

21 December, 2023

Headmaster's Newsletter – End of Year 2023

Dear Parents,

As Christmas approaches, we can reflect on what has been an overwhelmingly successful year at the College. Whether you have been a frequent visitor or have observed from a distance, I am sure that you share my appreciation and pride in what our Community has achieved, all the while focused on what we perceive to be best for your children.

The untimely death a week ago of Mr Fidelis Majuba - a man cut down in his prime by a cruel disease - was devastating news, not only for his family and us at the College, but for the hundreds of young men and women whose lives were changed for the better by having been taught or coached by him. His impact on hockey in Zimbabwe cannot be overstated, and he leaves a void that will be impossible to fill. Several of his friends and colleagues attended a simple funeral on Friday last week, and we will hold a special service once the Falcon Community is all back together in the new year.

We were also shocked to learn of the sudden passing of Mr Magura Mhaka, Headmaster of Eaglesvale Junior School, and former Head of Petra College Primary. He was a gentle, God-fearing man whose devotion to education in Zimbabwe made him a greatly respected Head. I will miss his calm and humble approach at National level as he was a frequent contributor and leader in meetings and at conferences. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and the Eaglesvale community.

The last two weeks have seen a transformation in our region, as we have finally had some rain. The whole country seems to be bursting with new growth after the awfully hot, dry spell with temperatures at the College reaching 38° Celsius. Although there has been no significant runoff, we remain hopeful that dams will take at least some water this season.

Over the past 12 days, a group of learner guides, under the direction of Mr John Laing (Quest Operations Manager, and Chairman of the Zimbabwe Professional Guides Association, ZPGA) has been involved in a volunteer programme on Quiet Waters. They have made tremendous progress as they have been part of a larger initiative to expand the Conservation Area by moving the boundary fence to the south and east, thus establishing access to the so-called Wilderness Area. These 19 young men and women have been interested, helpful and open-minded as they have worked and

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learned. It has been a pleasure to host them and to have some of our colleagues share their skills and knowledge with these hungry minds.

The end of year is always tainted by farewells to friends and colleagues, some of whom have served and influenced generations of Falcon students, and this year was no different.

Mr Karl Makahamadze, a Junior Master whose services we enjoyed for only seven months, brought a work ethic and energy seldom seen in one so young. A debater and public speaker with significant local and international experience, as well as an academic and sports coach, his impact over only two terms has been fantastic; his work with the MUN group was particularly appreciated. He has left to begin his studies in finance in Dubai where, no doubt, he will thrive.

Mrs Candice Love and Mrs Raquel Fouche remain as Falcon Parents, but their official roles in admissions and marketing, respectively, come to an end this month. Mrs Fouche, for six years a marketing and events coordinator, accompanied me on numerous local and international trips, and her energy and commitment were always appreciated.

Mr Brent Dodd and Mrs Laura Dodd have relocated back to Pietermaritzburg after a year in which they both achieved a great deal, in education and marketing, respectively, and we will miss their competence, vision and influence. They are not a couple to burn bridges, and I would not be surprised if they returned one day to a place they came to love, and which they served so well.

Mrs Tracey McGovern had her third (and final) Falcon farewell. This time, she has emigrated to Australia to be nearer to her children and grandchildren, and will continue teaching Mathematics in Western Australia. Her no-nonsense, skilled approach has been greatly appreciated in her time at the College.

Mr Rodwell Khumalo, former Deputy Head Boy and Head of Chubb, and a teacher, coach and Housemaster who joined the Staff in 2006, has left to join Sicelo, his wife, in the UK. He received thunderous applause in our final assembly, reflective of the high regard in which he is held by the Student Body and his colleagues. A senior member of the Khumalo family, he is sure to return sometime in the future, but we wish him and Mrs Khumalo success and fulfilment in their UK adventures.

Mr Maxwell Ncube takes early retirement, on medical grounds, at the end of this year, after 17 years of service to the College, and we wish him a smooth transition to his new life away from the stresses and pressure of classroom teaching. I thank Mr Ncube for his dedication and commitment to three generations of Falcon Students.

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Mr Dave Grant, who has taught at the College for 32 years, is stepping into “normal” teaching life after 17 distinguished years as George Grey Housemaster, followed by a decade as the highly respected Second Master (latterly, Deputy Head (Pastoral)). He is something of an institution, and we are fortunate that he will remain as a teacher, coach, mentor, and guide.

I will introduce our new colleagues in January, but I am excited by the quality and experience of those who will be joining us, and have every confidence in our faculty and support Staff as we continue to grow and evolve.

As we close for the Festive Season, the new swimming pool construction is complete, with tiling happening between wet spells. The new double classroom block, which now stands proudly in what was the parking lot opposite the Admin Offices, is a wonderful addition, with a removable partition and state-of-the art interactive screens. The solar project which will take us virtually off-grid altogether is about to start; the Workers’ Village refurbishment project, long overdue and gathering support from Falconians Worldwide, has started; development and expansions including an Astroturf, indoor sporting facility, and Staff accommodation, are all at the advanced planning stage. We expect 537 Students at the start of next year, and will have five streams in Form One for the first time ever.

I extend my thanks to the Board of Governors, particularly outgoing Chairman, Mr Andrew Marchussen, for their support, commitment, and visionary approach. I am indebted to my colleagues - academic, administrative and support staff - for their professionalism and innovation as they have sought to serve your children, and our College as a whole.

Brenda joins me in wishing you a safe, happy holiday with your families, and a blessed Christmas. We look forward to seeing you in 2024 - Falcon College’s 70th Anniversary year.

Warm regards,

Dave van Wyk
HEADMASTER

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