

Principal's Newsletter

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We brought our term to a spectacular close with our very first Combined Schools Carol Concert. Schools from across the region joined us, performing beautifully and creating a truly festive atmosphere. A memorable highlight was our staff choir's energetic and spirited rendition of 'Holiday Road'.

We are also grateful for the promising start to what looks like a wonderful rainy season. Our campus is flourishing, including the forty indigenous trees planted by our Grade Six and Lower Six pupils. Marking our 40th anniversary by planting trees reflects our strong commitment to community and sustainability.

FEE FREEZE

Thanks to improved fiscal discipline, including careful expenditure and a focused effort to collect school fees and legacy debts, we are pleased to announce a planned fee freeze for 2026. Provided there are no unforeseen statutory adjustments, we will operate within the 2026 budget without increasing school fees.

2026 BUDGET APPROVAL

In line with protocol, the 2026 budget was presented to a quorum of SDC representatives at the Mutare Club on the 2nd of December, 2025. It received full approval from those in attendance, alongside representatives from School Management and our Board. Accompanying this newsletter is the summary of this budget presentation for your perusal.

BEIT TRUST GRANT

In March 2025, our Business Consultant, together with the accounts and estates teams, submitted a comprehensive and well-prepared application to the Beit Trust, seeking support to replace damaged asbestos roofing on selected school buildings.

We are delighted to share that the application was successful and a grant of GBP 50,000 has been awarded to undertake this important work. Planning will begin in the new year and implementation will begin once the rainy season has ended. Our sincere thanks go to the management team for their diligent efforts in preparing the required documentation and to the Beit Trust for their invaluable support.

FAREWELL TO TEACHING STAFF

This term, we bid farewell to two valued members of our teaching team, Mrs Michelle Nyabadza and Mr Martin Chinoda. We are deeply grateful for their years of dedicated work and the meaningful contribution they each made to our academic, co-curricular and boarding programmes.

We wish them every success in their future endeavours and warmly welcome them to visit Hillcrest whenever they are able to come here.

PARENT AND PUPIL SURVEY SUMMARY

Thank you to everyone who completed the recent pulse survey. Your insights are highly appreciated and will guide our future planning as we continue to evolve our services to meet the needs of our community. We pledge to do whatever we can to address the issues below so that our stakeholders feel heard.

Below is a brief overview of the parent and pupil surveys conducted in October 2025. Should any parent or guardian wish to view a more detailed breakdown of the results, please contact us to arrange access.

HILLCREST PARENT PULSE SURVEY – TERM 3, 2025

Parents reaffirmed their appreciation for Hillcrest's holistic education approach, which balances academics, sport, culture, and character development. They highlighted the dedication of our teachers, our safe and inclusive environment, and the wide range of opportunities that nurture growth, leadership and confidence. Our commitment to international standards, strong boarding care and supportive pastoral systems were also commended.

Constructive feedback focused on several key priorities:

- Strengthening academic outcomes and teaching consistency
- Enhancing communication between school and home
- Modernising classrooms and boarding facilities
- Increasing practical, future-focused learning - including digital literacy, coding and life skills
- Ensuring equitable access to co-curricular activities
- Providing clear and consistent recognition systems
- Continuing to promote student emotional, social and mental wellbeing

We are grateful for this valuable guidance and remain committed to continuous improvement so that Hillcrest delivers the highest possible value for every child

HILLCREST PUPIL PULSE SURVEY – TERM 3, 2025

Our pupils expressed great pride in Hillcrest, especially enjoying the variety of sports, clubs, trips and the strong friendships that they build here. They appreciate teachers who make learning engaging, supportive and practical.

They also raised important areas for improvement, including:

- Teacher professionalism and consistency
- Clearer homework expectations
- Stronger support for emotional and mental wellbeing through a relevant life skills program
- Fair access to sports and clubs
- Upgraded facilities
- More exposure to highly competitive schools, tours and trips

In response, the Senior Management Team has developed a focused 2026 Action Plan, prioritising the key concerns raised.

This plan includes:

- Enhanced professional development for teachers
- Reinstatement of prep timetables
- Further improvements to classroom culture
- A more balanced workload, including limiting travel before exams and common tests
- Expanded co-curricular opportunities
- Strategic upgrades to school facilities

CAT4 TEST RESULTS

Our Form 2 pupils wrote internationally acclaimed Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT4) last week. The results have been published and parents will receive their child's individual report soon. Please find, accompanying this newsletter, a letter from our Director of Studies with more detail.

COLLECTION OF EXTERNAL EXAM RESULTS

Friday 9th January, 2026 at 0930hrs - AS/A Level results will be released. Parents/Guardians and candidates can collect their results from the Deputy Head's office (Mr Chipato).

Thursday 15th January 2026 at 0930hrs - IGCSE results will be released. Parents/Guardians and candidates can collect the results from the Deputy Head's office (Mr. Chipato). Once results have been collected, L6s can then do their subject confirmations with the Lower 6 Line Head and subject teachers.

Candidates are to ensure that they are fully cleared by the school for fees and textbooks before collecting their results.

WATER BOTTLES

In our quest to reduce the use of single-use plastic bottles, especially during sports fixtures, I would like to appeal to all parents to send their child to school with a named water bottle that can be refilled during the day and used throughout the school day. Research has shown that keeping hydrated with fresh water is essential for healthy development and well-being

MEDICAL AID COVER

It is essential to have medical aid or medical insurance in place for your child. In the event of an emergency, having this coverage can be truly life-changing. We appreciate that many parents have already been proactive in securing medical aid to support their child through various medical situations.

Please be advised that, effective January 2026, all boarders who are not registered on a medical aid scheme will be required to pay a deposit to the school. This deposit will cover any expenses related to external medical assistance and medication provided during their time at school.

We kindly ask that you make the necessary arrangements to enrol your child in a suitable medical aid scheme as soon as possible to ensure their wellbeing and avoid any inconvenience.

TOURS IN TERM ONE

We are excited to announce two upcoming sports tours. During half term (February 2026), selected pupils will travel to Mozambique and our rugby and girls' hockey teams will compete in a tournament in Kugersdorp, South Africa. Pupils involved have already been informed.

Please encourage your child to maintain their fitness and a healthy routine during the holiday break to stay competitive for these events. Additionally, ensure that your child has a valid passport in preparation for the tours, with six months validity beyond April 2026. Please renew the passport during the holidays if necessary.

Kindly note that pupils may only participate in school tours once tuition, boarding, and tour fees are fully paid at least one month before departure.

ABSENTEEISM DURING THE TERM

We are committed to improving the academic results at Hillcrest College. However, we have observed a concerning trend of unnecessary absenteeism. For example, on one day in November, over fifteen pupils from a single form missed school entirely to "go shopping for camp."

Frequent absenteeism directly affects a child's academic progress. We appeal to all parents to ensure their children attend school consistently so we can provide the highest quality education and improve our academic outcomes.

LOST PROPERTY

Our storeroom currently holds a large amount of lost property, as pupils often leave belongings in their classrooms or by the fields. Some items are labelled, while others are not.

Please encourage your child to take care of their belongings and ensure that all clothing is clearly labelled. For second-hand uniform items, contact the front office to arrange a collection of clothes.

IMPORTANT TERM DATES AND CALENDAR FOR TERM ONE 2026

A soft copy of the Term One, 2026 calendar has been shared with you but below are some important dates for you to be aware of:

January, 2026

- Friday 9th - AS/A Level Results are out at 0930hrs
- Prefects check into Hostel for Induction Program at 1700hrs
- Monday 12th - New Parents & Pupils Meeting at 1030hrs
- Teas will be served from 0930hrs
- Tuesday 13th - Schools Open
- Thursday 15th - Cambridge IGCSE Results are out at 0930hrs
- Thursday 22nd - Form 3 Tutor, Parent & Pupil Meeting at Lighthouse at 1730hrs
- Thursday 29th - Form 2 Tutor, Parent & Pupil Meeting at Lighthouse at 1730hrs
- Friday 30th - Boarder Parents Meeting in Harare at 1730hrs
- Saturday 31st - Crestonians' Reunion in Harare at 1730hrs

February, 2026

- Thursday 5th - Form 1 Tutor, Parent & Pupil Meeting at Lighthouse at 1730hrs
- Friday 6th - Zonal Athletics Competition
- Monday 9th - Careers Fair
- Wednesday 11th - NBSZ Blood Donations
- Thursday 12th - Form 4 Tutor, Parent & Pupil Meeting at Lighthouse at 1730hrs
- Monday 16th - Interact Fundraising Luncheon
- Wednesday 18th to Monday 23rd - **Mid-Term Break**
- Friday 20th to Monday 23rd - Sports Tour to Beira International School, Mozambique
- Thursday 26th - Lower 6 Tutor, Parent & Pupil Meeting at Lighthouse at 1730hrs
- Friday 27th - Rugby Tour Fundraiser

March, 2026

- Thursday 5th - Provincial Athletics Competition in Chimanimani
- Friday 6th - Grade 7 Discovery Day at 1000hrs
- Grade 7 Social & Dinner at Laverock at 1730hrs
- Sunday 8th - Crestcan Walk
- Thursday 12th - Form 4 Common Tests Begin
- Inter-House Athletics Day 1 at 1400hrs
- Saturday 14th - Inter-House Athletics Day 2 at 0830hrs
- Monday 16th - Common Tests for the rest of the School Begin
- Wednesday 18th to Sunday 22nd - Form 4 Geography Camp
- Saturday 21st - Farmcrest Day (Form 1 Concert) at the Rec Centre at 1900hrs

- Tuesday 24th to Friday 27th - National Athletics Competition in Harare
Wednesday 25th - Crestonians' Reunion in Mutare
Friday 27th - Hillcrest Schools' Night (NIAA Highlights Concert) at 1800hrs
Tuesday 31st - Hockey Girls 1st Team Departs for South Africa Tour at 0330hrs
- Rugby 1st Team Departs for South Africa Tour at 0700hrs
- Final Assembly at 0950hrs

Wednesday 1st April - End of Term 1

START OF TERM 2026

- Friday 9th January at 1700hrs - Prefects Induction
Tuesday 13th January at 0800hrs - Form 1 Induction begins
Tuesday 13th January at 0800hrs - L6 Induction begins
Thursday 15th January at 0730hrs - L6 Coding Workshop with 'Uncommon' for two full days

We wish you all a restful and joyful holiday and Christmas with your children and I look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready for an exciting year ahead.

Warm regards,



SARAH SHOESMITH
PRINCIPAL

Principal's Newsletter

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We concluded this half term with a truly special Speech Day. We were honoured to welcome Augustine "Gus" Mwaramba, our very first Hillcrest College Head Boy, who traveled all the way from the UK to join us for our Fortieth Anniversary celebrations. Gus delivered an inspiring speech and presented awards to our well-deserving pupils.

In addition to his speech, Gus—an experienced mathematics teacher currently working in London—spent the day observing our teachers and generously sharing valuable insights and practical tips. Together with our current Head Boy, he also planted a beautiful tree at the College Amphi-Theatre, leaving a lasting mark on our campus.

Fireworks Night

We warmly invite you and your family to join us for our annual Fireworks Night, hosted in support of the SDC Committee, on 31st October. Festivities will begin at 16:00hrs and conclude at 20:00hrs. Tickets are US\$10.00 per adult and college pupil, and US\$5 for children at the Prep School. College pupils should bring their payment to school after half term and submit it to their tutor. Tickets will also be available at the gate.

Surveys

Thank you for taking the time to complete the recent pulse survey. Your feedback is invaluable, and we will carefully review the data to incorporate emerging trends into our future strategies and planning. In addition, we have conducted pupil and staff surveys to ensure that the voices of all our valued stakeholders are heard. We deeply appreciate your contributions to shaping our educational services.

Important Term Dates

We have many exciting events planned for the remainder of the term and warmly encourage you to join us whenever possible.

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| ● Cambridge Exams | - | Thursday 25 th September to 13 th November |
| ● Mid-Term Break | - | Thursday 16 th to Monday 20 th October |
| ● Swot Leave | - | Tuesday 21 st October |
| ● Form 1 Great Zimbabwe Trip | - | Sunday 26 th to Monday 27 th October |
| ● Fireworks Night | - | Friday 31 st October |
| ● End of Year Internal Exams | - | Monday 10 th to Wednesday 19 th November |
| ● Tree Planting Day | - | Thursday 20 th November |
| ● Form 2 Matopos Trip (Byo) | - | Sunday 23 rd to Tuesday 25 th November |
| ● Form 3 Camp (OBZ Chimanmani) | - | Friday 21 st to Wednesday 26 th November |
| ● Farmcrest Christmas Dinner | - | Saturday 30 th November |
| ● Schools' Carol Service | - | Tuesday 2 nd December |

Please note that the end of term for Forms One, Two, and Three is at 13:00hrs on Wednesday, 3rd December. We kindly ask that you do not remove your children from school before this time, as teaching continues until the very end of term. If you need to take your child out early for any reason, please write to the Principal at principal@hillcrestschools.co.zw for safeguarding purposes.

Start of Term 2026

Looking ahead to next term, all pupils—including Lower 6—will begin the year together on 13th January, 2026. Lower 6 pupils will start their AS level curriculum from the first day of term. If necessary, subject choices may be adjusted once IGCSE results are released, but this plan ensures that all pupils have a strong, focused start to the academic year alongside their peers.

We wish you a restful and joyful half-term break with your children and look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready for an exciting term ahead.

Warm regards,



SARAH SHOESMITH
PRINCIPAL