

Learning, safety and happiness

We ended 2010, our country's soccer world cup year, on a high. We had made good progress across so many areas of activity and the outstanding Grade 12 results were the proverbial cherry on the top. Our successes and achievements confirmed that we are doing more things right, more often, and they are a tribute to the leadership of our headmaster, Shane Kidwell, and the commitment and passion of our teachers and our administrative staff.

Oakhill is a place of learning, safety and happiness, and the order or priority will vary from time to circumstance. Learning, safety and happiness are variables that, combined, will produce excellence in a deeper, stronger sense than academic or sporting achievement.

Our constitution speaks to "excellent education", the "joy of learning", providing a "flexible disciplinary approach with the aim of developing

students into self-disciplined individuals” who can think for themselves and make decisions, and accept responsibility for those decisions and their consequences. Shane and the teachers continue to shape these objectives into a uniquely Oakhill learning system that prepares students for a changing, demanding world full of opportunity and risk.

We recognize too that innovative, passionate and committed learning can only take place in a safe and secure environment. We have a “zero tolerance” approach to bullying, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, and we are committed to informing, guiding and protecting – through our Life Orientation teaching and our student support and counseling – our students from the multiple challenges that lie outside our campus.

And then the intangible “happiness”, a characteristic that even governments today are trying to measure because they recognize that wealthier, busier, harder-working people are not necessarily happy people. From the outset, Oakhill has been committed to the “joy” of learning and this philosophy inspires everything we do on our campus. It has helped make Oakhill a happy place to be at. Parents and visitors to the school

remark on it and past pupils write to us to celebrate it. And recent research confirms that our students think it too.

A safe and happy place is ideal for learning. Then again, the joy of learning in a safe place helps create happy students who can be the kind of people envisaged in the constitution our founding parents wrote; and they are the kind of people essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of when he said:

‘Nature ever flows, stands never still. Motion or change is her mode of existence ... life is always transitions. Hard blockheads only drive nails all the time; forever ... fixing. Heroes do not fix, but flow, bend forward ever and invent a resource for every moment’.

Ends