



Dear Parents

Curse ruthless time! Curse our mortality! How cruelly short is the allotted span for all we must cram into it!
We are all worms. But I do believe that I am a glow worm.
Winston Churchill 1907

We have started the year in an extremely positive fashion and I cannot believe that it is already February. Time flies when you are having fun and there is no doubt that the young men and women of Oakhill are enjoying every minute of their experience here. Oakhill is a vibrant, energetic space and I have been overwhelmed by the passionate start we have made in the classroom and on the sports fields.

Our Matrics of 2011 produced outstanding results and this reflects wonderfully on all our teaching staff, including little Oaks and the Preparatory School. The final results were as follows:

*100% pass rate
30 candidates and 60 distinctions
1 candidate with 9 distinctions
3 candidates with 7 distinctions
2 candidates with 4 distinctions*

We are particularly proud of our Dux Scholar: **Maren Seydack** who earned a level 7 (80% or above) in nine subjects, closely followed by **Harry Maarsingh, Kate Gardy and Jo-Li Kotze** with seven level 7 achievements.

Oakhill welcomed 67 new families into our community this term and this has taken our numbers to 480. This growth is exciting and as we approach our 21st birthday in 2013, we can certainly celebrate the exciting developments in the past few years.

We welcomed many new families at the Grade 8 induction camp picnic and it was wonderful to see old and new families getting to know each other in a relaxed environment. The Grade 8 camp is a wonderfully affirming intervention in our calendar and my sincere thanks goes to all the staff who planned this event but particularly to Sheila Pasio, Riaan van Straten and Dawie Botha for putting the programme together. The Matrics join the Grade 8's at this intervention and this certainly allows for positive interaction and relationship building before the year really kicks off. Our House captains, in Bendigo: Nicola Gilliomee and Caspar Lee; in Millwood: Leo Thesen and Nina Orzechowski and in Jubilee: Josh Pieters and Emma Horn, have certainly started the year well and I have no doubt that they will lead this Matric group, and ultimately the school, efficiently and with compassion. I look forward to working with them as the year unfolds.

- **Staff conference**

Our staff conference, before the start of term, was once again a huge success and I am encouraged by the enthusiasm to explore new teaching methods and the determination to ensure that we will become a true learning and thinking organization. The theme of the conference was 'Shift happens' and we have started the year exploring how technology can help teaching and learning at every level of the school. We have ensured that all classrooms are linked to the network this year and furthermore we have installed more interactive white-boards in certain venues and data projectors in every classroom. We have also purchased a number of ipads for staff and they will be leading a pilot project to ensure that we use these amazing tablets effectively for teaching and learning. Oakhill wants to continue to ensure that we prepare young men and women for the real world and I have no doubt that this endeavor continues to gear us up for the future.

- **Staffing**

We will be saying goodbye to two staff members who have resigned at the beginning of the term: Coreen Bierman, our Prep School IT teacher will be relocating back to Johannesburg after 15 years in Knysna and we wish her every blessing as she gears up for this next phase of her life-journey. Adele Conyers has also resigned as the Grade 00 teacher to start a whole new venture and we wish her and Mark everything of the best as she starts her own business. Both these teachers have made a significant difference in our community. They have brought a positive energy and efficiency to all we do and we will miss their presence here.

We have also recently advertised for a Head of Department Mathematics in the College and we are also looking to attract an IT Network Specialist to manage our ever complicated network.

Lastly, we will be appointing (internally) a Director of the Arts to coordinate our complex cultural programme and to represent this important facet of our school on our Executive Committee.

Deborah Seager has been away to attend the funeral of her Mum who has recently passed away after suffering from cancer. Our thoughts are with her in the term ahead as she comes to terms with her loss.

Unfortunately, I also need to report that Lwando Bantom's sister was murdered last week and as a result he has been at home, with family, coming to terms with this most brutal and tragic loss. It was only last year that his Mother passed away and we offer him our sincere condolences and assure him of our thoughts and prayers as he comes to terms with this untimely loss of a sibling.

Barbie Leibbrandt is also away at present after hearing that her sister was knocked over by a taxi in Port Elizabeth. Both she and Philip Stewart have joined their family to offer support at this difficult time.

- **Sport**

Sport at Oakhill continues to thrive and as we grow as a school we have to realise that we cannot do everything. We will be focusing more on team sport as the year unfolds. We believe that the team aspect certainly encourages kids to grow and learn about themselves in the context of a team environment and this in turn fulfills our mission of developing all-rounded, resilient and socially adjusted young men and women. This does not mean that we will not be continuing to offer tennis, golf or canoeing but we are suggesting that all kids should be involved in a team activity.

As a result we will not be offering tennis during the winter terms as an official school sport. Other schools do not offer tennis at this time either, which has made it difficult for us, but this will continue to be on offer during the summer terms (terms 1 and 4). We will be focusing on rugby, hockey and netball in terms 2 and 3.

We have already had both Inter-house Athletics events and various galas; water polo matches as well as cricket fixtures and I have been amazed at the level of participation and camaraderie. One incident in particular reminded me what a wonderfully beautiful school we have: Mikayla Oliver, in Grade 11 was chasing down Ashleigh Weavers in the 400m Inter-house event. Mikayla was hot on the heels of Ashleigh when she tripped and fell, 20 metres from the finish line. Mikayla could easily have sauntered through to take first place, but she chose not to – she stopped and helped her fellow student to her feet and they walked across the line together. They are both such wonderful young ladies and for me it epitomised all that is good about our school and the young men and women who walk our corridors each day. I, for one, certainly learn from their compassion and sportsmanship and I'm proud to be associated with a school which produces young men and women of this ilk.

We have some wonderful sporting events to look forward to in the term ahead and I would like to remind you of the water polo tournament in the quays on the 9th of February, where we will be hosting schools from around the country.

The Spain hockey and art tour is also gearing up for their departure and I would like to thank all the families who are giving their kids a gift of a lifetime by allowing them to experience this event.

- **Odyssey**

There are 20 days to go before the first Odyssey group leaves on their rite-of-passage into the beautiful surrounds of the Garden Route. I have no doubt that these young men and women are going to enjoy and grow from this experience. Please watch the webpage for updates and information about this event.

- **Meet and Greet**

We changed the format of the Meet and Greet functions this year and I would like to thank all who helped to make these events successful. As we grow as a school we need to protect our sense of community and the smaller events certainly allowed us to interact more meaningfully with new families and to reconnect with families who have been at Oakhill for a while. I would like to thank the PTA, led by Cindy Paggis, for helping us cater at the Preparatory School event.

- **Board AGM and discussion on capital expenditure projects**

Oakhill has revitalised the campus in the last four years by upgrading classrooms, gardens, play areas and sports facilities, but there is no doubt that we are still in dire need of even more specialised facilities. Our art, music and drama departments desperately need more space and our sports department needs their own fields as we plan for the future sustainability of our school.

At the 2011 AGM the Board was tasked with investigating how Oakhill could continue to support capital development projects in order for us to improve our offering to the community. The Board and the Planning Committee have tirelessly worked behind the scenes, since then, to ensure that we have a proposal to present to the wider parent body at the 2012 AGM.

I am pleased to inform you that we will be presenting you with several opportunities to interact with Board and Planning Committee members to discuss a funding memorandum in support of capital expenditure projects for 2012 to 2014.

Firstly, a prospectus highlighting the Board's proposals will be circulated, via email, on the 23rd of February 2012, for your perusal. You could also collect a printed copy from the school office if you would prefer a hard copy of the document.

Secondly, there will be two opportunities to interact with the Private Equity Company assisting the Board in this endeavour, and members of the Board. One of these interventions will take place in Plettenberg Bay on the evening of the 28th of February 2012 and the other will take place in Knysna, on the evening of the 29th of February 2012.

Please note that the **date for the Board AGM 2012 has changed to MONDAY THE 19TH OF MARCH**. Please disregard the date in the diary card for this event.

Lastly, it is vitally important that we have all Parents participating in this process as it will involve a commitment from every family at Oakhill. Please diarise the AGM date (**MONDAY THE 19TH OF MARCH**) and support your representatives on the Board who have given of their time to ensure the sustainability of our wonderful school.

I look forward to seeing you there.

- **Finally...**

Our aim at Oakhill is to allow your sons and daughters to explore, discover and enjoy finding the meaning of true learning and thinking and I would encourage you to contact us should you have an issue you would like to discuss.

I appreciate this quote, EM FORSTER WROTE: *The people I admire most are those who are sensitive and want to create something or discover something, and do not see life in terms of power...they produce literature and art, or they do disinterested scientific research, or they may be what is called 'ordinary people' who are creative in their private lives and who always help their neighbours. I believe in the aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and all classes, and all through the ages there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human condition. They are sensitive to others, as well as for themselves. They are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but the power to endure, and they can take a joke.*

Your sons and daughters are certainly amongst the people I admire and I look forward to learning and growing with them as the year unfolds.

Kindest regards



Shane Kidwell