

Dear Parents

8 weeks have flown past and the end of the first term is in sight. Most academic staff agree that the first term is the hardest one to manage; in part because one is getting to know the boys for the first time in many classes and teaching is easier once relationships have been built, in part because the term is the hottest making periods later in the day something of a trial, but mainly because it is a term in which so many extramural events happen – including many summer sport tours. Indeed, for our top rowers it is an almost impossible task holding it all together and some will have to do some work in the holidays to catch up and be ready for the second term.

We always tell the matrices that their final year is going to rush by. They only have three proper terms as school boys and one has almost finished.

Social networking

Boys have always been impulsive. In some ways this is what makes them so delightful and why, I would argue, we find ourselves smiling or laughing at their antics and comments more so than we do at girls. Of course it is this impulsiveness which sometimes gets them into trouble and leads parents to exclaim, “What were you thinking?” - the parents making the common error of assuming the boy thought in any depth before acting!

One of the problems of social networking becoming such a dominant (and open) means of communication for our sons is that the impulsiveness (and sheer bravado) which is so much part of who they are can get them into trouble quicker and with a wider audience. In addition, the evidence is so much more damning, not because the transgressions have changed that much from 30 years ago, but because the communication of them is so much more than word of mouth. Photos, videos, cruel statements etc can be put out there in a moment of folly and, once out and about, can often not be effectively withdrawn.

Bishops has a Social Networking Policy which you can view on our website (<http://www.bishops.org.za/Info/documents/socialnetworking.pdf>) or through the link below. I think it is important that we all read it.

How we respond to this challenge in the lives of our sons depends upon their age. For our sons at the College there is no way we are going to stop them being part of the world of social media and so the best thing we can do is to keep on warning them of the danger and give advice – even if we irritate them in the process.

I hope you all have a good holiday when it comes. It is important that the boys rest well ahead of a second term that is rather short and sharp ahead of the exams. The senior grades in particular will find that a lot of work will be crammed into a few weeks as staff scramble to finish syllabi.

Yours sincerely

Peter Westwood