

# THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

# For Staff

# Facing challenges, acing opportunities!



# TRANSNET



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*



Kingswood College

# THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

## For Staff

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



**Transnet Foundation**  
P O Box 72501  
Parkview, Johannesburg  
2122  
Tel: +27 11 308 2775  
[www.transnetfoundation.co.za](http://www.transnetfoundation.co.za)



**Rhodes University**  
P O Box 94,  
Grahamstown 6140  
Tel: +27 46 603 8111  
[www.ru.ac.za](http://www.ru.ac.za)



**Kingswood College**  
Burton Drive  
Grahamstown 6139  
Tel: +27 46 603 6600  
[www.kingswoodcollege.com](http://www.kingswoodcollege.com)

Text © Transnet Foundation 2018

Layout and design by Debbie Smuts Communications  
Printed by Rhodes University

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the Transnet Foundation.

# THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

## For Staff

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**

### Table of contents

Definitions - understanding terms used in this booklet	4
Background to this booklet	8
Objectives of this booklet	10
Understanding the scholarship opportunity	
Introduction	12
Helping scholarship pupils to navigate the 'institutional culture'	14
Being mindful of past school experiences	16
Dealing with assumptions - on both sides	18
• In the classroom	19
• Academic demands	19
Handling the pressure	21
Participation in sport	22
Participation in cultural activities	23
Communication with parents	24
• School reports	26
Parent concerns	28
Boarding	30
Conclusion	31

## 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 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 Pupil 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 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 scholarship pupils on the sports field
7. dealing with diversity
8. dealing with the parents of scholarship pupils

### THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

## For Staff

**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



## THE SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

**For Parents**

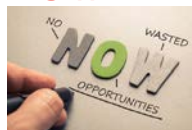
**Facing challenges,  
acing opportunities!**



## 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

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.

## Introduction

This booklet is intended to be a guide for STAFF at independent schools – both academic and pastoral - to navigate the journey they take with scholarship pupils who come from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. While pupils today come from varied and shifting backgrounds, it is easy in an independent school environment to assume that all pupils come from supportive families who have a modicum of financial means and comparable value sets. Even teachers who claim that they're accustomed to dealing with pupils from diverse backgrounds, may find that there are challenges and support channels which they may not have considered for scholarship pupils. There are complex factors at work as the pupils navigate the interplay of challenges and opportunities – and the staff they deal with daily play a critical role in their success.

There are numerous and varied scholarship programmes, that differ in the expenses that they cover as part of their ambit.

Well-intentioned scholarship programmes that aim to provide pupils with a quality experience at an independent school will make certain that their pupils do not feel disadvantaged within the school environment where there are likely to be other pupils from comfortable, even affluent families. Funds will be made available for most of these line items :

- 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

The LSO in collaboration with the housepersons and bursar will make decisions about what purchases should be made for pupils.

In the research conducted by Rhodes University, the focus with regard to school staff was firstly:

1. to understand the relationship dynamics at play between the staff and the pupils on scholarships, and how these relationship dynamics affect the pupils adjustment to their new environment;

and secondly:

2. to find out how the presence of pupils on scholarships may have influenced the classroom and boarding house environment, and to offer solutions for any challenges that may have presented themselves.

We will weave the findings of this research into the suggestions made in this booklet.

Let's explore ways in which your role and support of scholarship pupils can change their EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORY by helping them to meet the rigorous requirements of the independent school environment.



## Helping scholarship pupils to navigate the 'institutional culture'

**I**nstitutional (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 articulate in 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. It would be safe to say that most high-fee 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 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.

Ideally, in such a goal-driven environment, all succeed - or experience a modicum of success at least. However, we know that there are pupils who struggle with the pressure and pace of the busy independent school environment. They are hindered by learning disabilities, personal problems, family dramas, adolescent anxieties and so on. Independent schools are adept at anticipating and providing for all manner of support for pupils who struggle to achieve in some or all areas of school life.

So why would we single out the struggle of scholarship pupils from previously disadvantaged school backgrounds?

Quite simply, most pupils who struggle to succeed at an independent school may well understand and share the institutional culture of the school, and be able to locate their struggle within the shared

understanding of what is expected. They are likely to take advantage of support strategies available at the school (such as extra lessons, remedial assistance, extra coaching, counselling and so on), and their parents will doubtless engage with staff about what can be done to assist their child. A scholarship pupil, however, who is unfamiliar with the institutional culture may not be aware of what is expected of them, their parents are

unlikely to know how to go about engaging with school staff – and all of a sudden, small challenges become seemingly insurmountable – when small tweaks, and some mindfulness from staff would solve the issue.



## Being mindful of past school experiences

A good place to start would be to be mindful of the school environments from which scholarship pupils may have come. While this is not intended to disparage functional and well-managed state and township schools, it is pertinent to face the reality that many scholarship pupils will be coming from lesser-resourced schools, with demoralized staff that are less committed and/or able to provide a quality educational experience. Factors such as high absenteeism from both teachers and pupils, time squandered on non-teaching events and disruptions, a poor culture of learning and even violence in some schools will all contribute to how incoming scholarship pupils experience school.

Punctuality is unlikely to have been observed, and timetables would have been haphazard. Stationery and textbooks may have been in short supply. Teacher-parent interaction was probably infrequent, and trust between parents and teachers would have been low. Corporal punishment

The school culture of a top independent school, with its emphasis on values, quality teaching and learning, strong leadership, high discipline, solid trust between parents, teachers and pupils, highly functional systems, and caring, motivated, committed staff will seem like a dream come true – but also like a foreign land.

may still have been used as a disciplinary measure. Pupil discipline would probably have been negative with behaviours like smoking, littering, bullying and truancy going unpunished. Extracurricular activities were likely to have been minimal, and facilities for sports training quite possibly non-existent.

All these factors are commonplace in many South African schools. One can only imagine the impact that such an environment has on a pupil who is diligent and determined to get a good education. The school culture of a top independent school, with its emphasis on values, quality



teaching and learning, strong leadership, high discipline, solid trust between parents, teachers and pupils, highly functional systems, and caring, motivated, committed staff will seem like a dream come true – but also like a foreign land.

How can you help scholarship pupils to adapt to their new school culture? Quite simply, scholarship pupils will need to learn to trust their teachers, and believe in the care and interest that staff will show them in their new school environment. Showing the scholarship pupils that they can rely on your care and interest will be a process that will take time and consistency – checking in

on them, showing kindness, assisting when you see they are struggling. In the Rhodes research report, it emerged strongly that a dedicated staff member tasked with ongoing support, mentorship and oversight of the scholarship pupils' progress was important – someone who could develop a relationship with each pupil, and act as a liaison between the pupils and other staff members. In some cases, the LSO can play this role, but having a teacher who is 'on the ground' in the academic setting was seen as a way of preventing the new pupils from getting 'lost in the busy-ness of the school programme'.



## Dealing with assumptions - on both sides

Given the demanding schedule of pupils who participate in a full programme of classes and extracurricular activities at independent schools, especially if they are boarders who will need to live by a boarding house schedule in addition – this is a valid observation. The ‘busy-ness’ of the school day, the highly structured timetable and the rigidity of control over their movements was cited by staff and pupils interviewed for the research as a major adaptation for pupils who came from a school day that used to end at 2pm, with no after-school activities and no supervision for homework. Having some understanding of how the pupils are adapting to this change will be useful.

Along with a dedicated staff member for scholarship pupils to rely on, it is also important for the new pupils to have a ‘buddy’ – a pupil selected to partner with the new scholar to show them the ‘ropes’. Such mentors should be selected for their patience, understanding and sensitivity. It would be advisable to select a group of ‘buddies’

for the purpose of assisting new scholarship pupils settle into the school, and to hold a briefing session with them to prepare them for the important role they will play. Elevating the role to an important service assignment will benefit not only the scholarship pupils, but also the ‘buddy’ pupils who can learn valuable mentorship skills. Encouraging the buddies to share their own time management strategies, study skills and general tactics may yield valuable information all round.

It is hard to say exactly how the previous school experience of scholarship pupils will affect their integration into a new independent school environment. However, from the perspective of staff, it will be useful to bear in mind possible assumptions that may be held by both staff and pupil that could cause misunderstandings. While there will be orientations and information sessions with the scholarship pupils, both from the Scholarship programme team and from the school – there will be many

aspects of school life that will slip the attention of presenters. So many aspects may seem self-explanatory – but, it is this very assumption that can result the challenges that unexpectedly crop up for the scholarship pupils. The following list is intended as a guide to possible areas where assumptions may occur. It may not be comprehensive, but it is intended to initiate an examination of the possible assumptions that may arise.

**In the classroom:** Scholarship pupils may have areas of academic backlog, which will need to be addressed through the usual support structures within the school. Many scholarship pupils are selected from their previous schools because they are the top academics in that environment, and it can be a rude shock for them to experience academic struggle in their new school. They can be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work, and are often unable to identify what it is that they ‘don’t know’. They are generally eager and conscientious, and it will not

be for lack of effort that they have academic challenges. It is important, therefore, that teachers help them to pinpoint the source of their academic challenges. It will then be easier to recruit the necessary support.

**Academic demands:** While staff may assume that pupils accept that all homework must be completed, and that resources available within the school in terms of IT and libraries can be accessed, scholarship pupils may be unaccustomed to the obligation of homework completion and not be *au fait* with how to use the available resources in the school. While an initial information sessions setting out your expectations with regard to homework and classwork can clarify things, the important thing to foster in scholarship pupils is the confidence and capacity to ask questions if they do not understand something, or to ask for help when they may need it. Asking questions is also critical to engaging in classroom discussions and debate. A reticence to ask questions can stem from a number of factors:

- a cultural propensity 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'
- a fear of failure, or being seen as foolish
- not knowing what questions

to ask.

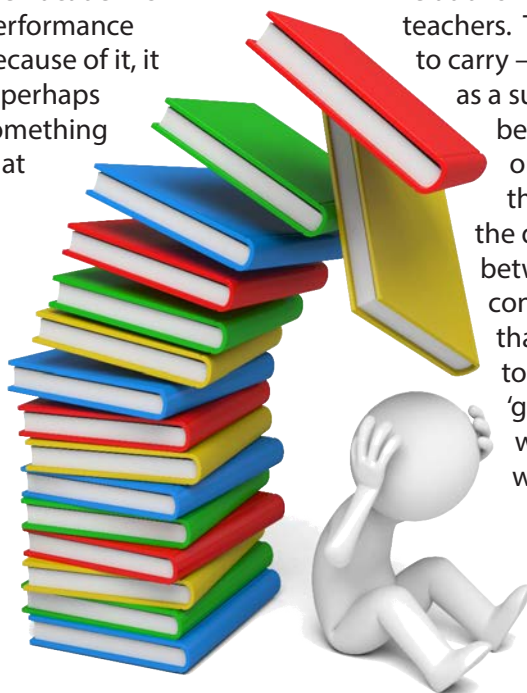
Staff participants in the research project felt strongly that the courage to ask questions needed to be 'cultivated' in the scholarship pupils as this would lead to increased confidence to engage in classroom debate, questions to gain clarity and the full utilization of support activities within the school. 'Cultivating' the courage to ask questions is unlikely to be an easy task – and is something that will come with time, and a developing relationship of trust with staff members.



## Handling the pressure

Scholarship pupils involved in the research project reported a sense of great pressure to 'perform academically', in a bid to justify their scholarship, and to ensure the continued support of the donors. Pressure was brought to bear both within the school environment and externally from their families. While many are able to deal with the pressure, and may even improve their academic performance because of it, it is perhaps something that

teaching staff need to bear in mind in their dealings with scholarship students. As mentioned above, scholarship pupils may be dealing with academic backlogs which will hamper their progress, they feel pressure to perform, they are grappling with the institutional culture, they may not know how to avail themselves of the support activities, and they have yet to develop a relationship of trust with their teachers. This is a heavy burden to carry – but one which you as a supportive teacher will be able to moderate once being aware of the dynamics. Finding the delicate balance between applying constructive pressure that will motivate pupils to greater heights and 'going easy' on them when needed will be what is required.



## Participation in sport

Physical activity and sport plays a big role in the lives of independent school pupils and their parents. Selection for team sports and matches that are well-supported by parents are all part of the school experience. Many pupils aspire to success on the sports field, and they work hard for team selection and competitive participation.

Scholarship pupils, however, are likely to have had little sports coaching, and might see sport as an optional, even frivolous activity. While many may have great potential on the sport field, they may never have experienced success or even the aspiration of sporting success, given lack of access for facilities and coaching.



Their participation will be affected by many factors which may seem senseless to those for whom sport is a way of life. Such factors may be :

- Feeling that sport will affect their ability to concentrate on their academics
- A fear that they will appear inept and incompetent on the sports field
- A reluctance to let their team mates down because of weak play
- A fear of contact sports
- A lack of understanding of the benefits of playing sport

However, many scholarship pupils, once having found the confidence to play sport, become committed and talented players. They will need to be guided with regard to their level of participation, the gear they will need, the commitment required for team sports, and the qualities of sportsmanship espoused by the school.

## Participation in cultural activities

In general, scholarship pupils relish the opportunity to participate in the many cultural activities available at independent schools – music, art, drama, dancing and enrichment societies. They discover hidden talents and flourish. Obviously, there can be additional expenses associated with these activities which will need to be canvassed with the scholarship donor through the LSO. However, most scholarship

programmes make provision for such participation and welcome the development of talent in these areas.





## Communication with parents

It is easy to assume, when you operate in a connected world, that everyone has easy access to technology. This is not always the case, and the parents of scholarship pupils who have been interviewed in research projects indicated that the use of email communication by the school was not an effective medium of communication. Some parents do not even have email addresses, while others struggle with access to data, computers or phones on which they can read emails. Most independent schools operate on the assumption that all parents can access email and the school website, and communication with parents takes place frequently through these mediums. Similarly, termly reports are sent electronically.

It is often up to the LSO to make sure that hard copies of school communiques and reports get printed and posted to parents. It is however important that all staff be aware that electronic communication may not reach the parents of scholarship parents, and that they may need

Spare a thought for parents who may find school events intimidating, expensive and overwhelming. They may have not friends or colleagues with whom they can connect to share a cup of tea. They may fear needing to spend money on drinks and meals which they cannot afford. They may not know where to go or what to do, what to wear or what to say. They are unlikely to understand the significance of traditional events on the school calendar.

to use alternative communication methods. Parents tend to rely on their children to communicate the happenings at school – but understandably, pupils may be selective in what they are reporting to their parents.

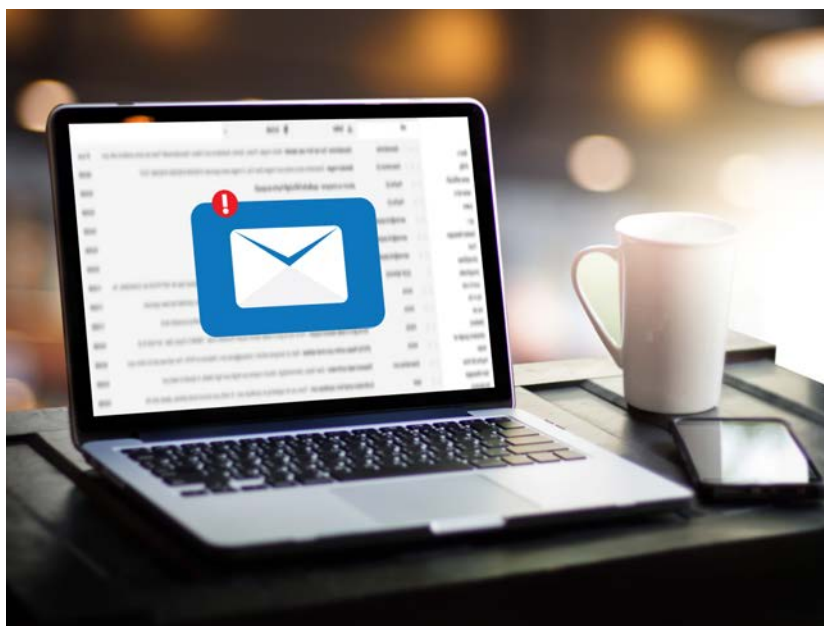
If scholarship pupils face a steep learning curve when coming into an independent school environment, their parents and guardians are even more bewildered! The majority come from a school experience where parents play a minimal



role in school life – and they are accustomed only to being summoned for meetings at schools where disciplinary issues are handled. They lack information about the role they can play in the school lives of their children, and feelings of inadequacy prevent them from getting involved with the school and staff. Other factors also play a role – like the cost of travelling to the school to meet with teachers, work and family obligations which make it

difficult to attend functions, It is suggested that parents be asked at the start of the relationship with the school, how best communication channels can be set up. It may even be useful to enlist the help of the school IT staff to assist parents to set up an email address on Gmail or other free services. Some may, by virtue of lack of resources just have to be contacted by 'snail mail' or phone calls.

Spare a thought for parents



who may find school events intimidating, expensive and overwhelming. They may not have friends or colleagues with whom they can connect to share a cup of tea. They may fear needing to spend money on drinks and meals which they cannot afford. They may not know where to go or what to do, what to wear or what to say. They are unlikely to understand the significance of traditional events on the school calendar.

One may argue that all new parents find themselves in a similar position when their children start at a new school, and that they acquaint themselves with what they need to know and do. This is true – but giving extra assistance to the parents of scholarship parents is advised for the reason that the initial intimidation that they feel may prevent them from participating on a longer term basis. Giving them an orientation which gives an overview of each school function during the year, what is expected of them, where they will need to be, what the dress code is, the social aspects of each event and recommendations for participation will go a long way to settling their nerves and

encouraging attendance. Once parents begin to feel accepted and comfortable within the school family, they will be able to navigate events themselves and need less assistance. While one would hope that parents who have been at the school for several years would extend themselves to making new parents feel comfortable – this does not always happen as they are often greeting their own friends, and are not mindful of the struggle of new parents who are dealing not only with being new, but facing possible cultural barriers as well as shyness and apprehension.

### **School reports**

Besides parents not receiving school reports on email, it was also identified in the research that some parents found their child's school report difficult to decode, and consequently, they did not know how to address any issues that were raised in the reports. They often do not understand how term marks relate to overall performance, and they find teacher's comments hard to understand. Once again, one should reflect on their

previous experience of school reports, which were likely to have been rudimentary with only marks and little in the way of comments.

Staff can be mindful of how they express themselves in the school reports of scholarship pupils where parents will have language barriers. The use of jargon and slang may be confusing. 'Say what you mean and mean what you say' is a good maxim to follow. It is advisable to go through the first reports with scholarship pupils

themselves, with a view to them being able to interpret them for their parents, but also so that they too can understand the reporting conventions of the school.



## Parent concerns

There is little doubt that scholarship pupils experience two different socio-economic extremes between school and their homes. Parents interviewed for the research project were acutely aware of this, and expressed concern that their children might not want to come home for holidays. They feared that they could not provide the same quality and variety of food as the school. They also feared that their children would grow apart from family members and friends at home.

However, these fears seem to have been unfounded as most pupils seemed to enjoy going home for holidays, and even looked forward to home cooked meals over the varied menu that was available at school. Some did comment that their interaction with old school friends had changed. They called it a 'disconnect', caused largely by lack of contact and that they felt that their old school friends perceived them differently. They reported that their old friends felt that they

While parents may have had concerns about how their children would change from their new school experience, most expressed relief that they experienced their children as more respectful, and that this had been a positive influence on all family members. They also said that their children had gained a sense of purpose with future life goals more in focus.

had changed since being at their new schools, but that the changes were not perceived as negative.

Parents expressed great relief that their children were able to be in a boarding school as they felt this would provide them with safety, adequate nutrition, homework supervision and a stable environment. However, some parents felt concerned about what they felt was a 'freedom' for female pupils, especially – and they worried about the girls being able to have boyfriends and this leading

to the possibility of falling pregnant. However, some parents felt that the boarding environment offered their children protection from this very 'danger' – and so it would seem that these concerns were likely to have been normal parent anxieties when being away from their children.

While parents may have had concerns about how their children would change from

their new school experience, most expressed relief that they experienced their children as more respectful, and that this had been a positive influence on all family members. They also said that their children had gained a sense of purpose with future life goals more in focus.



## Boarding

Moving into a boarding house routine after being a day scholar is an adaption for any pupil, but especially for pupils who have come from a relatively unstructured school routine. Scholarship pupils reported that they did have a period of adjustment when they started boarding, and staff observed that the structured nature of the school day as well as the length of the day proved to be challenging for the pupils, physically and emotionally. With the structure came a loss of autonomy. However, once the pupils had adjusted, the structured routine seems to impact positively on pupils even when they were home on holidays.

Challenges experienced in boarding were largely to do with sharing living space with other pupils who were more affluent. Some scholarship pupils expressed concern about being invited to go to the homes of peers, but feeling that they could not reciprocate

because they felt their homes would not be acceptable. However, despite some feelings of concern, boarding was seen as critical to the success of scholarship pupils in their new school environment. Many of the pupils themselves attributed their own success to friendships and peer networks developed in their boarding houses. Boarding gave parents a sense of security that their children were being well cared for, and teachers also felt that boarding contributed to the pupils becoming part of the 'fabric' of the school.

## Conclusion

Staff interviewed for the research project were overwhelmingly positive about the way that scholarship pupils rose to the challenges they faced in their new school environment, as well as complimentary about how they made use of the opportunities that were available to them.

Staff felt that the scholarship programmes largely provided for the pupils so that they did not face economic challenges within the school programme. There was provision for equipment and full participation in the academic and sporting programme, as well as money for clothing and spending money that would allow for successful assimilation into the social world of the school. There was a general positive attitude towards the scholarship opportunity from pupils and staff felt that the pupils contributed positively and substantially to school life. Staff also felt that interaction with the scholarship pupils had

broadened the political, moral and social outlook of other pupils and the staff. Some staff did caution however, that the scholarship pupils should not be pressured into feeling a sense of undue gratitude for their scholarships which would add to the pressure for academic achievement and performance.

Scholarship pupils attributed much of their success to the fact that they felt supported by their families, friends, school staff and the scholarship programme team. This quote from one the pupils says it all :

*"...now you've got everybody who's behind you and believes that... and who's willing to invest so much money in you because they believe you can do it. It's just... it fills your confidence. Makes you believe you're actually worth something."*













































































