



HILTON COLLEGE

*A letter from*

# The Head

*No. 20-12 / 28 August 2020*

Dear Parents,

One of the good fortunes of embracing IT at Hilton was our ability to transition to emergency distance learning when we needed it most during this pandemic and I am especially grateful to our teachers for their agility in learning the required tools quickly to ensure quality instruction continued.

Prior to this 'emergency' we were in various discussions, as an academic staff, as to the challenges that devices present to teenagers and whether we were actually doing them a disservice by insisting upon certain work being done on this platform; many teachers and parents fear the amount of time teenagers spend glued to a screen, at the cost of other healthy social and outdoor pursuits.

Appropriate time spent on devices remains a delicate balancing act as our teenagers navigate these formative years.

Regrettably, one of the ills of our reliance on, and excessive use of, devices is the ease of communication. This is linked to societies' shift to non-verbal communication, by employing far more text and visual messaging instead of speaking to the other person. The ease with which we can communicate with a group of people is staggering these days, and the speed at which messages can fly from one corner of the planet to another is rather dramatic. Indeed, a marvel of our time.

Sadly, together with the ease and beauty of this quick communication comes the challenge of typing and posting without thinking.

I have been dealing with a few incidents of poor judgement by boys who type and post without thinking. These messages are sent to a wide audience and they are forwarded on, without much thought, to an even wider audience of impressionable young people. This is a recipe for disaster.

The Social Media law expert, Emma Sadlier, speaks to teenagers about the perils of this virtual world, and the permanence of posts that live on way beyond their immediate targeted moment.

Often teenagers don't listen.

We need to educate, educate, educate - I need your assistance in this.

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The horror of being presented with an erstwhile errant post from a decade before, is too frightening to contemplate. Just as one is about to land one's first job, or make an impression upon a potential client, or be considered for a prestigious prize at varsity, and then the errant post from the past surfaces...careers have been ruined.

Much has been made of the dangers of Instagram, Facebook and TikTok posts but perhaps not enough has been said about WhatsApp messages. It seems all too easy to message someone or a group in a derogatory way and believe that this is admissible and also erasable. Teenagers need to be taught boundaries of what can be said to one another and what is frankly rude, derogatory and utterly unacceptable.

My request is that you have a conversation with your son about his messaging etiquette, whether this be his Instagram and Tik-Tok posts, or his WhatsApps to his mates. The practice of forwarding someone else's message does not exempt the forwarder from culpability either - this, too, needs to be emphasised.

The significant upside that devices afford us enables us to maximise our potential in many areas of our lives. We must, however, learn to use the technology with the required etiquette a responsible person would demonstrate.

At Hilton, we are unapologetic about demanding high standards in many areas and this is certainly an area that I will not tolerate negligence in. Young men can behave as gentlemen and there is no excuse to accept anything less in the virtual world.

On another note, a few updates to be aware of:

## **Speech Day 2020**

After much thought, we have rescheduled Speech Day to the 14th of November. The hope is that we will be able to host an in-person event by this time, but we will confirm this at the beginning of the 4th term. Should Government regulations still not permit gatherings of more than 50 people, we will present this Speech Day virtually. Please diarise this date.

## **Staffing changes**

Mr Ernie Steenkamp concludes his tenure as Housemaster of Churchill at the end of this year. I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Steenkamp for their dedicated service to Churchill over the past eight years, two as Assistant and six as Housemaster. Mr Steenkamp has helped boys create superb memories and his mentoring, care and guidance has meant much to many boys over the years. I am sure you will join me in wishing him well as he moves into a new chapter, still at Hilton, in the new year.

Mr Tony Richter is promoted to the role of Director of School Operations from January 2021, which necessitates his completing his tenure as Housemaster of Ellis at the end of this year. Mr Richter has also been the Executive Housemaster and has led the Housemasters well. His wisdom, given his years of school-mastering, has been invaluable. Mr Richter is not lost to Hilton, but will move into this new role which we have identified as a key function in our ongoing determination to be the leading boarding school in Africa.

I will inform everyone as to the successors to Mr Steenkamp and Mr Richter as soon as we have made these appointments.

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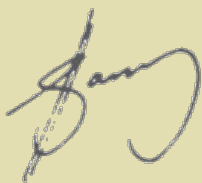
On the Music front, I am delighted to announce that I have appointed Mr David Orr to Co-Lead our Music Department as of January 2021. Mr Orr holds a Masters degree in Organ Performance from Rhodes University. He taught initially at Epworth High School and then at St Anne's Diocesan College before being appointed as Director of Music at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town in 2007. Since April 2013 he has been Head of Music (whole school), Head of Culture and an Academic HOD at Epworth.

## **Arrangements for matrics and Parent Days**

Please look out for some important app notifications next week. One will deal specifically with matric exam arrangements, and another will be about 'Parent Days', an opportunity for you to engage with your sons' teachers on a one-on-one basis.

My thanks, once again, for your continued support and encouragement as we navigate the rest of this year.

Regards,



George Harris  
**Headmaster**