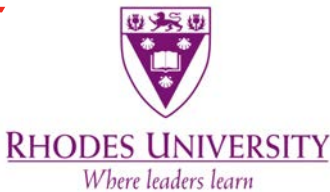
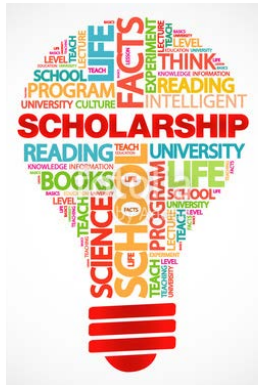


# THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

# For Parents

# Facing challenges, acing opportunities!



Kingswood College

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## For Parents

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



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acing opportunities!**

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## Definitions - understanding terms used in this booklet

### Independent schools

While there exist a range of independent schools in the South African context today, from high fee, exclusive, well established institutions to low fee, newly established schools - and while all of them are likely to admit pupils on scholarships in some form or other, the independent schools referred to in this booklet fall into the high-fee, previously white, affluent and traditional school, also called 'private schools'. Such schools receive either none or minimal state funding, and are registered with the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA).

These schools tend to have high tuition rates, comfortable boarding facilities, impressive academic and sports amenities and hard working and disciplined staff. Such schools are likely to have long standing traditions and customs, many of which are informed by historical figures and events, that are lovingly observed and preserved. The institutional culture of such schools – the unconsciously operating shared understandings, beliefs and assumptions – may be difficult for newcomers to access and navigate. Read more about this in 'Behaviour'.



## Scholarships and bursaries

Scholarships and bursaries are both refer to financial assistance to further one's studies. They can provide funding for a range of expenses associated with studying – tuition fees, living expenses, stationary and equipment, transport, daily living allowances – each scholarship and bursary will have it's own provisions. What then, is the difference between a bursary and scholarship?

Generally speaking, a bursary is usually awarded based on financial need. Academic merit or other talents, sporting or cultural may also be part of the eligibility

criteria for a bursary. However, bursaries can have obligations or conditions attached to them by the funders, which can range from the repayment of the bursary, to work obligations after the completion of the course of study.

Scholarships, on the other hand, are usually awarded not only or necessarily for financial need, but typically as an award for outstanding achievement in academics, sport or other talents. Typically, scholarships do not have obligations or conditions to be met after studies or completed, although



## Parents

they may well have some behaviour and performance conditions for the continuation of the scholarship from year to year. In the South African context, scholarships and bursaries have become critical to the provision of funding for disadvantaged students and pupils. In the context of independent schools, scholarships provided not only access for deserving, but financially needy pupils, but also a means for the schools themselves diversify their student numbers, while giving talented pupils the opportunity to move into a highly functional and often optimal study environment where academic potential, sporting talent and cultural pursuits can be realised.

The definition of 'parent' is to be someone's father or mother. However, the definition of the word 'parent' when used as a verb, means to:

*be or act as a parent to someone that you bring up, look after, take care of, rear, raise, nurture.*

What a lovely way look at parenting! In today's modern world where families are seldom the simple nuclear family of a mother, father and a few biological children – schools are accustomed to dealing with biological parents, step parents, foster parents, guardians, caretakers, relatives – and so on. Obviously, for the purposes of legal documents, it is important



## LSO - Learning Support Officer

that a parent of legal guardian is available. However, for the purposes of this booklet, when we speak of parents, we mean the people who “act as parents to the pupil” in that they care for and have the best interests of the pupil at heart.

The Latin term ***in loco parentis*** means, **in the place of your parents** – and in many cases, when pupils are boarders at an independent school, the head of the school is considered to be ***in loco parentis*** for the pupils. This means that they will act in the best interests of the pupils at all times, and will need to make decisions as if they were a parent.

LSO stands for Learning Support Officer. It is the term that we use for the special person at independent schools who deals with scholarship pupils. They are the liaison between the school and the pupils, the school and the parents, the school and the scholarship programme, the staff and the pupils, the pupils and any service providers that are involved with the programme. The Learning Support Officer may be a teacher who is assigned this duty, or a person especially appointed to the position. They may not bear the title of ‘Learning Support Officer’, but the role they play will be as the liason. It is important for pupils and parents to know who the Learning Support Officer is at their school.



## Background

The idea for a booklet such as this took root at Kingswood College in Grahamstown/Makhandla in about 2010. The Development Office, which had taken up the 'pupil support' role for a corporate scholarship programme had developed systems and strategies to support scholarship pupils who had come into the school from severely disadvantaged backgrounds in 2007. At the time – it was an exciting venture which seemed on the surface to be making the dreams of the youngsters come true – an all expenses paid education at a top independent school. The pupils were excited, the corporate donors were delighted with the partnership. The schools was equally thrilled to be able to admit pupils from a rural, Eastern Cape background with the full financial support from the donor. This was an important imperative to extend access to local, deserving pupils and to diversify the pupil body.

Then began the hard work. The pupils were kitted out with uniforms – that seemed easy. But uniforms weren't all they needed. Some of them didn't

even have adequate underwear, let alone essential toiletries. Their families were not able to provide them with pocket money – something that is taken for granted for more well-off pupils at independent schools. Going to town for milkshakes and pizza on Wednesday afternoons is just a 'given' – but not when you don't have any pocket money. A school dance – much anticipated by pupils – but a nightmare if you don't have the requisite formal clothing, shoes and the hairdo that goes with preparing for such a formal function. The pupils had never had the opportunity to learn to swim – and here they were a school where they were expected to participate in the school gala. There were optional school excursions, for which parents were billed – did the scholarship cover such extras?

And so, the Development Office at Kingswood began to navigate the journey with the pupils – at times having to plead with the donors to make funds available for things that no-one had anticipated, at times having to remind school staff and teachers to be mindful of making assumptions that all



pupils are equally resourced and privileged, at times having to make tough decisions – the kinds of decisions that any parent who was being responsible with their income would make. Slowly, a system of managing the needs and requirements of the pupils, balanced with a strong relationship with the donors, developed into a structured, yet responsive programme.

Kingswood's experience in this area led to another corporate scholarship programme and yet another. It was with the generosity of the Transnet Foundation – that it was decided to formalize the collective knowledge of Kingswood, as well as the research conducted by Rhodes University in a report titled "Challenges and opportunities facing scholarship students attending private schools" - and to produce a series of booklets aimed at pupils, their parents and the staff who deal with scholarship pupils.

The objective for the booklets to be a resource for the pupils, parents and staff who will navigate this 'scholarship journey'

in the future. We've called the series, "Facing challenges – aching opportunities!". The information in this series was hard-won. Mistakes were made, but with generosity of spirit, love and understanding – all the stakeholders worked hard to make life for the scholarship pupils and their families better, brighter and easier. We thank all those scholarship pupils who have walked this road before – your experiences and shared insights will light the way for those that will come after you!

## Objectives of this booklet

This booklet is one of a series of three - all focussed on support for scholarship pupils. There is one for parents, and another for the staff of independent schools, and of course, one for the scholarship pupils themselves. In each booklet, there are common areas that are covered in all three booklets, but they mostly address each group individually.

In the case of parents, the objectives of the booklet are:

1. to help parents to understand the scholarship opportunity that has been granted to their child
2. to explore what is required of you as the parent of a pupil at an independent school
3. to help you to understand adolescence
4. to give you tips on how to relate to teachers and housepersons at school
5. to alert you to some of the challenges you and your child will face
6. To share some coping strategies with you help you make the most of this opportunity with your child

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### THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

## For Parents

**Facing challenges,  
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In the case of pupils, the objectives of the booklet are :

1. to help you understand your scholarship opportunity
2. to help you to navigate your relationships with your pupil peers
3. to alert you to some of the challenges that you will face during your scholarship journey
4. to share some coping strategies with you to help you to make the most of the opportunities in your school

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## For Staff

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



In the case of staff, the objectives of the booklet are:

1. to alert you to some of the assumptions that you may unconsciously be making about scholarship pupils
2. to help you understand what the scholarship opportunity may mean to pupils and their families
3. to explore strategies that you can implement to help scholarship pupils prepare for their journey at your school
4. to explore challenges for scholarship pupils in the classroom
5. to explore challenges for scholarship pupils in the boarding environment

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## For Pupils

## Facing challenges, facing opportunities!



6. to explore challenges for scholarship pupils on the sports field
7. dealing with diversity
8. dealing with the parents of scholarship pupils

## Understanding the scholarship opportunity



Every parent wishes the best for their children, and getting the news that your child has been granted a scholarship at an independent school will undoubtedly bring much happiness to you and your family. It will represent, amongst other things:

1. An opportunity for your child to get a quality education, with all expenses paid.
2. An opportunity for your child's academic, sporting and cultural potential to be developed at a school with world class facilities, and dedicated quality staff.
3. A release from financial stress which may be plaguing your family if you have a number of children at school.
4. Relief that your child will be in a boarding environment
5. A chance for your child to enter into tertiary studies and eventual good employment, and being able to help to break a cycle of financial struggle for your family.

### Opportunity

Other words for 'opportunity' are 'break' or 'chance'. Both these words are excellent descriptions of what a "scholarship opportunity" can be for a pupil - a 'chance' to for better education which can mean a better future. A 'break' in the cycle that may have trapped their families in poverty for generations – sometimes referred to as a 'lucky break'.

where study time and school routine is strictly monitored.

While all of these expectations will be exciting and positive – you will no doubt also be experiencing some anxieties, such as the following:

1. Concern that your child will manage the academic expectations of their new school.
2. Concern at what you as a parent will be able to contribute to school life.
3. Concern about what exactly the scholarship donor will pay for, and whether you may be required to contribute financially.
4. Concern that your child will grow apart from you and your family members as they become part of their new school environment.
5. Concern for the safety of your child in their new environment.
6. Concern about your ability to interact with the school staff members.
7. Concern that your child may do something that will

lose them the scholarship opportunity and embarrass your family.

8. Concern that your child will like school so much that they will not want to come home for holidays.
9. Concern that other children in your family will not be able to benefit from the opportunity.

It is perfectly normal to have all these concerns and hopefully the information in this booklet will help you to prepare yourself, as a parent, and your child, so that you can all enjoy the exciting opportunity that has been offered to you. It is likely that you will have an opportunity to meet with a representative of the scholarship programme, either face-to-face, or in a workshop environment, and you will be able to ask questions and clarify issues. If you are prepared with a list of questions, you can engage fully in an information session.

Let's have a look at some of the areas of information that you should be clear about, and some the questions that you may want to ask:



## **Expectations of the scholarship donors**

It is important that you establish what the scholarship programme expects from your child with regard to academics, extracurricular activities (sport, cultural pursuits), behaviour and the living arrangements (boarding or day scholar). You will also want to find out what expectations there are for parents. Here are some of the questions that you should ask:

- What level of ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE will be expected from my child? Obviously, scholarship pupils will be expected to be diligent and to do their best in the classroom, but does the scholarship programme have any set levels of performance that will influence the continuation of the scholarship?
- Will there be some form of ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMME for pupils who will experience areas of difficulty or backlogs in their academic programme?
- Will my child be able to pursue EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES like sport and music while on the scholarship programme?
- What are the rules and regulations that my child will have to follow while on the scholarship programme, and what will constitute problematic behaviour that can jeopardize their continued participation in the scholarship programme?
- What will the living arrangements be for my child while they are at school? Will they board in a school hostel? What will they be required to supply in the line of bedding and utensils? What arrangements are there for

their safety and protection in their living environment?

- What are the expectations of the scholarship donors and the school of parents while my child is at the school? Will I be required to attend certain functions? Will I need to join parent committees and participate in school fundraising events? What will happen if I am unable to participate significantly?
- What will be required of me with regard to my child when they are home for school holidays?

Here are some of the answers that you can expect:



### Academic performance

Most scholarship programmes will certainly expect good performance in the classroom from their scholarship recipients. However, they are likely to be realistic about the fact that pupils who are coming

The most important thing that both the school and the scholarship programme will want to see is diligence, effort and determination on the part of the pupil in conquering areas of difficulty.

from a disadvantaged school background may have areas of backlog. While they will expect pupils to be diligent about attending their classes, doing their homework, and seeking out all the academic support activities in the independent school environment, they will not expect that pupils achieve well in areas that they find difficult. Gradual progress may be expected, especially where the scholarship programme makes extra tuition available. The most important thing that both the school and the scholarship programme will want to see is diligence, effort and determination on the part of the pupil in conquering areas of difficulty. Most independent schools have extra support in various subjects available for pupils. However, it is often left up to pupils themselves to avail themselves of these lessons. Scholarship pupils can sometimes be shy or embarrassed about seeking this help, and it is here that

parents can be encouraging and reassuring – making sure that they do attend these lessons. Teachers at the schools will also recommend that the pupils attend these lessons, but they are unlikely to coerce the pupils. This is a way of teaching self-reliance and independence to pupils – but it does mean that if pupils are not motivated enough to attend extra lessons, that they can languish in the classroom struggling to achieve in certain subjects.

## **Behaviour**

Most schools have 'Code of Conduct' or a 'Disciplinary Code' which will list the school rules and regulations, as well the disciplinary consequences of transgressing the rules. You may find that the rules are more strict or different from rules of your child's previous school. You should make sure that you receive a copy of the Code of Conduct from your child's new school so that you can read them and discuss them with your child.

Behaviour goals of most schools seek to govern the following :

- Regular attendance at school and in all classes

- Adherence to the school uniform code
- Punctuality at all times
- Tolerance, acceptance and goodwill towards staff and other pupils
- Courtesy and respect for individuals and property
- Co-operation and participation
- Diligence and effort in academic pursuits
- Good sportsmanship
- The pursuit of excellence
- Trustworthiness and honesty
- Respect for the whole environment

Perhaps this would be a their new school, they should exercise caution with regard to spending time with other pupils who may engage in risky behaviour. Scholarship pupils have a lot to lose if they face disciplinary action – not only can they be expelled from the school, but they may well have their scholarship withdrawn. No-one wants to face such a



situation. Returning home, and possibly to your old school after being chosen for a wonderful scholarship opportunity will be humiliating, disappointing and depressing for the whole family.

At the same time – it is unfair for your child to feel excessive pressure to behave, to the point that they feel they cannot be themselves. As a parent, be sure to deal with this issue in a positive way, assuring your child that if they live by the values of honesty and kindness, they are unlikely to be in trouble. As a parent, also be reassured that independent schools have well-developed disciplinary procedures that will protect your child while at the same time making it possible to investigate and deal fairly with transgressions. There is no need for you, as parents, and your child to feel undue pressure!

However, be prepared to for the fact that your child's new school will have a list of unacceptable behaviours most likely to do with the following :

- Assault
- Drugs usage
- Consumption of Alcohol
- Sexual Activity and Sexual

As a parent, also be reassured that independent schools have well-developed disciplinary procedures that will protect your child while at the same time making it possible to investigate and deal fairly with transgressions.

#### Harassment

- Smoking
- Bullying
- Insolence
- Vandalism
- Theft including unauthorised borrowing
- Repeated misbehaviour
- Carrying of weapons
- Initiation
- Use of offensive language
- Hate speech
- Gender, racial, religious or other discrimination
- Dishonesty
- Malicious damage to property.

Pupils will be expected to represent the school at all times,

especially when they are in uniform. This means that they should behave appropriately and within the school rules at all times.

Pupils should also be careful not to bring prohibited items into the school environment. There will be disciplinary consequences for the possession of dangerous objects such as weapons of any sort, prohibited substances such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, prescription medications (without permission, obviously), items removed without the permission of the owner, i.e. stolen goods. It is also important to note that the use of electronic devices to transmit material, images or video clips deemed to be offensive or bullying or pornographic, and the possession of electronic devices that may contain evidence of serious misconduct will also be seen in a serious light.

### **Extracurricular activities – sport, music and societies**

A huge part of the ‘scholarship opportunity’ rests in what happens outside the classroom. Encourage your child to take up every single opportunity.

Independent schools usually have a busy extracurricular programme of sport and cultural activities. Pupils are expected to participate, and where possible, in group activities like team sports, musical ensembles, clubs and societies.

Pupils from previously disadvantaged schools may not have had access to such after-school activities, and might feel unwilling to give up what they see as personal time after school to participate. However, the many wonderful opportunities that arise from full participation in sport and other activities at independent schools is a critical part of the quality education they will receive. They will be EXPECTED to participate, to contribute their skills and talents to the school. Most scholarship programmes not only make provision for such



participation, but are most likely to provide for your child should they show talent and excel in extracurricular pursuits – things like sports tours, music tours, excursions, coaching workshops – and so on. A huge part of the ‘scholarship opportunity’ rests in what happens outside the classroom. Encourage your

child to take up every single opportunity.

### **Finances**

What will the scholarship programme pay for? For your child to attend an independent school, there will be many

additional costs over and above the tuition fees. It is important to establish which of these extra costs the programme will cover, as you may not be able to finance extra costs yourself. Don't be shy to discuss this with the scholarship programme team and the LSO at your child's new school. Here is a list that you can use to check what will be covered, and what you may have to fund for your child:

- Tuition fees
- Boarding fees
- Bedding
- Books and stationery
- Travel to and from school every term
- School uniform
- Sports equipment
- School excursions and tours
- School events like dances, social events.
- Pocket money
- IT devices – laptop, Ipad, phone, etc.

- Overseas travel if it arises in the school environment
- Medical expenses
- Casual clothing
- Toiletries
- Parent's attendance of school functions

### **Living arrangements/Boarding**

Most scholarship programmes in independent schools will require that the pupils become boarders. This means that your child will move into a school hostel and live on the school campus during the school term. Independent schools have highly developed boarding systems and facilities. While they are well-organised and strictly controlled, the schools usually strive to make boarding homely and comfortable for pupils. Remember – the schools do not want homesick pupils that struggle to settle down. This serves no purpose, and so they will do everything they can to make pupils feel 'at home', safe and settled in the boarding facilities. Hostels are often referred to as 'houses', and the pupils in each house regard



each other as 'family'. Houses are run by housepersons (sometimes called housemothers or house-fathers), with a team of matrons, student assistants and other staff that are on hand to make sure that pupils live contentedly, and can concentrate on their studies.

While in most independent schools, all bedding will be provided for boarders, and laundry will be done, it is likely that there are certain items from home that your child will be allowed to bring. Clarify exactly what your child will need, and what will be provided.

Living in a boarding environment with a number of other pupils, all from different family and cul-

tural backgrounds, requires that everyone lives by a structured schedule. Pupils will be required to sign in and out of their hostel, and to be on the school campus at all times, unless they have permission from their houseperson to be elsewhere. It is important to be punctual and to follow the daily schedule.

Living with other people requires respect and consideration – there will be 'quiet times' when everyone is required to keep quiet for study and sleep purposes. It will be expected that everyone respects the belongings of others, and that no one uses, borrows or touches other people's things

without permission. It will be expected that pupils live neatly and tidily in all areas of the house. It will be expected that pupils observe acceptable personal hygiene, physically and with their clothing, and in their living space. Pupils will be required to respect and obey the leaders and staff within the house. There will be senior pupils who will be given the responsibility as prefects, and they will assist with direction and order in the houses. In many independent schools, a system of mentorship operates, where a senior pupil will take a new / junior pupil 'under their wing' in a caring and protective manner, helping them to navigate the schedules and systems within the house.

### The role of parents

While the school may be *in loco parentis* to the pupils when they are at school, this does not mean that your role as a parent is diminished in any way. Aside from the usual contact with your child – phone calls, WhatsApps, emails, - you may want to make plans to visit your child for special occasions at school like sports matches, concerts, church services, prizegivings,

Independent schools welcome parent involvement and being present to encourage your child and to share in their successes is important.

award ceremonies, parent-teacher meetings – and so on. Independent schools welcome parent involvement and being present to encourage your child and to share in their successes is important. Remember – your child will remember your ***presence*** more than ***presents!***

As a parent, you may feel a little daunted at visiting your child at their new school. The key to finding your feet with school visits is consulting with the LSO and getting all the details of the various school functions. If you know what is happening, and where you need to be, you will feel more at ease. Independent schools communicate frequently with parents through newsletters, their website, the School Communicator, and emails to parents. If you do not have access to email and the internet, you will miss much of the school communication. There are ways around this problem – if you alert the LSO to



the fact that you are not digitally connected, they can fax or post communications to you. This will mean a slight delay in getting information, but you can keep in touch by phone or WhatsApp about important points. The important thing is that you must be reachable, and you must expect to get information from the school. Be sure to discuss this issue with the LSO so that the school knows the best possible way to communicate with you.

When you first attend a school function, it might seem as if all the other parents know each other, and you will feel alone and left out. This is not the case – many parents are new, and everyone is trying to make new friends. If you show an openness to meet new people, you will also meet and make new friends! Ask your child to introduce you to the parents of their friends.

With regard to participation on school committees and parent associations – your contribution will be welcomed. Schools are always grateful for involved and active parents. However, in independent schools, there is an understanding that many parents live far away, and are unable to attend meetings. Often, it is the local parents who participate

most actively in committees and parent associations. However, your input will always be welcomed, and from time to time, you may be asked to assist with certain events. Discuss with the LSO where you can help, if you are able to help, but do not feel guilty if you are not able to participate. This is the case for many parents.

### School holidays

Your child will come home for



school holidays after being at boarding school during the term time. You will be excited to see them, and hopefully, they will be happy to be home. But remember that we are dealing with teenagers!

You may find that your child is a little bit moody when they come home – they miss their friends, they miss things about school, they are emotional.

This is normal for teenagers. With the high pace of life at an independent school, you will probably find that your child is tired – and that they want to sleep a lot! This is also normal. Remember that at school, the day starts early – every day – weekends included. An opportunity to sleep late and have a lazy day at home will be highly appreciated by your child. But – this does not mean that family life needs to revolve around the boarding school child! Oh no! Your child needs to part of your family life, just as they need to be part of school life back at school. They do not need special treatment – they just need family life and love. They will be full of stories about school. The most important thing is to keep your child grounded – in other words, make sure that they are able to see the good things about home as well as the good things about school.



they are having a difficult time at school, they will want to talk this over with you. Try to be moderate and reasonable in your reaction. Teenagers sometimes feel strongly about things, but their emotions change quickly. There is no need to react emotionally until you are sure that there is something serious that needs to be dealt with. If you are worried that there are some issues that need to be dealt with, you should contact the LSO and



talk the problems through with them. They will deal with things discretely, so that your child will not feel that you are breaking your confidence.

Now that we have looked at some of the aspects of the scholarship opportunity, let us explore some important topics that will be relevant to you in this journey with your child.



## Adolescence



**A**dolescence is the period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult. It can occur from age 13 through to age 19. It is a transitional stage where teenagers are growing and developing quickly, and their status as a child is changing. It is common to say that youngsters are “searching for themselves” – in other words, they are trying to establish who they will be as adults. They are going through a lot of psychological changes during this stage, as well as physical changes, as their bodies develop both inside and out. This can cause confusion for them, and they often react out of their normal character.

The World Health Organisation recognises adolescence as one of the most rapid phases of human development.

You might find them moody and emotional, sometimes even aggressive and angry. You will wonder, “What have I don’t wrong?”. The answer is – nothing! You are experiencing a normal phase in your child’s development. It is important to understand what is going on with your child so that you can be supportive and loving, and to try not to react with too much personal emotion.

The World Health Organisation recognises adolescence as one of the most rapid phases of human development. They also note that although teenagers can reach biological maturity (in other words, their bodies will be fully adult), this sometimes happens before psychosocial maturity – in other words, before youngsters are emotionally and socially ready to deal with the changes in their body.

Boys and girls start to change



physically as they become adolescents. Their bodies will transform – boys will become bigger, more muscular and hairy, and girls will start to develop a more womanly figure. There are many physical changes taking place in the body at this time, and they can cause confusion and fear in teenagers. Hormones are raging through their bodies, all with a long term physical purpose, but the short term side effects of acne, body odour, moodiness are all things that will be affecting your child.

Parents often find this a difficult time in their relationship with their children. Sometimes it seems as if your child is angry with you and the world, and you don't know what to do!

It is normal! Parents all over the world experience this difficult time with their teenagers. While the physical changes are taking place in your child's body, there

are also psychological changes taking place which will affect the way they relate to their environment socially. During adolescence, teenagers begin to think more abstractly. They will start to show a concern with politics and social issues. They will be influenced by their friends and they may begin to hold a world view that is different from yours. They will start to think more long-term, making plans for their lives, and setting goals. They will begin to show more independence from you, as parents, and will possibly start to show an interest in romantic and even sexual relationships. Each child will progress at their own rate and teenagers may become competitive and compare

The most important thing is for parents not to feel too rejected if your child seems to prefer to be with their friends.

themselves to others.

How can you support your child through this difficult time in their lives?

The most important thing is for parents not to feel too rejected if your child seems to prefer to be with their friends. Don't take it personally if your child never seems to agree with anything you say anymore. BUT – this does not mean that you should allow your child to be rude, aggressive or abusive towards you. You are still the adult in the relationship, and the same values of respect and consideration apply. It is important to provide consistent, loving discipline so that your child knows where they stand with you. Find ways of spending time together, and let your child know that you are supportive and available to talk about anything that may be worrying them. Tell them stories of your adolescence and let them know that you understand what is going on with them. Encourage them to take on new challenges and show faith in their abilities and dreams. Do not be intimidated by their growing confidence and independence. Learn to embrace their developing maturity and independence. This is, after all, one of the goals of attending a

Your child will probably sleep a lot during holidays. And eat a lot! This is normal – make allowances for this to happen, and don't be too demanding of their time.

boarding school! Your child is on the road to adulthood – and you may find that they can be your best friend now that they are growing up! They will have an appreciation for your worries and concerns which they may not have had as young children.

Teenagers during adolescence are growing quickly and they are likely to eat a lot! Your child may compare your food to the meals they get at school. You might also feel that you are not able to provide them with the variety and quality of food that they get in the school dining hall. Instead of feeling that your food is less appealing, try and make your child's favourite dishes, and make them feel happy to be having a home cooked meal. You may be surprised to find that your child really misses your cooking, and spending time with the family.

Remember that teenagers need a lot of sleep. At boarding school, pupils live a very busy life. They seldom have the opportunity to sleep late in the mornings, or to

have a snooze in the afternoons. Your child will probably sleep a lot during holidays. And eat a lot! This is normal – make allowances for this to happen, and don't be too demanding of their time. After a few days, they will probably start sleeping less and being more active.

### **Giving your child some 'space'**

Scholarship pupils often feel a lot of pressure to succeed in the school environment, firstly to 'reward' and please the scholarship donors, and secondly, to make sure that they are able to keep their scholarships as they carry the hopes and dreams of their whole families. They will be feeling pressure to perform academically, while at the same time, they are dealing with the challenges of adapting to their new environment at school. They will be making new friends, dealing with new work, taking on new challenges and possibly even feeling a little homesick at times. This is a lot of pressure for a teenager to deal with. They must feel as if there is a spotlight shining on them all the time.

Instead of contributing to the pressure your child may be feeling, try to make their

holidays at home a time when the "spotlight is turned off". Let them enjoy "time out" from their busy lives at school, and try not to discuss too many pressing issues with them. Find a time closer to the end of the holidays to have serious discussions with them. While you as a parent may also be worried about your child's results and behaviour, remember that putting undue pressure on them is not going to contribute in a good way to the situation. Rather take a constructive approach, and make sure that your relationship with your child is affectionate and supportive. Perhaps you can tell them that you'd like to talk about some things and make a date and a time for the talk, but tell them that until then, you want them to relax and enjoy being at home.

Remember that YOU may be more stressed than your child about how they will react to being home! It may be your own fears about how your child will have changed while they have been at boarding school that cause concern. You are on this journey together, and you will all change and develop because of the opportunity that has come into your family. Try to embrace the change with a positive attitude so that you can all enjoy the journey!

## Relating to teachers and housepersons

While you will have a lot of communication with the LSO at your child's school, you will also be invited to parent-teacher meetings, and be in contact with the housepersons.

You may not be accustomed to regular contact with your child's teachers and other school staff members. You will probably feel a little intimidated about meeting with them – wondering if they will give you good feedback about your child, perhaps worried about a language barrier. There is no need to be concerned. Teachers at independent schools are accustomed to dealing with parents from all walks of life, and you can be assured that they will be focussed on making meetings with you constructive

and easy. If you are worried about a language barrier, discuss this with the LSO and ask if they can attend the meeting with you.

The Houseperson: You will find that the houseperson at your child's school is one of the most important people in your child's life. As the houseperson actually lives with the pupils in the school boarding facilities, they will be familiar with how your child is interacting with their friends, how they cope in the boarding environment, and how they are adapting to their new school programme. Housepersons will try to create a 'home-away-from-home' for pupils, and they will be available to discuss personal problems with pupils and their parents.



They will be responsible for the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of your child. They will foster a sense of family and community in the house so that pupils feel supported and sustained in the boarding environment. Make sure that you have the houseperson's phone number, and if you have any concerns about your child, get in contact with them.

Teachers at independent schools write comprehensive reports about each and every pupil, and they expect and assume that parents read and assimilate the reports about their child. All too often, parents only read the results section of the report, and do not engage with the comments that teachers have taken the trouble to write. In these comments, there may be valuable suggestions, recommendations, and even cautions of possible difficulties that lie ahead. These reports are a good point of contact for you to discuss with teachers. They will appreciate that you are prepared to discuss the issues that they may have written about. It is also perfectly acceptable for you to ask questions and deliberate about how your child is performing

the classroom. Perhaps you are able to explain aspects of your child's character that will be useful to teachers. Teachers at independent schools see themselves as part of a team which is focussed on helping pupils to have academic success. This team includes you – so assist teachers to help your child succeed.

When meeting with teachers and housepersons about problems that you may have, make sure that you have got all the facts you need to discuss a problem. It is not helpful to jump to conclusions, or to make assumptions.

It is also advisable to make appointments to see teachers and housepersons if you wish to discuss issues with them. Staff at independent schools work to strict timetables, and it is not easy for them to just "make time" to have a consultation with parents when it has not been planned into their schedules. To ensure a positive meeting, phone or email to ask for an appointment, and arrive prepared and ready to engage with the people who have your child's best interests at heart.



## Facing challenges

**R**ealistically speaking, your child will experience challenges in their new school environment. Many of them will be the kind of challenges that all pupils experience, and there will be enough support in the school environment for them to overcome these 'bumps in the road'. However, it is possible that scholarship pupils can experience more serious challenges that may prevent them from succeeding in their new school environment. There may be emotional challenges like depression, homesickness and loneliness, as well as a feeling that they don't fit in as the dominant culture feels unfamiliar. Academic challenges may include falling behind with subject work, not managing the volume of work, struggling with a language load, battling some learning disability. On the sports field, pupils may feel useless and unable to contribute to a sports team, due to lack of experience and previous coaching. Socially, the pupils will have to make new friends and learn to live in a group environment – something that can be intimidating for the strongest of people.

All of these challenges are experienced by all pupils – not necessarily just scholarship pupils who have come from a previously disadvantaged school environment. The staff of independent schools are attentive and conscious of the dynamics with pupils, and they will call on the support systems within the school to assist pupils where they ascertain problems. However, teenagers are good at hiding their feelings – and so it is critical that parents communicate with school staff if they become aware that their children are experiencing difficulties over and above the norm.

Sometimes, the challenges will come from the home environment and not from the school setting. There may be bereavements at home, or financial issues and family dramas. While your child may be far away from home, they will still be affected by what is happening with the family, and they may even be severely stressed about not being able to help. These are times that you may need to confide in the houseperson, possibly with the



assistance of the school chaplain or counsellor, to help your child to deal with home situations that will impact on their success at school. Some things cannot be avoided and so they must be managed. Take the houseperson and the LSO into your confidence and ask for help to manage situations which will cause your child anxiety.

While many challenges in a school environment are easily handled and common to all pupils, there are some behaviours that are completely unacceptable. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in schools, but the reality is that bullying can happen undetected if pupils are too fearful to speak up. If you become aware of any bullying behaviour involving your child, it is most important that you speak to the LSO or houseperson. Once again, you will be able to rely on the discretion of the staff in the way they handle these matters. You will not be cited as the source of the information. The staff will gather the facts discreetly and make sure that perpetrators are dealt with appropriately, while providing support and counselling for victims.

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Your child may face other less serious challenges – teenage challenges, which you may need to mediate. Such things as : my cellphone isn't fancy enough! my trainers are not smart enough!, my hairstyle is not stylish enough!, my jeans are too old!, - and so on! Before you become stressed about these kinds of challenges – remember this, there may be some wealthy families at independent schools, but there are also many ordinary families with parents who try to provide their children with everything they need, but not the best, most expensive things! They will shop around to find good bargains, buy things from the second hand store, and sometimes, they will say to their child "Sorry, but we can't afford that – you will have to go without it". Try to support their decisions - you can be sure that the LSO will be acting in the best interests of your child.

## Conclusion

As a parent, you are an integral part of the success your child will make of their scholarship opportunity. Your attitude and reaction to their school journey will greatly influence how they approach their new journey at an independent school. Keeping positive and encouraging them to grasp all opportunities will boost their confidence. At the same time, remaining constructive and practical when they face challenges will assist both the

school and your child to handle matters in a calm, productive way.

Try to enjoy this exciting journey with your child. If you are able to attend school functions, sports matches and prizegivings – take the opportunity to do so. You may not have had a similar school experience, but you can experience it through your child.

Enjoy the journey!





