

## **SPEECH AND PRIZE GIVING DAY 13 OCTOBER 2017: ELLIS ROBINS SCHOOL HEADMASTER'S SPEECH:**

Directors of Ceremonies, Ms Museruka and Mr Mudau;  
Our Guest of Honour, Mr A Mudzikitiri;  
Representative of the Ministry of Education, Warren Park/Mabelreign District;  
The Chairman of the School Development Committee, Mr Karumekayi and Executive members of his Committee here present;  
Reverend Gatora and Amai Gatora of the AFM Church;  
Mr Zuze and Representatives of Former Students of this School;  
Head of Mabelreign Girls High School, Mrs Kusena  
NASH Heads here present;  
NAPH Heads here present;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;  
And the Gentlemen of Ellis Robins School, the Dolphins

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to greet all the congregants gathered here as we celebrate the achievements of our teachers, students and the school community at large. It is barely a month since joining the institution that is Ellis Robins with its rich traditions stretching back to pre-independence days. I am happy to say I have embraced the distinctive character of Ellis Robins popularly known as the Dolphins. The first Speech Night and Prize Giving (as it was called then) was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1958, ie 59 years to date and we have since transformed it into the School Merit Awards Day that is now celebrated during the day.

### **Enrolment and Staffing**

Our school has classes from Form 1 to Form Six with a total student enrolment of about 770. The total number of teachers who guide them through their various disciplines is 45. Currently the school is facing some challenges because we are not getting

replacements for teachers who leave through retirements or resignations. However, we are grateful to the parents through their School Development Committee because they quickly intervene to give us replacements whenever we request for them. At the moment we have engaged four such teachers as relief for the vacancies that have not yet been filled by the Ministry. Ladies, gentlemen and the boys let's put our hands together to applaud the parents who help us to keep the school going.

### **Curriculum Issues**

Our celebratory theme this year is: "Celebrating our Achievements, Embracing the New Curriculum". For the most part of this year, our teachers have been attending numerous workshops that were meant to equip them with the requisite skills and knowledge for a new curriculum that was introduced this year, 2017. The new curriculum is intended to provide our students with an education that is responsive to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There might be some parents who still regard education as based only on strong content knowledge i.e. bookish knowledge. That is yesterday's thinking! Schools are now there to provide holistic development of individuals and not the bookworms as what is currently obtaining. At this school, we have since moved on and we have embraced new subjects to our curriculum, for instance, Heritage Studies and Physical Education which will be examinable at the end of four years of education. We also have a vibrant Arts and Culture Department to promote social, moral and emotional development.

The school is also playing its part in the promotion of STEM subjects. The enrolment of Science students at Lower Six has risen. The school has embraced the new curriculum and now offers pure Sciences starting from Form Three. This is in line with world trends, and at this point allow me to quote HE the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe when he said, ***"There is need to transform the structure and curriculum of the country's education system in order to adequately meet the evolving development aspirations. This should see greater focus being placed on the teaching and learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, including....entrepreneurship."*** The new curriculum should also

help us to cater for students who have different abilities, different gifts, different needs and different dreams. Somebody once said that if you judge the fish by its ability to climb trees, then it will spend the rest of its life thinking that it is stupid. We were in the past providing a one size fits all paradigm. It is time we stopped teaching fish how to climb trees.

### ***Our Pass Rates***

Our "O" Level pass rates are very competitive when we compare ourselves with sister schools in the District. However, the "O" Level pass rate needs to be seen against a backdrop of previous performances of the last three years. The "O" Level pass rate was at 19.7% in 2014, rising to 27.0% in 2015, then to 30. % in 2016. This shows a determination to succeed by each successive group of students and their teachers for a solid three years in succession. The current "O" Level class of 2017 has promised me that they will improve on the current pass rate. We also managed to have a student receiving a District Merit Award for attaining 9 A<sup>s</sup> and 1 B in last year's "O" Level ZIMSEC results. That is an achievement that had not been attained the previous year, and we want to keep on improving on that performance. Again the boys have promised that they will do better and their self-belief will definitely contribute towards the realization of that desire. At "A" Level, we must admit that the current pass rates are lower than the national pass rates. The 2014 "A" Level pass rate was 54. 9% rising to 60.5% in 2015 and to 67% in 2016. These figures are low for a school that has a glorious past of its pre-independence years and the post independence years of the 1980<sup>s</sup> and 1990<sup>s</sup>. However, the figures have been rising steadily over the years indicating a positive development in the school. Our best "A" Level student in 2016 had 13 points in a bad year for our District in which the best student had 14 points. Nevertheless, we have to employ strategies to improve our pupils' performance through our teachers, parents and of course, the Old Boys Association.

## **Performance in Sport, Arts and Culture**

(Refer to end notes on notable achievements and read the achievements\*)

In the sporting arena we have a mixed bag. Ellis Robins is a school in which a lot is expected. Sadly, we have not been able to match those expectations. The Old Boys have seen this and have started doing something about it. Some parents have also seen it, the Ministry Officials, some well wishers and other stakeholders have seen it as well and intervention measures should be put in place to awaken the giant that Ellis Robins once was. We are surely poised for greater things to come. The school had lost its ethos, its character and its self-belief. Some old boys (who are now fathers) were no longer enrolling their children here. They had lost faith in the school, they had lost trust. But, there is palpitation in the air and a refreshing feeling of self-belief that should inspire us to realize our dreams. Some of the Old Boys are here and they are dreaming big.

Our greatest challenges, ladies, gentlemen and boys, are the overstretched school facilities. The upgrading and development of sporting facilities are hampered by lack of funding. Our revenue base has continued to shrink largely due to the difficult economic conditions currently prevailing in this country. In the long term, we have plans to upgrade and maintain the existing sporting facilities for the benefit of sport-hungry students. We want eventually to have sports facilities that are second to none and some of the old boys are coming up with brilliant ideas of how we can do this. The school hall also needs sprucing up for indoor activities as well as its gymnasium. The sports equipment, even for such mundane disciplines such as athletics, is grossly inadequate. At the moment, our students have to make do with what is available which definitely impacts on their performance.

Finally, ladies, gentlemen and boys, the school was beginning to gain notoriety because of the misdemeanours of a handful of boys. Misbehaviours cause lots of distractions to the culprits themselves and to the generality of students whose school's name gets to be tarnished by these miscreants. Serious among the issues of misdemeanor are cases

of absenteeism and bunking of lessons. There is a lack of direction among this group and we are inviting parents to play their part and put a stop to this nonsensical behavior. A close monitoring of their work at school could be revealing to the parent of the learning behaviours of their children. At this point, let me take this opportunity to thank one of the old boys who reported a case of two boys who were caught stealing in a supermarket in town while wearing our school uniform. It's despicable behaviour which may mean that all our boys will be seen in poor light because of the misdeeds of just two. I can't preempt the disciplinary measures but you will know about the action we will take against them. Let's give this old boy, a true dolphin, a standing ovation and a round of applause.

Finally, I wish to remind ourselves again that we are gathered to celebrate the achievements of our teachers and students, our sons, during the 2017 academic year in a somewhat difficult environment. I wish to congratulate the prize winners today for a job well done.

I thank you!

**\*End Note**

-The school was at position 2 in the District Athletics competition (2017). It fed 18 Athletes into the District team.

-In Handball, the U17 and U20 boys were the first runners-up in 2017.

-In 2017, the U17 Volleyball team was number 1 in the District, proceeding to the Provincial finals where they fell to Churchill who later became the National champions.

-From 2015-2017, the Table Tennis team won all their league games. In 2016, 3 players- Hart Hozheri, Isaac Bangwayo and Andy- were selected into the Zim Team.

-in 2016, fed Danai Gunde into the Badminton National team.

The Junior debate team won the Provincial finals (2017). Panimaha Hikwa was the best speaker in the district public speaking competitions (2017).