



4 August 2017

Dear Saints Family

St Stithians Statement on Race and Racism, Transformation and Diversity: promoting a community of belonging which is transformative, inclusive and diverse

The leadership and school communities of St Stithians College are committed to engage proactively and decisively in addressing issues and experiences of racism, discrimination, diversity and transformation.

This letter has been co-authored by the Rector (Tim Nuttall), representing the College Executive; the Chair of Council (Carel Nolte); the Deputy Chair of Council (Ntombi Langa-Royds); the Chair of the St Stithians College Endowment Fund Trust (Gary Morolo); the Methodist Bishop of the Central District (Gary Rivas); the Chair of the Council's Transformation Committee (Motseki Majake); the Chair of the Council's Governance Committee (Nerine Kahn) and the Chair of the Campus Schools Transformation and Diversity Committee (Jakes Fredericks).

There is no place for racism at St Stithians. Where racism is evident, we need to combat the phenomenon in both definitive and educational ways. We are determined to embrace a present and a future which creates a non-racist society and is inclusive of difference and diversity. It is important that there be no doubt about what we stand for and what we stand against.

The focus of this communication is on race and racism, while recognising that sexism and homophobia are also critical issues to address proactively in the creation of a better South African society.

There is a long history of engagement with race and transformation, led by the St Stithians College Council and the executive team. The College adopted a [Transformation Statement](#) in 2009, creating an important benchmark for subsequent developments. For many years, the Transformation Committee of the Council has provided leadership at a governance level, with the Chair of this Committee sitting on Council. This process has been further deepened by the creation earlier this year of a Campus Schools Transformation and Diversity Committee of school representatives, signalling the intent to co-ordinate and strengthen programmes which are active in each school. This Campus Committee is tasked with creating a policy document which formally articulates the College's stance on racism, sexism and homophobia.

Reflecting the debates and encounters in wider South African society, the schools of St Stithians have addressed transformation and diversity priorities with concerted attention over the past few years. Transformation structures and programmes are operating in each of the schools, namely the Junior Preparatory, the Boy's Preparatory, the Girls' Preparatory, the Girls' College and the Boys' College. Senior staff lead transformation portfolios and participate in the executive committees of each school. There are student transformation committees in the Boys' College and the Girls' College. Our Parent-Teacher associations each have a Transformation portfolio. There have been issues and challenges to deal with, and the approach has been to open up channels of communication and action, to promote critical conversations and to make proactive responses.

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE. MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

The [Old Stithian Association](#) (OSA) has a Transformation portfolio, and at a recent strategy review the OSA addressed the experiences of black alumni during their time as students at St Stithians, while committing to a programme of increased engagement with black alumni.

Addressing Founders' Day in [2016](#) and [2017](#), the Rector articulated a clear and public stance against racism and promoted an inclusive community of belonging. In July 2016, 'Race and Racism' was the topic of a well-attended [Rector Connect](#) meeting with parents. The Heads of School and Campus Departments, the Deputy Heads and middle managers have participated in a series of workshops which have highlighted social bias and stereotyping, both conscious and unconscious. Whole-school workshops of staff, and student assemblies, have addressed identity issues and race relations. We recognise the centrality of a continuous programme of education and consciousness-raising.

Our student admissions policy and staff recruitment practices are intent on increasing the number of black people contributing to and participating in the College's community and mission. At our two major admission intakes of new students, in Grade R and Grade 8, we are currently committed to enrolling black applicants into at least half of the available places.

We are conscious that, from the College's founding in 1953 until the 1980s, when the first black students began to be enrolled, St Stithians was characterised by an all-white student body. Since the 1980s, St Stithians has been on a journey of growth and change as a South African school contributing to the creation of a new society in the democratic era. We are on a journey which requires courage, openness, humility, determination and commitment to change and transformation. There is much to celebrate and there is much to learn.

Our intent is to grow daily in our promotion of a community of belonging at St Stithians which is transformative, inclusive and diverse. We owe this to our students, so that they can experience a society which is freed from the shackles of racism, rooted in colonialism and apartheid. The negative legacy of racial discrimination runs deep in South Africa. We acknowledge that, like all institutions in South African society, we are shaped by our past and present.

At St Stithians, our Christian values as a Methodist Church School (and indeed these values are core to all major religions) affirm dignity and respect for every individual. The motto of St Stithians – One and All – is a celebration of individuality and our community of belonging. Our Honour Code enjoins us to Honour God, Honour Others, Honour Self. We strive to educate for Saints Character: to know ourselves, to be ourselves, to make our contribution. In these words, and what they mean, we have a conscious St Stithians language with which to promote non-racism and to combat racism.

It is important that we are firm and determined when we address transgressions involving racism. We need to be clear in defining our understanding of what racism is, and how it is manifest. We encourage members of our community to talk out, and to acknowledge where we do not live up to the values expectations of our College. At the end of this statement are listed the contact details of the Rector, the Chair of Council and the Deputy Chair of Council, as well as the names of our Parent Teacher Association Chairs and Old Stithian Committee representatives.

We have done much, and yet there is more to do: the building of new communities is a dynamic and iterative process of learning and unlearning.

Through the founding of Penryn College in 1991; the creation of five pre-schools on Methodist Church properties in the township of Ivory Park; the founding and growth of the [Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy](#) at St Stithians since 2005; and through an active community engagement programme, St Stithians is outward-looking, seeking to open our doors and to make a difference in society beyond the College.

Our core documents which define School Character at St Stithians need to be more explicit in including the affirmations of non-racism and our stand against racism, as highlighted in this letter. We uphold and celebrate our unity and our diversity as we educate young people in boys' and girls' schools on one campus. In the wider context of transformation and diversity, we need also to add the importance of standing against sexism and homophobia, and of addressing questions and issues of gender relations, as we inspire excellence and make a world of difference.

Yours sincerely



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