



THE JOY OF LEARNING

## HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER

23 September 2014

Dear Parents

As we come to the end of Term 3, I am confident that this particular year and term will stand out in the broader canvas of Oakhill's history. It has been a wonderful celebration of the school's community driven focus and there is no doubt that the school continues to leap ahead with boundless energy.

We have celebrated the opening of the Oakhill Sports Campus and this time last year we were dreaming of watching our children play on the Astro or kicking a rugby ball on the fields. These dreams are now a reality and we have been catapulted into the future with confidence and joy. I find a deep pleasure in watching our children playing sport at the OSC – they enjoy the space, revel in their friendships and ultimately they have risen to the occasion by performing outstandingly well in their fixtures.

Our u13A hockey boys have beaten all and sundry, including Wynberg Boys from Cape Town, Knysna Primary, Plett Primary, Glenwood and Holy Cross on our new turf and it was a joy to see them beat Park, from Mossel Bay in the final of the league. They have been coached and motivated to believe in themselves by none other than **Alastair Trafford**, who continues to have a profound impact on so many young boys and girls in our school. Congratulations to him, his Captain **Trevor Gebhard** and his team – we are extremely proud of them! Our u13A girls' side, led by **Neve Canny** and coached by **Rene Korsten**, have also impressed and managed to get through to the quarter finals of the league. Our College girls' side also competed in the Independent Girls Festival and were unbeaten and the highlight of their season was the 0-0 draw to York in George. **Terri Pautz**, their coach, continues to gain wonderful traction with this team.

**Tessa Micic** and **Jason Fogle** made the u12 SWD Tennis sides.

**Aimee Canny** (u11), **Sophia Trollip** (u12), **Jamie Hattingh** (u14) and **Kendra Underwood** (u16) were invited to the Western Cape trials for SA Schools Swimming and competed in Strand/Cape Town on Saturday, 9 August. **Aimee Canny** has also received eight gold medals at the SWDA Short Course Swimming Championships held in George in September.

**Gabriella Lubner** made the 2014 Western Cape OPEN Dressage Team for the South African Pony Championships that took place in Johannesburg.

**Marija Dimopoulos** (u12) participated in the "Seal" Cup in Kragujevac, Serbia, in August. Seventeen clubs were represented from Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Kenya and South Africa. Marija received Gold Medals for 100m Backstroke, 50m Backstroke, 50m Butterfly and 50m Freestyle in her age group. Marija was also awarded with the trophy for having the highest amount of FINA points in her age category.

**Nina Micklewood** (Level 3) and **Hannah Kidwell** (Level 3) both achieved silver medals and **Georgie Gibson** (Level 1) achieved a gold medal in the Level 1 to 3, South Zone competition in Cape Town whilst representing the Eden team.

Students from Oakhill participated in the annual Port Elizabeth Dance Festival held in August and **Nadine du Plessis** and **Josie Trollip** both received eight gold medals, respectively and **Alodie Gould-Wagenaar** received two gold medals and one silver medal. **Hannah Micklewood** received seven gold medals as well as the titles of Best Junior National Dancer, Most Promising Junior Dancer (up to age 13 years) as well as Junior Ballet Champion Runner-Up.

The Equestrian Team did Oakhill proud with their recent participation in the SANESA Schools League. Oakhill Prep came 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 16 schools and the College 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 9 schools.



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Congratulations to all our Water Polo players who have recently been selected to represent SWD at the up-coming SA Schools Water Polo Tournament in Gauteng in December 2014. This will be the first u13 side to represent SWD at SA Schools Water Polo.

*u13:* **Lourens Kok, Joshua Smith, Damian Hart, Vicky Frost, Thalia Paggis, Sophia Trollip**

*u15:* **Dale De Gouveia, Jayden Jullien, Kevin Laughton, Gordon Sprenger, Tamara Foyn, Sabrina Rupert, Veida Vosloo**

*u19:* **Dimitri Paggis, Jason Sprenger, Isabella Fulford**

Our College 1<sup>st</sup> XI hockey side has also completed an outstanding season, with wins against Bishops, Bridge House, Glenwood, St Andrew's Bloemfontein, Outeniqua, and draws against St Andrew's Grahamstown, Somerset College and Woodridge. They have ended up in the top 30 rankings for South African Schools at the end of the season and all the credit needs to be given to their coach, **Chicco Ponela**, who continues to make an immense difference at Oakhill. The u16 College boys' hockey side has also completed an unbeaten season – which is no mean feat. They had wins against Bishops (6-1), York, Glenwood, Woodridge, Outeniqua and drew to Grey High Port Elizabeth 1-1 in an extremely exciting game.

I could also mention that our u11 rugby side played extremely well this season as did the College 1<sup>st</sup> XV who narrowly lost to Knysna High in the last seconds of the game 15 -14. Our u13 rugby boys beat Elkanah House 22 – 17.

The College Golf team consisting of **Lawrence Wiid, Jarred Wels, Todd Walker** and **Joshua van der Merwe** won the Oakhill Independent Schools Golf Festival Stableford Competition.

Seven College players were involved in SWD Cricket trials: **Chris Marrow, JJ Strydom, Todd Walker, Lawrence Wiid, Scott Armstrong, Athi Khwitshana** and **Sam Mvimbi** and this bodes well for the season ahead.

**Max Stam**, who recently joined us again after a brief sabbatical at a tennis academy has made the u15 SWD Tennis Team.

**Francine Oliver** (Level 6) made the Western Cape Gymnastics team and will be participating in the SA Gymnastic Games in October in Cape Town.

**Jason Campbell** has recently been awarded Western Cape colours for road cycling. **Amy Williams** also keeps astounding us with her magnificent results on the bicycle.

I would also like to make mention of the fact that **Ian Melliar**, Master in Charge of Water Polo, was recently selected to represent South Africa as a referee at the FINA World Championships in Kazakhstan – we are certainly proud of his achievements!

I do not normally start a newsletter with sports results but after our outstanding performances in a variety of areas I felt it was appropriate to point out that our school, which is small in comparison to some Cape Town or Grahamstown schools, continues to achieve results way above its weight division. I have been wondering how this is possible and I am reminded that we do not focus on results. We do not obsess about them and consequently our children do not feel the extraordinary pressure to perform, week in and week out. In fact, I can truly say: all our children enjoy participating at a high level and the outcome of this joy has been outstanding results. This speaks to the reason we do sport at Oakhill – not to always win – but to expose young men and women to the joys of learning to work in a team, to dig deep when the chips are down or to keep your head when you are 4-1 up against Bishops at half-time. Sport builds character, it builds belief in the extraordinary, and it helps us work through frustration and encourages us to remain humble in victory. We should always remember these values even when a team has not done as well as we would have liked. All of us like to achieve. All of us want to excel but too much pressure on our children is not a good thing and I would encourage all of us to remember this as we continue to post extraordinary results.



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## Final Farewells

Our Matrics are currently finishing their Prelim exams and because of our different terms this year, will shortly begin their final examinations. Time is running out for our senior students and they are about to enter an emotional phase of their school careers as we celebrate their time with us at the final Matric Assembly on 16 October, the Matric Valediction on 17 October and finally the Celebration of Excellence on 18 October. Earlier this term we celebrated the first of these rites-of-passage - the Matric Dance, and it was a wonderfully relaxed and affirming evening and I would like to thank **Mandy Fuller** and her Matric Dance Committee for all they did to ensure that it was a special occasion for our Matrics.

Please remember to diarise the Celebration of Excellence date to ensure you are present to support your child:

Little Oaks:	28 November
Foundation Phase:	27 November
Intermediate Phase:	28 November
College:	18 October

## Facilities

As you are no doubt aware, we celebrated the official opening of the Oakhill Sports Campus this term and I would like to thank you for your support on the day. We would like this format to be repeated next year as a celebration of our Founders Day, so please watch out for this date in 2015!

We are also completing two building projects on the academic campus and we are looking forward to being able to occupy these premises at the beginning of 2015. The music school will acquire the building next door to the current classrooms which will give more practice facilities for individual instruments and we will also have a dedicated band-room for the marimbas and the rock band practices. The old art block will be transformed into six new classrooms for Grades 5, 6 and 7 on the ground floor and the second floor will be home to the senior art and drama departments. The art studio has been carefully designed to ensure continued excellence and the drama classroom will incorporate a mini-theatre space for productions and rehearsals.

The new learning commons will also be housed on the second floor. This section of the building will have sweeping views of the lagoon and will incorporate a modern library, information technology, and collaboration space for the whole school. The 168 square metre learning commons will allow our students to find a space for learning, researching and collaborating in a relaxed, modern environment. Pupils will be able to recharge their devices in this venue, download library books onto their Kindles or iPads or interact with a teacher who could help them to develop the research and critical thinking skills which will hold them in good stead for the rest of their lives. It will also offer a constructive and organised space for doing homework in the afternoons.

These new facilities will also allow our Preparatory School to have a dedicated space for both art and drama. This is a significant step for our school and I have no doubt that these facilities will have a significant impact on each individual. It will also allow our children to realise a sense of space in their classroom and this can only promote a calmer more productive learning environment.

## Staffing

All learning environments have to deal with change and recently we had two teachers depart to teach in Singapore. We decided to replace them with temporary teachers until we had a chance to advertise and interview for these positions appropriately. I am pleased to announce that we have now filled both the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase positions with two passionate and dedicated professionals.



We have appointed **Nerine Turvey** to the Foundation Phase position from the beginning of 2015. Nerine has extensive experience in the UK and is currently teaching at Rustenburg Girls School in Cape Town. She is an experienced and talented educator and I look forward to welcoming her onto our team.

**Dylan Langheim** is also joining us from Rustenburg Girls School (which is a coincidence) to fill the Intermediate Phase position in 2015. He has 10 years of teaching experience and is particularly competent in using technology in the classroom. His enthusiasm and love of young boys and girls will certainly shine through once you have met him.

As you are aware, **Riaan and Joanie van Straten** are leaving us at the end of 2014 to move back home to the Kalahari and we have been fortunate enough to gain the experience of **Garth Turvey** (Nerine's husband) as our new Director of Sport in the Preparatory School. Garth has extensive experience in the sporting field and is a qualified teacher as well. He has taught in the UK and is currently working in the sport industry. His specialities are Rugby and Cricket but his philosophy of allowing each child to develop a love for sport spoke volumes at his interview. I have no doubt that you will appreciate his enthusiasm and gentle nature once you interact with him next year.

Finally, I am excited to announce that we have acquired the services of an Educational Psychologist who will be joining our staff from the beginning of 2015. **Julia Warren** has extensive experience in counselling in the school context and will add a huge amount of expertise and passion to the team. She will be teaching Life Orientation in the College but will be the Counsellor to the whole school. She is innovative, passionate about helping kids, community orientated and wise and I am excited to be able to work alongside her from the beginning of next year. Not only will she help kids and parents navigate through the difficult waters of times of crisis but she will help set up programmes which will enable staff and pupils to grow and be proactive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

We will be interviewing for a Facilities Manager next term.

### **eBooks and Connectivity**

Oakhill is investigating an eBook or digital textbook app that will enable your children to access their textbooks digitally. This app allows adding notes and other resources such as podcasts and video clips, as well as creating summaries according to highlighted text. For example, a teacher can add a resource to the book, and everybody who owns a digital copy, will be able to see it. For more details visit: <https://www.itschools.co.za>.

These digital textbooks are as a rule cheaper than a hard copy printed book. All devices with the following are supported:

- ✓ Android 4.1 and up
- ✓ iOS 7 and up
- ✓ Windows 8.1 and up

If we proceed with this, it will be available for Grade 7's and College students from 2015. The School will make a decision based on your feedback. As this is an important decision, please take the time to complete a very quick poll which has been sent to you on a separate email. The closing date of the poll is today, **23 September**.

I am also pleased to tell you that we are in discussion with various stakeholders in the town who are helping us solve our slow internet connection. As you are aware, Knysna only has a 10mbps connection and ideally we need a 100mbps connection for an educational institution. Our IT Consultant, **Jaco Smit** and I are working on trying to implement a long-term solution and we will hopefully be able to share this information with you before the end of the year.



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## Academic focus for 2015

Our academic committee has introduced many interesting innovations recently and while we do not buy into fads, we certainly want to remain at the cutting edge of teaching and learning at Oakhill. We consider ourselves a thinking school and have introduced many opportunities for developing critical thinking in the school, to name a few: Singapore Maths, our One Research Tasks (in the College) and establishing a Chess Club. Our Academic Directors would like us to find further ways of developing a thinking culture, by explicitly teaching thinking skills to all students. This whole school approach will require employing a range of frameworks in the planning of teaching and our focus in our staff development sessions at the beginning of 2015 will address this.

## Exchange students

Oakhill has the privilege of participating in numerous exchanges and at the moment we are hosting students from France, Germany and Argentina and we have the opportunity to send students to the UK, India, Argentina and Germany. Thank you to all the families who have offered to host children from schools in these countries. I hope it has been an enriching and rewarding experience! I have no doubt that our young men and women grow from these exchanges and we will continue to provide every opportunity for our students to experience another culture at a nominal cost to parents.

## SRC

After the recent SRC elections in the College I am delighted to announce that **Joshua Carver** has been elected as the new President for 2014/2015. Joshua has already made a significant difference in the positive and inclusive way he has approached all he has done and I look forward to working alongside him to ensure that we build on past years. **Leon Martin** has been elected as the Vice-President and his humble, thoughtful interaction will also spur us on to greater heights.

The members of the new SRC are as follows:

Grade 9:	<b>Jamie Hattingh, Shaun Riley</b>
Grade 10:	<b>Scott Armstrong, Melissa Davies, Anna Reid</b>
Grade 11:	<b>Ruby Fisch, Jess Gebhard, Louis Maarsingh, Nic Reid</b>
Grade 12:	<b>Matt Fermor, Sonia Moodley, Gabi Vitali</b>
Vice President:	<b>Leon Martin</b>
President:	<b>Joshua Carver</b>

Our sincere congratulations to them and their families for being elected to represent their peers and I have every confidence that they will serve the community with distinction.

## Finally...

We come to the end of a seven year strategy which was implemented by the Board in 2008 and it is fascinating to see how many of the things we dreamed of then have become reality now. It has been an exciting time for the School in many ways but most importantly, Oakhill continues to provide many opportunities for young men and women to grow and develop on our academic campus as well as our newly opened sports campus. We have stretched ourselves in the last while and I am overwhelmed by the excellence I see here every day. Each individual has the opportunity to shine at Oakhill whether it be at a music soiree, a dramatic production, in the classroom or in the sporting arena. Each young boy and girl has every opportunity to flourish should they so wish.



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As we begin to plan for the next six years and cast our eye on the year 2020 we should not forget the magic which has enabled us to grow to this point. Oakhill is a unique place and we have a vast array of personalities and individuals, which woven together create the most beautiful tapestry. We have a wonderfully supportive parent body, the happiest students, a great team of staff and a wonderfully rigorous Board which continues to shape and direct our thoughts as we progress. As you are aware we are celebrating the centenary of the First World War and the words on the cenotaph – lest we forget – are relevant in this context and in ours today. We have recently celebrated our 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday and we are happily entering adulthood, emboldened by our achievements in the past and excited about what the future holds.

As we continue to grow we need to ensure that ‘The Joy of Learning’ stays at the very centre of all we do and every decision we make going forward. I look forward to sharing some of the vision for the next few years with you as we enter the final term of the year. I also assure you that there will be many opportunities for starting a conversation which will shape our future as we consult about the school we are, and the school we want to be, as we progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are developing as a school and we are excited about the journey. Your children are developing too and our journey of learning and theirs are intricately linked. Every word and action from you as a parent and us as teachers sends a message. We all need to listen to what we say to kids and tune into the messages we are sending to them. Are they messages that say: you have permanent traits and I’m judging them? Or are they messages that say: you’re a developing person and I’m interested in your development? Hopefully we give our children positive messages which give them the opportunity to grow and learn from their mistakes.

Enjoy your holiday with your children, travel safely and see you next term!

Kind regards

Shane Kidwell  
HEADMASTER