

25 June 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians

I have always believed that one of my primary functions as both a parent and a teacher is to create a sense of hope for my own children and for those I teach.

The very idea of hope, however, is not an abstract concept nor does it occur in a vacuum or in isolation. Equally it is not something that happens simply because we wish it.

Over the years I have had many conversations with students where the word hope is central. Typically following an examination session students will say to me that they hope that everything went well.

If you analyse such a response it can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, I am hopeful that the exams went well because I studied hard and deserve a good result. This sense of hope resides in a positive set of actions and a firm commitment to the writing of the exams. The second interpretation (and dare I say it, often a teenage thing) is one of hope that is devoid of any conscious action or meaningful attempt by the student to successfully influence the outcome of the examination.

In my view one of the reasons that the Covid pandemic has been so difficult is not only because it has played havoc with our health, our emotions and our lives. It has challenged the very understanding of our sense of hope. As human beings we are used to finding solutions to the problems that face us. We go into 'action mode', become creative, apply our minds and together find a way forward. This is very much what makes us human and thinking beings.

The vaccine roll out is the strongest indication yet that we are slowly turning the tide against the virus. Yet at the same time we witness daily the amount of cases surging country wide and in our neck of the woods. It has sent our emotions on a roller coaster ride which appears to be endless.

However, like with all things this too shall pass, but unlike the student that hopes to do well in the exams yet remains inactive and impervious to the action that is needed, we need to continue being proactive and aspirational.

Each day at school we actively create hope for our students by providing the platform from which hope can flourish.

Health and Safety protocols remain in place as always and we stay vigilant in our responsibilities to our school family.

At the same time we leave no stone unturned in our teaching and learning despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. We continue to ensure that the curriculum is being extensively covered creating comfort that we remain on track for the remainder of the academic year and all that it entails.

School development continues unabated as you would have seen on all our social media sites, with the images of the work at the OSC and at School being front and centre.

We are also applying our minds to the Protection of Personal Information Act and are ensuring compliance in this regard. I have assumed the role of Information Officer and have appointed numerous Deputy Information Officers who, together with all staff, will drive this much needed initiative. It is a fairly exhaustive process but one that the school fully supports in an era where personal information is often a soft target.

I have scheduled the 'Meet and Greet' dates for Little Oaks and the Prep School parents for early next term, so please be on the lookout for these. I look forward to meeting the rest of the Oakhill parents in due course.

At the same time I will also be convening parent meetings in the third term for those parents whose children will be passing into new and different school phases next year. This will include Grade R into Grade 1, Grade 3 to Grade 4, Grade 7 to Grade 8 and Grade 9 to Grade 10.

The aim is to create an awareness of what each new grade will entail, how things may change in the year ahead and what to anticipate in that particular grade. It will also give some clarity to the philosophical imperative of each new grade and the expectations thereof.

Transformation and Diversity remains a key wholeschool imperative and a priority. Being an inclusive school leads comfortably into establishing a transformational school environment and is the logical precursor to such a culture.

Being a transformational community is not about being politically correct or ticking boxes from a compliance perspective, rather it is about our humanness and a deep seated care for all people. It is about seeing people for who they are, not that which outwardly reflects them, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, colour, creed or socio economic reality.

The school is in the process of establishing a standing Transformation and Diversity Subcommittee on the Board, as well as a school operational Transformation and Diversity Committee made up of staff and students.

It is hoped that our actions in this regard will further entrench that for which we stand by truly being an institution that is diverse in its intention and its actions.

From a staffing perspective the appointment of Mrs Sharon Brown to the position of Head of College has been well received and brings with it a wealth of leadership and institutional knowledge. Her appointment, coupled with the tremendous work being done by James Cross in the Prep School brings stability and assurance to the senior management structure at Oakhill School.

On another note the school says farewell to Melanie Vogt and her family who are relocating to Canada. In her seven years at Oakhill School Mel has been an outstanding member of the Marketing Department and has contributed immensely to the quality and professionalism of the school's media profile. Mel is also a thoroughly nice person who will be sorely missed.

So, as the term comes to an end and despite the difficulties we face together, there is cause for optimism.

We will continue to remain proactive in our approach, nimble and agile where needed, creative and bold when required. At Oakhill we continue to reside in the province of hope but it demands our continued concerted effort, our positivity and above all else our collective action.

Thank you for the term past, your support and your understanding as together we remain beacons of hope for one another and in particular for our children. Please continue to remain proactive in the fight against the virus and may this holiday period bring relief and healing to our country.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Graham', written in a cursive style.

Mr Graham Howarth  
**Head of School**

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A logo for 'Happy Holidays' featuring the word 'HAPPY' in a small, sans-serif font above the word 'Holidays' in a large, elegant, cursive script font.