



HOLY CROSS HIGH SCHOOL

(Maitland)

7 September 2016

In view of recent articles in local media, Holy Cross High School, Maitland wishes to make the following statement.

The school's demographic composition is such that at any given time there can be up to twelve different languages represented at the school. Oral communication in English within the classroom fosters a common language base in a multi-lingual classroom.

The practice of fining for not speaking English was initiated by Student Leaders approximately 11 years ago as a means of supporting the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) at the school. This practice is not written into our Learner Code of Conduct or any policy at the school.

Particularly in English language classes and content subject classes, the aim of the practice was to encourage learners, in their interactive engagement, to use the LoLT which is the language in which all subject tasks and examinations are assessed (except Afrikaans and Xhosa). Thus the practice was to facilitate teaching and learning (pedagogic) and not punitive. The practice is also implemented in the Xhosa and Afrikaans subject classes where learners persist in using a language other than Xhosa and Afrikaans, respectively. However, learners may code switch (use a word or expression in their mother-tongue for other learners to tell them the English/Xhosa/Afrikaans equivalent) during class discussions.

All parents or guardians who enrol their learners at the school must attend a Registration Meeting where the ethos, rules and policies of the school are explained. After this meeting the parents are given copies of relevant policies and documents which they sign as acknowledgement of receipt. Of the aspects discussed at the meeting is the fact that the LoLT is English and as such is promoted and that the school has an 'open door policy'.

The school has a long history of enrolling learners of all races contrary to the prescripts of racial segregation by the previous government. This spirit and ethos has not changed. The school still strives to accommodate learners from all spheres of society without promoting one group over another. Outside the formal classroom, at assembly and on the sports field conversations, songs and chants of all languages are heard.

Thus the practice of imposing a fine on learners who persist in communicating in a language other than the medium of instruction is contextualized within the classroom situation.

The School is and has always been open to comment from parents but to date the school has not received correspondence or personal complaints from any of our stake holders that there is dissatisfaction with the practice.

Now that there is an indication of dissatisfaction, albeit via the media and not directly, we will place it under review (which is how we address areas of concern which are brought to our

attention). The school will do so and a meeting will be called for parents in order to get their input. The learners will also meet to review the situation especially since it was an initiative of theirs to impose fines.