

**17 September 2009**

## **Our Houses**

There were two events held recently that as a spectator I really enjoyed watching. The first was the annual swimming gala at the Victoria Park Pool. The second was the football match last week between 7B and 7C in the Lower Playground. This morning, I would like to share some of my observations and thoughts on those two activities.

The 'finals' day of the swimming carnival is a colourful occasion with plenty of excitement and anticipation for the events on the programme. 'Finals' day sees the emergence of flags, drums, banners, umbrellas, balloons plus anything that can make a noise; be it musical or not. While I was looking closely at the fine performances taking place in the swimming pool, I was also really interested in observing what was unfolding in the grandstand. After only a short time, the cheerleaders were taking up their positions at the front of their house, ready for battle with other cheerleaders be they in front, behind or to the side. It is no easy task getting 200 fellow students to clap, cheer and wave. However, succeed they did.

It soon became apparent to me that the houses were determined to go head-to-head in their quest to win the 'best cheering team prize'. I also observed that the efforts of all six houses were not simply for the benefit of the judges. The spectators were determined to support the swimmers who were giving their all not only for themselves but also for their house. There was loud cheering at the start of each race and as the swimmers, one by one, completed the task. But I wonder if you noticed that the loudest cheering was not for the fastest swimmer or for the closest race. The loudest cheers and most enthusiastic clapping were directed at the students who were the slowest in the pool, possibly struggling to complete 50 metres. These swimmers knew that they would not win the race. But they also knew that by the simple act of getting in the water they were representing their House.

I also mentioned last week's football match last Friday lunchtime. The boys played an exciting match with great passion and effort from both teams. But once again, I was watching the spectators as well as the game. The lines were clearly drawn; 7B classmates in one half of the stand; and 7C classmates in the other. This was no setting for a neutral supporter; you were either for 7B or for 7C. You sat with your class; students in Oak sitting beside Ginkgo, Rosewood next to Pine, Yew beside Banyan. House affiliations were put to one side; you were at the match to support your class.

I fully support the passion of our class groups and I want you to continue supporting your class; be that 6B, 4F, 3D 1E or any of the other 32 classes. But I also want you to be equally as passionate about your House. At this assembly we have sitting on the stage the six new House Captains. I know that these students are passionate about their Houses and determined to raise the profile of the House system in our College. I look forward to the day when our Houses will be just as strong as our Classes and that each boy and girl in St. Paul's College will be just as proud of their House and they are of their Class.

J.R. Kennard