



# WATERFORD KAMHLABA UWCSA

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Letter 29/2005

Dear Parents

## Main Weekend Activities

The IB students plan to celebrate an 'African Evening' this Saturday. Open to parents and the public is a performance of selected scenes from 'A Journey to Mecca' by Athol Fugard, starting at 7pm in the Michael Stern Hall. Those who enjoy serious theatre are more than welcome. There is no charge.

The Form 2 and 3 Boarders visit Hawane Resort this weekend, as a Residence retreat.

## Next Week

The Form 5 Leavers' Ceremony takes place on Wednesday evening (16<sup>th</sup>), the IB 2 Leavers' Ceremony on Saturday evening (19<sup>th</sup>). Parents of these students should have received invitations many weeks ago.

## Apologies for late Bus Service on Wednesday

I apologise that several day students needed to wait for 45 minutes on Wednesday afternoon before a bus became available to take them down to town. I hope that not too many were seriously inconvenienced. The buses are also used for community service and that morning the Edu Dance and Aids Awareness (IB1) community service groups visited Nkaba Primary School. They got lost on the way and mistook Hwane Primary for Nkaba Primary, and because of this ran late for their return. Fortunately late returns to school by community service groups seldom occur.

## Waterford to become a non-smoking campus?

Most parents are aware that members of staff are permitted to smoke in the area immediately outside the staff room and IB students are permitted to smoke in the 'smoking shack' near the tennis courts. I am increasingly of the view that this is an unsatisfactory situation, and have proposed that Waterford become a non-smoking campus from 2006. My proposal is that staff only be permitted to smoke in their houses or cars (while on campus) and that students not be permitted to smoke anywhere on campus, but (as is the case at present) the school should not concern itself in a disciplinary sense if students smoke off campus. This discussion started in a staff meeting and senior members of staff have consulted IB1 and Form 5 students.

Reasons to move in this direction include:

- Health. There is consensus amongst both students and staff that smoking (especially cigarettes) is a very unhealthy and addictive practice. Of course there are other health issues at Waterford; most (including food) are being addressed on an ongoing basis. This is the only health issue of which I am aware that would need a change in the College Rules.
- Ethics. I find it increasingly difficult for a school to condone a practice that has such negative health implications (by making formal provision for it).
- Growing worldwide practice. Increasingly, governments are attempting to restrict the practice of smoking (especially by young people) by bans on smoking indoors and in educational and other institutions. This is paralleled by practice in most United World Colleges, some following national legislation, some by their own decision. I feel uncomfortable providing a venue for socializing where the key common denominator is smoking. My assumption is that by promoting a non-smoking policy on campus, in the medium and long term the number of young people in our Colleges who take up smoking will diminish.

Of course reasons have been given why Waterford should continue with its current policy of allowing smoking in restricted (essentially outdoor) areas. These include:

- Acknowledgement of reality. Several Waterford students smoke, possibly 15% of students in Esiveni (Form 4/5 Residence) (where no provision for smoking exists) and 25% of students in Emhlabeni (IB Residence).
- Smoking (or not smoking) should be a matter of choice, even if it is a choice easily influenced by a sophisticated advertising strategy from the tobacco industry. (Of course the proposed policy does not say anything about smoking off-campus.)
- The current practice does not harm non-smokers, and if no on-campus provision is made for smoking, more students might be tempted to smoke in their cubies where the smoke would be harmful (and an irritant) to non-smokers. (Although I would not consider a breach of the smoking rule a major offence, I think it would be appropriate for the sanctions to be much more significant in the case of students found smoking indoors on campus.)
- Banning a practice might increase its attraction for some.
- There is no certainty that the proposed policy will be effective in reducing the overall number of smokers.
- Any change in policy should be contemplated only after more focussed 'anti-smoking' education, to see if the desired effect can be achieved without a change in policy.

I now invite parents who may have strong views on this subject to submit these views, before my proposal is taken to the Governing Council at its meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> November.

Whatever the outcome, I have decided that Waterford should provide further focussed education (including peer education) on the dangers of smoking and should provide further support to students who wish to give up smoking, including the provision of nicotine patches.

Tinzaba

Each student should receive a copy of Tinzaba, the WK magazine, this week. Please ask your child to bring the copy home. Unfortunately at this stage we are unable to get a copy in PDF format, but the text will appear on the Waterford website.

Yours sincerely

Laurence Nodder  
Principal