

Tel: +27 (12) 348-1221
Fax: +27 (12) 361-1917
Cell: +27 (83) 409 9149
www.stalbanscollege.com
Email: viljoenk@stalbanscollege.com



St Alban's College

St Alban's College
110 Clearwater Road
Lynnwood Glen
Pretoria 0081

✉ Private Bag X01
Lynnwood Ridge
0040
South Africa



MacRobert House

From the desk of Keith Viljoen, MacRobert House

10 September 2010

Dear MacRobert House parent

I write this letter to you to welcome you to St Alban's College and more specifically to MacRobert House. This school is a vibrant community where boys are challenged to discover and then develop their talents to the full, while we as staff attempt to nurture, support and guide them throughout. I look forward to getting to know you and your son and I hope that our association will be a happy and rewarding one. On behalf of the MacRobert community, we hope that you and your son will enjoy your time with us. To quote my predecessor, Ross Barrett, "This is a House with a proud history and a tangible sense of family."

Let me firstly take this opportunity to introduce myself: I became Housemaster of MacRobert at the beginning of the year and before that I was Head of Maths at the school. When not in the classroom, I am more often than not coaching the boys on the cricket or rugby field. I am married to Julie and we have two beautiful children, Erin age 5 and Joshua age 2. Julie is an English teacher by profession but currently prefers to be a stay-at-home mom.

From the outset, I would suggest that you do put some time aside to read this letter carefully. It is not just another one of the countless reams that you have been flooded with – this one is important!

Our other resident staff member is Mr Lampies Lotter who is my Assistant Housemaster. In addition to him, I will have an extremely caring and dedicated Miss Marcel Cornelius as Form 1 tutor. She spent her whole school career as a boarder and therefore understands the intricacies of boarding and the difficulties some boys initially experience in adjusting to life as a boarder. In addition to her, our House staff comprises of an experienced, talented and level-headed Mr Dave Kroeger, our passionate Director of Rugby Mr Johan Visagé and an extremely promising young educator in Mr Daniel McLachlan. Mr Guy Elliott, an English teacher in training and a very competent hockey coach, completes our team. We all are tutors in the House and we are there to get to know you and your son in a far more personal manner. We will strive to ensure that each boy is dealt with individually, to give him support and encouragement in tough personal times but also to challenge him to become the best that he can be so that one day he will be able to take up his place in society as a confident and equipped young man. We choose to do what is best, but we will make mistakes and sometimes assess situations incorrectly. It is in these times that I would encourage you to speak to us. Do not hesitate. We are co-partners in preparing your young man for life!

I can be contacted at **083 409 9149**, should any problem or query arise, and I would request that you contact me between 19:00 and 20:30. Alternatively, my e-mail address is viljoenk@stalbanscollege.com.

Your communication with your son is important, but experience has shown the first few weeks are the toughest. Distance and separation are always difficult to overcome and often the group dynamics are complicated as new friendship groups are discovered and established. Dad and Mom, you need to believe and trust in the resilience and the inner strength of your son; it is amazing to see how each one rises to the challenge before him. Husbands, you need to tenderly care for the mother of your son – this is going to be a difficult time for her. The first term is wonderfully new and exciting – each day holds new surprises. You will find every conversation will bubble with animated stories and on his return home, he will crash on his bed from exhaustion and effort.

As wonderfully convenient as a cell phone is, I would strongly recommend that it does not come to school or alternatively it is locked in the safe in my study for the first term. You would know how important a status symbol a phone can be, however, I would strongly recommend that you consider purchasing a phone which does not have camera, video, music and Internet or Bluetooth® capabilities. This addresses a couple of areas that have been problematic. It reduces the

chance of theft, as often the phones are innocently left under pillows, in blazer pockets and attached to chargers. Despite our striving to keep theft to a minimum, it does occur. The fad of making late-night prank calls is something which has caused undue stress. It will also mean that sms-ing, being online with MXIT and the downloading of explicit material will not occur – their sleep is going to be important in making it through each day. Please discuss this with me, should you have a special request or circumstance. There is a call box, which is a card telephone. The number is **012 348 5815**. Cards may be purchased at the school. The best time to contact your son will be between 17:00 and 19:00 or between 21:00 and 21:30.

There are numerous systems in place to ensure that the required boundaries are clear and accountability is upheld. One of the most important systems is that of **"leave outs"**. This deals with the movement of the boarders on and off the school campus. A normal week starts for boarders on Sunday with the 18:45 roll call through to Saturday (after sport fixtures). Therefore, going home for a Friday night is an exception rather than the norm and therefore special "application" has to be made to gain this privilege. Before any boarder may leave campus they have to receive written permission from me, by means of a Leave out slip. There are a number of incentives which allow each boarder to earn a Friday night leave out, but acknowledgement of this arrangement needs to be gained from his parents and final permission from me. When he leaves or returns to the College it will be in full winter uniform (Number Ones). The full details of this system will be explained at the New Boys' function next year.

MacRobert House is an energetic and sociable place where boys are challenged to develop to their full potential. Comfort zones are a thing of the past. You have a huge role to play in this process and I would encourage you to become involved in all facets of MacRobert life, but to give your son the space he needs to grow, to stand on his own two feet, to make his own decisions and to reap the benefits – or sometimes the consequences. As a boarder parent it is very tempting to adopt a hands-off approach of drop-off; leave and collect after 5 years. We are a community that enjoys each other's company, encourages deep and searching questions of the heart, ask difficult questions of each other and often you will find that we choose to move against the spirit of the day. This is a safe environment where mistakes are tolerated, but excellence is striven for. Honesty and trust are foundational. Being one of the older boarding houses, there is a concrete sense of history, with the senior boys being proud custodians of House spirit. The boys wear their uniform and House badge with pride. You too, will find your wardrobe is going to change, so that it will include hints of red – the red fire and passion is truly catchy!

One of the areas in which you can become involved is the Parent Committee for the House. The mandate of the committee is to facilitate and promote communication and encourage a spirit of family. If you have a love and flair to entertain others; if you cannot wait for the weekend to meet friends around the cricket or rugby field – there is a spot for you. This committee is ably led by Jan Rombouts, a current Form 2 parent. His contact number is **082 826 5261** or he can be reached via e-mail on jkm@belgiumcampus.co.za. Should you be interested in joining the team please give him a call.

A member of MacRobert House is expected to conduct himself honourably and in the best interests of the House and the College at all times. The House has achieved its successes in the College as a result of teamwork, full participation and wholehearted commitment to the House. These all lead to enjoyment. I trust that your son will embrace this ethos. Lifelong friendships between families are often begun and established here. Welcome!

INVITATION

I look forward to meeting you and your son. To aid your integration into our family, we invite you, the parents, to an evening of coffee, drinks and light snacks to meet my wife and I, and our House tutor team. Please pop in any time from **19:00 on Friday 12 November**. Please RSVP to my cell phone or my email by Monday the 8 November 2010.

There will be a **New Boarder Mums' Tea (November 13, 09:00 in the St Alban's Pavilion)** to answer any queries.

Kind regards

Keith
Keith Viljoen
MacRobert Housemaster