

Engage case study

Kingsmead College

About the school

Based in Johannesburg, South Africa, Kingsmead College is unique among independent girls schools in the region because it does not require students to pass an entrance exam to attend. The ethos of the school's founder in the 1930s was to recognise that every child has their own individual talents and there should be a place for anyone. Kingsmead's 870 students today range from pre-primary to grade 12 and despite its open entry, the school has achieved the top academic results in the country for the past two years, as measured by the IEB.

Website

kingsmead.co.za

Director of Education Technology

Lora Foot

"We believe here that every child has their own potential – there's always a place for you whether you are good at sports, academic subjects, music or whatever your talents." So explains Lora Foot, Kingsmead College's Director of Education Technology. When we catch up with her she explains how the school is not only running a very diverse programme to cater for that broad range of interests but also producing its best ever academic performance as a result of its approach to education.

"Our staff take a lot of time to sit with students individually. We have a very open style and there's a family atmosphere here. We also make our children responsible for their own learning. We might say to them 'you've done badly in that test, but you've got to make the time to come and see me at break time to find out why or how we can fix it.'

"We always want evidence of what we are doing and that's why we chose to change our school management information system last year. Engage will empower us to be able to analyse our students to a higher level so that we can improve our performance.

"With Engage I also love the fact that everything works together. It's not just a system to record marks – it spans everything from timetabling to parent communication and more. We only signed up last October and by the end of November I had finished the training and completed the timetable for this academic year.

"I particularly liked the remote training that was provided, as and when I needed it. The user manuals are wonderful and I could figure out the majority of Engage but it was good to have answers for my questions about



how to do certain things.

"Our timetable is very complicated because we allow the students to choose their subjects (again focusing on the individual) and we create our subject packages around their choices – we don't have set lines for each grade. But Engage coped with this. You know what you can adjust and what needs to stay fixed – the ability to drag and drop and be notified of any clashes as you do so was a huge time saving. I also appreciate no longer having to keep a manual tally of teacher substitutions.

"We have implemented the Parent Portal and distribute our reports that way. Before we used to email them but would then have to deal with requests for duplicates when parents could not find them. Now they are all in one place.

"We can do things in a much more organised way with Engage," Lora concludes. "There's so much potential in it and it's been great that the Engage development team listens to our comments and incorporates improvements specifically for South African schools – that's a huge plus."

