

WENYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Wendywood High School today is a very different product from the school that was opened in 1987. It functions in an entirely different era and in an entirely different country. Nevertheless the best features of Wendywood - the family values and camaraderie, the feeling of belonging in a caring environment – are still there. Today we continue to strive to be true to our school motto – *Magno Animo* - Greatness of Spirit.

No longer do we compete for honour in the swimming pool or on the athletic track; no longer does rugby play a central role around which the school functions throughout the second term; no longer do Wendywood sportsmen feature prominently in provincial or national teams, but what has replaced this is just as important and just as worthwhile.

Wendywood has embraced the changes in this country with enthusiasm and commitment. We have adapted to the needs of our learners today and have not inflexibly striven to maintain features of a society long gone. Athletics and swimming have given way to basketball and soccer; drummies, the equestrian club and the debutantes have gone; cricket, hockey, rugby, tennis and squash are still played at school, but it's on the basketball court, the soccer field and on the netball court where today's pupil flourishes and where we achieve our greatest success.

Rhetoric and drama continue to be important cultural activities, albeit on a smaller scale, the Interact Club is as strong as ever and chess is played in the media centre at break. I'm happy to say that, in spite of a continuous battle to recruit competent teachers from an ever diminishing pool, we have retained a good academic standard with close to a hundred percent pass rate every year. Most years we have learners among the top achievers in our district.

Thanks to the strong fiscal control of the Principals, Governors and our bursar, Mrs Marilyn Williams, the school is in good financial standing. Improvements to our existing facilities are made regularly and grounds and buildings are well maintained.

With the ever rising cost of school uniforms it became necessary to make changes in this area too. The aubergine school blazer, so admired in the late 80s, is now unaffordable and no longer forms part of the uniform. A navy blue blazer was introduced in 2009. The flimsy grey jerseys have been replaced by a good quality navy jersey. In keeping with African tradition hard collars and ties

have made way for open necked shirts and this too has made monitoring of school uniform much easier.

The Gauteng Department of Education has very strict criteria for election of Governors. Members to the Governing Body must comprise mainly parents with a specified number of teachers and scholars on the committee as well. It should reflect the demographics of the school population.

The prefect system has been replaced by a Representative Council of Learners. Each grade is represented on the council by duly elected peers from their Grade. An executive committee is elected by the council, comprising boy and girl Presidents, boy and girl Deputy Presidents and a Secretary. The staff may not intervene in any way to support or veto candidates. This is truly democracy in action and has proved highly successful. What better way to empower children and to teach them responsibility and accountability. To date their choices have been very good especially with respect to the executive members.

Wendywood is a section 21 school, which means we are self sustaining. The school must maintain and improve facilities, employ administrative staff, an estate manager and staff to work in the grounds, purchase educational and sporting equipment, computers and books for the library. The Governing Body currently pays the salaries of 15 teachers to augment the 23 supplied by the Education Department. This allows us to keep classes at a reasonable size. All this money must come from school fees and as a result these have escalated over the years.

Unlike the 80s the pupil body and teaching staff at Wendywood is a melting pot of colours, cultures and languages, fully reflecting the South African population dynamic. All work and play together in harmony with respect and tolerance encouraged at every level.

Rather we embrace the changes that have taken place in South Africa and in the school. We look to the future with hope and remember with pride that Wendywood was one of the first state schools to welcome all population groups to the school and to encourage the growth and development of our rainbow nation. We are proud of the stream of capable young people who matriculate and move on to successful tertiary education and careers and this applies to many of you sitting in the hall today. We are delighted to have you back with us today.