

23 September 2020

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Guardians, Teachers, and Pupils,

At the end of the term assembly I read a quote from George Saunders from The New Yorker that makes the analogy of the world as a sleeping tiger, where we tend to live our lives on its back and now and then that tiger wakes up and causes incredible disruptions like the onslaught of COVID- 19. This past term, whilst we are slowly getting back to some sort of normality, it certainly still felt like we were being jolted about a bit especially during the peak of infections. Notwithstanding, our pupils and teachers took on the challenge and persevered with the dual medium of teaching and learning and we eventually ended the term with nearly all the grades back on campus.

Whilst navigating a crisis, we tend to focus on getting through it and forward-thinking sometimes gets left on the back burner; however, as always, within any challenge lies opportunities. This time has provided us the opportunity to reflect on who we are as a school and what differentiates us from other schools in the region. From a creative think tank with the College teachers earlier in the year it was very clear that the pioneering spirit of the school is one, amongst many, of our differentiating factors. It is with this in mind, that our beginning of term whole school executive breakaway 'on campus' will explore innovative ways to further prepare our pupils for meaningful, satisfying and sustainable lives in a world where technology is fundamentally transforming everything, as currently witnessed in the world, from learning, work, play and well-being. I am looking forward to reporting back on the outcomes of this break away and the dynamic offerings for 2021 and beyond.

Back to school in Term 4

With some timetabling adjustments and due to the matrics only being back for a week in the fourth term we look forward to having and expect all grades back on campus. On campus teaching and learning will be the main focus in the new term whilst the usual access to the various subject specific Google classrooms will still be available.

Whilst we will continue to respect the legitimate need for some children to access learning remotely due to health concerns, we ask that parents who will be keeping their children at home in Term 4, formally request this by completing the form contained in this [link](#). This will assist us in updating our records accordingly. It is to be noted that despite the recent news of a move to Level 1, schools are still required to follow their current protocols and restrictions which will remain in effect for Term 4.

The timetable is also going to be adjusted to make provision for five shorter sessions of an hour each with short breaks in between still in accordance with the COVID protocols and procedures.

Sport

Even though the country has moved to Level 1, sport at a school level is still not being permitted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and we acknowledge this is causing a lot of frustration amongst our school community. Until such time schools get the official go-ahead to reintroduce sport, we will continue with our skills-based and fitness orientated physical education programme that takes place in the last session of the day, Monday to Thursday.



Furthermore, we have applied for our swimming pool to be certified so that water-based skills training can also commence for the 2021 water polo season. Planning for our ten year anniversary Chukka Festival has commenced in earnest . We certainly hope that it's all systems go for school sports in 2021!

School uniform

Next term will see us going back into our regular school uniform. I am sure there are a few parents that are most grateful!

It is undoubtedly going to be a challenge for some of our pupils to return back into school uniform and adhere to the guidelines after such a long time in civvies. However, we need to be reminded of the importance of the unifying factor of our uniform in instilling school pride and the sense of belonging underpinned by our core values.

Please could you take the opportunity during the holiday to rectify any lockdown hair colour experimentations or styles. Some really interesting hair colours were starting to make their debut this past term!

The clothing shop is also currently fully stocked and is open for purchases on Monday, 5 October from 9h00-13h00. Please see [this link](#) as a reminder for the uniform guidelines for the College. It has also been very heartening to see how our pupils, through the Student Representative Council, have taken ownership of their uniform with the submission of a proposal to introduce chino shorts in place of the blue shorts currently in place.

Tuckshop

As mentioned in a previous letter the tuckshop will not be open next term. However, we look forward to the reopening of it at the start of the new year.

End of year examinations

Matric final examinations start on Wednesday 14 October. As per normal, the matrics will be writing their final examinations off campus at St Boniface Catholic Church in Knysna. Despite a challenging year, we are confident that our 2020 matric cohort will do us proud and on behalf of the whole school we wish them the very best of luck.

The other exam commencement dates are as follows:

- Grade 10: Thursday, 15 October
- Grade 11: Monday, 2 November
- Grade 8 & 9: Thursday, 12 November

Upcoming events in Term 4

We are excited to be able to continue with our planned Grade 10 Odyssey this year. The three groups will be leaving for Odyssey after their examinations on 5, 6 & 7 November. This is such an enriching Oakhill tradition and it would have been very sad if the current Grade 10s had missed out on this opportunity due to this year's events.

We will also be hosting the annual Celebration of Excellence, Valediction and Matric Dance at the end of November for our Matric Group. These are wonderful experiences for our current matrics to look forward to post

their final examinations. The Celebration of Excellence for Grades 8 to 11 has also been shifted to the end of year and will take place on the morning of the last day of school on Wednesday, 2 December.

The annual Matric Art Exhibition is always a highlight on the Oakhill calendar, and this year will certainly be no exception. The opening night of the exhibition will be for the current matric art pupils and their families and the exhibition will be open daily for public viewing from 12 - 17 October.

Staff news

Louise Fourie, our Head of Department of Afrikaans will be retiring at the end of the fourth term and we wish her much joy in her retirement years. She will be offering Afrikaans tutoring in the future. Tiemke Rijpstra has been appointed as Head of Department and we wish her much success in her new role. We are currently busy finalising the interview process for a new Afrikaans teacher.

Samuel Booyesen, from the Maintenance Department finished up with us at the end of July to explore other work opportunities in the construction industry.

It is with much sadness that we say farewell to Gladwin (Chicco) Ponela at the end of the fourth term as well. He has accepted a promotion post at St Albans in Pretoria which is also closer to his family. We thank him for his incredible contribution to Oakhill sport over the last 10 years. We will do a more formal farewell at the end of the term.

We are also in the process of interviewing candidates for the Director of Sport position. The calibre of the candidates that have applied are very encouraging and speaks to the impressive reputation of our school.

Thank you

I would like to thank the College teachers for maintaining their positive attitude and sense of humour throughout this very unsettling time. Their sheer determination to ensure the very best for our pupils was highly commendable!

Furthermore I would like to thank the sports staff for assisting with the smooth running of substitution classes and break duties in conjunction with the teachers, to ensure the necessary social distancing. I would also like to thank our Servest support staff for maintaining the high standards of cleanliness as required by COVID protocols and procedures, and the administrative staff for the well-oiled administrative functioning of the school.

In closing, I would like to thank all our parents, guardians and carers for all the support and guidance given to their children as well as the school over the last term. We acknowledge it has not been an easy time for our families and many sacrifices had to be made. Next term is short in duration, and we hope it brings about a lot of positivity and that the 'tiger' remains asleep at least for a little while.

Warm regards,



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