



KEARSNEY COLLEGE

Founded in 1921

17 June 2020

Dear Kearsney family

The recent killing of Mr George Floyd in the USA has precipitated a significant global response to racism and discrimination. South Africa has its own long history with regards to racism and discrimination, and as citizens of our transforming country, we need to continue to work hard to eradicate all elements of racism in our society, institutionally, economically and socially. The global social movement #BlackLivesMatter, as well as ongoing evidence of, and responses to racism in South Africa, has led to a renewed energy and determination within our Kearsney community of boys, Old Boys, staff and parents to openly and fully explore and address issues of race and discrimination, that continue to affect the lives and experiences of our boys and the wider society in which we live. These critical questions have led people to re-examine their own attitudes, opinions and the values that they hold true, in terms of race, inequality and identity.

This global movement, and the South African response to it, has led us, as the Kearsney leadership at both board and management levels, to put increased thought, effort and energy into the transformation processes that are already underway in the school. We need to re-examine the attitudes and values of the school in terms of racism and discrimination, and to review our existing systems and processes, so that we can achieve meaningful social transformation in the school and build social cohesion in a way that is reflective of our Constitution.

Kearsney strongly condemns racism and social injustice. As such, racial and other forms of discrimination will not, on any basis, be tolerated, condoned or accepted. A core principle of Kearsney is to develop young men who will hold respect for others as sacrosanct and who will accept, embrace and respect the many diverse people they will interact with in their lives. At Kearsney, we are committed to playing a leading role in helping to heal the divisions of the past and to build an equal, just, inclusive and transformed society.

The board and management believe that no pupil or staff member at Kearsney should be discriminated against, feel unvalued or be treated with disrespect or prejudice by virtue of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or social standing.

Kearsney has adopted various initiatives to embrace the diverse backgrounds of its pupils and staff, and to create an environment in which these differences are recognised, acknowledged and respected, with a focus on the inherent value as a person, of each boy and staff member who attends the school.

With the assistance of its pupils, Kearsney set up the Cultural Diversity Imbizo in 2016 and adopted the Kearsney Racism and Racial Discrimination Policy in 2017. The College's Employee Forum (established in 2001) also meets regularly with the Headmaster to discuss diversity matters, including transformation within the College.

However, and notwithstanding the implementation of these measures, it would be naïve to believe these measures will ensure that any form of racism or intolerance of diversity will simply disappear. Kearsney remains part of a South African society that still has much work to do in dismantling the systemic racial and other injustices and discriminatory practices. We also recognise that there have been instances of racism or prejudice at the College. On behalf of the school, and on behalf of my predecessors, we apologise to the boys, parents and staff members who have experienced acts of racism or other prejudice at Kearsney.

We re-commit ourselves to our transformation programme, recognising that there is more that needs to be done to address discrimination of any form, and the building of racial and social cohesion in our school. Some of the steps we will be taking immediately are:

1. we will increase the interaction and engagement we have with Old Boys, in particular those groupings who have made contact with the school and have indicated a desire to engage the school on issues of race, identity and discrimination;
2. we will review the school's Racism and Racial Discrimination Policy;
3. we will engage the boys within the school through the Cultural Diversity Imbizo and we will explore other processes to address race, identity and discrimination;
4. we will examine the curriculum, including academic, cultural and sporting matters to identify opportunities to further our transformational goals;
5. we will continue with employee programmes, to support and equip our staff with the knowledge, skills and reflection required to drive the school's, non-racism, transformation and social cohesion programme.

In this context, we hope to create genuine opportunities for any current or past pupil or staff member to raise matters of overt or covert prejudice, racism and unfair discrimination and to work with them in implementing positive strategies. We believe that with the will to address these issues by our community and school, we will become a better school and all our boys will become better human beings.

In conclusion, we recognise that we will need to work hard if we are to achieve our desire to create a school environment that is truly non-racial, which embraces all boys and their diverse backgrounds, which we as South Africans can truly be proud of, and one that is a true fulfilment of the transformed and socially cohesive nation which our first democratic president, Mr Nelson Mandela, envisaged.

Yours sincerely



Elwyn van den Aardweg

Headmaster



Andrew Parsons

Chairman Board of Governors