

Dear Parents

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly... who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never known victory or defeat. Teddy Roosevelt

Knysna has been extremely busy over the December period and I have no doubt that it brought welcome relief to businesses in our town. We enter 2013 with optimism and excitement for what the future holds for Oakhill as we celebrate our 21st Birthday. The Chairman of the Board announced the purchase of 17 hectares of land at the end of last year and I am excited that we have already started to clear and prepare this land for the first phase of development. We will be building four fields which should be ready by the end of July and I have no doubt that this will add excitement as our students start to play fixtures on our own grounds. We have also started to gear up to repair the land slip on our current property and our field will be reinstated and replanted in the next three months.

Oakhill certainly continues to grow in stature and with every incremental improvement, comes heightened expectation from parents, pupils and staff. We have a wonderfully happy, engaged community and as we continue to strive for excellence we should not forget the amazing progress we have made in the last five years. Our sporting teams have become more competitive, our Music department amazes with outstanding performances, our Art department continues to smash all academic records and our Drama department allows young men and women to grow immeasurably in confidence and stature.

Our academic achievements have also made pleasing progress in the last five years and we continue to allow young men and women the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. There is no doubt that there is heightened expectation in this area and as we make progress we have also got to raise our aim when it comes to results. The problem with results is that they do not always tell you the whole story. Oakhill does not have entrance examinations - we accept young men and women who struggle as well as those who soar academically and as a result we have to be careful that we do not compare ourselves with schools where results are the only benchmark. Oakhill strives for excellence - not

excellence based on one child's marks, but excellence based on what we believe each individual should achieve. We often compare our children with other children and in the process we forget that they are unique individuals, with unique talents and dreams. It is our responsibility to try to nurture and believe in those dreams.

With each Matric group comes a unique mix of talent. Not all groups are alike and they should not be. **The 2012 Matric group was unique in many ways.** This was a group of immensely talented artists. 12 out of 14 of them received a subject 'A' for Visual Art and we are particularly proud of these individuals and their subject teacher, Amy Nuttall.

It is certainly a year for celebrating and it is wonderful to be able to share with you another outstanding set of results from our Matrics of 2012. They certainly deserved the results they received and as a matter of fact many of them improved their prelim examination mark in their final examination.

The final results were as follows:

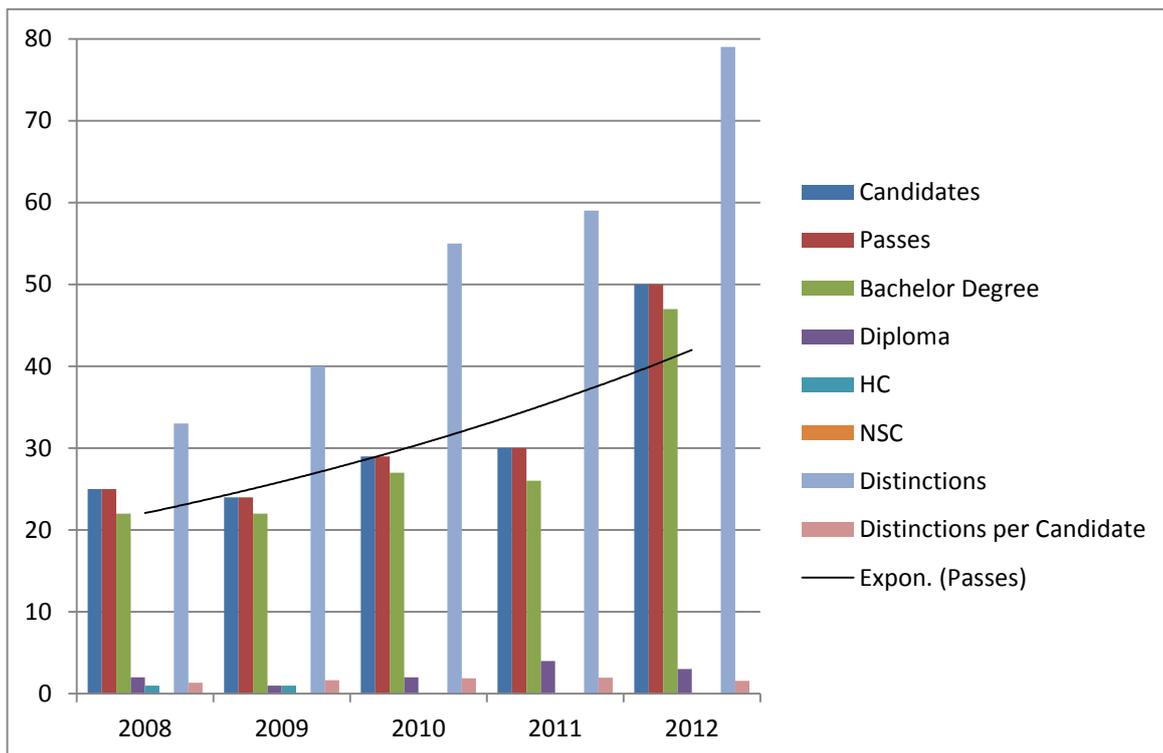
*100% pass rate
50 candidates and 79 distinctions
1 candidate with 7 distinctions
5 candidates with 5 distinctions
1 candidate with 4 distinctions
5 candidates with 3 distinctions each*

We are particularly proud of the fact that **94% of our Matric students received University Entrance qualifications** and our congratulations must go to our Dux Scholar, **Luke Bell** who earned a level 7 (80% or above) in seven subjects.

One issue which we are concerned about are the amount of '79%' marks we received - eleven (11) in total and we have asked the students concerned to consider asking for a remark in these subjects. If these 11 are converted to 80% we would have achieved 90 subject distinctions as opposed to the 79 which are reflected above. Nevertheless, I am extremely proud of our Matric class of 2012 and congratulate them on an outstanding set of results all round. The important thing is that, if they worked and focused on their goals, they would now all be able to follow their dreams as they progress into the future.

Another academic milestone is that all our subjects continue to reflect the academic level and averages of the Independent Examinations Board, who benchmark themselves internationally, so there is no doubt that these results continue to prove that Oakhill students are performing at an international level and get accepted to the Universities of their choice.

We also track our Matric progress year on year and I am delighted that the graph below continues to indicate that we are making incremental progress:



Oakhill College continues to raise expectations when it comes to academic performance and we need to take into account where we have come from to understand and comprehend how well we are doing in 2013. We also need to refrain from comparing ourselves to schools that have entrance exams and waiting lists which enable them to cherry-pick the best students in the area. Oakhill believes in developing individuals and year on year we attract diverse, multi-talented young men and women who achieve their own goals with determination and perseverance.

- ### Mathematics at Oakhill

In the next couple of newsletters I am going to concentrate on a particular subject area so as to explain our strategy and progress. We monitor our progress year on year in all areas and these statistics, not only make for interesting reading, but formulate our thinking and action for the years ahead.

Four years ago we did an assessment of our Mathematics results and were not happy with the outcome. We endeavoured to put measures in place which would encourage kids to take Mathematics as an option in Grade 10 but also to ensure that we built a solid foundation for this key subject in the Preparatory School. Some of the decisions we made were:

- To appoint Peter Vieyra as the Head of Department in the College.
- To appoint Marina Kok as the Head of Department in the Prep School - both these teachers are experienced Maths educators and they were tasked with auditing their departments and making recommendations which would encourage kids to enjoy Maths and improve their results.
- We decided to encourage as many kids as possible to take Mathematics and NOT Maths Literacy as an option in Grade 10. Although this is a difficult option, it is incumbent on the school to place the student in the best possible position for future studies. Many children do not know what they want to do after school and if you take away the Mathematics option it closes many doors later on.

We would prefer our students to get 40% or 50% in Maths rather than a higher mark in Maths Literacy. Ultimately, this decision will cause our average for Mathematics to drop but this does not affect our ability to allow kids to excel in the subject as well.

Recommendations made by these individuals have enabled us to make pleasing progress in all areas over the last five years as can be seen in the table below.

	Maths core (no of pupils)	Maths Lit (no of pupils)	IEB average	Oakhill average
2008	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	63%	53%
2009	Only 7 (29%)	17 (71%)	64%	77%
2010 Peter Vieyra	Only 11 (38%)	18 (62%)	63%	65%
2011 Peter Vieyra	21 (70%)	9 (30%)	63%	51%
2012 Peter Vieyra	29 (58%)	21 (42%)	64%	54,3%

If you take the 5 worst Mathematics marks from last year's Matrics (2012) out of the equation our Mathematics average for 2012 would be 60%.

	Number of 'A' symbols	'B' symbols	'C' symbols	Number of candidates
2008	1	0	3	13
2009	2	4	1	7
2010	4	1	2	11
2011	3	3	2	21
2012	5	1	6	29

Our strategy has been, FIRSTLY to ensure that we get more young men and women doing Mathematics. Five years ago we had a 50/50 split between Maths and Maths Lit. In 2011 we had a 70/30 split with 70% of our pupils doing Maths. 2012 saw 58% of the class doing Mathematics. This is a positive turn around, but not enough.

Lastly, if we took the average of our top 7 (all the pupils we had doing Maths in 2009) or 11 (all the pupils we had doing Maths in 2010) candidates in 2011, our average would be the following:

2011 Top 7:	78%
2011 Top11:	67%
2012 Top 7:	81%
2012 Top 11:	76%

I am afraid this reveals that, in the past (prior to 2010), we did ourselves no favours by encouraging students to do Mathematics Literacy instead of Mathematics. Nevertheless, we have now stalled this trend and I am delighted that we continue into the future providing young men and women with the tools they need to succeed.

Mathematics at Oakhill is in good hands and I have no doubt that, should our students spend the required amount of time needed for success, we will continue to improve year on year.

- **Start of Term 1 2013**

Oakhill welcomed 57 new families into our community this term and this has taken our numbers to 460.

We welcomed many new families at the Grade 8 induction camp picnic and it was wonderful to see old and new families getting to know each other in a relaxed environment. The Grade 8 camp is a wonderfully affirming intervention in our calendar and my sincere thanks goes to all the staff who planned this event but, particularly to Sheila Pasio, Riaan van Straten and Dawie Botha for putting the programme together. The Matrics join the Grade 8's at this intervention and this certainly allows for positive interaction and relationship building before the year really kicks off.

Our House Captains, in Bendigo: **Adam Oosthuizen and Kathryn Hemmes**; in Millwood: **Joshua Buchalter and Mirren Sharp** and in Jubilee: **Niklas Martin and Lulu Read**, have certainly started the year well and I have no doubt that they will lead this Matric group, and ultimately the school, efficiently and with compassion. I look forward to working with them as the year unfolds.

- **Staff conference**

Our staff conference, before the start of term, was once again a huge success. We grappled with the challenges of integrating our teaching styles with that of 21st century students and I am excited about the exciting ideas and programmes being put into place to challenge and engage with our young men and women.

- **Staffing**

We will be saying goodbye to one staff member who has resigned at the end of 2012: **Lee Raynor**, our College Geography Teacher will be recommencing his studies and moving to Knysna High on a governing body post.

I am delighted to announce that we have appointed an experienced teacher to replace him from St Patrick's College in the Eastern Cape. **Adolf Groenewald** and his wife, Roxanne will be joining us at the beginning of term 2 2013. We are also advertising for a Head of Department Mathematics in the College to replace Peter Vieyra and I am confident that we will make this announcement at the start of Term 2.

I would also like to welcome **Alistair Trafford** who is working in the sports department this year and **Candice Logan** who joins us as a part time Art Teacher in the Prep School.

We also welcome three exchange student-teachers from the USA who have joined us this term: Carrie Schwartz - Cincinnati, Ohio; Nick Wolfer - Cincinnati, Ohio; and Meredith Cubero - Louisville, Kentucky.

- **Odyssey**

There are 40 days to go before the first Odyssey group leaves on their rite-of-passage into the beautiful surrounds of the Garden Route. I have no doubt that these young men and women are going to enjoy and grow from this experience. Please watch the webpage for updates and information about this event.

- **Music concerts (Red Hot Chili Peppers)**

Knysna is an isolated town and we so often miss out on international concerts and sport fixtures. Whilst we support our community in trying to expose our children to a range of events we also need to be careful that we do not compromise ourselves and what we are trying to achieve here in the process.

Many families would like to attend the Red Hot Chili Peppers concert in Cape Town on 5 February. We do not encourage families to allow their children to miss school and in this instance many children who are going will be missing the first S Test of the year. While we have made an exception in this instance to allow kids to write this test when they get back, this will not be happening in the future. We will also not condone students missing the Chesterhouse Derby Day on Saturday 2 February. If a student has been chosen for a team for this event we would expect your son or daughter to fulfill his or her commitment. These events are disruptive and affect the balance and rhythm of our term and the few who go, have a negative impact on the greater whole.

Please plan well in advance in the future for events of this nature and please understand that we will not consider changing our timetable during an academic term in the future.

- **Board AGM**

Please note that the date for the Board AGM 2013 is on Monday 4 March.

It is vitally important that we have all Parents participating and I would encourage you to join us and engage with those who have made the sacrifice to serve on your behalf. I look forward to seeing you there.

- **Parent Forum**

At the end of 2012 I sent out a letter regarding teenage behaviour and the implications of poor judgment and decision making and asked parents who were interested in engaging me on this topic to contact me. I have been inundated with responses and will be organising a talk which will deal with these issues directly.

- **Finally.....**

Oakhill celebrates its 21st year this year and we will be celebrating our Birthday with a function on Saturday 2 March 2013. There are a limited number of seats and I would encourage you to ensure that you contact **Catherine Brodie**, in our finance office to avoid disappointment.

Oakhill is not a perfect school but it certainly is a happy place where all who are involved grow and learn immeasurably. I can only think of how we continue to improve in developing young hearts and minds for the real world and I am excited for what the future holds. Please continue to engage with us should you have any concerns.

Kindest regards



Shane Kidwell