

# THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

# For Pupils

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



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**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*



**Kingswood College**

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## For Pupils

**Facing challenges,  
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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 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 liaison. 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/Makhanda 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 clothes, 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 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.

THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

### For Pupils

Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!



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

## THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

**For Parents**

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



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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
6. to explore challenges for

## THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

**For Staff**

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



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scholarship pupils on the sports field

7. dealing with diversity
8. dealing with the parents of scholarship pupils

## Introduction

### **Yay! You've been granted a scholarship!**

Getting the news that you have been granted a scholarship to a top independent school, with funding for tuition, boarding and all the expenses of a quality education must feel like a dream come true! For many scholarship pupils, it represents more than just a personal achievement. It is a triumph for their families – the possibility of real change, a future that can be different. It will mean a release for your parents from the financial responsibility of your education – which will mean extra resources for other family obligations. It will mean opportunities – to achieve academically, to participate in sport and music, to travel and to study further. It will mean meeting and befriending pupils from all sorts of backgrounds and cultures. It will be an exciting journey, filled with new experiences and thrilling prospects. But, with all the opportunities, there will be challenges.

As with any new opportunity,

### **Opportunity**

Other words for 'opportunity' are 'break' or 'chance'. Both these words are excellent descriptions of what a 'scholarship opportunity' can be for a learner - a 'chance' for a 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'.

you are likely to be feeling excited, but a little afraid. The confident, excited part of you is saying:

'Yeah, I've got this! I can do this! I am going to grab this opportunity with both hands! I deserve this! I am going to make my family proud! I am going to work hard and deal with every challenge! My future is exciting!'

But, the anxious, afraid part of you is asking yourself:

- 'Can I do this?
- What will happen if

something goes wrong?

- Am I worthy of this big responsibility?
- Will I cope with the academic programme?
- Will I have to do things that I don't like?
- Will I manage to live with pupils from other cultures?
- Will I find new friends?
- Will I be homesick?"

Rest assured that all the mixed feelings that you will be having are normal. This booklet is intended to be a guide to help you navigate the journey you will take as a scholarship pupil at an independent school. Each pupil will experience their own combination of opportunities

and challenges, so you may not find all the answers you need in this booklet. However, it will contain the combined wisdom of many scholarship pupils, school staff and parents who have travelled the journey before, as well as the findings of the research conducted by Rhodes University titled "Challenges and opportunities facing scholarship students attending private schools".

The idea is for you to use this booklet to guide you on your journey. It may help you a lot in some areas, and in others, you will need to find your own solutions. But such is the nature of a journey – not altogether predictable, but the more prepared you are – the better. Let's explore this wonderful opportunity that has come your way.



## What does it mean to get a scholarship?

In all the excitement you will be feeling about being granted a scholarship, it is important to fully understand what this opportunity means. The scholarship will mean the following:

1. An opportunity for you to get a quality education, with all expenses paid
2. An opportunity for your academic, sporting and cultural potential to be developed at a school with world class facilities, and dedicated quality staff.
3. A release for your parents from financial stress which may be plaguing your family if you have a number of siblings at school.
4. An opportunity to live in a boarding environment where you will be safe, well fed and study time and school routine is strictly monitored.



5. A chance for you to enter into tertiary studies and eventual good employment, and being able to help to break a cycle of financial struggle for your family.

But, what will be expected of you?

### A partnership

Getting a scholarship to attend an independent school usually means that there is a partnership between the school, the scholarship donor and you – the

pupil. The scholarship donor will have good reasons for supplying the funds for your scholarship. Your scholarship will be part of a social investment programme where corporates commit to contributing to social change. Sending you to an independent school for a quality education will be seen as an intervention that will bring returns to the scholarship donor in terms of uplifting communities, breaking poverty cycles and in the long term, attracting well educated employees.

For the school, they will welcome you as a pupil whose tuition is fully covered, and as a pupil who has potential but who may never have been able to attend their school without the assistance of a scholarship. Independent schools value the diversity and multiculturalism of their pupil bodies, and many of them seek out scholarship programmes that will give access to pupils, especially talented and deserving local pupils, to attend the school.

And then there is you – recipient of the scholarship – you are the

third corner in the partnership. You will be seen as a deserving, diligent young person with potential to succeed – and it will be expected of you to make the most of the opportunity that is being granted to you.

## So what will be expected of you?

Some scholarship programmes will require you to sign a form of a contract so that their expectations are clearly outlined, and they can ensure that they have your agreement with regard to the terms and conditions of your scholarship.

However, it goes without saying that they will expect certain levels of performance, behaviour and participation from you. Let's have a look at the sorts of expectations they will have. While some scholarships may be granted on the basis of your previous academic performance, it may also be the case that your sporting potential or other talents are the reason for the scholarship. Either way, scholarship donors will certainly expect you to achieve well in all areas of school life, but especially well if you have been selected for a particular strength. As you have no way of knowing how well you will be able to achieve, it will be a good idea to clarify with your scholarship programme what they expect from you.

### 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 from a disadvantaged school background may have areas of backlog. They will expect you to be diligent about attending classes, doing homework, and seeking out all the academic support activities in the independent school environment. They will expect to see effort and participation.

Teachers at independent schools usually offer extra classes for pupils who are struggling in their subjects, but they typically do not insist that you attend these sessions. It will be expected of you to avail yourself of the assistance that is offered. In cases where you feel that you need more assistance than the teacher can offer – discuss this with the LSO who will investigate further support. The most important thing that both the school and



It would be senseless for you to attend a school that offers you all the help you need – but for you not to use their support.

the scholarship programme will want to see is diligence, effort and determination on your part in conquering areas of difficulty.

Scholarship pupils can sometimes be shy or embarrassed about seeking help. This is something that you should learn to overcome

as independent schools pride themselves on offering all the support and help that pupils need to succeed. It would be senseless for you to attend a school that offers you all the help you need – but for you not to use their support. Your houseperson, teachers, LSO, prefects and friends can all be sources of information for you.

So, remember to **ASK FOR HELP** when you need it. There will be helping hands to reach out to you.



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

Independent schools usually have a busy extracurricular programme of sport and cultural activities. Pupils are expected to participate, and to contribute to 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 you will receive. You will be EXPECTED to participate, to contribute your skills and talents to the school. Most scholarship programmes not only make provision for such participation, but are most likely to provide for you 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. Take up every single opportunity.

## **The challenge of time management**

Being a pupil at an independent school, with a full schedule of classes, sport, extra mural



activities, as well as the living in a boarding environment where your time will be regulated by bells, mealtimes, roll calls, prep times and lights out – you will need to learn to manage a busy timetable.

Being busy needs energy, and it is vital that you get enough sleep, and that you eat well, and so one of the crucial parts of managing your time is to make sure that you are available for your mealtimes, and that you get a good night's sleep! But how can you manage your busy day?

- First of all – make sure that you have a diary and a copy of the school timetable. Make it a habit to write down all your commitments in the diary – homework,

appointments, deadlines for homework assignments, reminders and so on.

- Every morning, take a few minutes to **PRIORITIZE** your day – what is the most important thing that you need to get done that day? Prioritize important tasks so that you can concentrate on those. Make a simple daily "To do" list – the things you plan to do that day.
- **SET DEADLINES** for tasks that you need to complete. Your teacher may have given you a deadline for an assignment, but you can set your own smaller deadlines to regulate your completion of your work. Here is an example of



time management for a big history project that you have been given a month to complete:

**History project : Hand in deadline 24 October 2019**

Research completed – 10 October

Project plan – 14 October

Draft write up – 17 October

Check in with teacher – 18 October

Rewrite – 20 – 22 October

Check work and finalize 23 October

Hand in 24 October

The important thing for big projects is to **START EARLY**, so that you do not end up having to cram all your work in at the last minute.

- **AVOID PROCRASTINATION**  
– there is an English idiom that says “Procrastination is the thief of time”. This means that procrastinating, putting off doing important things to a later time so that you can do more pleasurable things is going to steal your

time away from you. We all do this even though we know that we will end up in a stressful situation. Try to work out what triggers your procrastination – is it having time with your friends, or listening to music, or tidying up your room, or chatting on your phone – all things that you would prefer to do instead of work! Rather use these pleasurable pastimes as **REWARDS** for completing sections of work, for example, say to yourself, when I’ve finished my homework, I am going to spend some time chatting to my family on the phone.

**REMEMBER**, pupils at independent schools are expected to be self-reliant and independent. Teachers expect that you are managing your time well, and that you are coping. If you are not coping – it is up to you to **ASK FOR HELP!**

**Behaviour**

Most schools have a ‘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 previous school. Admission to an independent school generally implies that you accept the Code of Conduct of the school, and so it is not a defence to say “I didn’t know that I wasn’t allowed to do this” – if you have been caught in a disciplinary issue. You will be provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct by your new school, and it will be a good idea to read through it, and make a list of any questions that you may want to ask for clarification. You can ask the LSO or your houseperson to explain aspects that are unclear to you.

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

### **Choosing the right friends**

It is never easy to go to a new school and being the new pupil who does not have a friendship group. It feels good to have friends and to be accepted.

When you start at your new school, you will likely be paired with another pupil who will be your 'buddy' – the person who will show you around, and help you to find your way. There will probably be other new pupils starting at the same time as you, and so you will not be alone.

Everyone is different in the way they make friends. Some people are easy going and quick to strike up friendships, whereas others are more shy, and it takes time to develop a friendship. It is always a good policy to be friendly and open with everyone and to take some time to work



out the different personalities and friendship groups that exist amongst your classmates. There will always be pupils who are outgoing, outspoken and full of fun. There will be quieter, more thoughtful pupils, and there might even be some loners who stick to themselves.

As a scholarship pupil, you should exercise caution with regard to spending time with 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. So take care to PICK YOUR FRIENDS WISELY.

Be prepared to for the fact that your 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 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.



These behaviours are likely to result in immediate disciplinary action, and possible suspension or even complete expulsion from the school. Even if you do not engage in these transgressions, but you assist or with pupils who do – you will be implicated. While you may not be suspended or expelled, being involved in a disciplinary procedure is stressful and will involve your parents and your scholarship donor. It is not a situation that you will wish to find yourself.

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, even outside the school.





## Living arrangements/Boarding

Most scholarship programmes in independent schools will require that the pupils become boarders. This means that you 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 school does not want you to be homesick! They would like you to feel comfortable enough to settle down and feel at home.

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 housefathers), 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.

Living in a boarding environment with a number of other pupils, all from different family and cultural backgrounds, requires that everyone lives by a structured schedule. You will be required to sign in and out of your hostel, and to be on the school campus at all times, unless you have permission from your houseperson to be elsewhere. It is important to be punctual and to follow the daily schedule.

There are important considerations when living with other people:



## 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

## RESPECT 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. Find out who your mentor is, and begin to develop a relationship of trust and friendship with them.

## Challenges

As a scholarship pupil entering into a new school environment, you will have challenges – you can be sure of that! Let's look at some of the main challenges that were identified by scholarship pupils in the research :

### Dealing with pressure

Pressure is going to be a part of your new school experience! Get used to it!

All scholarship pupils reported that they experienced pressure :

- Academic pressure caused by overcoming deficits of previous poor quality schooling, increased academic standards.
- Pressure to meet behaviour standards at the new school. Some pupils experienced this as a 'loss of freedom'. They said they felt as if they were constantly under the spotlight.
- Pressure to meet the expectations of the scholarship donors in terms of academics, behaviour and



participation in extracurricular programme.

- Peer pressure – the influence of other pupils who encourage you to conform to their behaviours
- Pressure from yourself – internalised pressure to achieve and not to disappoint yourself or your family
- External pressure – from your parents or family.

**W**hile pressure can be harmful and negative, it can also be a **POSITIVE INFLUENCE** – a gentle force on you to try harder, work smarter and do your best. This is ideally what you need to do – to **USE** the pressure you experience positively, and not to let it get you down. “How can I do that?”, you will ask.

When you are under pressure, you will experience a range of emotions – sometimes anxiety, frustration, and anger (**NEGATIVE** emotions), and sometimes it will be determination, strength of mind and perseverance

(**POSITIVE EMOTIONS**). What you need to do is **RECOGNISE** when the emotions you are experiencing are negative and take steps to deal with them, and try your best to turn the situation around so that you use the pressure to find the positive emotions.

**H**ere are tips for dealing with feelings of pressure in a positive way:

- Recognise how you feel, what is causing your stress and how you can deal with it positively. If your pressure is from an academic struggle, find help. If you are having trouble with a relationship, find someone who can advise you on how to deal with it. Make a list of things you need to do so that you don't feel stressed about remembering everything. This is a good way to take control of your pressure – recognising the cause of the pressure and dealing with it.
- Talk about it! Find someone to chat to about your pressure – someone you like

- and trust. At independent schools, there will be people who specialise in helping you through difficult times – the chaplain, the school counsellor, the houseperson, your senior mentor, teachers and your friends. If you are feeling that you are really not coping with your days, ask the LSO if you can be referred to counselling to a professional who can guide you through your pressure.
- Set small, achievable goals. Sometimes a big assignment seems unachievable, until you break it down into small tasks that make it easier to tackle. Ask your teacher to help you identify the smaller tasks in a big project so that you feel more in control and you can see your achievements more easily.
  - Get outside! Fresh air and exercise are scientifically proven to help feelings of pressure, stress and anxiety. You will have plenty of opportunity for exercise and fresh air if you play sport at school. Use sports practises as an outlet for negative energy.
  - Believe in yourself. Pressure often builds up when you doubt your own abilities. Getting up every morning, and saying, “I believe in myself – I can do this!” will help you to regain focus and cope with pressure.
  - Get the help that you need. If you are able to identify clear reasons for the pressure that you are feeling, you can seek the help that you need from the most appropriate source. If you are experiencing pressure with your academics, find a teacher that can help you, or attend extra classes in the area that you are struggling with. If it is a personal problem, speak to your houseperson, or the chaplain, or the school counsellor. In all things, the LSO can advise you on the most appropriate source of help.

## Understanding your new school

When you start at your new school, you might feel as if everything is strange and unfamiliar to you. It may feel as if everyone understands what to do, where to go and how to handle things, but you will feel overwhelmed and different. It is probably because your new school will have an 'institutional culture' which is new to you.

Institutional (or organizational) culture can be described as a set of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which govern how people behave in organizations. These shared values have a strong influence on how staff and pupils behave and relate to each other in a school environment. It is not easy to explain the institutional culture like a set of 'rules', but the fact that the assumptions, values and beliefs are shared means that interactions between staff and pupils is guided by the institutional culture at an unconscious level. If you are a newcomer, you will need some time to observe and assess how

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things work in your new school as most teachers and pupils will not be able to explain it to you. Institutional culture can be like wearing a comfortable jersey – it just feels right, but you don't know how to explain it! You will need time to adjust to and understand a new culture of teaching and learning. It will not be an overnight adaptation – and your understanding will be moderated by your friends, teachers and even the reaction of your parents and families to your new school.

It would be safe to say that most independent schools have an institutional culture which values an ethos of learning, hard work, effort, kindness, support, quality teaching. They celebrate achievement at an individual

and group/team level. The assumption is that everyone at the school is there as a collective unit for the same pursuit of success and accomplishment – both academic and extracurricular. Staff assume that pupils and parents desire such success, and parents and pupils expect and assume that staff will deliver the means for the attainment of success. And school management is there to oversee the proficient systems that will lead to success.

It is possible that you may not have experienced teaching staff as caring and supportive in your previous school environment, and so you might not feel that you can approach your teachers in your new school for help when you need it.



## Joining in class discussions and asking questions

Teachers at independent schools encourage class discussions and debate. They like to hear the opinions of their pupils, and expect them to ask questions about the work they are doing. However, sometimes new pupils lack confidence to participate in discussions. You may feel nervous about asking questions. This can be for a number of reasons, like :

- ☐ a cultural tendency not to question elders and teachers,
- ☐ an uncertainty and mistrust of the support role of teachers, possibly from previous experience where pupil support from staff was less available
- ☐ shyness and inhibition, a lack of 'courage'
- ☐ a hesitancy to be seen to need help and to be 'different' by peers
- ☐ a fear of failure, or being

seen as foolish

- not knowing what questions to ask.

How can you develop confidence to become part of class discussions?

One way is to start off by going to the teacher after the class, and ask your question in private, or expressing your opinion and asking the teacher if you are on the right track. In this way, you can start to gauge how your questions and opinions will be received, and the teacher will also get an idea of how you think about the subject matter.

Another way is to start asking questions is to ask for clarification in class of something that has been explained. Listen carefully, and then restate the information in your own words, asking the teacher to clarify that you have understood properly. Start your question with, "Am I correct if I say the following, .....?". Sometimes, these questions lead to discussion, and it is valuable in the classroom. Remember this, asking questions is the simplest and most effective way of learning.

Try discussing some of your classwork with friends until you develop the confidence to contribute to class discussions. Sometimes you will have a unique point of view which is of interest to your classmates and your teacher. You can make a contribution, and everyone can learn from you.

## **Dealing with homesickness and home issues**

It is likely that this is your first time living away from home in a boarding environment. Some pupils adapt really easily and love living in a school hostel. They enjoy being with their friends all the time, and the busy lifestyle of a boarder. But, sometimes, pupils find it difficult to adapt to living with a lot of people, and they miss home.

Homesickness is a feeling of sadness caused by being away from home and family. Sometimes, you can't even identify the feelings you are having as homesickness – you just feel sad and withdrawn, and it will affect the way you relate to your friends and your school performance. The thing about homesickness is that it can come



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to you suddenly and it can go just as suddenly! It can be a phone call from home that makes you long for your family. It can be a memory of special times that makes you miss home. But just as suddenly, something will make you feel happy, and the feelings of homesickness will be gone.

This does not mean that homesickness is not something that you must take seriously. You will need to cope through times of homesickness, and the best way of doing this is to identify your feelings, and acknowledge how you feel. You don't have to feel guilty about being homesick! Missing home is something that many of the pupils in your school will be feeling, and so it will help you – and others – to be honest and talk about how you are feeling.

Advice for coping with homesickness usually includes, staying positive, keeping busy, having contact with home and so on. All easier said than done when you are feeling sad and lonely. But it is important to understand that homesickness is usually temporary, and when you're feeling better, you will probably be surprised that you felt so sad!

Bring a few things from home that make you happy – photographs, perhaps a teddy bear, a favourite coffee mug. These will help to comfort you during times of homesickness.

There will also be times when happenings at your home will affect your life at school. Bereavements in the family are especially difficult when you are far away from home. In the case of a bereavement, your family will be advised to inform the school first, so that they can make sure that you have the necessary support when you are told of a death in your family. You will obviously be allowed to travel home for the funeral services of close family members, but this may not be the case for the death of more distant family members and friends. Your houseperson, the chaplain and the

LSO will counsel you and support you, and the decisions will be made in the best interests of your school programme and your emotional wellbeing.

In the case of family problems where there may be conflict between family members, or financial issues – remember that while these may affect how you feel, you should not allow these issues to upset your academic programme. You will find plenty of support within the school when you are feeling sad about family issues, but their primary focus is to keep your education on track.

So – it will require a great deal of maturity and understanding on your part to control your feelings and to find a balance between the anguish you may feel about issues from home and the way you deal with it when you are far away. It is not possible for you to go home for every small issue – this will disrupt your school programme and unsettle you.

## **Money, money, money**

**E**very scholarship programme is different – some pay only for tuition and boarding, others will cover many other additional expenses. It is likely that your scholarship programme will want you to succeed in your new school environment and will make sure that you have the clothing, equipment and resources to be a full participant in school life. Expenses that are likely to be covered are the following :

- Tuition and boarding
- 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
- Other items that may be funded will be on a more discretionary basis:
- 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

Remember that your scholarship donors want to see their money spent wisely, and they will mandate the LSO to make decisions on what can be bought for you in some cases. Having a scholarship does not mean that there is an endless supply of funds to buy anything your heart desires! Your LSO will make decisions as any parent will. They will ask questions like:

- Do you really need this item?
- Can we find a cheaper alternative?
- Can you borrow the item until we're certain it is what is needed?
- What is the cheapest but best quality we can find?

With sports equipment, the LSO will not rush out and buy you

Having a scholarship does not mean that there is an endless supply of funds to buy anything your heart desires!

to top-of-the-range equipment until you have shown that you are enjoying the sport and are in a team. If you achieve well, and play the sport regularly, the LSO will make sure that you have all the equipment you need.

For school events like dances and socials, many pupils borrow outfits from each other and everyone enjoys finding the clothing that they need. Even wealthy pupils do not rush out and buy a new expensive outfit for every occasion. Your LSO will make sure that you have what you need for formal occasions, but once again, do not expect expensive new outfits every time.

You will be supplied with pocket money in line with the amount that your houseperson deems appropriate for pupils of your age. This money is to be used for everyday things that boarders enjoy – a milkshake and a pizza on the afternoons that you go into town, a coldrink when on a sports trip, some personal

toiletries, and so on. Take care with how you spend your pocket money. Your houseperson will not be sympathetic if you spend your money unwisely and then ask for more! You will be expected to come out on your pocket money each month and to spend wisely.



## Conclusion

### The bigger picture

Being a young person in South Africa today is both exciting and confusing. Our country is so full of promise and potential, and yet at the same time, so many people are feeling despondent and desperate. There are reasons for this – our economy is struggling and our politicians need to do a better job of making life better for us all. But – we must remember that this feeling of confusion is something that people are feeling all over the world. There

are many issues affecting the future of the world that are converging on the youth of today – and we need to see our local issues in the context of the bigger picture of the world.

All young people need to be educated to make the world a better place. Education is key to a better future, and you have been granted an opportunity to have a quality education so that YOU can take your place amongst the adults of the world that are going to make the future better for all.



So, take this opportunity, ace this opportunity and make everyone proud – your teachers, your parents, your scholarship donors and most importantly – be proud of yourself!

You're going to be part of an exciting future!

































































