the property. This project was completed earlier this year.
2. This time last year, work started on the new Dickens Avenue parking area. The project ran late due to the very heavy rains that were experienced. The objective of the new design was to improve the flow of traffic and make the campus safer and more attractive for the children. Flow has improved with the 'drop and go' area now working well. The school grounds are much safer for the children now that vehicles have been removed from all areas. A bonus was the green lung which now extends from the Simpson Hall past the tennis courts down to the Grade 3 classrooms known as Headmasters Walk.
3. The drop and go area in Drama Street was improved to allow for busses to park on the verge, thereby creating a safer area for children when embarking and disembarking. A new internal gate was also constructed so as to eliminate the need for the slow and unreliable motorised vehicle gates. This too has improved traffic flow. A video phone was also installed to monitor access.
4. The website for the school was completely redesigned and is now being used for the communication of sport information and team selections. This is also a key area for marketing of our school, and in many instances represents the first experience of our school for prospective parents.
5. The lawn areas under the Oaks behind Cloetenberg were decompacted and grassed.
6. Restructuring and streamlining of the administrative and estate management functions of the school has been ongoing. This was managed in such a way as to take advantage of the retirement of three administrative personnel. Heidi, our new bursar, Judith, our new assistant bursar and Neil, our facilities manager were all employed this year.
7. Noleen Jansen has moved up to Cloetenberg so that there is always a presence at the telephone in the afternoons, thereby improving communication.

8. We have rented out almost the whole of Prospect House to Vergezicht School. This relationship has grown and we are very happy to see them growing so well too. They also occupy the cottage which used to be home to Oakwood Pre School. Our Art class is still in Prospect House.
9. The first 12 children to fulfil the requirements of the Non Nobis Solum Leadership Programme were awarded their symbols of achievement after having made a substantial difference to our school's level of involvement in the community.
10. From a sporting perspective, I am pleased with the progress that has been made in terms of widening access to our sports teams. More children are experiencing the opportunity to play in teams and experience sport more constructively. While we continue to be a top sporting school in spite of our small size, we are becoming better at providing meaningful sport to children of all ability groups.
11. We have also introduced more specific and accurate reporting on sport and physical fitness. This takes place twice a year at the culmination of the summer and winter sport seasons.
12. This time last year we were anxiously waiting for our new Deputy Headmaster to arrive. He has now done so and Richard has settled into his role at Somerset House well. He did not intend to be Grade 5 teacher when he arrived, but when the gap presented itself he jumped in. The rest is history, and I am delighted to be working with him.
13. Our new building was due to be announced late last year. Issues around design, structure and location took more time than anticipated and we did not reach a point where we could make any firm announcement around the building. We are currently engaged with an architectural firm, but we are obviously taking a cautious view of this project due to the present financial climate. We hope to be able to say more in the near future.
14. On the academic and teaching front, we moved to a subject teaching system in Grade 5, 6 and 7 this year. This has assisted with consistency in teaching between classes as the teacher is now common to both classes in a grade.
15. UMALUSI, the state quality assessment agency conducted a site visit earlier this year, which we were told went extremely well. We await the official report.
16. A massive upgrade of the computer system in the school was undertaken at the end of the first term of this year. This upgrade will essentially underpin our new thrust into ICT teaching. The focus will move from how to use a computer, to using the computer as a tool for learning and working. You will see much change in the coming months as far as this is concerned. The upgrade included the installation of 3 servers and fibre optic cable throughout the school. We will be replacing the 25 machines in our main ICT Centre next term.
17. We eagerly await the arrival of Mrs Lynn Brazer, our new Director of Information and Communication Technology, who will be teaching in the Computer Centre and developing and driving this very different approach to ICT teaching in our school.
18. Revamping of Shelters, the old headmaster's house, began at the end of the first term of this year and the Music Department was able to move in recently. The building is well suited to the teaching of music in more spacious and well appointed surroundings. The Sound of Music now wafts over the parking area from the early hours of the morning.

19. Work is currently underway on the conversion of Huellin Cottage, the old Music Centre, to the Educational Support Centre, which next term will be home to our remedial, occupational and speech therapists.
20. The highlight of the past 12 months must of course be the Big 60. Our sixty year celebration was a stunning success from the special Founders Assembly to the spectacular Golf Day at Erinvale to the dinner that brought past teacher and pupils together. The Mango Groove Concert under the Oaks was the perfect way to finish. The guild did us proud with the role they played in this event.

Those are really the main items. In-between the things I have mentioned, the really important stuff happens. That is the stuff that simply happens because this is a school where many people live and learn together on a daily basis.

Questions from the floor were addressed.
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To conclude.....

We have worked hard to improve over the past 12 months, and much work lies ahead. I would like to thank all parents for your commitment to our school. It certainly is a special place and we love being here and teaching here.

I would like to thank the staff for the commitment and dedication shown to the task. They work hard and I am grateful for their efforts.

To John and the Guild, what an amazing group of people. The events that have been pulled off have been brilliant. The Family Fun Day earlier this year was such a super event. Thank you for all that you have done to make our school great.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I thank Julia Dyssell for her role as Chairman of the Board for the last 2 and a half years and recently handed over to Mr Andrew Ribbans, our new Chairman. She has been unbelievable in her support of both me and the school. The school owes you a debt that few understand. Thank you for your time, effort, belief and commitment. Last, but not least, thank you to a very special person who has been involved in this school longer than anyone else. Wilga du Plessis was a pupil here in she was a teacher here, a parent and a member of the Board of Governors. Her contribution will be matched by few... if any. Thank you Wilga for all you have done for Somerset House over the years. You have led by example and you have always committed yourself to complete involvement and engagement with this school that is so dear to you. That this school is a school of substance, is due to the contribution of people like you. We all thank you.

Chris Storey
Headmaster