

Dear Parents

I have no more sleeps before Epic – we leave in a few hours' time to set up a range of things today and tomorrow. This means I won't see you at the Blessing of Boots service tonight at 6.30 pm nor for roll call at 5.30 am on Tuesday. So tonight after a marathon couple of days of packing, off-loading and final admin stuff we'll be enjoying a braai at Waterbase while watching the sun's final rays on Krakadouw peak – can't wait!

Guy spoke to the boys on Friday reminding them that Epic is essentially a school outing and therefore normal school rules apply. Each year group is remembered as a group. Whilst the individual is an important part of that group, the collective memory is what remains and for that reason we want this to be remembered as a great Epic. We need to control what we can control and to this end he reminded the boys of the dangers that exist if guidelines that are in place are not adhered to. He reminded boys we need to respect each other, ourselves and the environment. He specifically mentioned that no contraband should be brought along (including e-cigarettes etc) and I will also add no cell phones, music devices and the like.

I know that over the years our programme of preparation has developed, taking in things learnt from previous years. The first aid course is put in place to increase awareness of what to do if...Two of my biggest concerns on Epic are fires and dehydration. These are REAL issues and real dangers if they develop. I would like to think that through our preparation, we have created a safe environment – yes, there are dangers in that environment (as there are with anything in life) but I hope your son will know how to respond and act safely wherever he might be and in whatever he might be doing. We trust him to do so.

One of the incredible privileges of being a teacher and particularly at a boys' school such as Bishops, is that boys will always surprise you. I cannot wait for Tuesday and my excitement is increased because of the superb way in which the boys responded to the Epic Seminar this past week. They are ready for Epic! The practice hike on Thursday proved this to me – I had such wonderful feedback from the staff who also enjoyed themselves fully. There were a few casualties and plans are in place to make necessary arrangements and adaptations to the programme.

Boys must please wear their boots this evening, no school uniform but be dressed appropriately – I would suggest jeans, a shirt and the Epic top (if it is cool enough).

Meeting time on Tuesday is 5.30 am. Roll call is taken at the bus your son has been allocated. Mrs Peel will check that each bus is filled correctly and at the strike of 6 am (or before, if you are Mr Court!), Epic begins. In the past, we have had parents catching the group around Malmesbury – please set as many alarms as are necessary in order to get to the Astro on time!

Bus 1: Wolfberg Hiking Blue (including Mikhail Lovric) and the whole of Tafelberg

Bus 2: Whole of Sneeuwberg plus Apex Hiking Red (Vladko Levendal to Bus G)

Bus C: Wolfberg Hiking Red (Mikhail Lovric to Bus 1)

Bus D and Bus G: Krakadouw (see list on bus – includes Raafiq Adams & Vladko Levendal)

Q1 (hired Quantum): Apex Hiking Blue (Raafiq Adams to Bus G)

We're so grateful to you all for the support you've given Epic so far – getting your sons to this point with his bag packed, his food boxes filled (some over-filled!) and labelled, writing letters and encouraging him all the way. I think some of you have already had your own Epic just helping your son with this! We're looking forward to seeing him on Epic and we're confident that he will enjoy the challenge, learn more about himself and others and come back having had the time of his life!

A huge thank you to the mums who so quietly and quickly did all the packing of the craft boxes, the sorting of the donation of linen and the extra purchases. I don't have the accurate figure but close on R25 000 was raised through your generous donations. We filled the truck yesterday with boxes and boxes of goodies, paint and (literally...) the kitchen sink (for the school at Jamaka). Thank you!

Our thanks need to go to (and please tell me if I have left you off – it is NOT personal!):

- Hermann and Irene Boeddinghaus for the loan of the Toyota Land Cruiser that I will be driving
- Toyota Claremont for the Toyota Fortuner for use by Guy and for others driving around during Epic
- Ford Mekor for the use of an Echo Sport to ensure a staff member gets back to Cape Town in time for a meeting
- Hi-Tec for their sponsorship of shoes for the children who came down to Cape Town for the weekend. In addition, for the boots for our Allan Gray scholars as well as the top quality support and advice given to all of us
- Jeremy Stewart from Seamless Flooring for the surface that will be put down under the jungle gyms at Grootkloof Primary (school at Jamaka)
- Shane Cheminai for the donation of linen and heaps of slippers from the Mount Nelson
- A wonderful team of Bishops staff (academic and support) who all pull together to make so many things happen for Epic
- A number of you who made donations towards the craft work and outreach projects that went well beyond what we suggested would be appropriate – particularly to Sue Beaumont who headed up the team of mums

There is electricity at all the bases, so remind your son to pack the charger for his camera if he is bringing one. Please remember no i-this or i-that or other cell phones! We confiscate them. The camera needs to be a thing in its own right.

Boys should have some breakfast or at least bring along a snack for the 2 to 4 hour bus ride – two groups start a hike (Apex and Wolfberg) and one cycles (Sneeuberg), so the energy needs to be there! Tafelberg need to bring something for their 2 hour walk in to their base – without ruck sacks. Krakadouw will be put to work with some alien vegetation clearance and a couple of km's of walking. Water bottles should be ready.

A reminder that from now to the end of Epic your contact person between the school and Cederberg is Andrea Rutter – her number is 072 783 7340 and her email is arutter@bishops.org.za. Please only contact her in the event of an emergency. I do not have quick access to email so you won't get a quick response if you mail me. Operate by the maxim of: "No news is good news".

A number of you have requested information about where your son will be whilst on Epic – a summarised version is below:

Date	Waterbase	Sanddrif	Elizabethfontein	Jamaka	Hike
14 to 17 Nov	Sneeuberg	Tafelberg	Krakadouw	Closed	Apex and Wolfberg
17 to 20 Nov	Apex	Wolfberg	Closed	Closed	Tafelberg; Sneeuberg & Krakadouw
20 to 23 Nov	Tafelberg	Sneeuberg (24 hr solo)	Apex	Krakadouw (24 hr solo)	Wolfberg (solo hike)
23 to 26 Nov	Wolfberg	Closed	Sneeuberg	Tafelberg (24 hr solo)	Apex and Krakadouw (solo hikes)
26 Nov to 29 Nov	Krakadouw	Apex (24 hr solo)	Closed	Wolfberg (24 hr solo)	Sneeuberg and Tafelberg (solo hikes)
Last night (28 Nov)	Krakadouw	Apex & Tafelberg	Closed	Wolfberg & Sneeuberg	

No one likes to think about it but if there is a need for your son to see a doctor or go to hospital, we will get in touch with you. Our priority is getting him to where he needs to get to, so there are more often than not delays in this process of communicating with you. In order to speed this up, I've asked WildMedix to make first contact if I am unavailable. As you are aware, you pay towards a Personal Accident Policy for your son. This kicks in if the claim is in excess of R500 and it is, as its name implies for 'accidents'. They do not consider sunburn, infected blisters or gastro for example, an accident. Regardless of what intervention is required, Bishops will foot the bill for all things medical whilst we are on Epic – it is just simpler that way in terms of getting authorisations and the like. My experience has been that any hospitalisation (even if it is for two or three days) or visit to the doctor's rooms, has ever exceeded R 2000 to R 3000. Once we return from Epic and I have paid all the bills, I submit these to you for further action. If a claim is made against the accident policy, there is a set of other hoops that has to be jumped through and I will explain these to you.

Bishops Epic is a rite of passage experience. Each person experiences this in a different way. I know that some boys have already had an epic battle to get to this inevitable date that has loomed large all year. I know there are a number of parents for whom this has also been difficult – Epic is a chance to 'let go' and to allow your boy to grow and develop. Thank you for letting him do this – it is a huge privilege for the staff at Bishops (and many others who are not part of the staff) to take him to the Cederberg and to let the environment and activities on offer do the work it is designed to do.

Let Bishops Epic 2017 begin!

Kind regards

Graham