



26 March 2020

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Guardians, Staff and Students

It is sad that we have not been able to conclude the term as normal due to the extraordinary situation we find ourselves in. With the profound developments regarding the Covid-19 virus dominating our thinking and consuming much of our energy, it is easy to overlook the fact that we have, for the most part, completed a busy, productive and positive term. As much as it has been good for our teaching staff to have this time to refine and generate teaching resources for moving to a remote teaching scenario, the essence of what our school is all about, namely the children and families of Oakhill, has been sorely missed.

We realise that the precautionary recess that was taken has been a real challenge and has required much adaptation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our parents and community for their support and understanding during this time. Now more than ever, we need to be dealers in hope. We need to try to adopt a narrative or a mindset that will focus on what is true, good and encouraging. As you lead in your home, in your workplace or in the community, I wish you strength and wisdom.

Our school continues to be a place of joy, innovation and engagement and the efforts and support of the entire Oakhill community helped us to start the year really well. We continue to be an ambitious school with high expectations. Just recently our boy's Oakhill water polo squad competed at the prestigious Grey PE Water Polo Festival. The 12 schools at the event represented many of the top water polo schools in the country. The average age of the schools participating was approximately 120 years, with most of these schools at least 3-4 times our size. To have competed so admirably (including 3 wins) in this company speaks volumes for our small school and is evidence of just how capable we are.

Another highly commendable achievement was a fourth place at the National Kids Lit Quiz that took place in Johannesburg. Our team who, once again, won the regional competition continue to impress with their knowledge of all things literature-related. In keeping with this theme, I would like to encourage all our children to take the opportunity presented by the early holiday and enforced lockdown to read as many books as possible. We will be launching an inter-house challenge to encourage children to be more proactive readers. As of the close of our school, we will ask children to keep a record of the books they have read and we will allocate house points accordingly once they return to school. These points will count towards the house cup at the end of the year. Please convey this initiative to your children and to those reluctant readers who perhaps think that this is another example of *fake news*, please direct them to this communication. The keeping of a journal is something we would also encourage our children to do particularly as we move into the lockdown phase. This form of reflection is a great writing activity and can be very meaningful and even therapeutic.

As we are now gearing up to operate remotely for the start of Term 2 should this be required, we are excited and encouraged by the many possibilities that our technology, aligned with good teaching practice and appropriate pedagogy, will present us with. Our staff have been very busy preparing for online learning since we closed and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their efforts and for embracing this new



reality with such enthusiasm and purpose. A special word of thanks should go to our Ed Tech Director, Dylan Langheim for his tireless efforts in helping us gear up for this exciting prospect.

Some three term independent schools around the country have shifted to varying levels of online programmes already as their holidays were not due to start for some time still. We believe that we will benefit from the time we have invested now in preparation for Term 2. We will, in consultation with ISASA and the Education Department, consider options to make up for some of the contact teaching time lost. These options may include the possibility of adapting the school calendar.

We are very mindful of the need to establish an efficient and reasonably paced workflow with a view to meaningful engagement involving learning in context and in the richest possible way. We have received valuable guidance from colleagues overseas and have taken advice from educational experts with regard to what our expectations of an online or remote learning programme should be.

The Academic Directors will be communicating specifics regarding the rollout of our remote learning programme to parents and children in their relevant phases. The procedure around the collection of necessary resources packs and devices from school for the start of Term 2 will be shared with you as part of this communication and once we are clearer on the restrictions and timelines affecting schools.

Parent interviews that have not taken place in person or telephonically will be concluded once we return to school. We want to ensure that this important feedback is done as efficiently as possible and that we don't miss the opportunity to reflect, with parents, on their child's performance

We encourage our children to remain active during this break while still practising responsible social distancing and respecting restrictions placed upon us. Some sporting resources are being generated by our staff and coaches to offer children the option of a home skills programme across a variety of codes. These resources will also be shared with the implementation of the online programme.

As we face this period of lockdown, I wish you and your family health and strength. Should you require any support at this time, our staff would be happy to help in whatever way they can. Please note that our Educational Psychologist, Erika Revington can also be contacted at [e.revington@oakhill.co.za](mailto:e.revington@oakhill.co.za). This time may well be challenging but it also provides a rare opportunity for us to embrace family time that will be free of some of the usual distractions. As we dust off the board games and break out the lego may we once again discover our inner child and enjoy some time at play in the company of our nearest and dearest.

Kindest regards

James Cross  
Head of Prep