



6 April 2017

Dear Saints Family

The Seventh of April 2017

I write this letter at a time of national crisis that is also a moment of opportunity.

It is a sign of heightened abnormality and tension in our democracy that I am writing this kind of letter to the school community on the eve of 7 April – a day characterised by calls for nationwide civic protest and public expression of moral outrage. The plan for tomorrow at St Stithians is outlined below.

Schools mirror society. Schooling has the potential to transform society – through values, skills, knowledge and human relationship. Schools can and should be places of hope. The Christian character of St Stithians, rooted in a Methodist ethos, reinforces and shapes our sense of purpose. The Statement of Purpose of St Stithians College pledges our schools to educate ‘lifelong learners who participate, lead and serve’ and includes our commitment to ‘the positive transformation and development of South African society.’ Our College embraces South Africa’s future with hope.

It is important to state that this letter seeks to emphasise certain principles and values which flow from the institutional character of St Stithians. This is not a party-political statement. Twenty three years ago this month, our fledgling South African democracy was born in 1994. Compared to our apartheid past, we have made great strides since then and there is much to celebrate. We cherish our freedom. Our society remains one of wide social inequality, with many challenges to overcome in creating a better society for all. Across our land, there is a gathering and increasingly public moral outrage at a worsening, corrupt and self-serving culture in our political system. Our society deserves and demands better. This trend contrasts with the emphasis at St Stithians on educating leaders who serve others and who promote hope and the common good.

At St Stithians we hold before us the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Galatians 5: 22-23) represented with symbolic beauty in our chapel windows: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The plan for tomorrow

The national situation is one of flux and uncertainty. In this context, and aware of the need to remain alert and adaptable, the College’s plan for tomorrow is as follows, agreed among the members of the College Executive Committee. I express appreciation to the Chair of the St Stithians Council, and to members of the Council, for their advice at this time.

The first responsibility of a school is to create a safe and nurturing environment for our young people. The schools will be open tomorrow at normal operating times. The regular programme is likely to be adapted to the circumstances of the day, with the anticipated absence of certain numbers of staff. There will be no assessment activities. The Prep Sports Festival will take place.

In each of the schools, there will be a gathering for ‘lament and prayer’ (in answer to the call of the Methodist Church of South Africa) and for a message of hope.

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE. MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

There will be age-appropriate opportunity to talk about the national situation, to allow the expression of viewpoints and to engage in debate. This is a 'teachable moment'.

St Stithians acknowledges and affirms the rights of individual citizens to choose to join the proposed civic action tomorrow.

In the case of students, this choice is to be made with parental consent and with parents taking direct responsibility for their children. The request to parents and students is that, if a student is to join in public civic action, he or she does not come to school first. No student will be allowed to leave the College grounds during the school day to participate in public civic action, unless there is written parental consent and approval given by a Head or Deputy Head of School.

In this regard, it is important to state that the student message distributed on social media calling on students to gather at the Peter Place gate and to march to the William Nicol highway does not have the official approval of the College.

In the case of staff, the individual choice to participate in civic action is to be recognised and enabled. Individual staff members are to gain approval of line managers for a day's special leave. Where disruptions to traffic may prevent staff members getting to school, individuals are required to keep in communication with their line managers.

In conclusion

May South Africans across our beautiful land affirm our common humanity, our search for solutions, our hope for the future, our celebration of those who stand for what is right, and our rejection of corruptible and self-serving leadership among those elected to public office and among those with power over our major economic resources.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Nuttall". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr T A Nuttall
Rector