



Dear Parents

I am an avid follower of the parliamentary debates and over the past two years we have had many interesting and thought provoking debates coming out of the parliamentary discussions. What has been evident is that there seems to be an attitude of “my way or the highway”. My concerns, however, is that this type of reasoning and reactions are starting to manifest itself in education. I am also very aware that this type of reaction is the minority of our school and that the majority of our parents would still find an amicable way of dealing with school issues.

Over the past two weeks we have had incidents where parents have attempted to break down our front gate, walk into classrooms while the teacher is teaching and start confronting the teacher in an aggressive manner, parents (in high heels) jumping over the foundation phase gate, even though the children are only released an hour later, and fathers speaking so loudly on their cell phones that the pupils and teachers could not do what we are there to do – EDUCATE. I am also fully aware of the frustrations that have arisen due to the extended period of construction.

The question that I ask myself is “What are we teaching our youngsters when we behave in this manner?” Much of the research to come out of the many studies on high – functioning schools, both locally and internationally, indicates that parental investment and involvement (not always the same thing) make for a significant difference in the functioning of the school and the pupils. Perhaps part of a school’s success is a constant reminder that it is called to account for it’s functioning. Equally important, perhaps pupils need to know that their parents are not only actively supporting them, but also holding them to account for their performance. I am an avid supporter of parent involvement and would love to engage more with parents about the challenges that you face or with issues that you have with the education in our school. I welcome positive criticism and solutions on how to make Waterstone College a better place and a fun place to be.

I, however, cannot accept the behaviour of some of our parents who are blatantly rude and aggressive with our staff members. It is not the teacher’s fault that the front gate is locked; it is locked so that your child is safe. It is not the teacher’s fault that the foundation gate is locked, it is that your child is safe. Why must we swear and shout at the teacher when the front gate had not opened when it is actually the swimming club that has the keys?

We expect a lot from our teachers, we expect them to deliver creative, professional lessons, to stay up late in order to mark or prepare tests, to be caregivers, counsellors, accountants, be on time, well prepared, friendly, compassionate, and most importantly to educate the youth of this country. Teachers do not expect to be treated like dirt which I am sure we as parents also feel.

I therefore urge parents to appreciate the time that a teacher spends on your child, that we still have teachers who are prepared to follow this noble profession. Let us not take our own frustrations and anger out on the one person responsible for educating your child.

Contact and communication with parents are key processes in the life of a school. I encourage you to engage with the teachers, discuss issues with them but let us remember that teachers are also human beings who can make mistakes, have feelings and also need some TLC from time to time. Let us look towards a positive intent. On the surface, the meaning of this phrase seems self-evident. It is natural to assume that parents will be supportive of their children and their teachers and the school they

Have chosen. Most teachers, we want to believe, are in the job because they genuinely want to make a difference in the lives of the children they have the privilege of teaching. Most teachers want to leave the world better than they found it, and teaching – like planting trees and having children- look to a better future. Like other human beings, teachers can of course be ratty, narrow minded, narcissistic, vain, defensive, out of depth, frustrated, tired or plain lazy. But, for the most part, the intention of a teacher is to praise, encourage, and build, to recognise effort and talent, and to get more out of their pupils than even the teachers thought they were capable of. Does this not sound like good parenting? We are all here for the same goal – the child, your child.

Issues around the new security system.

We have installed a new security system at Waterstone College. A system which we believe will ensure the safety of all our learners and staff. The new system comprises of cameras, alarms and beams which are activated at designated times. As we are in the early stages we will experience some challenges. When the beams are crossed the control centre sends out a reaction unit. The following arrangements are currently in place.

1. Alarm and beam times – will be activated at 20h00 in the evenings and deactivated at 05h30 the next morning. Unless the school gives the security company any other times these will be standard.
2. Guarding – Waterstone College has employed two guards on a permanent basis. Their times will be from 06h00 – 15h00 and then from 15h00 – last person has left the school. During the day time we have (extra 3) D and D security guards who will help with gate control and do patrolling around the school.
3. The outside users of the school facilities (The Church, Swimming club, Dance studio, hockey club) have all agreed that they will be responsible for their clients' cars after the 20H00 curfew.
4. The foundation gate will be locked from 07h45 – 13h00. This is to ensure that all pupils are safe and that parents do not disturb the classes.

The car park in front of the school is almost complete and we are looking forward to its completion.

Please take note that once the alarms, cameras and beams have been activated, the school will be totally locked down with no movement allowed within the school grounds. Movement will trigger the alarms and a reaction unit will be sent out to the school.

It is also important for aftercare parents to know that the aftercare closes at 18h00 and that pupils who have not been picked up will be charged an additional R100. This will cover the call out fee of the security company.

To Conclude

Our job as teachers and parents of nurturing and caring for children has not changed even if the way we do it has: to provide the boundaries for staff, pupils and parents and to strike the right balance between being overly interfering and too careless, cloyingly protective or dangerously permissive, and to allow our children to take their place in this world which they are in a better position to own and to heal than we are. Parenting and teaching can be terrifying at times – and perhaps this is as it should be. The responsibility is enormous, but it should not be overwhelming or crippling.

Perhaps we all need to have the luxury of sitting around a cosy fire to allow the indulgence of presuming positive intent, but even without the flames I do think some presumptions of positive intent would go a long way towards creating more receptive and helpful Parent- school interactions – particularly when it comes to our children.

Yours in Education

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Waterstone College

PS – Thank you to all parents and pupils who supported Waterstone College at The Mall of South this weekend. Waterstone truly owned the mall. Well done and thank you