



PRETORIA HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 949 PARK STREET ARCADIA PRETORIA

STATEMENT ISSUED BY STONE ON BEHALF OF PHSG GOVERNING BODY
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PRETORIA HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

MEDIA STATEMENT

SUBJECT
DATE OF STATEMENT
SUBJECT

RESPONSE TO THE MEC REPORT ISSUED ON FRIDAY 02/12/2016
06/12/2016
FINAL VERSION FOR MEDIA DISTRIBUTION WITHOUT EMBARGO

PRETORIA – On Friday 2 December 2016 Gauteng MEC of Education, Mr Panyaza Lesufi presented the School Governing Body (SGB) of Pretoria High School for Girls (PHSG) with the report from the investigation team into allegations of racism at the school as conducted by a law firm on behalf of the Gauteng Department of Education.

The report was presented to the school by MEC Lesufi last Friday during a series of engagement sessions held with the SGB, school leadership, learners and media. The SGB is currently studying the report containing the law firm's findings and resultant recommendations.

"We will study the report and its recommendations in a spirit of correcting any wrong-doing with due sensitivity and fairness. The recommendations of the report will inform a proactive corrective strategy that is being developed to correct any systemic inequality or unequal engagement with learners. We acknowledge and appreciate the constructive approach followed by the MEC and his team in this very sensitive matter, while supporting his call for corrective action. The best interest of all the learners of Pretoria High School for Girls will drive our action in this regard," states Graeme Wilson, Chairperson of the PHSG SGB.

The SGB acknowledges that steps need to be taken to improve sensitivity for cultural and religious inclusion towards improving the social cohesion in our school in the interest of all the learners. An apology has already been extended to the affected learners who experienced victimisation and racial abuse. "We will ensure that no proven racist conduct or inappropriate rules will be left unaddressed. We will move forward as one inclusive proud South African school that recognises the diversity of our society with the sensitivity it requires," states Wilson.

"It is important to recognise that the structure, school discipline and adherence to a higher standard must be shaped in an inclusive and sensitive manner, without compromise to the values or excellent results that PHSG has become known for. We will proactively reinforce this firm commitment to equality across our entire school," states Wilson. The SGB appreciates and supports the MEC's call that learners need to respect the authority of educators and to conduct themselves with good discipline in a fair and equal school system. "We must ensure that the education of learners remains the primary focus of the school. This includes ensuring a conducive disciplined environment for learning," says Wilson.

PHSG and its SGB fully subscribes to an equal South Africa where the rights of everyone are protected in the country's constitution. "We have a responsibility as a society to uphold uncompromised equality. The report and the incidents that gave rise to the investigation are a renewed call to all South Africans to pursue the noble democratic dream of integration, collaboration and tolerance. We take pride in the PHSG rich tradition of pursuing excellence and allowing all our young ladies to prepare themselves to contribute meaningfully to a bright, inclusive and non-racist South African future," concludes Wilson.

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MORE INFORMATION ON PRETORIA HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS:

The School was founded in the earnest hope that here girls of different races and different denominations might meet in that commonwealth of letters which gave Erasmus and Shakespeare to the world; to acquire there, in accordance with the ideals of Christian duty, the healthy physique, the trained mind and the disciplined character which should fit each to live worthily in that state of life into which it should please God to call her.

- Edith Aitken (Founding Headmistress) 1902.

- Pretoria High School for Girls offers extensive opportunities for growth and achievement. Whether they be in the academic, cultural or sporting arenas, all girls are given the chance to excel. The successes of the school are largely due to the commitment of the girls and staff to capitalise on what is offered and achieving excellent results.
- The school is listed as a Circle of Excellence School by the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation. In addition, the Gauteng Department of Education has ranked PHSG as one of the Top Schools in Gauteng. PHSG was ranked one of the 2015 Top High Schools in South Africa based on a survey conducted by Fairlady magazine.
- As the only English medium public girls' school in Pretoria, we are exceptionally proud of our unique heritage.
- The young ladies who attend this school are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential in the academic, sporting and cultural arenas, whilst becoming responsible young adults with a sense of their own worth.
- The diverse clubs and societies, along with the prospect of serving their peers in numerous spheres, build emotional intelligence, develop good communication skills and reinforce an awareness of the needs of others.
- The well-qualified staff are subject specialists and serve as cluster moderators, provincial and national examiners in addition to their responsibilities at the school.
- The academic performance of the girls who pass through Pretoria High School for Girls, enable them to cope and adapt well at tertiary institutions throughout South Africa and internationally.
- We set high standards at PHSG, and provide our girls with countless opportunities to challenge themselves and broaden their horizons.
- We strive to produce lifelong learners; discouraging the artificial rote learning process and focusing instead on a deepening of knowledge and a critical understanding of all subject matter. In doing so, we endeavour to equip our girls with the knowledge, insight and skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to society.
- While we boast a 100% Matriculation pass rate and have won countless awards for educational excellence, our aim is to cultivate curiosity and a thirst for knowledge in our girls.
- Many of our Old Girls feature prominently in their chosen fields, whether they be academic, sporting or in the creative arts.

MORE ABOUT THE PRETORIA HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY:

- The School Governing Body (SGB) at PHSG sees itself as the custodian of a tremendous legacy, and to that end we join the school leadership in a commitment to ensuring excellence, and to providing our girls with a quality, balanced and holistic education.
- The SGB exists in accordance with the provisions of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, and is made up of elected members of the various constituent parts of the school; namely, parents, educators, learners, administrative, academic and general staff. In terms of the Act, most members of the governing body must be parents, and the critical executive positions – Chair and Treasurer, for example - must be held by parents. This serves to reaffirm the pivotal role played by parents in the school.
- While the SGB's focus is primarily financial, and while educational and academic matters are managed by the Headmistress, we see ourselves as part of a dynamic partnership which is supportive, innovative and committed to the safe and successful stewardship of the school. Our common aim is to turn out confident, capable young women who can go out into the world and make their mark.