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# HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

I would like to share an extract from my assembly message for the students this week because this has been a topic of conversation at the Heads meetings and it seems that in recent months bullying has become more of a problem, especially on the online platforms. I am particularly mindful of the disrupted context within which we currently find ourselves and of the somewhat disconnected spaces we fill. This message is intended to enhance awareness of this growing issue and to remind us all of our need to build meaningful human connection, especially in times such as this where we cannot hug freely and show our usual spontaneous human expressions of love, joy, appreciation and friendship.

***Strong people stand up from themselves. But the strongest people stand up for others.*** – Unknown

I want to remind you that we have an email address for the reporting of racism – anonymous or in person. It is clearly marked on the landing page of the school intranet. I want you to know that you can use this address to report any bullying behaviour too. Bullying behaviour in all its guises is not something that we will tolerate at Herschel. It concerns me that this is on the rise and is being experienced especially via social media platforms, and specifically WhatsApp via direct messages and exclusion. It is mean, nasty, hurtful and damaging and it is not acceptable.

SA Stats show that 20% of high school students are being/have been bullied and up to 25% cyber-bullied. We know this is a big issue in schools. The problem is that most students do not necessarily process exactly what bullying is let alone how to handle it if it is happening to them or someone else. It has grown into a scourge and needs direct engagement. A bully is someone who “seeks to harm, intimidate, or coerce (someone perceived as vulnerable)”. It constitutes the ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour with the intention of causing physical, social and/or psychological harm. It involves an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more people who feel unable to stop it from happening. It is an ‘uneven’ experience which happens far too often: in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious or hidden.

All Herschel students and staff need to understand the roles that we can play as activists committed to ending bullying. If we witness expressions of power through bullying and we do not take action, then we are bystanders, and this makes us complicit in their actions. We need to know exactly what constitutes bullying so that we can see when bullying happens and so that we know how to intervene appropriately to stop it and protect the victim. We need to know the seriousness of bullying and its consequences.

Bullying is not single episodes of social rejection or dislike, single episode acts of nastiness or spite, random acts of aggression or intimidation, mutual arguments, disagreements or fights. While these actions can cause great distress, they do not fit the definition of bullying and they are not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them. It is the repetition of this behaviour that causes unseen damage – anxiety, fear, associative disorders, panic attacks, a sense of isolation and or loneliness, a feeling of hopelessness and damage to a person's self-esteem.

Posting a video or a photo on social media showing someone being abused is in itself a form of bullying. We have a responsibility to report any form of bullying that we witness at school to tutors or House Directors, or the Herschel Support Unit, or to our student leaders and parents or guardians and members of school management.

When bullying is reported, we will take the reported incident seriously and act appropriately, especially in terms of supporting the victim. Remember that you can report this anonymously or in person. It is a lot more effective to do so in person or to use your name so that the follow-up can be immediate and specific, but there are times when people are scared to trust the system and it is still effective to make known the bullying because it creates awareness and directs our focus towards the incident.

Bullying at school generally occurs across four areas and involves a multitude of anti-social behaviours:

1. Bullying of the verbal variety includes passive aggressive comments, micro-aggressions, hurtful comments, exclusionary comments, untruths, damaging rumours, sarcastic comments and so on.

2. Physical bullying which includes pushing, shoving, hurting, more aggressive hitting, slapping, physically harming, fighting is obviously more overt and easily noted.
3. Relational bullying constitutes bullying through the manipulation of relationships. It often involves exclusionary tactics where someone is deliberately prevented from joining or being part of a group, whether it is at a lunch break, in class when forming groups, participating in sport or in any social activity. For example, a group of students might speak about a weekend activity deliberately in front of a person who has been excluded, treating that person as if she is invisible. There is often no particular reason for this other than the 'queen bee and wannabee cycle', which is a very toxic and damaging cycle which draws girls into anti-social and destructive behaviours. This also involves a power struggle and often girls use these tactics to test their social power.

This involves exclusion and non-verbal or emotional intimidation, made even easier now with social media platforms. For example, girls will deliberately exclude one or more girls from an event and then include them in the social media postings so that they feel even further excluded. I have even heard of an example where girls have communicated that a function has been cancelled and then they have posted photos of the function which actually does take place, to show the person or people excluded that they have missed out. This is incredibly hurtful and mean and it goes against everything that we, as girls and women should be protecting and nurturing: synergy and mutual support, sisterhood, inclusivity, standing together...

The pain can be as strong as physical bullying and last even longer.

4. “*Cyber bullying is bullying. Hiding behind a pretty screen doesn’t make it any less hateful.*” (unknown)

This happens on social media platforms and involves spreading lies, mean words, rumours and damaging thoughts about a person, or posting photographs or potentially damaging/shaming images and memes. These messages can be spread anonymously and quickly leading to 24/7 cyber-bullying. In a nutshell this involves using technology to hurt someone. Given the increase in screen time since the pandemic and the cutting back of a lot of school activities and social interaction, there has been a rise in cyber-bullying. It is not a lesser type of bullying and it is not acceptable. It does not fit with the values that we hold to at Herschel: care, respect, integrity, equality, dignity, and kindness, for example.

If you have sent damaging or harmful messages or have hurt a person’s feelings and damaged their self-esteem via social media or Whatsapp, or if you have known about someone doing this and have not called them out or challenged them, then you are complicit in the bullying behaviour. Group WhatsApp exclusions make every member of the WhatsApp group a bully! Is this something that we support as a community? I hope not. It is downright mean. Always imagine what it might be like to be on the receiving end of whatever message you are sending. Would you like to receive your message? If not, then why would you send it to anyone else? If you cannot say something directly to a person, face to face, then do not say it via social media. I believe that a few years back there was a guest speaker at Herschel who said that if what you have to say cannot be put on a billboard, then do not say it! Sound advice indeed!

Likewise, remember that one cannot be neutral in situations of injustice. If you choose to look on and just to observe bullying behaviour, you are complicit in that you are allowing bullying behaviour to

continue. Your lack of stance is allowing an unacceptable action to continue. Think about it. Always try to imagine how you would feel in a situation and then ask yourself what actions you would expect of those around you.

***We are not the stories that others hear about us, we are the stories that we know about ourselves.*** - Lauren Kasper

Repeat this whenever you feel the need to remind yourself that you are your source of strength. You are the stories you know about yourself. Make sure that you do not contribute to stories about others unless you are enriching the narrative and adding value. Be respectful, kind, caring and authentic. Think of your friends as significant individuals and value their unique qualities the way that you should value yours.

In this month of August let us look at ourselves openly and honestly and see how we can play a role in stopping bullying and making Herschel a kinder, gentler, and safer space for us all.

Let us not allow bullying at Herschel.  
We can do that.

Heather Goedeke

Sources referenced:

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*The legislative framework regarding bullying in South African schools* [\(Annelie Laas, 2014\)](https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo/)  
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*Bullying in South African schools* (Lilita Gcwabe, 16 April 2021)  
<https://health-e.org.za/2021/06/01/child-protection-week-bullying-in-sa-schools/>



## Celebrating Pride Month

The Pride Club, under the guidance of Mr Wesley Deintje, have instigated a number of initiatives and festivities for the month of August to celebrate Herschel's Pride Month. Whilst International Pride month is in June, the club felt that they wanted to celebrate the month when everyone was able to be on campus and participate.



Activities included a Pride Art Installation in the Atrium. The Club also had masks designed and are selling them to raise funds for a Cape Town based LGBTQIA++ charity.

## Opening of the Inkwenkwezi Music Centre

The long-awaited official opening of our new Music Department took place on Tuesday evening 30th March. Aptly named *Inkwenkwezi*, meaning Star, the most Reverend Dr Thabo Makgoba Archbishop of Cape Town, blessed and officially opened the new music centre.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the Senior School Music Department was unfortunately only able to present a limited programme to a reduced audience. This certainly did not detract from the quality and energy of the performances. It was a privilege to watch the staff and students perform and witness the exquisite acoustics of the new space. Brava to all involved! We are delighted to be able to share a recording of this event with you today.

### Opening of the Inkwenkwezi Music Centre

May *Inkwenkwezi* and all her staff and students shine brightly as they learn and flourish through making music. (Petra Conrads)



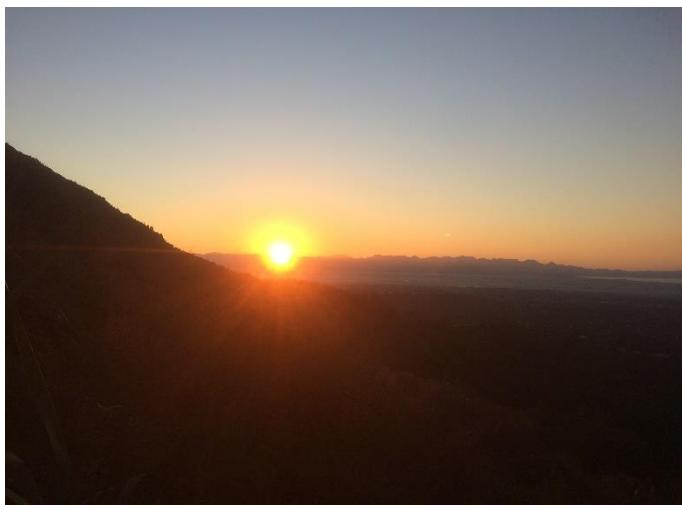
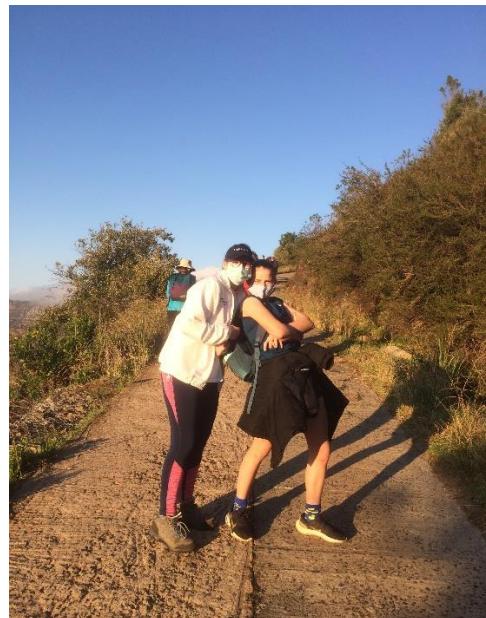
## Making a Difference

Congratulations to Grade 11 pupil, Savannah Voigt who, together with 16-year-old Zack Waters from Rondebosch Boys, completed a 7.5km crossing to Robben Island this week....in water temperatures of 12.7\*C!!

Both passionate lifeguards, the swim was in support of the Clifton Lifeguards that have lost jobs during the lockdown restrictions, and they managed to successfully raise over R67 000 on the BackaBuddy platform for the Clifton Surf Bursary fund.



The **Herschel Hiking Club** got up bright and early last Sunday to embark on a sunrise hike to De Villiers Reservoir.



## GRADE 11 RESEARCH ESSAY 2021

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, after eight long months of grappling with their Research Essays, in between all the other academic work, sporting, cultural and community commitments, the Grade 11s handed in the products of their perseverance and labour. It is always rewarding to see the satisfaction and hear the joy that the moment of “handing in” brings. We are especially proud of the work the students have managed to complete this year due to the many extra challenges that the COVID pandemic has caused.

When reflecting on the Research Essay assignment given to the Grade 11s each year, we are reminded of the reasons why we keep this project going. Besides learning the skills to complete an academic research essay, the Grade 11s acquire valuable life lessons through this practical experience, including how to be organised and adhere to deadlines, work independently, but also ask for help and feedback when necessary, and they learn to be patient, gritty and resilient when tackling a difficult long-term project.

The essays are being assessed by the supervisors at the moment and the Grade 11s will receive constructive feedback on their work. The feedback from supervisors will be valuable as it will include comments on managing the process skills as well as the final product. A selection of essays will be moderated internally and externally to close the process.

Well done to the Grade 11s for completing this challenging task. (Wendy Paterson)



## HERSHEL SENIOR DEBATING

This term, the Herschel Senior Debating team has enjoyed tremendous success, reaching the finals in both the Western Cape Schools Debating Championships (Provincials) and Rotary tournament. In Provincials, the team went through to the knock-out rounds and were the only team undefeated at that point, on six out of six wins. The team won the quarterfinals and progressed to the semi-finals. After a nail-biting hour of deliberation, the adjudicators declared that Herschel would go through to the finals. The final debate was against DF Malan, and after a closely fought debate, on the topic of land ownership on Mars, DF Malan were awarded the tournament. The Herschel team thrived on the close competition, which really enhanced team camaraderie. As individual speakers, Lulama Lingela ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the province, Grace North ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and Kate Forrest ranked 1<sup>st</sup>.



(Senior Debating Team)

Throughout this year, Herschel has been advancing through the Rotary League, made up of Cape Town schools. Having reached the finals, Herschel faced DF Malan once again, this time discussing the legitimacy of replacing armed force members with Strong Artificial Intelligence. With DF Malan again victorious, Herschel can at least claim truthfully to have only lost to one team in the last term.

Through this term, debating has switched between online and in-person to respond to different phases of the pandemic. We are appreciative that the debating community is so resilient and committed to continuity and inclusion. We express our thanks to all the coaches, teachers and parents who have supported Herschel's debating journey this term. (Grace North)



### COMMUNICATION FLOW CHART

For your convenience and to facilitate the flow of communication concerning your daughters with respect to academic and to pastoral matters, please note the attached flow chart and communication channels. The intention is to make communication easier and more consistent and to ensure that matters are dealt with through the correct/appropriate channels.