



THE JOY OF LEARNING

HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER

3 December 2014

Dear Parents

After a complex year I have been craving simplicity. Simple joy, simple food, simple conversation and simple thought. Sometimes life is too noisy, too complicated, because we make it so and too fast because we are always chasing. Chasing our own focused outcomes which cause us to become selfish and introspective. Sometimes we also lose perspective and we think the whole world is against us when actually we have just perceived or interpreted a situation in the wrong way. One of our biggest frustrations may be that we feel nobody is listening to our issues or even worse we perceive that they don't care. I love AA Milne, the author of Winnie the Pooh's simplicity: *"If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear."* So, if you feel someone or an organization is not listening don't jump to conclusions – perhaps they just have some fluff in their ear!

2014 has been an incredibly successful year for Oakhill School and we have the unique problem of ensuring that we do not get ahead of ourselves as we continue to grow as a thinking and learning organisation. How should schools measure success, is perhaps the question we should be asking ourselves? Is our success as a school based on our academic results? Or any results for that matter? Because if results are the benchmark, then Oakhill is an outstanding school.

We can boast about our Matric results or the fact that in the second term, all the IP children wrote the South African Mathematics Challenge (SAMC), in which 70,000 students from over 300 schools participate each year. Each question is a challenging question and any question the students get right, is an achievement in itself. Only the students who got more than 60% in the first round went through to the second round. Certificates were awarded to all students who achieved 55% and more. To receive a gold certificate, one had to achieve 85% or more. We are very proud of **Daniel van Zyl** who got 90%. The students had a choice of working by themselves or in a group of two. Six Grade 6 students received silver certificates: **Jessica Devine, Ryan Shearer, Tessa Micic, Georgina Palmer, Jason Fogle** and **Francois Viljoen**. Four students received bronze certificates: **Tom Seddon** (Grade 4), **Christopher Bailey** (Grade 6), **Joshua Smith** (Grade 6) and **Joss Kenyon** (Grade 6).

Or we could boast about **Kristin Groenewald coming first in the SACEE Puzzle Parades & Language Challenges!** Kristin was one of two learners nationally in Grade 11 to score 95%. The Language Challenges started in 1991 as an initiative to provide an English language benchmarking service to schools, and over the past 24 years they have expanded into a national initiative serving schools in all nine provinces of South Africa.

Our Grade 6 class participates in an IEB benchmarking exercise each year. These results always tell a story and this year is no exception. We have put in place interventions in previous years which were aimed at improving our Maths and Literacy results. These Grade 6 benchmarking results clearly indicate that these interventions are starting to make a difference.

School: OAKHILL SCHOOL 1098
Number of candidates: 36
Number of candidates in the IEB: 3234

% of IEB learners and school learners in each result category on:	Exceptional	Outstanding	Commendable	Good	Adequate	Needing Attention
	90-100%	75-89%	60-74%	50-59%	40-49%	< 40%
Total score						
IEB	2.6	14.1	27.6	19.6	18.6	17.5
OAKHILL SCHOOL	5.6	19.4	30.6	16.7	13.9	13.9
Language Thinking score						
IEB	1.9	11.2	27.1	22.7	19.8	17.2
OAKHILL SCHOOL	2.8	19.4	27.8	11.1	30.6	8.3
Mathematical Thinking score						
IEB	5.4	15.9	21.9	15.8	15.9	25
OAKHILL SCHOOL	11.1	19.4	30.6	8.3	13.9	16.7
Visual Literacy score						
IEB	0.6	4.9	19	21.9	21.4	32.3
OAKHILL SCHOOL	0	13.9	25	19.4	27.8	13.9
Complex Thinking score						
IEB	0.7	7.1	23.1	23.1	23	22.9
OAKHILL SCHOOL	0	11.1	30.6	19.4	27.8	11.1



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Carol Dweck is a psychology professor at Harvard University and she has written a book called *Mindset*. She describes two specific mindsets and encourages parents and schools to inculcate a mindset which will allow growth, development and excellence in our homes and schools. Dweck, in her research, suggests that as parents and teachers we should not be praising our children's, so called talent or results, but rather we should be praising effort.

When I was in my last years of schooling I remember the gifted sportsmen. They clearly had great eye-hand coordination and fast-twitch muscle fibres. They just had talent, I was told, and our teachers loved these guys because they made them look good. They always scored runs or goals and they could run or swim the 100m in less time than most. The same happened in the classroom: some of my friends were clearly just gifted at Maths and I had no clue. Unbeknown to me at the time, my teachers were actually doing me a favour because it forced me to work harder, to develop great habits because when I failed, it strengthened my resolve to learn from the mistakes and try harder when I faced a setback.

Dweck calls these two mindsets the **fixed mindset** and the **growth mindset**. What Dweck ascertained is that as parents and teachers we might be doing our children and students a huge disservice by praising their intelligence or their results. In fact she proves, it is detrimental to their long-term intellectual growth and development. Dweck found that students praised for intelligence, selected easier tasks when given a choice and they lied about their scores to look smart. Students who were praised for effort, overwhelmingly chose more difficult tasks the next time around and they showed higher levels of engagement and achievement.

Kids with a fixed mindset viewed effort as a reflection of low intelligence or talent. Effort was interpreted as a lack of ability! Those with a growth mindset saw effort as necessary for success, they tried harder when they faced a setback, they used effort to overcome difficulty and effort was interpreted as success.

- Fixed mindset individuals set performance goals.
- **Growth** mindset individuals create learning goals.
- Fixed mindset individuals find that low marks mean that they are not smart.
- **Growth** mindset individuals realise that scores and marks reflect how you are doing now and that they do not measure your future potential.

The point is that we, as parents, focus on results too often, instead of focusing on learning, and whilst I understand the pressures of the modern world, we ultimately do our kids a huge disservice by approaching the world in this fixed mindset manner.

So contrary to my thoughts in the opening paragraph of this newsletter – I do not think that we should be judging whether our school is successful or not by measuring our results. What we should be measuring is our effort at all levels. We should be measuring our levels of participation in art, drama, music and sport and we should be measuring our work-ethic and our self-discipline on the academic front. There is no doubt that both Kristin Groenewald and Daniel van Zyl are incredibly dedicated, motivated and self-disciplined workers. **Their results are as a product of their hard work, effort and discipline.**

We do not focus on results at Oakhill but paradoxically our results are outstanding and 2014 has been the most magnificently successful year. It has been successful because I have seen growth and development in every individual on our campus – teachers as well as students. Our hard work on the sports fields, in the classrooms, in the music rehearsal rooms and on the stage has allowed us to produce performances which have truly inspired us. I love celebrating success and I make no apologies for sharing these stories with you.



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Ilze Schoeman is a master-teacher and has made a significant difference in the Science Department this year. She introduced a Bridge Building competition which was well received by the College students:

Seven teams consisting of 3 students each from Grades 8 to 12 competed against each other to determine which team's bridge could carry the most mass. All teams received the same materials – twenty 4mm thickness wooden sticks, glue and a few metres of rope and had 6 hours to design and build their bridge. All the teams did an excellent job considering it was their first attempt at this type of competition – even the team that ended 7th carried 30kg before breaking. Other teams were able to carry masses of 50kg, 60kg and 70kg before breaking. And then we hit a snag – two of our teams were able to pack all 107kg available on their bridges and still they did not break! It meant that we had to order more weights to be cut and finally the winners could be determined. The winning bridge carried a whopping 142.5kg. That was 1,037 times its own weight! The first three teams in the internal competition were as follows:

- **1st: Rhys van der Handel, Joshua Bennett, Joshua Killian**
- **2nd: Tristan McKechnie, Finn Stevenson, Sean Brodie**
- **3rd: Louis Maarsingh, Nicholas Thomson**

After this trial at school, three teams went through to compete in the provincial competition organised by the South African Council for Civil Engineers in Port Elizabeth. Our 1st team (*Rhys van der Handel, Josh Bennett and Andrew Vedder*) carried a mass of 95kg which was equal to the mass carried by the overall winners, but due to our bridge being heavier and awarded a lower mark for aesthetics, we were placed third. Our 2nd team consisting of *Tristan McKechnie; Finn Stevenson and Louis Maarsingh* came 5th overall and the junior team (*Luc van der Handel, Brandon van Staden and Liam Watson*) placed 10th.

The competition was of a very high standard with most schools displaying a lot of experience and skill. We are incredibly proud of all our Oakhill teams – as our first attempt, only nine days before the Port Elizabeth competition, we truly achieved great results. Well done bridge builders!

Our Grade 6 group, under the guidance of **Rodney Anderson**, our Science teacher, was also involved in an innovative Science experiment which took place on the Oakhill Sports Campus.

Our sport results have been outstanding this year and this is a snippet of our Preparatory School sports results for 2014

The Prep School embarked on their first ever winter sports tour this year. Our u11 and u13 rugby, netball and hockey sides toured to Port Elizabeth over the June holidays and came up against Woodridge Prep and Charlo Primary with outstanding results. This was truly an amazing experience for all our kids. They got to witness our Springboks take on Scotland in a test match at the Nelson Mandela Bay stadium and experienced all the sights and sounds of PE first hand.

Hockey:

Our hockey performances were truly outstanding. Our u13A Boys finished top of the SWD league, beating Park Primary 1-0 in the final. Our u13A Girls finishing 2nd in the KPSSSU region and narrowly lost to George-South in the quarter finals of the SWD league. Our u13 boys beat Wynberg Boys 1-0, narrowly lost to Paarl Boys 2-0, and drew to Woodridge 2-2. **Neve Canny** and **Viggo Platt** received their u13 SWD Provincial hockey colours.

Rugby:

For the first time in Oakhill history we sent boys to participate in regional and provincial trials. **Ruben Brits** (u13) and **Luyolo Mvimbi** (u12) were selected to represent the KPSSSU regional side at the SWD provincial rugby trials. Although they didn't receive their provincial colours, this has been an extremely exciting step forward for Oakhill rugby. Our u13 side beat Elkanah House on their tour to the Garden Route.



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Netball:

u11 Girls beat Woodridge 3-2. Our netball has grown over the last couple of years and we have managed to maintain four full sides in u9, u10, u11 and u13 age groups.

Cricket:

Ryan Shearer received his SWD provincial colours for the third year in a row. He also scored his first 100 for the School against Plett Primary earlier this year. A great accomplishment for such a young, passionate cricketer. Five of our u11 boys were also chosen to represent our KPSSSU regional side at the SWD provincial trials over the September holidays. **Toby Tyrrell, Richard du Plessis, Sash Sunkar, Nicholas Swire-Thompson,** and **Simon Shearer** have all shown great courage and determination this season so far.

Swimming:

Aimee Canny and **Sophia Trollip** were selected to represent the Western Province team to swim at the SA Schools Gala in December. Aimee has also been unstoppable this season raking in many gold medals at various Level Gala's. We have entered more than 20 swimmers for the Eden Gala's this year: more than ever in our history! We have phenomenal talent in the pool and look forward to seeing this sport grow even more.

Water Polo:

For the first time in SWD aquatics history, SWD will send an u13 boys and girls side to the SA Schools tournament in Gauteng in December. We are delighted that five of our Water Polo players have been selected to represent SWD. Congratulations to **Joshua Smith, Lourens Kok, Victoria Frost, Sophia Trollip** and **Thalia Paggis** on their selection. We have also started with an internal Water Polo league, which is hugely exciting and very well received by our up and coming Water Polo players.

Tennis:

Our tennis players have also been very busy this year. Oakhill has 5 players who have been chosen to represent SWD: **Ruben Britz** (u13), **Tessa Micic** (u12) who is also ranked 28th in the country, **Jason Fogle** (u12), **Imogen Anderson** (u12) and **Viggo Platt** (Reserve u12).

Equestrian:

Our horse riders have also been busy and have shown great competitiveness at the SANESA Schools League, finishing 3rd overall out of 16 participating Prep Schools. **Gabriella Lubner** received her Western Province colours and **Victoria Frost** her Eastern Cape colours.

Gymnastics:

Three of our gymnasts received their Eden colours for gymnastics at this year's South Zone competition in Kuils River: **Georgie Gibson** Level 1 (Gold), **Nina Micklewood** Level 3 (Silver) and **Hannah Kidwell** Level 3 (Silver) medals.

A snippet of our College sports results for 2014

Hockey:

Girls: our 1st XI Girls were unbeaten at York Easter for the first time in Oakhill history and unbeaten at the Oakhill ISCHF. They also had a very successful Eastern Cape Tour drawing with Graeme College and narrowly going down 2-1 to DSG Grahamstown. They drew against York 1-1 and were ranked 8th in the country.

Boys: our 1st XI Boys had a hugely successful Independent Schools' Festival beating Bishops (2-0) and St Andrews Bloem (3-1) and drawing with Somerset College (1-1) and St Andrew's (Grahamstown 3-3). The 1st XI Boys were also unbeaten in the ISCHF. They drew with Woodridge 1-1 and Victoria Park 1-1, convincingly beat Outeniqua 5-1 and beat Glenwood 3-2. Oakhill was placed in the top 20 Hockey schools nationally for most of the season.



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Our u16 Boys went unbeaten drawing 1-1 with Grey PE, 1-1 vs Woodridge and beat Pearson 4-0 and a young Bishops side 6-1.

Our staff also need to be congratulated for their incredible commitment and effort: **Terri Pautz** was elected as Chairwoman of SWD Girl's Hockey and **Chicco Ponela** managed the SWD u18 Boys hockey side.

Our congratulations go to the following players who were selected for the Provincial sides:

u18A Boys: **Chris Marrow, Caleb Bell, Rayne Davis** and **Greg Cuthbert**

u18 B Boys: **Ben Giliomee**

u16A Boys: **Todd Walker, Sam Mvimbi, Scott Armstrong, Steven Campbell** and **Jake Turner**

u16B Boys: **Nick Thomson** and **Nicholas Reid**

u16C Boys: **Dimitri Paggis, Jayden Jullien** and **Ben Pama**

u14A Boys: **Kevin Laughton** and **Logan Tait**

u16A Girls: **Anna Reid** and **Morgan Watson**

Cricket:

Our 1st XI beat York and Outeniqua in the Super League and beat Outeniqua by 9 wickets in the Standard Bank National T20 Competition ending 5th in the Super League and getting through to the quarter-finals of the T20. We have four Provincial cricketers in **Chris Marrow, Todd Walker, Athi Kwitshana** and **Sam Mvimbi**.

Dave Pryke, our Director of Sport, was selected to attend a Level III CSA Cricket Course and is currently coaching the SWD u15 Cricket team.

Water Polo:

Both sides did extremely well in the Chukka Festival and have played in the top co-ed tournament in the country. We have 10 Provincial Water Polo players in the College, namely: **Isabella Fulford** (u19 Girls), **Dimitri Paggis** (u19 Boys), **Sabrina Rupert, Tamara Foyn** and **Veda Vosloo** (u15 Girls) and **Kevin Laughton, Jayden Jullien, Gordon Sprenger** and **Dale De Gouveia** (u15 Boys).

Ian Melliar has just returned from FINA World Champs where he represented South Africa as a referee.

Swimming:

We have hosted a number of individual and relay galas at Oakhill leading the way in the College with organisation and performance. Our two leading Provincial swimmers are **Kendra Underwood** and **Jamie Hattingh**.

Our Coach, **Tiemke Rijnstra**, is ranked No 1 in SA in her age category for Open Water Swimming and is a qualified FINA official.

Athletics:

We had our first Provincial Athlete ever in **Bianca Mincione**.

Rugby:

The 1st XV had a successful season losing 16-15 to a Knysna High team.

Tennis:

Max Stam (u15) and **Josceline Fogle** (u13) represented SWD Tennis.

Netball:

Massive strides have been made in this area with Oakhill having four teams in the local league.



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Golf:

Oakhill won the Oakhill Independent Schools Golf Festival with the four-ball of **Lawrence Wiid, Todd Walker, Joshua van der Merwe** and **Jarred Wels**, and Oakhill also competed admirably in the local George Golf League.

Chess:

Oakhill participated actively in all Derby Days and local Chess fixtures.

“Outside Sports”

Kevin Redman is ranked in the top 15 in South Africa in Super Biking. Our Equestrians have done us proud with our young ladies achieving Provincial colours, namely: **Melissa Davies, Robyn Dodd, Xisca Taylor** and **Isabella Fulford**. **Francine Olivier** was awarded her Provincial Gymnastics colours and **Greg Cuthbert** Provincial colours for Surfing, **Melissa Strydom** for Baseball and **Ross Hunter** for Downhill Skateboarding. Our Cyclists received Provincial recognition for a number of disciplines namely: **Ben Giliomee** (Mountain Bike Marathon), **Amy Williams** (Mountain Bike Marathon and Cross Country) and **Jason Campbell** (Mountain Bike Marathon and Cross Country and Road Cycling). **Ben Giliomee** and **Jason Campbell** received Provincial Duathlon colours and **Jason Campbell** added Provincial Triathlon colours to his repertoire. **Joshua Nel** took part in National Martial Arts championships, winning a Gold and two Bronze medals and as a result has been selected to the 2015 SA Protea team.

To top this all off, **Amy Williams** has just been announced as the Senior Sports Woman of the Year in the Eden district. We are truly proud of her!

Our performing arts department has also produced some outstanding productions this year and Broadway Blue blew us away! With a cast of close to fifty students and a fabulous band including the likes of professionals such as **Lizanne Helberg** and **Cewan Korsten**, Oakhill College’s Performing Arts Department recently wowed the audience with their tongue-in-cheek, funny and heartrending production: Broadway Blue.

This mad revue of love, fantasy and playing cards invited the audience into a realm of fantasy, inhabited by mystical creatures, fairy godmothers and the obligatory wicked witch (or three!). Two would-be heroes stumbled, plodded and waded their way through the enchanted musical forest. On the way they tumbled down the standard rabbit hole, met some highly suspicious characters and, of course, discovered that fairy tales really do come true! The Revue follows on from Olga Schoeman’s (previous music teacher at Oakhill) original brainchild – Music in the Blue. However, the Performing Arts Department changed the format this year to create a vehicle that would allow the opportunity to shine for as many of the College actors, dancers, singers and musicians as possible. With a focus on Broadway and West End show tunes, the department gave the pupils partaking in the show more scope. And so Music in the Blue became Broadway Blue... The Performing Arts squad consists of **Carika Rademan; Robyn Humphreys** - a new member of the English and History faculty at Oakhill and an experienced dancer and choreographer of musical theatre, and **Leanna Dreyer** - the Dramatic Arts teacher at Oakhill College.

Blues Clues was our Foundation Phase production this year and **Beatrix Hardick**, once again, produced a wonderful show in which every single Foundation Phase pupil was involved.

Our Matric Art exhibition, as always, drew a large crowd from the Knysna community and **Amy Nuttall**, once again, facilitated a fantastic exhibition. Oakhill students are wonderfully creative and the external moderator continues to use Oakhill’s practical exhibitions as a benchmark for the rest of the country.



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Great schools are successful because they never consider themselves great. If you think you are great you start sliding toward mediocrity. The first step toward greatness and success in schools is ensuring that you have great people and to ensure that this continues we need to do two things:

Firstly, Oakhill needs to attract professionals from around the country who will help us grow and develop and secondly, we need to continue to develop and improve our teachers significantly. **Caroline Payton** has been appointed as the Academic Director in charge of professional development and I am delighted that we continue to build a staff development programme which stretches us significantly. This year our staff have been involved in the following professional development interventions:

- **Dawie Botha** and **Sharon Brown** attended the IEB Report back to Headmasters to discuss the Matric process, the year ahead and other IEB initiatives.
- The following staff attended the IEB Subject Conferences: Regional conferences in Cape Town: History – organised by **Sharon Brown**, the Western Cape NSF Representative, Mathematics (**Andrew Browne** and **Hannalie Viljoen**), Physical Science (**Ilze Schoeman**) and Business Studies (**Liam Bell**).
IEB National conferences in Johannesburg: IT conference and CAT conference (**Diana Barnard**), Accounting (**Dawie Botha**), English (**Melanie Cloete**), Geography (**Adolf Groenewald**), Life Sciences (**Juliet le Fleur**), Maths Literacy (**Gerhard Claassen**), Music (**Carika Rademan**) and Visual Arts (**Amy Nuttall**).
- Euclidian Mathematics Workshop in Cape Town: **Andrew Browne** and **Hannalie Viljoen**.
- One Research Task Training Workshop in Cape Town in May (**Liam Bell**, **Adolf Groenewald**, **Juliet le Fleur** and **Sharon Brown**).
- WCED Life Sciences Conference in the July (**Juliet le Fleur**).
- SA Geography Teachers Conference in Hermanus and the Winelands: (**Sharon Brown** and **Adolf Groenewald**).
- AP Maths Workshop in May (**Peter Vieyra**).
- International Junior Round Square Conference (**James Cross** and **Herman Hardick**).
- Hockey Coaching – Level 1 and Level 2 (**Chicco Ponela**, **Dave Pryke**, **Andrew Browne**, **Alastair Trafford**, **Rene Korsten**, **Rodney Anderson**, **James Cross**, **Lwando Bantom**, **Tim Paine** and **Guy Jacobs**).
- Cricket coaching – Level 3 (**Dave Pryke**).
- First Aid Level 3 courses - **Dave Pryke**, **Mark Stevenson**, **Heather Mayne**, **Claemont Titus**, **Elvin McCullum**, **Tiaan Skey** and **John Kriel**.
- ISASA Sustainability Workshop (**Peter Wallington**, **Shane Kidwell**, **Karine Trollip** and **James Cross**).
- SAALED Maths Workshop at Oakhill with a focus on the academic language of Maths, Numicon (presenter from Crawford Schools) and Family Maths (lecturer from NMMU).
- Workshop at the start of term by Fleur Durbach from Bellavista School. Focus on Mediated learning, reading in the brain and writing.
- Emma Sadleir - Social Media Law (all staff).
- IEB Curriculum workshops - designing assessment tasks and exams (All Preparatory School staff).
- Professor Loretta Giorcelli from Australia (SAALED) - Educational Trends in the 21st Century: preparing our diverse learners in classrooms for a brighter future. (**Annette Nelson**, **Alexa Frost**, **Herman Hardick**, **Rodney Anderson**, **Julie Stevenson**, **Di Goosen**, **Susan Minnaar**, **Sharon Brown**, **Robyn Humphreys**, **Caroline Payton**, **Sue Buchalter**, **Daleen Halton**, **Deborah MacDonald**, **Marina Kok**, **Rene Korsten**, **Angus Bridge**, **Deborah Seager**, **Sue Carver**, **Leanna Dreyer**).
- Dr Marlene Wasserman: how to raise sexually healthy children in the digital age (all staff).
- Gavin Keller workshop on brain based learning (Preparatory School staff).
- Learning commons and library investigation (**Shane Kidwell**).
- RAVE-O training. Research based reading programme (**Caroline Payton**).



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We have a number in our team departing at the end of 2014:

Deborah Seager has been teaching at Oakhill for 9 years in the Preparatory School and will be moving to Johannesburg to join her husband, Richard, who moved a number of months ago. Deborah will be missed by her colleagues but I have no doubt that she has an exciting journey ahead of her.

Carika Rademan only joined us 18 months ago but has decided to make a move to KwaZulu Natal. She has managed to build structures in our music department which will certainly continue to drive us forward positively and we wish her well on her new venture.

Lizanne Hafner, my Personal Assistant, joined us at a time when we needed administrative expertise during an aggressive growth phase for the school. She has managed to transform the admissions department and her attention to detail will be sorely missed by me. Lizanne will leave a department which is in good health and I am personally grateful for all she has done to help me be more efficient.

Susan Minnaar joined us for the second half of the year after the departure of Jane Horn and I am immensely grateful for her compassionate and dedicated approach to all the students in her class. She has made a huge impact in a short space of time and I sincerely hope that she will continue to be involved in our support unit in the future.

Sue Carver started her teaching career late in life and she has become a master-teacher in a short space of time. Her presence will be sorely missed by her students and her love of literature and the English language has encouraged us to raise our standards in the English department.

Matthew Schoeman is a gentle man who has joined us to fulfil a number of roles in the school. He has grown as a professional and we wish him well on the next phase of his journey.

Zachry Viljoen has decided to return to university to complete his Masters in Applied Mathematics and takes his leave of us after only a year. We will miss his dry sense of humour and his ability to engage kids in the mechanics club.

Suzanne Griffin joined us with the specific mandate of developing structures which would make us more efficient and she has been able to do that successfully. Suzanne, Roger and Damien take up an exciting opportunity in Dubai and I have no doubt that they will enjoy this new adventure.

Sue Buchalter has been helping in our support unit for a number of years but has now decided to further her studies and research in reading and its impact on learning. Hopefully we will continue to gain from her knowledge in this area.

Philip Stewart leaves us at the end of this year after the bombshell which revealed the fact that he had cancer. Phil has devoted the last few months to chemotherapy and radiation treatment and we all wish him every blessing as he continues to fight this dreadful disease. As I have indicated before: his legacy lives on in our natural landscapes but we will miss his presence on our campus.

Joanie van Straten joined us in the Preparatory Sport department after the departure of Stefan Weyers and has brought a calm and dedicated organization to the department. She has managed a growing department with compassion and love and I have no doubt that she will enjoy the time off from teaching to be a mother.

Riaan van Straten is a legend in our parts simply because he started and implemented the Oakhill Odyssey. His legacy will live on in that facilitation as we have renamed Group 1 the 'van Straten group'. Riaan is joining Griquas Rugby Union to follow his passion of coaching rugby and I have no doubt that he will make a success of his next venture. His organisation and dedication to all he does here will be missed.

We welcomed many team members in 2014 and they continue to make a significant difference here:

Deborah MacDonald joined us to replace Penny Lamb who left us for a position in Malaysia and her Grade 1 class has thrived under her wisdom.

Karine Trollip joined the marketing and commercial team at the beginning of the year and she has brought an efficiency and brand awareness to all she does at Oakhill. She is also a true servant leader and her support of our core function at Oakhill has been overwhelming.

Melanie Vogt also joined our marketing team as our Graphic Designer and our social media presence has been significantly enhanced by her dedicated approach.



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Schonrad Jordaan joined us as a part-time Afrikaans teacher and I am pleased that she will be continuing in 2015 with the extra load of an HSS class. Her gentle yet firm approach is appreciated by our students.

Cheryl Wolf, our dance teacher in the Prep School, has been at Oakhill for a number of years but has recently joined Little Oaks as our Administrative Assistant. Her love and gentle nature speak volumes and I am delighted she has joined us in this capacity as well.

Zolani Jenteza joined us as our Groundsman on the OSC and has singlehandedly transformed and maintained this piece of paradise.

Constance Sithonga, Zolani's wife, has also joined our staff as an assistant in the clubhouse as well as helping on the academic campus.

Holly Jacobs joined us in the College Administration office and has continued the good work started by her predecessor. She is also the wife of our founding student, Guy, and it is wonderful to have this family involved on the staff team.

Andrew Browne joined us as the Senior Master and HOD Mathematics and continues to make a significant difference in both areas. Andrew is meticulous and dedicated and Oakhill is lucky to have him join our team.

Robyn Humphreys joined us from overseas and has ignited the love of dance and was integral to the choreography of our production 'Broadway Blue'. Robyn has also made an impact in the classroom context and I have no doubt that she will be a 'sought after' teacher as she gains experience.

Ilze Schoeman joined us after a stint as a nuclear physicist at the Koeberg Power Station and has brought rigour, passion and a love for Science into the classroom and the school.

Liam Bell has raised the bar in the Business Studies department and continues to develop wonderful relationships with students and staff.

John Kriel and **Christiaan Skey** joined our drivers' team and their willingness to adapt and help at every turn is appreciated.

We have a number of exciting new team members starting in 2015:

Cemone Hewetson joins us in the English department for Term 1 after teaching 'A levels' at various schools around the country. She is an accomplished teacher and I have no doubt will apply for the permanent position available from April 2015.

Julia Warren joins us as our resident Psychologist. Julia is an Educational Psychologist with loads of counselling experience and her experience and wisdom will allow us to develop and grow in this crucial area.

Garth Turvey joins us from the United Kingdom and a short stint in Cape Town. He is a qualified teacher who is passionate about sport and he takes over from Joanie in the Preparatory Sport department.

Nerine Turvey, Garth's wife, will be teaching Grade 1 and joins us from Rustenburg Girls in Cape Town. She is an experienced and accomplished teacher.

Dylan Langheim also joins us from Rustenburg Girls and will be teaching Grade 4 in 2015. He is a gentle, passionate teacher and his experience in using technology in the classroom context will allow us all to grow.

Colin Wylie joins us on a part-time basis to run the Odyssey. Colin is an experienced adventure specialist who has previously run the logistics for the Epic and I look forward to collaborating with him around this important facilitation.

Anndia van Staden joins us after a rigorous interview process for the position of Bursar. She has loads of experience in the financial world and comes to us from BMW in Pretoria. She has a BComm Honours Degree with Articles and I look forward to her bringing a sense of depth and experience to our finance department.

Roxane Groenewald joins us after teaching at a number of schools on the Garden Route. She will be teaching Natural Science in the College as well as Maths Literacy. She is an experienced educator and I have no doubt will also make a significant impact in the extra-mural timetable.

Alastair Trafford joins us on a full-time basis after completing his studies. Alastair has lifted the level of professionalism in all he has been involved with and I have no doubt that he will continue to make an impact amongst the students in the Preparatory School.

Mark Stevenson joins us as our Facilities Manager. Mark is an engineer with varied experience and his innovative and practical thinking is already making us more efficient and effective in a number of areas.



THE JOY OF LEARNING

Lizanne Helberg joins us in the College Music department and will be teaching all our academic music as well as taking over the Vocal Ensemble. Lizanne was Music Director at Penryn College and I am excited by the calm wisdom she will bring to this department.

Mitchell Steenkamp is taking a Gap Year with us and will be helping out in the Prep School, particularly on the sports field. He matriculated at Woodridge and is completing a sports qualification.

Mikayla Oliver is an exciting addition to our team. Mikayla matriculated at Oakhill and wants to go into teaching in the Foundation Phase. She will be completing her internship with us and I am really excited that an Old Oak is joining us in this capacity.

Our team continues to grow in stature and I am excited by the new skills and experience we are adding in 2015. Our children are privileged to be able to interact with wise, compassionate and critical thinkers.

Talking of critical thinking: **Dawie Botha** will be changing portfolios in 2015. We have completed our building project and the Learning Commons will be a reality in 2015. This new venue has been designed to encourage collaboration and I am hoping that it will help pupils and teachers to collaborate more in terms of real learning. We are also hoping that it will influence the way we set homework tasks as well as the way we expect kids to collaborate around projects and homework. Dawie will be heading up our Learning Innovation in 2015 and beyond and this will include facilitating the use of the Learning Commons. Dawie will be looking at our academic systems and evaluating what works and what needs to be improved as we continue to grow in this critical area of our school. He will be working alongside the other Academic Directors as we re-evaluate our classroom practice.

I apologise for the length of this newsletter but please place or remove 'the small piece of fluff' in your ear for the sections which interest you. We have completed an affirming and successful year on all fronts but ultimately our students, your children, have completed a year filled with opportunity and fulfilling activities which have allowed them to grow and develop in amazing ways. Once again, thank you for all you do for Oakhill, have a wonderful holiday with your children – forget about the stress, listen to them, engage with them and enjoy the break. On behalf of all the staff at Oakhill we wish you a blessed Christmas and a fantastic 2015!

Kind regards

Shane Kidwell
HEADMASTER