

18 March 2022

Dear Prep Parents, Guardians and Caregivers

It has been wonderful to witness school life returning to something more in keeping with the usual busyness and energy. I would like to commend the children for the manner in which they have embraced the start of the year and geared up for a return to a more familiar and welcome school experience. We have enjoyed a positive and productive term and can look forward to building on this momentum and enthusiasm in Term 2.

Despite the ongoing waves of disruption and unease affecting our world, our school remains a happy place where children can grow and learn under the guidance of their dedicated teachers and supportive parents. More than ever, we as adults need to be dealers in hope, ensuring that our children remain optimistic and positive as they learn and grow. We have also spent much time and effort with the children stressing the importance of respecting each other and trying to make genuine caring commonplace at our school.

One of the many highlights of the term was the U13 Oakhill Chukka Festival which proved to be a great success and was welcomed back by an excited Oakhill and indeed Knysna community. Our sincere thanks go to Mr Crawford and his team for putting on such a great event and congratulations to the Oakhill teams who acquitted themselves so well. The boy's Water Polo team recently returned from the Selborne 150th Celebration Water Polo Tournament achieving a highly commendable 7th place in this event featuring the best of the junior water polo teams in the country. There has been wonderful growth in tennis and cricket in particular this season and we continue to refine our delivery in these and other sports as part of a strategic plan under the guidance of the Whole School Director of Sport.

The winter sport and co curricular programme is well underway and we are very pleased with the high levels of participation and great enthusiasm for the change of season. We encourage all children who have still not committed to activities for the term ahead to do so as soon as possible. The early season preparation has been important as Oakhill will already be involved in the U13 Backward Point Hockey Festival during the holidays.

The popular Kids Lit Quiz was once again hosted by Oakhill School and included teams from all over the Garden Route. Mrs Stevenson has driven this initiative over the last 8 years and Oakhill remains a school in which reading is both encouraged and celebrated. The colourful and greatly entertaining Foundation Phase production, *Jack in the Box*, was very well received by enthusiastic audiences and proud parents who thoroughly enjoyed these live performances returning to the stage. Congratulations to Mrs Hardick and her team for bringing our childhood back to life and for giving the children the opportunity to shine on stage.

We look forward to welcoming Ms Nicky Rau to Oakhill at the start of Term 2 as she takes up the Learning Support position. Nicky is an experienced and highly skilled educator who has a keen interest and specialisation in Remedial Therapy and Neurodiversity. She joins us from Western Province Preparatory School for Boys in Cape Town.

It is with great sadness that I announce that Mrs Lize-Mari Beukes will be leaving Oakhill at the end of Term 2 as she and her family will be embarking on a new adventure overseas. We have already started the process of finding a replacement for this position.

### **Academic Benchmarking**

We have recently received our results from the IBT International Benchmarking Tests done last year. These tests are done in Grade 3 and Grade 6 and the feedback that we have received has been most encouraging. Oakhill has once again achieved above the national and international independent school averages overall in the areas assessed. The areas assessed were English, Mathematics and Reasoning. We are delighted to note a significant improvement and particularly strong showing in the area of Reasoning.

We would like to thank our parents for their involvement and engagement with the parent interviews at the end of term. This is a necessary and very valuable opportunity for reflection on your child's performance as well as an opportunity for us to connect in person once again.

### **Communication**

As we have now returned to a more familiar in-person teaching programme we remind parents that while our staff are accessible to parents and children, this should happen during typical school working hours. The preferred method of communication is via email. Some staff are comfortable engaging parents via WhatsApp providing that this too happens during work hours. Communication outside of these times should be for emergencies or urgent issues such as illness only. Staff will endeavour to reply to emails and parent communication timeously but please note that this is not always possible during the morning where our focus is very much on teaching and learning in the classroom. Should any of your personal or contact information have changed recently please contact the academic secretary, Mrs Catherine Grootboom (c.grootboom@oakhill.co.za), so that this can be updated.

### **School attendance and punctuality**

Establishing a good academic rhythm and routine is essential for effective learning. Please ensure that your child is at school on time so that their day starts in as settled a manner as possible. While we greatly value

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consistent school attendance, children that are unwell should not be at school and should only return once they are better and are able to comfortably manage the school day. Children who are absent for two or more days do require a doctor's note for our records.

### **Outreach**

Thank you to the many families who continue to support our charitable drives. The teddy bear drive in conjunction with The Knysna Education Trust has been well supported and will go a long way to making the lives of children within the Knysna community more comfortable and happy. As a school we were able to collect well over four hundred teddy bears or soft toys for this great cause. We look forward to our involvement in the food garden initiative to be launched next term and will be sharing more information regarding other initiatives in due course.

We look forward to welcoming you back on the 5th of April as we embark on a busy and exciting term. Thank you to you, our parents, for your support of our school and for helping us make such a great start to the year.

Wishing you and your children a happy, safe and restful break.

Kindest regards



James Cross  
Head of Prep