



23 October 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians,

2018 has gone by in the blink of an eye! As we head towards the end of this academic year, I am grateful to all of you for the support for your sons and for the school this year. In the final letter for this academic year, I would like to share with you the directions for the school in the coming years.

Someone once asked me what I would want Singapore to be like for my grandchildren. This was in the context of setting strategic directions. At first, I thought the question was strange because when thinking of strategic directions, especially for schools, most Principals would think of the current generation of students and how we can better prepare them for their future. However, upon deeper reflection, I realized why the question is so important. Thinking about the Singapore I want for my grandchildren means that I have to think not just about the future readiness of this generation of students but their capability, as adults and contributing citizens, to create the Singapore that they want for their children. The question forced me to think not just about the success of the current generation of students in future but also their ability to create a nation where their children and grandchildren will also find success and significance in a virtuous cycle. In other words, what it means to nurture **generations of educated men who are God-fearing and growing in Grace**. It is a source of great encouragement to know that I stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before me tapping on the rich heritage of faithfulness of more than 130 years of ACS history.

So what does it mean for our gentlemen to be 'God-fearing and growing in Grace'? I believe it is best described by three 'Senses' and four 'Honours'.



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Our gentlemen need to have a strong sense of worth that comes from an honest assessment of who they are – fearfully and wonderfully made. They are unique individuals endowed with gifts, talents and limits. Talents and gifts open a multitude of opportunities but limits are equally important because they shape each child’s unique contribution to the world, his light in a specific corner of his world. A strong sense of worth is the belief that each person is precious in and of himself and not as an extension of his abilities or accomplishments. I believe ACS (BR) provides the unique environment for our gentlemen to learn this as they interact with peers from different streams and different needs.

The strong sense of worth must be accompanied by a strong sense of purpose. This speaks of the desire to use all they have to contribute positively to their community, beginning with their peers in school and their families, to the nation and the world. They are called to be the ‘beacon of truth and light’ wherever they are placed. It is a reminder that their sense of worth cannot result in pride and a self-serving nature.

To direct their sense of purpose, our gentlemen will need a sense of honour. Mr Lim Siong Guan, in his book ‘Winning with Honour’, has this to say about the meaning of Honour.

*“As a verb, honour means to ascribe value, esteem, regard or respect to a person or thing. As an adjective, it is the quality of knowing and doing what is morally right. As a noun, honour is something that symbolises recognition and privilege. Whether it is used as a verb, adjective, or noun, practically everyone agrees that Honour is a virtue important for life and living. Honour defines our humanity – it is a universally recognized and esteemed value not defined or confined by religious or cultural mores. We have Honour because we are.”*

Having a sense of honour is about living by the virtues. It is about respect for yourself, your words, other people and the principles you live by. It is about being a person of character in the deepest sense, someone who will do what is right regardless of what other people are doing.

To make honour explicit, the school will be focusing on four aspects:

- a) Honour our self and our words – Ascribe value and respect the gifts and talents they have and follow through on their words (integrity)
- b) Honour each other – Respect the gifts and talents in others and see differences not as less but as an opportunity to embrace and celebrate (respect)
- c) Honour effort – Acknowledge that nothing worth doing is easy and respect hard work in themselves and others (commitment)
- d) Honour excellence – Embrace excellence as the journey of being our best for the world

This is the education that ACS (BR) seeks to provide for our gentlemen in the years to come and it will require not just new programmes but a hard look at our current ways of doing and being and making the necessary changes. It is also an acknowledgement that the task requires an entire village. It requires the work of those within the school, at home and in the community of supporters. The school does not have a monopoly of ideas and we welcome parents and stakeholders to share their suggestions and work alongside us in nurturing our gentlemen.

### **Adjustment of schedules**

One important change as a result of ‘3 Senses and 4 Honours’ is the creation of time for teachers to be engaged in continuous professional development as a community as we reflect on our practices and try out new ones. To do this, **the school will be starting one hour later every**

**Wednesday at 8.40am.** Teachers will be engaged in professional development from 7.30am till 8.30am. Parents are welcome to send your sons to school at the same time and they can engage in self-study or self-initiated activities before 8.40am on Wednesdays.

A second adjustment of the school schedule will result in morning assembly beginning at **7.40am on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.** This will synchronize ACS (Barker Road)'s start time with ACS Primary and prevent disruptions to their assembly due to the movement of our gentlemen. This is a small but tangible aspect of honouring others within our community.

With those changes, **school will end at 2:30pm from Mondays to Thursdays and 1:30pm on Fridays.**

#### **Assessment schedule and load**

In line with the 'Learn for Life' directions announced by MOE, ACS (BR) will be **removing mid-year examinations for Secondary One and Secondary Three students from 2019** onwards as these are crucial transition years for our students as they adjust to higher cognitive demands of secondary school and Upper Secondary curriculum respectively. The adjustments to assessment schedule and load will free up more time and space in ACS(BR) to strengthen holistic development, self-discovery and engaged learning. These changes will also provide more opportunities for student-centred teaching and learning approaches and lay the groundwork for nurturing life-long learning attitudes and skills. A full assessment schedule will be released outlining the number of weighted assessments at the start of 2019.

In tandem with this, ACS (BR) will use a broader basket of criteria in the allocation of students into classes in Secondary One and keep classes intact as they progress from Secondary One to Secondary Two. This serves to reduce the over-emphasis on academic results and peer comparisons. Student allocation into classes in Secondary Three is largely determined by their subject combinations and classes will be kept intact as much as possible as they progress to Secondary Four.

#### **Building of Indoor Sports Hall and Fund-raising**

Work has continued at the building site for the Indoor Sports Hall and progress has been good. Target completion date remains at September 2019 when the school will be able to use the Indoor Sports Hall, Futsal court, classrooms and Chinese Orchestra room. We praise God for providing \$734,000 needed through parents, supporters and churches. With this, the school has reached the fundraising limit for the project and we are thankful for the strong support from everyone.

Yours sincerely,

Loo Ming Yaw  
Principal