



College News

06 March, 2026



1936 - 2026



**WOODRIDGE
PREPARATORY**
celebrating 90 years

Dear Parents

As our pupils return from their various grade camps, I find myself once again reflecting on what a uniquely Woodridge experience these past days have been.

Each year, our staff are reminded what a privilege it is to witness your children beyond the classroom, in wide open spaces, under vast skies, and in moments that cannot be scripted or staged. Camp week has always been part of the heartbeat of Woodridge. It is where nature is used to nurture, in the most authentic way. We find that each year when the pupils are out there, something shifts.

There is laughter that echoes across valleys and camp sites. Some friendships deepen through shared challenges and experiences. There are quiet, powerful moments when a child realises, often for the first time, "I can do hard things."

As staff, we get to see the various emotions leading up to the camps. Then we get to see the courage during it, as they push themselves and grapple with problems or bring their voice to a conversation for the first time. Then we have the privilege of seeing the pride and joy afterwards, the kind that makes them walk a little taller.

We get to hear conversations that don't always make it into the car ride home. Honest reflections. Big dreams. Small fears. The whispered, "I can't believe I did that!" As staff, we watch them problem-solve, we watch them negotiate issues and obstacles with confidence. We watch them lead, often for the first time, and sometimes, just as importantly, we watch them step back and allow someone else to shine. There are no corridors during camps. Not literal ones, and not metaphorical ones either. The experience is open, real, and deeply authentic. In that openness, children show us who they are becoming.

I know that while they are away, you wait for news. You wonder if they are warm enough, eating enough, sleeping enough. You worry because that is what loving parents do. Please know this: while you are waiting, your children are living fully. They are climbing, laughing, reflecting, running, cooking over fires, sitting under stars, discovering strengths they did not know they possessed, and building friendships that will last well beyond these few days. They are safe. They are supported, and they are thriving.

Growth during grade camps does not always look dramatic. Sometimes it is quiet confidence. Sometimes it is resilience after a wobble. Sometimes it is simply the decision to try again tomorrow. But it is always there.

Thank you for trusting us with what matters most to you. Thank you for allowing your children to step into spaces that stretch them, and thank you for being partners in this journey of raising young people who are courageous, grounded, and deeply connected to themselves, to others, and to the world around them.

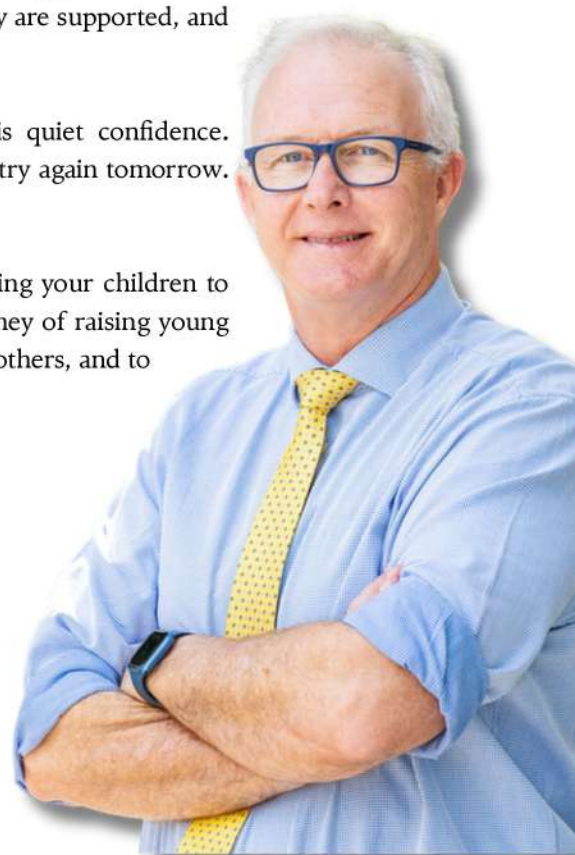
With gratitude,

Luke Hartley

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"In the woods, we return to reason and faith."
— Ralph W. Emerson

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UNDERSTANDING THE ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCE OF PRESSURE: A PERSPECTIVE FOR PARENTS

- Psychological and Academic Support Department

Adults and adolescents often experience pressure differently. While adults may see pressure as a normal part of growth and achievement, adolescents tend to experience it more personally and emotionally. Consequently, their lived experience in high-pressure environments is rarely about long-term outcomes; it is felt in the present moment and closely linked to their sense of self.

This difference can be particularly evident when sport forms a valued part of school culture. In these environments, learners may internalise real or perceived expectations to perform at an elite standard, which can unintentionally increase feelings of pressure.

From an adult perspective, high expectations are usually well-intended, encouraging commitment, resilience, and opportunity. Adolescents, however, may interpret these expectations differently. What adults experience as encouragement can be felt by adolescents as a fear of disappointing others or a belief that their worth is tied to performance.

Importantly, it is often not the actual demands placed on young people that have the greatest impact, but rather their perception of those demands. When learners believe that success or failure carries significant emotional consequences, their stress response increases. Over time, this can contribute

to anxiety, perfectionism, reduced enjoyment, emotional withdrawal, or burnout.

Many adolescents quietly carry thoughts such as, "I can't let people down," or "Everyone expects me to perform." These beliefs may not be expressed openly, yet they can significantly influence both well-being and performance.

Parents play a key role in helping their children manage pressure in healthy ways. Adolescents tend to thrive when they learn that achievement is only one part of who they are, alongside personal growth, relationships, and well-being. Conversations that focus on how your child is coping, rather than only on outcomes, can be highly protective.

Helpful parental approaches include:

- Showing interest in well-being, not only performance.
- Modelling realistic expectations and guiding balanced goal setting.
- Recognising effort, persistence, and growth – not just outcomes.
- Normalising rest and recovery as part of healthy performance.
- Allowing room for setbacks without judgment.

When adolescents feel supported beyond their achievements, they are more likely to thrive, not only in sport but across their broader school experience. Balanced expectations and emotional support create the conditions for both performance and well-being to develop sustainably.



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Fostering a Love of Reading at Woodridge

Across the world—and here in South Africa—the decline in children's reading ability and reading habits has become a serious concern.

The most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) paints an alarming picture: 81% of South African Grade 4–6 learners cannot read for meaning, which places South Africa at the bottom of all participating countries and highlights a deepening literacy crisis that begins long before high school.

As a result, the Woodridge English Department has committed itself this year to actively strengthening a love of reading across the school.

One initiative includes regular guided reading lessons for Grades 8–10, ensuring that students have protected time each week to read. Most students argue that they don't read because they "don't have time," and hopefully, these lessons will begin to create spaces for reading for fun.

Reading is like breathing in, and writing is like breathing out, so we hope that this initiative will translate to more confidence in the classroom across a range of subject areas.

To kick off our reading initiative, we chose the Grade 10 group to join up with the Grade R, 1, and 2 pupils to read children's books together. As February is reading month, with World Read Aloud Day taking place earlier on, this became a wonderful synergy event, with big kids and little kids celebrating the power of storytelling. The wonder of reading came alive during that shared moment and demonstrated the creative power of words.

So, to leverage the momentum from this experience, the English Department will be sharing recommended reading lists in each newsletter for the remainder of the year. We warmly encourage parents to contribute titles that have resonated in your own homes as well: please send suggestions to Mr Courtney Watson.

Reading is such a vitalising and important skill that needs to be prioritised, and we hope that these initiatives will do just that. So, over half term, we hope that you will support this vision. Read as a family. Talk about books. Find the time.



Epic Escapes...

A Journey of Growth

Camps remain one of the most powerful expressions of who we are as a College. In the outdoors, away from routine and comfort, our pupils discover resilience, deepen friendships, and grow in confidence. Each grade experienced something unique, yet as a school, we were all united by challenge, laughter, and belonging.

Grade 8: Introduction to Expeditions

Grade 8 marked the beginning of the expedition journey. In small teams, students navigated the countryside, learning essential map-reading skills while developing self-reliance and teamwork. Supported by staff, they took their first real steps into independent outdoor learning.

They learned practical skills such as cooking on hiking stoves, packing efficiently, and solving problems together. Adventure was woven throughout the experience, with fishing and swimming, sparking both curiosity and respect for the natural world.

Most importantly, there was joy. Shared laughter, shared effort, and the strengthening of friendships reminded us that connection is at the heart of every Woodridge camp.



**"And at the end of the day, your feet should be dirty, your hair messy and your eyes sparkling."
- Shanti**

Grade 9: President's Award Bronze Adventurous Journey

The Grade 9 cohort undertook a demanding 30km+, two-day expedition through river valleys and grasslands. Navigating in teams, they encountered wildlife and worked together to manage distance, time, and terrain.

Each team journeyed with a clear purpose, their "aim" to encourage thoughtful engagement and reflection.

The expedition required resilience, leadership, and disciplined time management. For many, this was their first truly challenging adventurous journey and a significant step as they prepare for "The Way" in Grade 10. It tested resolve, strengthened character, and reinforced the value of perseverance.



Grade 10: Academic Excursion to Nieu-Bethesda

Rather than an expedition, the Grade 10 group participated in a rich academic and cultural immersion in Nieu-Bethesda. This experience is linked directly to their art, drama, and English curriculum.

A visit to The Owl House encouraged reflection on creativity and self-expression, while The Kitching Fossil Exploration Centre sparked curiosity about South Africa's ancient past and scientific discovery.

The trip broadened perspectives and prepared students for their 21-day journey later in the year, where they will continue exploring South Africa's cultural heritage in greater depth.



Grade 11: Leadership in the Baviaanskloof

In the dramatic landscape of the Baviaanskloof, the Grade 11 cohort focused intentionally on leadership development in teams. The teams were tasked with two activities:

Firstly, raft building! Teams constructed rafts using knots, planning, and cooperation. The activity highlighted communication, delegation, and problem-solving under pressure.



With the second activity, gorge walking, or kloofing, the Grade 11s had a "challenge by choice" journey through the Uys River gorge, which tested courage and perseverance, encouraging students to step beyond perceived limits.

Through Tomorrow's Leaders in Training (TLT) workshops, students reflected on leadership styles and the importance of both leading and following, understanding that leadership is as much about service as it is about direction.

Grade 12: Reflection, Growth, and Celebration

For our Grade 12 group, the camp served as a moment of reflection and celebration. As they prepare to leave Woodridge, the experience created space to consider how far they have come, both personally and collectively.

Through team challenges, conversations about life beyond school, and reflective exercises, they strengthened their sense of identity and community.

Grounded in Round Square principles, they leave with resilience, confidence, and a deep appreciation for the shared journey that has shaped them.



CRICKET NEWS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS FESTIVAL

The 1st team boys had a challenging Independent Schools Cricket Festival hosted by St Albans. In the first match against Michaelhouse, we were bowled out for 113, with Michaelhouse reaching the total with only one wicket down.

The next day, we played Cornwall Hill, where we batted first, scoring 187 all out, with Stefan Ferreira top scoring with 43 runs. Cornwall Hill reached our total with 3 wickets down. In our third game, we played St Benedict's. Again, we batted first, reaching 164 all out, with Jack Feltham top scoring with 44 runs.

Woodridge managed to bowl St Benedict's out for 134, with Jack Feltham being the pick of the bowlers (3/11). Woodridge won by 30 runs. In the final fixture against Clifton College, Clifton batted first, scoring 178/5, with Daniel Darlow being the pick of the bowlers (2/29). Woodridge were bowled out for 148 runs with Jack Feltham top scoring (36 runs).

The team struggled against some very good opposition, but never stopped trying, showing grit and determination for a young side.



1ST GIRLS CRICKET FESTIVAL

For the second consecutive year, Woodridge hosted a very successful 1st Girls Cricket Festival over the half-term break. Unfortunately, much of the festival was affected by rain, and thus only two games were played.

We were up against a very good Steyn City team in our first game and narrowly went down.

In the second game against Stirling, our batters showed their class with Ava Horner scoring runs (54 not out), with Woodridge taking a comfortable win just before the heavens opened with the rain.



FINAL CRICKET FIXTURES

In the final fixture of the season for the boys', Woodridge played against Framesby. The 1st, 2nd, and U15 XI's went down against some very strong Framesby teams. The U14A team, however, did exceptionally well and recorded a well-deserved 7-wicket victory. Tanatswa Chari was the pick of the bowlers (4/14). This was a very positive victory for a team that continues to produce consistent results.

The Girls' 1st Team final fixture was unfortunately rained out against Victoria Park. However, the girls used the opportunity to thank and say farewell to the Grade 12s in the team who played their last game and have had an instrumental impact on the team.



WATER POLO NEWS

Over the half-term break, the boys' 1st team participated in the Rob Charlton Tournament in Makhandla. After dominating teams in the pool stages, Woodridge went on to play Kingswood College in the quarter-final (7-4 win), Pearson High School in the semi-final (7-3 win), and then came up against Glenwood House in the final. In a hard-fought game (10-7 win), Woodridge managed to win the tournament for the 3rd year running – a fantastic effort!



The 1st team then travelled to Johannesburg for the Reef Cup, coming up against some top sides in South Africa. The team won all their games in the pool stages and went on to beat St. Peter's in the quarter-final game (6-5 win). This was a great game of polo, and the boys thoroughly deserved their win.

In the semi-final, Woodridge came up against a very good Affies team, going down. In the 3rd/4th play-off game, Woodridge showed their class and beat Northwood (6-5 win), thus winning the bronze medal – a good way to end the season. Christian Chandler and Carter Rosser were chosen for the tournament team as an acknowledgement of their consistent performances.



The Girls' 1st team also participated in the Reef Cup in Johannesburg, finishing in a very creditable 9th place out of 20 teams. In the pool stages, they had good wins against Rand Park (13-2) and Affies Meisies (11-4). In the quarter-final, they lost to Helenic, from Zimbabwe (3-8). In the 9th/10th playoff game against Thomas More, Woodridge won (4-2), ending a good season where the team has grown and gone from strength to strength.



WATER POLO NEWS



The U15 Boys' team played in the Grey High Tournament over half-term, playing against top teams from the Eastern and Western Cape. In the pool stages, Woodridge beat Oakhill but went down to Selborne and Wynberg. In the play-off games, we beat Reddam Constantia (8-7) and Glenwood House (10-9) but lost to Grey (3-6).

This past weekend, a combined U16 & U15 Team travelled to KZN to play in the St Charles Water Polo Tournament. In the pool games, Woodridge beat St Charles 2nd team and Curro's 1st team, but went down to Michaelhouse, Northwood, and Kearnsney's 2nd teams. In the quarter-finals, we lost to Hilton's 2nd team (4-11). In the 5th – 8th play-off games, Woodridge lost to Westville's 2nd team and then lost to Maritzburg College's 2nd team (4-8) to end in 9th position – a very good effort for a young side!



The girls U15 team recorded good wins against Oakhill U14A's, but went down to Glenwood House and Oakhill U15A teams.

In the last weekend of the summer sports season, a junior Boys' and U14 & U15 Girls' teams played in the St Francis Water Polo Festival – a replacement for the cancelled Chukka Festival in Knysna. The junior Boys' team had good wins against Oakhill U14 (11-1), St Andrews U14B (8-2), Grey U15B (8-4), and Glenwood House (7-4), but went down thanks to the Oakhill U15A and Grey U15A teams.



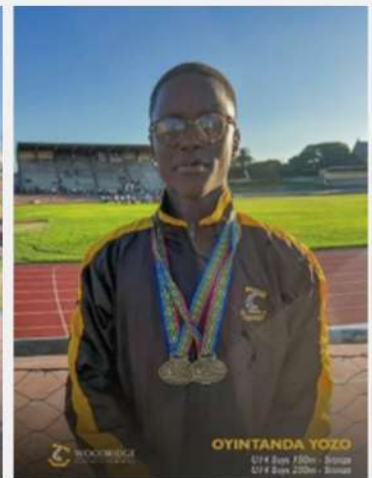
ATHLETICS

Our athletes participated in the second Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Athletics Meeting of the season this past Saturday. They delivered outstanding performances in both track and field events.

Not to be out done, Tristan Kretzmann also won a bronze medal in the U17 High Jump – a sound effort from both athletes.

Assia Rodrigues ran in the U19 Girls 1500m race, delivering another strong performance and getting a bronze medal for her efforts.

We are proud of our athletes as they have worked incredibly hard through the season.



EQUESTRIAN



This past weekend our riders headed to Plettenberg Bay to participate in the Robberg Show. Iviwe Ngangelizwe riding Blue Gangsta managed a very good 2nd place in the combined Adult and Junior 1.10m Speed Class. He was just off the winning time – this excellent round earned Iviwe enough points to move up to the next height level. This is a special achievement, and the future for Iviwe is looking bright.



PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION

TENNIS



Olivia Montagna recently represented Eastern Province at The Synergy Cup in Bloemfontein.

What makes this truly special is that she is playing in the U19 section as a 15-year-old! She was also the number 1 player for Eastern Province – a truly remarkable achievement and so well-deserved, reflecting hours of hard work and commitment to tennis.



SWIMMING



Shalea Hamilton recently participated in the Eastern Cape Aquatics trials held in East London to qualify for the SA Schools Team Gala later in the year.

Shalea achieved some outstanding results, getting gold in the 50m Butterfly, 200m Freestyle, 200m IM, 100m Freestyle, 100m Butterfly, 50m Freestyle, and 400m Freestyle.

We wish Shalea all the best as she continues to deliver performances of the highest standard.



CRICKET



Ashlee Buhr made her ODI debut for the EP Women's cricket team recently.

She batted at Number 4 in challenging conditions and produced a very composed, mature innings of 36 runs.

This was the top score of the weekend, guiding the team to a well-deserved victory.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACTION



Experiential learning is important because it allows our children to learn by doing, rather than only by listening or reading. When they are actively taking part in experiments, discussions, projects, simulations, or real-life problem-solving tasks, they understand concepts more deeply and remember them for longer. This kind of learning builds critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills, because each one must reflect on their experiences. Experiential learning also increases engagement and motivation, as our pupils see the relevance of their work to the real world.



Nature Reserve Deck

Recently, we had to close off access to the deck in the Nature Reserve. It has served the school well for many decades; however, it has become a safety risk. Thanks to a generous donation from one of our parents, a major upgrade of the deck is in the pipeline.

This space is such a happy place for many of our pupils and staff, and it often serves as a gathering place for our community. Generous contributions like these go a long way to sustaining the authenticity of Woodridge.



Alumni news

It is wonderful to see some of our recent Alumni, Meera von Berg, Ethan Calitz, and Erica Zhang, getting on with their studies and having some fun along the way.



Staff News

This past week saw the arrival of three new staff members to the Woodridge College family. Mrs Penny York joins as the Business Manager, taking over from Dave Emslie. Mrs York joins us from DSG in Makhanda. We wish her well as she takes on the business side of the school.

We also welcome Mr Clint York to the Woodridge family. He takes over the role of Estates Manager from the late Ray Holmes. Clint has a wealth of experience in both the Outdoor space as well as running the Monastery in Makhanda.

Finally, we also welcomed Mr Jason Syce back to the Woodridge fold after he had worked in the Midlands at Michaelhouse. Mr Syce is the new Head of Hockey and will also be teaching Business Studies.

We are looking forward to the positive contribution these staff will make to Woodridge College. I trust they will enjoy their journey with us!



Welcome



Farewell

MR DAVE EMSLIE



Today, we take a moment to acknowledge and thank someone who has played a significant role in the life of Woodridge over the several years, namely Mr Dave Emslie.

Joining Woodridge in 2020 as our Business Manager, Dave arrived at a time when the school was rebuilding and reimagining itself following the fires of 2017. Those were challenging years for our community, but they were also years that required steady leadership, wise decision-making, and a deep commitment to the future of this special place. Dave brought exactly that.

Behind the scenes, often without fanfare, he worked tirelessly to strengthen the foundations of the College. He put systems in place that have helped the school grow with confidence and stability. His careful planning, thoughtful approach, and attention to detail ensured that Woodridge could continue to move forward in a way that honoured both its heritage and its future.

But more than systems and structures, Dave brought something even more valuable, a genuine love for Woodridge. His decisions have always been guided by one simple question: "What is best for the school?" That sense of care and commitment has been felt by staff, parents, and pupils alike.

Woodridge is a place built on people who care deeply about the community they serve, and Dave has embodied that spirit throughout his time here. His positive impact on the Woodridge family will be felt for many years to come.

While we say farewell to Dave in his role as Business Manager, we are very fortunate that he is not leaving Woodridge altogether. He now moves into an important role within the Woodridge Foundation, where his passion for the school and his understanding of what makes this place special will continue to serve the community so well.

We thank Dave for his dedication, his wisdom, and the steady leadership he has provided during such an important chapter in our school's history.

We wish him every success and great joy in this next chapter.
Woodridge is more formidable because of him.





ISASA SOUTH EAST HEADS MEETING



This past week, we had the privilege of hosting the Heads of the ISASA Independent Schools from across the Southeastern Cape region.

The gathering provided an opportunity for school leaders to engage in meaningful discussion around one of the most significant developments in education today, the role of Artificial Intelligence in our schools, led by Ajit Gopalakrishnan. A key focus of the meeting was exploring how AI

can be used thoughtfully to enhance the learning experience for pupils in our classrooms, while also helping to streamline certain processes for teachers.

By sharing ideas, challenges, and practical approaches, the group reflected on how to embrace new technology in ways that support effective teaching, enrich learning, and ultimately create more time for educators to focus on what matters most: meaningful engagement with their pupils.



With Gratitude to Our Estate Team

The College extends its sincere appreciation to our Estate Staff for their continued dedication to maintaining and caring for the school grounds.

Their hard work ensures that our campus remains a welcoming, safe, and beautiful environment for pupils, staff, and visitors alike.

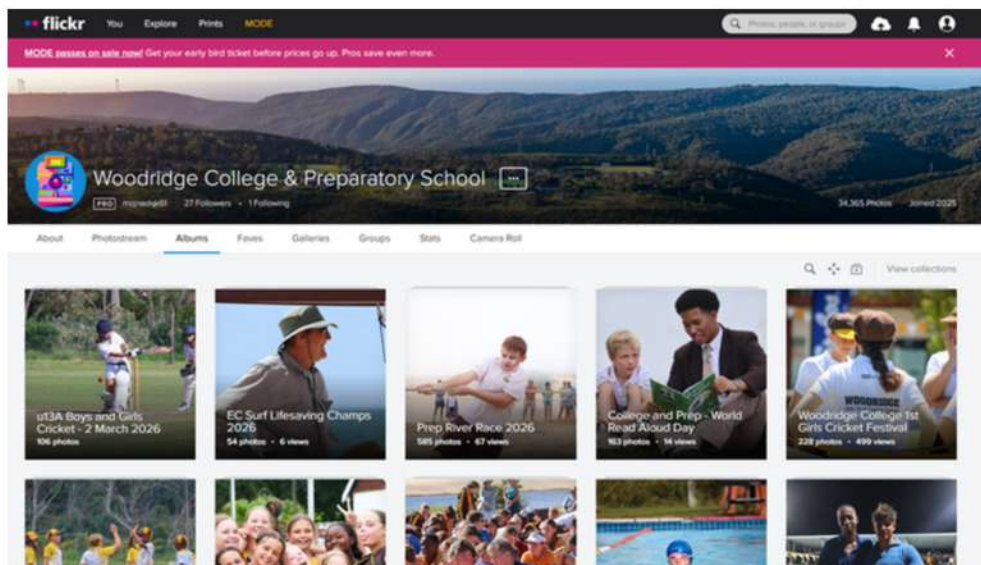


Their attention to detail and commitment to maintaining our facilities do not go unnoticed and contribute greatly to the pride we all feel in our school.

We are grateful for the effort, care, and professionalism shown by the Estate team each day in supporting the life of the school.



FLICKR - PHOTOGRAPH SHARING PLATFORM



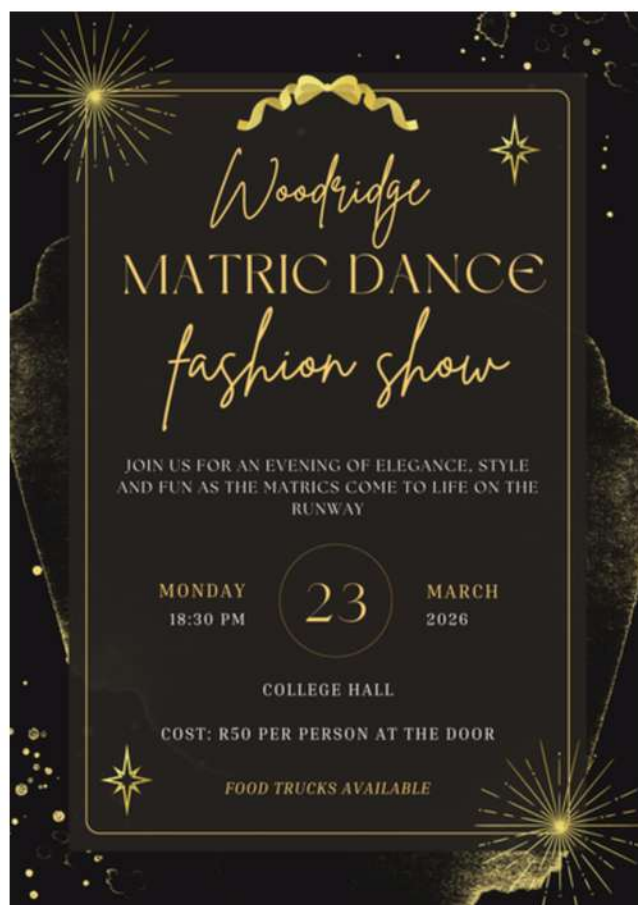
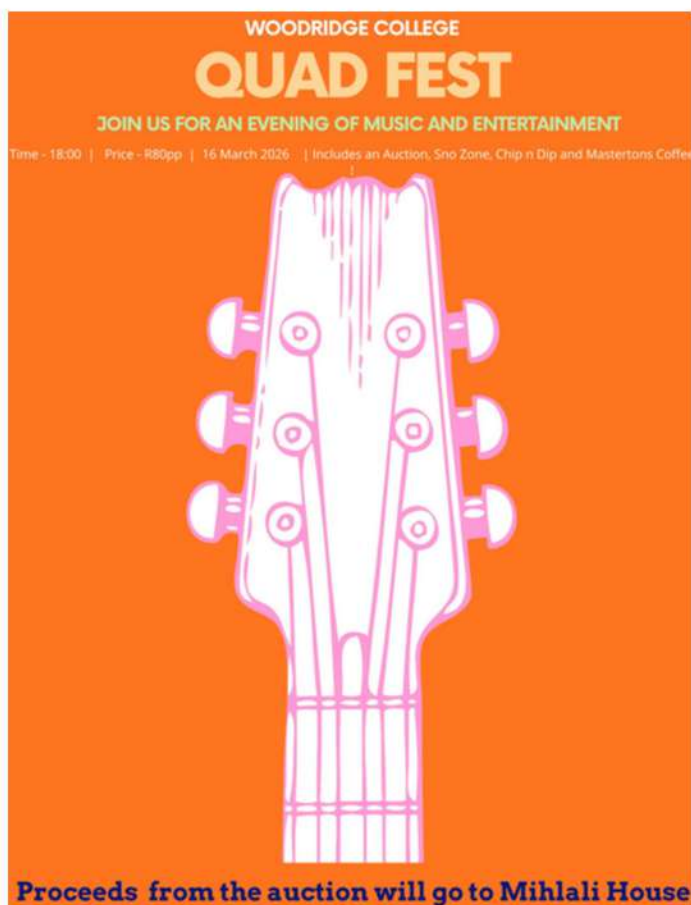
We'd like to remind parents that our school's official photograph sharing platform, Flickr, is updated as often as possible with a wide selection of high-quality, professional photographs from recent school events and activities.

We encourage parents to visit and explore these memorable moments. You can view and download photos to keep as special reminders of your child's journey at Woodridge.

The Flickr link is:



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/202364181@N05/albums>



DON'T MISS OUT!





THE WOODRIDGE
FOUNDATION
News



WE'RE HOSTING AN ONLINE AUCTION!

**20-27 March via
the Woodridge website.**

Only two weeks away!

Get ready to pledge your support.

**Bidding will open at 20h30
(UTC/GMT+2) on the 20th!**

JOIN
MY DIFFERENCE
SUPPORT US



ALL ON THE
WOOLIES APP



DATES TO DIARISE



Monday: 09 March, Cake sale in aid of Interact and Outreach projects



Thursday: 12 March, Interhouse Plays @ 18:30



Monday: 16 March, QuadFest



Saturday: 21 March, Matric Dance



Click [here](#) for the College Monthly Planner *Subject to change*

