



29 January 2016

Dear Parents,

It is always a privilege to welcome our families back to Oakhill after an extended Christmas break and this year is no different. The start of the year brings with it a sense of hope and optimism as the hallways and playing fields are filled with students' laughter, excitement and nervous expectation of things to come. It is a privilege to be part of this positive environment despite the fact there is a sense of foreboding as a result of our government's ineptitude and selfishness in recent decisions which affect us all. I sincerely wish every family the very best for 2016 and I look forward to working alongside you as we endeavour to allow our children to grow and learn this year.

As you are aware, Oakhill's matric results were our best ever and I would encourage you, if you have not yet read my analysis of these results, to engage with the information on our webpage. There are times that we as a community take for granted the quality of education at Oakhill. We are a Co-Ed school and we do not have an entrance exam, and despite this our results compare with the best in the country. I have recently stated at our annual staff conference that 'comparison is the thief of joy' but I feel very strongly that all of us need to understand that choosing to send your children to Oakhill allows our children to receive a quality of education which is as good as any other great school in South Africa. The reason for this is that we have assembled a superior team of teachers who work incredibly diligently to ensure that your sons and daughters will thrive and grow during their time with us.

I have recently read an article in the Business Day which spoke of the 'most expensive' schools in South Africa. Obviously and thankfully, Oakhill does not feature on this list but all of us need to embrace the fact that our teachers do an amazing job despite our limited resources. The fact is that if one takes into account the bigger picture of independent education in our country, Oakhill has to be one of the best 'value for money' schools in the country. The only way that this is possible is the fact that our teachers are amongst the best in the country and more and more we are attracting wonderful applicants for vacancies at the school. The majority of your fees go to paying great teachers. If the fees are less the salaries are less and ultimately competent, great educators will join schools who can reward them appropriately.

We have welcomed a total of 62 new students into the school at the start of the year. 10 of these students only enrolled at the end of January 2016 as a result of a crises at other local schools, and I have no doubt that we will make all these new families feel welcome as they join our close-knit community.

Our grade 8 class is full for 2016 and they enjoyed an orientation camp at the start of term which has allowed them to integrate into our fast moving and energetic environment with confidence and optimism. We have a wonderful group of students in this grade and I have no doubt that we will experience and interact with their unique characteristics as the year progresses.

Little Oaks is also bursting at the seams. Our Grade 000 and 00 classes are at capacity and we have double streamed in Grade R for 2016. This is an exciting development and bodes well for the future of the school if we continue to grow from the bottom up. We now have waiting lists in these grades and I would encourage anyone who would like to enrol their children for 2017 ensure that you have placed their name on the list to avoid disappointment. Please contact Tamzin van Staden at t.vanstaden@oakhillschool.co.za for this.

Manners

I thoroughly enjoy walking around our beautiful campus and interacting with your sons and daughters. I find Oakhill kids to be confident, engaging, happy and polite but despite this we have started the year reminding ourselves and our students that we would like to be known for our good manners. We will be concentrating on ensuring that our students not only engage in this manner with me on the campus but ensure that strangers and parents are treated with respect and feel welcome in our unique space. I would encourage you to engage with your children regarding manners at home as we seek to partner in this area. In particular I would like to emphasize the importance of listening and not talking when someone else is talking. We all need to be more self-aware and our children certainly can learn from ensuring that they read the social cues before interrupting a conversation because they want our attention.

Odyssey

We are also gearing up for the Grade 10 Odyssey and if you have not experienced the send-off we give our Odyssey groups I would encourage you to pop up to the school as we say goodbye to these students as they embark on a journey of self-discovery. Group 1 leaves on the 26th February. We also welcome Marcus Davies from Gordonstoun School in Scotland on an exchange. Marcus will also be joining the Odyssey and I have no doubt that he will be enthralled by the experience.

Old Oaks Association

Many of you will be aware that we have established an Old Oaks Association which helps us keep contact with past pupils and keeps them up to date with current happenings at the school. An off-shoot of this association is the establishment of the Old Oaks Hockey and Water Polo clubs and we are particularly proud of the fact that the Old Oaks Hockey club won the SWD league in 2015. Both these clubs have grown significantly in numbers in the past year and we are currently in the process of finalizing the establishment of the Water Polo section of this association. For more information please contact Karine Trollip in our marketing office.

As our school grows we need to establish protocols for access to and the use of our facilities and I would like to make you aware of some of the changes we have made in the last while. You will have noticed that we have outsourced the security function at the school so to ensure that the campus remains safe for our children. We will be improving the access control to the campus and although this might be perceived to be inconvenient I would urge you to work with us to ensure that we continue to provide a safe and secure environment for our children.

The top gates of the school will be closed at 08:30 each day and access to the campus will only be allowed via the main entrance. These gates will be opened again at 12:30 and then closed at 18:00 again. If you would like to enter the campus during these times please park at the front of the school. The circle will also be closed during the school day and will only be opened for you to collect your children at the end of the academic day. Please also cooperate with the All-Sound security guards to ensure that we maintain an orderly control of an overcrowded parking area at peak times. Lastly on this issue, please take note of the normal traffic rules when driving up the hill to school and of the no parking signs on the campus and ensure that your car is not preventing traffic flow around the circle at peak times! We certainly appreciate your patience and cooperation in this matter.

We will also be handing out Oakhill branded parking discs for both campuses and I would ask that you place this disk on all cars which will be entering both the OSC and the Academic campus. Should you wish to make use of the Oakhill facilities after hours the following will apply:

USE OF OAKHILL'S SPORTS FACILITIES

We encourage the use of Oakhill Sports facilities by parents, pupils and staff. This may be done outside of Extra-mural hours under the strict adherence to procedures and policies that are in place. Strict adherence to certain non-negotiables is mandatory in order to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of these facilities. Old Oaks Hockey (Astroturf) and Old Oaks Water Polo (Pool) are currently making use of our facilities with arrangements that are in place with these independent clubs.

No use of facilities will be made available on Sundays, and all children under 18 years of age must have parental supervision. All Oakhill families will be issued with a 2016 Access Disk next week, to be placed in their vehicle's windscreen to ensure access to Oakhill School and OSC property by Security. If this is not displayed Security will ask you to vacate the premises.

Pool

The Oakhill swimming pool and other assets are not a public facility available for general use. Parents or any outside swimmers wishing to use the pool are required to register and complete the agreement form with their ID and pay the monthly fee of R200 at the Administration Office. Based on the school's sporting program these swimmers may use the pool before 06h30 daily and after 17h30 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Saturdays, as there are often extra practices or clinics taking place the pool is available before 08h00 and most often after 14h00. Old Oaks Water Polo practice are on Mondays and Wednesday from 17h00-18h30 and registration is with their club directly. These times are outlined in the agreement letter signed on application. The pool may be used only for Swimming and Water Polo, and not for other recreational purposes.

Mini-Astro At Oakhill School

Please approach the Directors of Sport, Dave Pryke (College) and Garth Turvey (Prep) for written permission. On the mini-astro, there is to be no Soccer played and any shooting at goals for Hockey needs to be in the direction of the school. Please ensure that your behaviour is exemplary at all times and the noise levels are kept to a minimum in respect of the neighbours.

OSC Astro Turf

Old Oaks Hockey practices on the **Astroturf** on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 17h15 until dark, and has Summer League starting from 01st February on Mondays and Wednesdays from 17h30 -19h00. If wishing to hire the Astro Turf, please apply in writing to Alastair Trafford, OSC Astroturf Manager, (a.trafford@oakhillschool.co.za) who will share the prices and agreement letter.

New Staff

We welcome some new staff members onto our team this year and I am grateful that they have made a positive and affirming start to their careers with us.

- Lisa Marie Beukes is teaching Afrikaans in the Preparatory School.
- Lynette Petersen joins our Music team in the Prep school
- Matthew Withers is teaching Geography in the College as well as coaching Water Polo and Rugby.
- Ryan Habib joins the College Mathematics department and is coaching Water Polo and Hockey.
- Melanie Vogt heads up the facilitation of the Learning Commons and I would encourage you to pop in to see the changes she has already made.

Facilities Development

I would like to thank a number of parents who have kindly donated of their time and resources in the last while to ensure that we continue to improve our facilities for your children.

We will be building a set of cricket nets at the OSC for the use of the Prep School and College. I would like to thank the parents who have donated in excess of R100 000 to ensure that we can start building this facility. We are still trying to find donors for the netting, poles and concrete. If you are interested in helping with this project please email me directly.

We would also like to embark on a second project which will benefit all children at the school and I would like to thank all parents who have bought a tree for the proposed pathway next to the learning commons building. We are selling 20 trees for this pathway of which six have been sold. Each family will receive a plaque with their names on at the base of the tree and this fundraising effort will pay for 50% of the upgrade of this new pathway and green area for our children. We would still need to raise a further R50 000 toward this project and should you want to get involved with this please see the attached information and booking form. Should you require any further clarification, please also do not hesitate to contact Terri Pautz on t.pautz@oakhillschool.co.za.

Lastly we would appreciate any parent who is keen to help redesign a section of our gardens on the academic campus. Part of this project will entail facilitating raising the funding as well as collaborating with interested parents to action this project. I look forward to hearing from you if you are interested.

School Communication

We would like to attempt to streamline communication this year to ensure that you do not get bombarded with information from the school. I will be sending out a whole school communication six times a year which will include whole school news, educational strategy and interesting research. Furthermore, the Academic Directors will be sending out a newsletter four times a year in the middle of each term followed by an end of term newsletter from the Directors of Sport, Arts and Culture. We would like to aim at being more efficient, thoughtful and circumspect in our communication with you and I am hoping that you will find this more meaningful as we progress through the year.

Recent research points to schools which encourage high academic standards and happiness and I am of the firm belief that Oakhill continues to strive to prepare young men and women for life at the same time as encouraging them to enjoy the journey. I wish you all a happy, rigorous and fun-filled 2016.

Yours sincerely,



Shane Kidwell
HEADMASTER