



THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST SCHOOLS (ATS)

Empowering relevant, high-quality, holistic education in member, non-profit, independent schools

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Dear ATS Parent

THE PERFECT SHAPE

How often have you been asked: *“What sort of shape are you in?”* One rather rotund and relaxed gentleman responded to the question by saying: *“I am in shape – round is a shape!”* And, of course, he is correct; round is indeed a shape! It may not be the shape that people expect but it is a shape. In fact, round is the perfect shape. After all, a circle is the symbol of perfection, of eternity, of completeness. There is no beginning or end, no edge to it. A circle is ideal for movement, for progress – try putting triangular or rectangular shapes as wheels on your car! Round is the perfect shape.

Athletes who participate in the heptathlon (ladies) and decathlon (men) have to be in good shape as they participate in seven or ten (respectively) gruelling events, encompassing sprinting, long-distance running, throwing and jumping. They are the true all-rounders. In cricket, every player needs to a large extent to be an all-rounder now, able to bat, bowl and field efficiently and confidently – if a player cannot do at least two, if not all three, they are not likely to be selected. All-rounders are what we want.

It is not just in sport that we want and need all-rounders. Universities, businesses, schools will not employ one-dimensional people who only offer one skill or attribute; they want people who offer much – well-rounded people. In a similar way, the word ‘Balanced’ suggests ‘Rounded’. It may be difficult to balance on a ball but the ball is balanced by being perfectly shaped. The object is not top-heavy or lop-sided. Have you seen how awful someone looks who has concentrated all their efforts in weight-training on their upper body and ignored the legs - two spindly legs supporting a grossly-exaggerated upper body packed with ‘mirror-muscle’ geared purely for looks? Children must be balanced – to achieve that, education must be rounded.

Our own Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has as its Mission Statement the strong assertion that it seeks *“To be the leading provider of quality education, sport, arts and culture for the development of united, well educated Zimbabweans who are patriotic, balanced, competitive, self reliant with unhu/ ubuntu”*. Note two key points from this: firstly, they stress it is education and sport and arts and culture that will make a balanced child – ALL of those ingredients are necessary for a child to be balanced – if not, he will be lop-sided and unable to function fully or properly. Secondly they say it is education that will do this, not purely academic study. For a start, we should not even use the term ‘academics’ as many children need to study commercial, practical or vocational subjects, not just the so-called academic ones. Education is not simply a matter of gaining academic qualifications – Nelson Mandela also alluded to this when he said *“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”*. A well-rounded youngster must not simply have talent but temperament too; he must have the right attitude as well as (in fact, more than) aptitude. However, ATS schools will go further and ensure that we also include the development of their spiritual, social and emotional aspects. We are to develop the whole child.

That ultimately is what marks out an ATS school – it develops the all-round child through a balanced, holistic, high-quality, rounded education. Sadly, parents are tempted simply to accept an education that produces the vague result that Dr Seuss amusingly describes: *“You’re in pretty good shape for the shape you are in.”* However we will go further; our children are meant not just to be in *“pretty good shape”* but in the best shape possible – and that shape is definitely, infinitely round! Children must have all-round education!

For more on this, do look at the latest article on education on the ATS website, entitled *“Education with an E”* - <http://www.atschisz.co.zw/parents-articles/education-with-an-e/>

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