



Diocese of Johannesburg

ANGLICAN BISHOP

DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG



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1 August 2017

Dear members of the St John's community

The Council of St John's College met last night, deeply mindful of the fractures currently so evident in our school community as a result of the school teacher racism matter and the school's handling of it. Although the Council meeting was a scheduled one, the agenda addressed only the extraordinary and distressing circumstances currently prevailing in the school community. The venue for the meeting was only changed to enable Council to discuss these issues in a contained and private space before reporting to the broader school community.

After lengthy deliberations at this meeting, Council has resolved as follows:

Acknowledgement and apology

Acknowledging that the teacher concerned was found guilty of making racially derogatory and inappropriate remarks and is no longer employed by the school, we recognise that the process of handling this matter was flawed. Although our intentions were to deal with this complex matter in the best interests of the pupils, the school and in fairness to the accused teacher, the school did not:

- institute a disciplinary process as soon as the investigation was complete;
- pursue precautionary suspension for the teacher concerned pending finalisation of the hearing;
- keep the broader community appropriately informed of the process;
- give the external disciplinary chairperson a mandate to make a recommendation as to sanction; and
- appreciate the impact of this matter on the school community as a whole.

We unreservedly apologise and deeply regret the racially derogatory and inappropriate remarks, the way in which we handled the process and especially the hurt of the boys and parents. Although the appointment of senior counsel to chair the hearing ensured that the process was fair, a confidentiality agreement between the parties to the matter hampered communication somewhat and the process had a

number of unintended consequences such as significant delays due to unavailability of the chair, representatives and witnesses.

We acknowledge that these errors and unintended consequences have caused deep hurt, distrust and divisions between and within staff, pupils, parents, some Old Johannians and Council itself. We do not believe that the utterances of one teacher define or reflect the culture and ethos of St John's, but we acknowledge that there are some stakeholders within our community who now have their doubts about this. We accept that the flaws in this process have shaken the faith you have placed in our school and we are resolved to restore it.

We acknowledge that healing hurt, building trust and bridging divisions will take time and will be achieved more by what we do in the future than by what we say. We have resolved to take the following steps to address this:

- 1) Immediate structured engagement with the school community;
- 2) A rigorous transformation and diversity process which includes a review of the policies and procedures within the college, particularly pertaining to racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny, and how they are implemented to protect everyone but most particularly pupils;
- 3) Unequivocal rejection of all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny; and
- 4) A critical analysis of the governance structures within the school to ensure that we have the capacity and resources to take the school forward.

1. Immediate structured engagement with the school community

A number of key voices within the school community have sought an audience in this process. These range from a concerned parents group to an #OpenStJohns petition reflecting some Old Johannians, to staff submissions and pupil and community protests. We invite each of these groups to meet with us in an internal St John's community town hall meeting details of which are as follows:

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday 2 August	18h30-20h30	Rene England Auditorium

The primary purpose of the town hall meeting will be to hear from all stakeholder groups and to share an account of how the process unfolded. A representative group from Council will be present and will ensure that the concerns and views expressed are conveyed to the full Council at an extraordinary meeting which will be called before the beginning of the Michaelmas term. Thereafter issues emerging from these consultations will be fully addressed in the transformation and diversity process.

In addition, we sincerely appeal to all interested parties, for the sake of the pupils, staff and the wider school community, that to achieve constructive engagement, you make use of the existing channels of communication and those that are now being established, to make your voice heard. Additionally it would be most helpful if the existing representative bodies, such as the prefects, Old Johannian Association and the Parents Association were used to communicate with the school. We are particularly mindful of the need to ensure that pupils are kept appropriately and timeously informed.

2. A rigorous transformation and diversity process which includes a review of the policies and procedures within the college, particularly pertaining to racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny, and how they are implemented to protect everyone but most particularly pupils

St John's reconstituted a Transformation and Diversity Committee in 2016. Focus groups were established under this committee in the following areas:

- Council
- Culture, symbols and community ethos (to address issues of belonging and identity)
- Curriculum and syllabus (pedagogical concerns)
- Staffing and staff learning
- Pupil admissions
- Community engagement
- Procurement
- Parent community
- Student community

We acknowledge that progress through this committee has not been visible. A key issue which this matter has raised is the absence of a tailored complaints procedure for pupils to report allegations of racism, bullying or harassment and the need for amendments to the disciplinary procedure to take account of circumstances in which pupils are required to testify in a disciplinary hearing in order to fulfil the requirements of natural justice. Both of these issues are receiving immediate attention and proposals to address them, including a possible "app" for anonymous reporting of incidents, will be circulated to this committee and to Council for comment before the start of the Michaelmas term. The committee is also enjoined to incorporate the notion of unconscious bias into its deliberations.

3. Unequivocal rejection of all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny

Although rejection of all forms of racism and unconscious bias are implicit in our motto of *Lux Vita Caritas* and our vision *to create an environment in which our pupils can live their lives to the full, learn accountability, fulfil their potential, and reach their dreams*, we acknowledge that in our country our rejection of racism needs to be explicit. To this end, we as Council unequivocally reject all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia and misogyny and we enjoin the Transformation and Diversity Committee to develop a fuller statement and policy on Equality and Rejection of Unfair Discrimination of all kinds for adoption by Council at its meeting in September 2017.

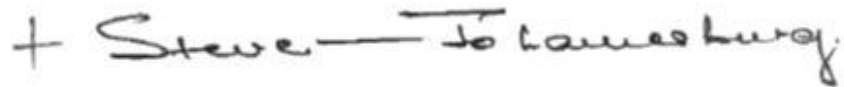
4. A critical reflection on the governance structures within the school to ensure that we have the capacity and resources to take the school forward

We acknowledge that this matter has caused some members of our community to question leadership and governance of the school. As with many aspects of this matter these questions have divided the different stakeholders in our community and there is no consensus view. While it behoves us as Council to continuously reflect on leadership and governance and particularly in current circumstances, we also have a duty to do so responsibly and after due consideration of all relevant facts and voices in our community. We commit to ensuring that this critical

reflection, which is ongoing, will take account of the structured engagement and transformation and diversity processes referred to in 1) and 2) above.

May the grace of our wonderful God remain with you.

Yours by God's grace

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Steve — Johannesburg." The signature is written in a cursive style with a plus sign at the beginning and a period at the end.

The Rt Revd Dr. Steve Moreo
Bishop of Johannesburg