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Dear Alex Family Members

Lucky Valentine's Day

When some people think about Friday the 13th, they might be forgiven for thinking that it is an unlucky day. Compiled insurance data for the last hundred years tells us that Monday the 27th of January is in fact the unluckiest day on average. They process more claims for this particular day when it happens than any other. Some insurance companies actually budget for it. This may have something to do with it being January when everyone is poor from Christmas holiday extravagance and getting paid feels like getting a new lease on life. In any case I hope that you all have a happy Valentine's day tomorrow and that today was not an unlucky one.

Open Day(s)

A huge thank you to everyone to come out to fetch your child on Wednesday and Thursday this week after 19H00 when our Open Days ended. Both days were a big success for our marketing team. The days depend heavily on our children as they are our very best brand ambassadors. Your support is very much appreciated.

Back Stage Camp

We are hosting our annual Backstage Camp this weekend. I incorrectly reported in last weeks newsletter that the backstage camp was last weekend. I have now caught up with the Back Stage crew and confirmed that they are on for this weekend.

SGB by Election

A reminder that we host the by election for our two vacant parent posts. We are still accepting nomination forms until the start of the election at 17H30 on Wednesday the 18th of February. Please join us for that election. We do not require a quorum but we do need your support.

Parents Meeting

I have met with all the grade groups during the last 3 weeks. During our meetings we discussed Grade related matters and I delved a little into the motivations for our decision to go phone free in term 2. I know that it was not possible for all of you to meet with us so I have a little synopsis (below) of how it is going to work next term.

Phone free school

The idea is to keep our children away from social media and its negative impacts for the seven hours that we are at school. The research tells us that during this time some of the harmful impacts of being engaged with social media will be reversed. This will allow us to achieve better engagement in class, fostering deeper learning. We also expect to see an increase in social cohesion in the school. This should be generated by people actually having to talk to each other.

During the meeting when we had questions from the floor, there were some concerns about communication with your child. I would encourage as many of you as possible to leave the phone at home when they come to school. I do understand that for many of you, there is a real risk to your children while they travel and it is a comfort to be able to contact them or have them contact you. We will accommodate anyone who brings a phone to school by providing a safe and secure location for the phone to be locked away at the start of the day. At 14H15 everyone will get their phone back.

Alternatively, consider visiting a shop that sells old school phones for R150 to R300 that are only able to phone and SMS. Those can be sent to school and kept all day. No problem with us because there is no social media or WhatsApp access available.

Night Time Phone Timeout

I would also very strongly encourage that any smart devices be secured at night while our children sleep. There is convincing evidence that many teens carry a permanent sleep deficit from waking up to check on their devices or just never going to sleep because they cannot afford to miss out.

I am confident that a 7 hour school day timeout and a 7 hour overnight time out, sustained over a year is going to set our children up for success.

Not a Sanction!

It is vital that during the rollout of this process that our children do not see this as a sanction. They are not being punished, they have not done anything wrong. We need them to buy into their own long term mental health. They should be working with us to help us protect them from something designed for a particular purpose without considering the harmful impacts that research tells us is being exacted on our children.

I will keep you updated on the process as it unfolds.

Please look after yourself and those you love this week.

Fond regards



Matthew Ridgway
Principal