

MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER

Thank you for taking the time to visit our website. The pandemic has had a significant impact on schools especially with regards to class sizes and the need for social distancing which has proven to be a challenge in schools with large numbers. Schools have had to be innovative in switching to online platforms to cater for their pupils' academic needs.

With this in mind, choosing a school for your child has become even more challenging. This is one of the most important decisions a parent has to make as you plan the future and educational development of your children. These formative years lay the foundation for what lies ahead.

At this age, a child's brain is like putty waiting to be shaped and moulded and needs to be exposed to a stimulating and dynamic environment that promotes and develops critical thinking skills, which are vital for them to take their place in the big wide world and make a meaningful contribution to society.

So by now you would have been to a number of open days at different schools and pretty much heard about what they have to offer – state of the art facilities; excellent academic programme; dedicated staff; excellent sports programme and how the school focusses on the holistic development of each child – familiar terms!

So what sets Manor Gardens apart from the rest of these schools?

Manor Gardens is regarded as the leading academic institution and has been for a long time. Why?

Manor Gardens is a small, family-oriented school with small class numbers which is essential in the current circumstances we find ourselves in; ***our average class size ranges from 18-23 pupils in a class; far less than other schools that you might be considering!***

Our approach to teaching and the curriculum offered is different in that we have adapted the curriculum to ensure it caters for the needs of our pupils and prepares them to meet the demands of our ever-changing society.

Fundamental to our success is our use of the constructivist approach to the teaching of Maths and the Language Across the Curriculum approach to all the other learning areas. I will elaborate on these later.

The key to education and learning is Reading. Reading and the comprehension thereof underpins all other learning including Maths. Reading is neglected at many schools because of the time constraints schools are faced with implementing the CAPS curriculum.

At Manor Gardens, we have adapted the curriculum to ensure that reading is a priority all the way from Grade R to Grade 7. Reading is timetabled up to Gr.7- something that you will not find at other schools. We are proud to inform you that we have an extensive reading programme that is the envy of other schools. We inculcate a love for reading from Gr. R We have a dedicated reading room for our junior primary department – pupils spend their time selecting suitable books and are able to relax in a very spacious and comfortable environment reading at their leisure. This room is well stocked with carefully selected and graded books. (You will see this room when you visit). We also have a well-stocked media centre for our senior primary pupils where pupils spend time during breaks and after school.

What also sets us apart from the traditional approach to teaching at other schools is our use of Language Across the Curriculum. LAC aims to improve language skills and bridges the gap between language and content knowledge. In applying LAC, one learns about a subject using the language you are trying to learn. One has to first master the language before decoding the knowledge content.

Therefore, a pupil's timetable at Manor Gardens differs greatly from that of a pupil at other schools where one will see – Eng., Maths, Hist, Geog, Science etc. At Manor Gardens, this is timetabled as LAC.

At MGPS we engage in lessons and activities that integrate skills and content of the traditional curriculum around a theme. So why do we use this approach?

The human brain does not operate in defined compartments of information – we look for connections between ideas and often learn best when we identify such connections. Our integrated approach breaks down arbitrary boundaries between Natural Science, Social studies and Language Arts by integrating the skills and knowledge traditionally defined within these disciplines into one Theme Centred approach.

With regards to Maths, we use the constructivist problem solving approach. The aim is to develop critical thinking skills that are essential for everyday life. Students are actively involved in constructing, evaluating and refining their own theories about Maths. They develop a greater responsibility for their own learning and develop strategies to solve problems, reflect on solutions and discuss ideas with others.

Manor Gardens is also affiliated to Thinking Schools South Africa which aims to embed explicit creative and critical thinking skills into our curriculum. Our children are exposed to different strategies- thinking Maps, De Bonos Thinking hats – which allows them to look at problems from different perspectives and develop a deeper understanding of content. In other words, one does not passively absorb content to be memorised but rather one engages with and interrogates the content. These strategies are used during our lessons from the foundation phase all the way up to

Grade 7.

Whilst these approaches might be foreign to you, what it does is emphasise our intense focus on academics, which is our core business, and our successes over the years bear testament to the success of these teaching philosophies.

Manor Gardens pupils have excelled in the various external Maths Problem Solving challenges that our pupils enter. We have been the number 1 school

in the Horizon Maths challenge for many years (trophies in our foyer). We also excelled in the Beyond Maths Problem solving challenge, which is a level above the Horizon maths. In the Living Maths Olympiad, which is written nationally, a number of our pupils have excelled, featuring in the top three. A truly remarkable achievement for our school.

As alluded to earlier, Reading is the cornerstone of learning and academic success. Manor gardens has excelled in the International Lit Quiz over the years- first in the world in 2011; 2nd in 2015 ; first in SA in 2018 ; first in KZN in 2019 and 3rd in SA.

These accolades are a result of the hard work of a dedicated staff and an extensive and relevant academic programme.

Manor Gardens pupils continue to excel at the various high schools with many achieving dux or second to dux.

We have an extensive extramural & cultural programme.

Manor Gardens is a very relaxed and stress free environment where pupils are not forced to function in a restrictive environment. You will see pupils either in sandals or barefoot, no ties; comfortable golf shirts and shorts. Many lessons occur outdoors and you will see children all around the school working in groups; reading at their own leisure, as we want learning to occur in a relaxed and fun environment.

I trust that you will enjoy the video we have put together which encapsulates “The Manor Gardens Way”. We would have loved to have you all present at an Open Day presentation; nonetheless, we have made provision for individual tours of the school at your request.

I wish you all the best and trust that you will make an informed decision regarding your choice of school for your child. Take care and stay safe.

Thank you

Charles Morgan

Headmaster