



ST MARTIN'S  
SCHOOL

# NEWSLETTER

TERM 3 - 4 DECEMBER 2019

## The kind of pupils we aim to produce at St Martin's

**Mahir Ramphal is one of our Matric boys. Just a few weeks before his final Matric exams were to commence, his dad tragically passed away.** I remember the morning of the funeral. I remember it vividly. It was a public holiday and I needed to pop into the office to fetch something. The security guard at the gate stops me and gives me some papers. He tells me they are from a boy who dropped them off very early that morning. I scan the papers and they look like lists of pupils. They don't make much sense to me and, a little intrigued, I leave them on my desk. We proceed to the funeral. Funerals are always sad and just before we leave, Mahir comes over and enquires as to whether I had received the lists of swimmers in his house, Founders, for the gala on Friday. Then it dawned on me. On the day of his father's funeral, Mahir got in his car at the crack of dawn to drop off those lists, so that everything would be in place for the inter-house gala on Friday. Wow, what commitment!



**Nicolas Parbhoo was our Deputy Head Boy this year. One Friday morning in the third term he is absent and we get wind of the fact that he is bunking.** Some questions are asked about his whereabouts, he is dishonest and tries to cover up. He had been to the after party of a Matric dance, couldn't face the next day at school with 2 hours of sleep and some transport issues, and told us he had gone for a root canal treatment. Really? I call Nicolas in. He is very nervous, but sits down and immediately confesses and apologises. The discussion then moves to an appropriate sanction for his behaviour. It's only two weeks to the end of his formal high school career. But he is the Deputy Head Boy of the school and that brings with it the responsibility of impeccable behaviour. He realises this decision is not only about him, but about the whole school community. He also realises that decisions made in the Headmaster's office aren't always that simple.

I hadn't yet made up my mind about how to punish Nicholas when he left my office. Little did I know that he was going to take the decision out of my hands. Early the next morning, Nicolas Parbhoo walks into my office, greets me with a firm handshake and, before sitting down, he takes off his prefect's badge and tie, and hands them to me. Nicolas knew he had erred, but he owned his mistake and was willing to bear the consequences. Wow, what stature!

Nicolas was very happy for me to share this story with you in my newsletter and the story has a lovely sequel. He accosts me in the passage after chapel a few days later and asks me whether I would consider allowing him to do the traditional deputy head boy's speech at the Matric valediction. Another one of those decisions.....! I gave him permission and what an excellent, heartfelt and humorous speech Nicolas delivered on the night. His prefect's badge lies on the mantelpiece in my office – and will for many years to come.

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**First team hockey captain, Daigen-Ray Stevens, decides not to come forward to receive his hockey half-colours re-award at Speech Day.** Although he had not met the criteria, he felt he deserved the full colours and was so upset that he refused to come up to collect his award. I call him in. He brings with him the required documentation that make him eligible for the award. He understands he should have brought the doctor's certificates in much earlier but still feels he should get the award. The first criteria for full colours stipulates an excellent attitude and I send him home to think about whether he still feels he deserves the colours after his appalling attitude at Speech Day. Later that afternoon, having had some time to think things through, he arrives at my office, adamant that he deserves full colours. He understands my dilemma regarding his insolent approach and agrees, as a compromise, to apologise to the school at our next assembly. Two days later, Daigen-Ray, without flinching got up in front of the whole school, explained the situation and presented an unreserved apology. Wow, what a decent lad.



## Form One Personalised Learning Programme

**'My comfort zone has been ripped away from me', was a comment from one of the Form One boys when I asked him whether he was enjoying the Personalised Learning Programme.**

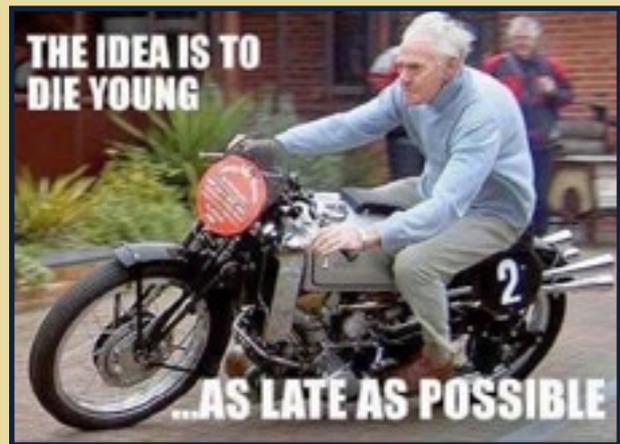
I was secretly delighted. Someone once made the comment, *'The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth'* – how quickly we get into our ruts and comfort zones. This year we decided to do away with exams in Form One and to put our pupils through a programme in which they were allowed to choose what they wanted to learn, while the rest of the school was writing their exams. Although it was a calculated risk, and we knew it would work, what we didn't expect, was the huge success it turned out to be. Pupils were challenged, teachers were challenged and real learning happened. As a school we often ask what the classroom of the future will look like. What can we expect to be teaching in 2030 or even 2040? These are questions we have to ask. Obviously we are not sure what our schools will look like 20 years from now. What we do however know, is that the education will be pupil-centred, open-walled and will not be focussed on learning facts but skills. Our Form One PLP included all of these and we are excited about what was achieved. The pupils chose to learn about, motor mechanics, robotics, media production, design of low cost houses, entrepreneurship, composing music and making eco-bricks.

Having encouraged her daughter to stay at home for a day or two during the PLP because she was not feeling well, a mum of one of the Form One girls was told in no uncertain terms that missing school was not even an option – she wasn't prepared to let her group down and insisted on going to school. When a teenage pupil who is ill, insists on going to school, you know you are doing something right!



## Farewell Ron Gill

**Mr Gill started taking on music students at St Martin's in 1979 – a whopping 40 years ago.** He has involved himself in the school in a myriad of ways and his legacy will live on for ever. He went on the Form Four camp for over 30 years and his organ playing in our chapel, his Carols by Candlelight services and his humour and 'naughtiness' will not be forgotten. Just recently he took a Form One group during the PLP and taught them all about engines. The smell of petrol and seeing boys with grease under their fingernails as they were taking the cylinder head off a lawnmower engine, pleased me no end – this was real education! The meme below and a comment Ron made recently describes him perfectly:  
*I don't do speed limits – otherwise I would have bought a scooter.*



Ron – thank you for a job well done. Incredibly well done. We will miss you!

## Prep and High School Art Exhibitions

**Both events were festive occasions. Scrumptious snacks, good wine, quality art and, of course, the St Martin's community connecting with each other.**

Pictured below is an exhibit, consisting of a work of art from each of the grades Grade 000 all the way to Grade 12. The progression is fascinating to see and everyone present agreed that art at St Martin's is flourishing. Isra Hoosen's exceptional depiction of a Southern Cape landscape will grace the walls of Bishop William's work space in the diocesan offices. There were numerous people offering to buy this painting and, had we put it up for auction, Isra would have been able to have a fabulous holiday spending spree. It really is a beautiful piece!



# Tambo Foundation Business Breakfast

**In 1976, just after the Soweto riots, many high school pupils fled South Africa and went into exile.**

The ANC leadership was not willing to integrate them into Umkhonto we Sizwe because they were too young, so they approached Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian president, for a piece of land. Having generously been given 250ha of real estate, they built a school and called it the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College – SOMAFCO.

We were recently invited by the Tambo Foundation to attend a business breakfast focussing on Tambo's vision for an equal society. The list of panellists was impressive, including the governor of the Reserve Bank, Justice Albie Sachs and non-other than the current CEO of SOMAFCO. I approached him after the formal proceedings were over, asking him to consider an exchange programme between St Martin's and SOMAFCO. He was very excited about this prospect and we will be meeting early in the New Year to button things up. What an experience that will be for our pupils!

During question time, Keana Mendes asked: *'As the youth of today, having been left with the burden of a country with serious problems, what should we focus on first?'* Young people are just so honest! Later I received this message from the CEO of the Tambo Foundation: *'I cannot thank you and your wonderful students enough for participating in our event – and on a day when they were writing exams! Your pupils are so articulate, curious and engaging – it really was such a pleasure to have them in the audience'. And they ask those same questions in class every day!*

**TAMBO FOUNDATION**  
**BUSINESS BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER**  
**Tambo's Vision for an Equal Society:  
A Retrospective of 25 Years of Democracy**

**Panellists:**

**Lesetja Kganyago**  
Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa

**Albie Sachs**  
Former Justice of the Constitutional Court

**Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi**  
Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University

**Tihlohele Mohlathe**  
CEO, SOMAFCO Trust

**Facilitated by:**  
**Siki Mgabadeli**

**Tuesday, 3 December**  
**GIBS**  
26 Melville Road, Illovo

**07:00**  
Seats are limited

**Tickets: R625pp**  
Available on Quicket  
**R5000 per table**

For table bookings, contact [info@tambofoundation.org.za](mailto:info@tambofoundation.org.za)

Gordon Institute of Business Science  
University of Pretoria

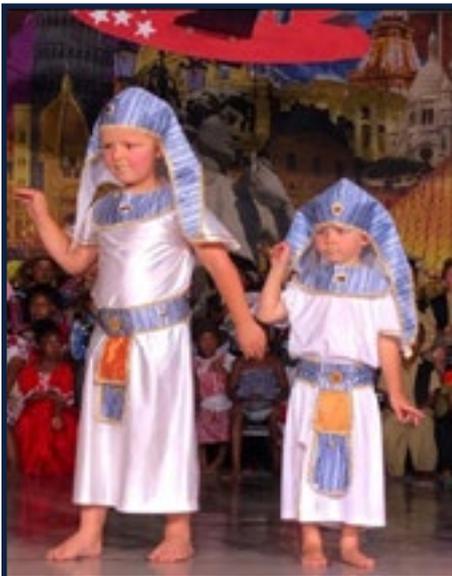
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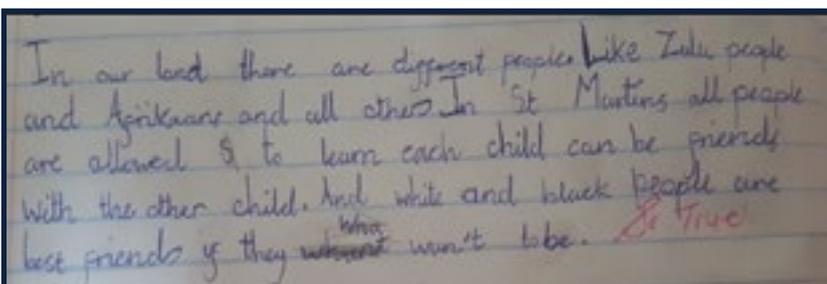
## Pre-Primary Play

Getting three, four and five-year-olds on stage is a mammoth undertaking, but the learning that happens makes it all worthwhile. Memorizing the lines, remembering when to come onto the stage, when to say what and trying to get the dance moves right, makes this an incredibly valuable learning experience. Our Pre-Primary productions are always happy occasions, full of laughter and joy. What stood out for me this year, and I was able to sneak in a picture, was Teacher Kamala holding and comforting a boy who had somehow lost his nerve with everything that was happening, and just burst into tears. This is what sets our school apart. Teachers don't shout at kids when the wheels come off – they see it as a learning experience and encourage, support and reassure where necessary. What a moment!



During a rehearsal one of the Egyptian girls says to her teacher, *I'm a magician dressed like Jesus!*

A line in one of the songs of the production reads: *'We are proud to be part of a school that loves South Africa'*. And indeed, that's what we are! As a school, we keep hope alive and our ethos seeks to reflect the nation we continue to dream of. The two descriptions of our school, below, were heart-warming to receive: The handwritten one is from a Grade 3 pupil and the other is from a monologue in the Form One Production.



Us...  
**We are a family, One with no borders,  
No divide, No lies, Diversity runs wild,  
We are all accepted. In its essence, I say,  
We are the perfect representation,  
Of a rainbow nation.**

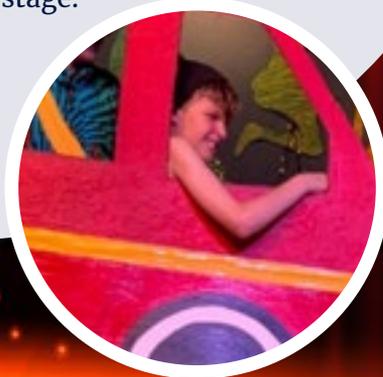


## Form One Production

**Colourful, humorous, loud, excellently choreographed with graceful dancing, a beautiful backdrop and lots of energy.**

The audience was kept spellbound for the full duration of the play and couldn't quite believe what these thirteen-year olds put on as their Form One production. Drama at St Martin's really is in a league of its own. Every child was expected to be on stage and although this was quite a challenge for many, they stepped up to the plate and performed their part. The backdrop had been produced by the pupils under the watchful eye of the Art teacher and, with the lighting, it added a really professional touch to this production.

Everyone commented on the incredible talent these pupils displayed and what stood out was the fun they were having on stage.



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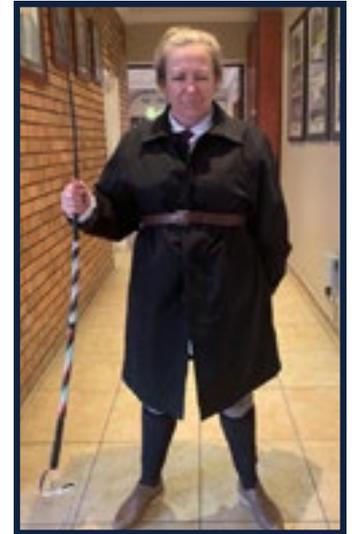
## Prep School Speech Day



The setting of our Prep School Speech Day on the beautiful green lawns, under the English Oak trees at the High School, with the blue, blue sky high above, was comparable to the best wine farms in the Western Cape!

It was a celebratory occasion, looking back on an incredibly fruitful year at our Prep School. A number of significant changes have been introduced at the Prep this year and these have put us at the cutting edge of what is happening in schools countrywide. A quote from Mrs Myburgh's cleverly crafted inaugural speech, sums up the shift in education we have begun to

make: *'We lose too many talented and intelligent people by defining intelligence through tests that are inadequate and constricting. We need to look wider and encourage the entrepreneur, the inquisitive and the creative in our schools to make the most of who we are and bring out the richness and diversity of thought and ideas in our society'*. In and amongst all the learning, the sport, the tours, the choir, the rocket launches, the art exhibition, the outings and everything else that happens in this vibrant school, St Martin's Prep is a happy place and 'Miss Trunchbull' has already made her mark!



## Snippets

### The Tuckshop

We are delighted with our new tuckshop operators and they have already made a huge difference. Pupils get grumpy when the food is not good and, so far, we have received fantastic feedback. When you engage with new people to run the tuckshop at a school you always enter discussions about what will be on the shelves. This is usually a robust conversation with a bit of give-and-take from both parties – particularly if the Headmaster believes in healthy eating and the prospective operator is a tough businessman who needs to make a profit. In my discussions with Dewald, I let a few things through under duress.



I was absolutely delighted, when one of the new prefects for 2020 came to see me, saying they need healthier food in the tuckshop. I sent her to negotiate with Dewald! It will be interesting to see the outcome of those negotiations next year!

He is a wonderful man and, off his own bat, he has started teaching the Pre-Primary children that arrive at his tuckshop about money. With the advent of credit cards we are finding that children are less and less au fait with the very basics of dealing with money.

## Touch Rugby

Nine of our Touch Rugby girls were invited to represent their province at the Interprovincial Touch Rugby Tournament in Cape Town this year and they loved the experience. Three of these girls were then selected for the U21 ladies side and we are incredibly proud of them.

## Matric's Final Exam



Pictured here is the Matric exam room in the final few minutes of the final Matric exam.

It's all over now and the looks of ecstasy and relief on the faces of the Matrics was quite something to behold. They walked out to a welcome from the rest of the school with blue balloons, some cup-cakes with #wemadeit on the icing and some alcohol-free Champagne. Now comes the long wait for the results.

## Field of Dreams Children's Centre

You may remember the 'Put it in the Bag' campaign in the Trinity Term to collect clothes for the needy. Thandeka Vilana, one of the girls who went on the trip to the beneficiary organisation, The Field of Dreams Children's Centre, made the following comment: *'It made me realize that not everyone in this world has the privilege to get the things that we complain about most – school and parents.'* Such an incredibly insightful comment! I again realised how important it is for us, as a school, to expose our pupils to communities in our city that are not as fortunate. They gain a little perspective when they interact with orphaned children of their age, who don't have a school to go.

## 2020 Matric Dance Invites

During the final assembly of the year, our Form Four pupils were given their invites for next year's Matric dance.

The invitation was an umbrella and there was, at first, much confusion as to how this umbrella could possibly constitute an invitation – until they saw the QR code, pictured here, attached to the umbrella with a ribbon. If you scan this QR code with your phone – and you can scan it on your screen right now – you will be taken to a most creative and beautiful invite. Otherwise go to: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19yq5mtN3UmybgS2ITZEYQPHoT59TaMWO/view>  
It's worth having a look – particularly the last page!



## Christmas Greetings

St Martin's has had a wonderful year and, as a school, we continue to push the boundaries of innovation, technology and the newest teaching trends, never forgetting what really sets us apart: 'Where every child is known'.

It remains for me to wish you a wonderful holiday. May this Christmas time be filled with an awareness of the love of Christ, memorable family moments and much rest and recuperation.

Best wishes

**Thomas Hagspihl**  
Headmaster

# SCHOOL TERMS CALENDAR 2020

## TERM 1

Tuesday 14 January – Thursday 9 April

## TERM 2

Tuesday 5 May – Friday 31 July

## TERM 3

Tuesday 1 September – Friday 4 December

Keep up to date with school activities and student life on our social media pages



saintmartinsschool



Stmartins\_school



The St Martin



## GET IN TOUCH

**PRE AND PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

Grades: 000 - 7 011 435 0380

**HIGH SCHOOL**

Forms: 1 - 5 011 435 0735/6/7