



NEW FOREST HIGH SCHOOL

SPORTS AND EXTRAMURALS AWARDS EVENING 2026

Principal's Address

Good evening, to our Guest Speaker and past pupil, Mr Shabalala, SBG members, members of staff, our coaches, parents, and, most importantly, our learners and athletes.

It is a privilege to welcome you to the New Forest High School Sports and Extra murals Awards Evening. Tonight, we gather to celebrate achievement, recognise commitment and acknowledge the many individuals who have contributed to making 2026 a memorable sporting year for our school.

This evening is not simply about trophies, medals and accolades. It is about the values that sport instils in us, the character it builds, the friendships it fosters and the lessons it teaches us about life.

At New Forest High School, our mission is to provide a holistic education, nurture character and guide every learner towards achieving their full potential.

We recognise that education extends far beyond the classroom. While academic achievement remains central to our purpose, sport and extramural activities provide invaluable opportunities for developing discipline, teamwork, leadership, resilience and a sense of belonging.

On the sports field and the courts, our learners learn to work together, to respect one another, to accept disappointment and to celebrate success with humility.

These are lessons that cannot always be taught through textbooks. They must be experienced, practised and lived.

Our investment in sport is therefore an investment in the development of the whole child. We want our learners to leave New Forest High School not only with academic qualifications, but also with the character, confidence and values to navigate life successfully.

We began 2026 with our first-ever dedicated Sports and Extramurals Strategic Planning Session.

This was an important milestone for our school. We recognised that sporting success does not happen by accident. It requires a vision, careful planning, clear goals, measurable targets and a collective commitment to achieving them.

There is a principle I firmly believe in: **life must be planned.**

We cannot simply hope for success; we must prepare for it. We must identify where we want to go, determine what needs to be done and commit ourselves to the work required to get there.

Our strategic planning set the tone for the sporting year, and we have seen encouraging results.

We have witnessed an explosion of success across several sporting codes, including touch rugby, volleyball and soccer.

A special word of congratulations goes to our soccer team for emerging as Plate Winners at the Kloof High School Tournament. Well done to Mr Trembath, Coach Muchave and the learners who represented our school with distinction.

We have also seen an unprecedented increase in the number of learners representing New Forest High School at district and provincial levels. This is a significant achievement and a clear indication that our learners are beginning to realise their potential beyond the school environment.

We are particularly proud of our road-running team, led by Mrs Barnes. We commend the dedication and commitment of these athletes, who have braved the early hours of the morning and, at times, unfavourable weather conditions in pursuit of their goals.

Their commitment reminds us that success often requires us to do what is difficult, even when nobody is watching.

Our commitment to sport also extends beyond the playing field. Through our external coaching positions, New Forest High School continues to create employment opportunities for our former learners and other young people. In doing so, we contribute to developing the next generation of coaches and sporting leaders.

These achievements demonstrate what is possible when vision, planning, commitment and teamwork come together.

Like every worthwhile journey, our sporting year has had its challenges.

We bid farewell to our former Head of Sport and Extramurals, Mr Govender, who led the department with passion, determination and commitment. We thank him for his contribution to the growth of sport at New Forest High School.

We subsequently welcomed Mr Ndlovu, who picked up the baton and continued to build on the work that had already been done.

Leadership transitions are not always easy, but they remind us of the importance of continuity, teamwork and a shared vision.

We also ended the year with a 7s Rugby Activation Session, an exciting development following repeated requests from our learners for the return of traditional rugby, which was discontinued during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is encouraging to see this renewed interest in rugby and the possibility of opening another sporting pathway for our learners.

This brings to mind an important lesson: when one door closes, another can open.

Life will not always go according to plan. There will be disappointments, setbacks and circumstances beyond our control. What matters is how we respond.

We must teach our young people not to dwell on disappointment for too long, but to see setbacks as opportunities to learn, adapt and explore new possibilities.

As Winston Churchill is widely quoted as saying, “Never waste a good crisis.”

The lesson for us is simple: adversity should not define us. Our response to adversity can become the foundation of our next success.

At New Forest High School, we want our learners to develop the courage to try again, the creativity to find alternatives and the resilience to keep moving forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, as much as we celebrate sporting achievement tonight, there is a principle that must remain above every trophy, every medal and every individual accolade.

That principle is integrity.

At New Forest High School, our values of Respect, Integrity, Commitment and Compassion — our RICC values — are not merely words displayed on a wall. They are the standards by which we expect ourselves to live.

Our school motto, Honor Ante Honores, reminds us that honour must come before honours.

We have remained steadfast in our belief that sporting excellence cannot be separated from personal character. A learner may be exceptionally talented on the field or court, but talent alone does not qualify one to be an ambassador of New Forest High School.

We have therefore taken the firm position that no sporting accolade should be awarded without due consideration of the conduct and character of the recipient.

This evening, our message is clear: you cannot truly represent New Forest High School if your conduct brings dishonour to yourself, your team or your school.

We have had to make difficult decisions in this regard, including withholding recognition where conduct has fallen short of the standards we uphold.

These decisions are not taken lightly. They are not intended to diminish talent or sporting achievement. They are intended to reinforce a far more important lesson: that our actions have consequences and that we are accountable for the choices we make.

Our responsibility as educators is not merely to produce successful athletes. It is to nurture young people who understand that character matters, that integrity is non-negotiable and that accountability is an essential part of growing into responsible adults.

We want our learners to understand that the true measure of a Panther is not only how well they perform when the crowd is watching, but how they conduct themselves when nobody is watching.

Honour before honours. Integrity before accolades. Character before recognition.

This is the standard we will continue to uphold.

No sporting programme can succeed through the efforts of one individual.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our Sports and Extramurals Department, under the leadership of Mr Ndlovu, who succeeded Mr Govender. I also acknowledge the guidance and support of our Deputy Principal responsible for Operations and Discipline, Mr Singh.

To our members of staff who give up their time to supervise, encourage, organise and support our learners, thank you. Your contribution often extends well beyond the normal demands of your professional responsibilities.

To our coaches, both internal and external, thank you for your commitment to developing our learners. You do more than teach sporting skills. You teach discipline, teamwork, perseverance and respect. You help our learners discover what they are capable of achieving.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for your continued support. Your encouragement, sacrifices and willingness to ensure that our learners participate in sporting activities make a significant difference.

To our supporters and the wider New Forest High School community, thank you for standing behind our teams and helping us build a proud sporting culture.

At our strategic planning session, we defined excellence simply as “doing better.”

This is a definition that I believe is both practical and powerful.

Excellence does not always mean being the best. It means being better than you were yesterday. It means learning from your mistakes, improving your performance and refusing to become complacent.

In 2026, we have done better in several areas. But we are not finished. We will continue to evaluate, improve and strive for excellence.

For some of our learners, sport may become a career. They may go on to represent their province, their country or even compete professionally.

We wish them every success in pursuing those dreams.

However, for the vast majority of our learners, the greatest benefit of sport will not necessarily be a professional contract or a collection of medals.

It will be the character they develop along the way.

The discipline learned during training will serve them in their studies and careers. The teamwork developed on the field will help them work with others. The resilience built through defeat will help them face life's challenges. The leadership developed as captains and team members will prepare them to lead in their communities and workplaces.

These lessons will remain with them long after their school sporting careers have ended.

That is why we prioritise sport and extramurals at New Forest High School. We are not simply developing athletes; we are developing people.

To our learners receiving awards tonight, congratulations. You have earned the recognition you receive, and we celebrate your hard work, sacrifice and achievement.

As you continue your journey, I want you to remember three lessons about what it means to be a Panther.

First, a Panther demonstrates commitment, grit and resilience.

A Panther understands that success requires effort. When the training becomes difficult and the competition becomes tough, a Panther does not give up easily.

Second, a Panther remains focused until the hunt is done.

A Panther does not lose sight of the goal. A Panther understands that talent must be matched by preparation, discipline and determination.

Finally, and most importantly, a Panther does the right thing even when nobody is watching.

A Panther has integrity. A Panther respects opponents, officials, teammates, coaches and the rules of the game. A Panther understands that how we conduct ourselves matters just as much as how we perform.

As you leave this evening, remember that you carry the name of New Forest High School with you. Wear that name with pride, but always conduct yourself with honour.

Let us continue to build a sporting culture that celebrates achievement, nurtures character and upholds the values that define us.

May we continue to grow, continue to improve and continue to do better.

Remember, Panthers: Commitment in everything we do. Resilience in the face of every challenge. Integrity in every choice we make. And always — Honour Before Honours.

Congratulations to all our award recipients, and thank you for being part of the New Forest High School sporting journey.

I wish you all an enjoyable and memorable Sports and Extramurals Awards Evening.

Thank you.