

My Dear Students,

Some of you were surprised by the short message I shared at the end of our National Day Celebrations this morning. I understand your sentiment — the message may have felt sombre, especially as we head into a long weekend.

Ten years ago, we celebrated SG50 — a golden jubilee filled with joy, pride, and hope. There was talk of the future, and even excitement about SG100, our nation’s centennial. That same year, a special event, *Youth Celebrate!*, was held at the National Stadium, with then Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong addressing a full stadium of young Singaporeans. I’ve included the link to his speech [here](#), but let me share a few excerpts:

“You are Singapore’s future and hearing you, feeling you, I know this is a future that is bright and full of hope. Go for it!”

“Whatever we can do to prepare you, we have done – stable society, homes for everybody, good schools everywhere, jobs for your parents and opportunities ahead. Now make the most of what you have. Stretch your limits; help one another; work with your fellow citizens as one Singapore team.”

“Make the most of the next 50 years – the best years of your life. Get a good education, pursue ambitious and successful careers, raise happy families of your own, and make Singapore a shining red dot in the world. Chase that rainbow!”

“Then we will have many reasons to celebrate SG100. Then we can come back to this stadium and say, we have lived our lives well.”

Ten years may not seem long, but it feels like a lifetime ago. Since then, we’ve weathered many storms, including the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting social norms, and evolving values.

Within schools, I’ve seen how these broader changes have affected our students. Relationships between peers, and even between students and teachers, have become more fragile. Anxiety levels have risen. Social tensions and differences are more visible.

When I first began teaching, youth smoking was one of the most serious disciplinary offences. Today, while smoking has declined, it has been replaced by something even more dangerous, **vaping**. Bullying, especially **cyberbullying**, has also become more prevalent, as reported in studies and the media.

What concerns me most, however, is the increasing strain on **student-teacher relationships**, once considered the cornerstone of a nurturing school environment. Misunderstandings have increased, often due to differing expectations. But there are also

times when lines are crossed; students goading teachers, or even displaying obscene gestures toward them.

We are human too. Like you, we want to be treated with dignity and respect.

Many of us may not recall Singapore's four Shared Values. Let me draw your attention to the first two:

1. **Nation before community and society before self**

2. **Family as the basic unit of society**

These are not just abstract ideas — they are deeply relevant to who we are as a school.

That is why our motto is “**Beyond Self.**”

The second value, *family*, is especially close to my heart. One day, many of you will start your own families. When you do, I hope you live with **PRIDE** — *Perseverance, Resilience, Integrity, Discipline, and Empathy*; and, above all, with **honour**.

A late colleague once shared with me how he raised three daughters of character despite both he and his wife holding full-time jobs. He said he simply gave them three guiding questions:

- Do your actions honour God?
- Do your actions honour your mother and me?
- Do your actions honour yourself?

So I ask you: **Do your current actions bring honour to yourself and your family? Or do they bring shame?**

At the heart of everything is **personal agency**. *You* choose your actions, your words, your reactions, and your path. Every choice has a consequence

Despite the dark clouds, I continue to believe that each of you is a gift. I treasure the privilege of being your principal, and I'm grateful that many of you have trusted me enough to share your hopes and aspirations. We have already achieved much together as a school and I truly believe our better days are still ahead.

As we celebrate SG60 this year, I hope you take time not just to look back, but to dream forward. Think about the Singapore you want to live in, and the kind of person you want to become.