



BELLAVISTA

NEWSLETTER

A SAFE HARBOUR SCHOOL

6 February 2023

Dear parents



On holding hedgehogs, honey badgers and hands

As we settle into 2023 and all the little people wriggle into their place in the sun, I am reminded of a 'position statement' we made at Bellavista School, many years ago. Academics aside, what does it mean to be a school, how does a school fit in a community, and how should we approach all the children in our care?

"It takes a village to raise a child".

In a village, children are born, given to the inhabitants to protect, nurture, guide and develop to their full potential. In the village, all the adults take ownership of the children. They are ours, not yours and mine. Some of the young un's may be easy going, like a retriever that is always happy, always interested and an obliging companion; others are hedgehogs; some may be honey badgers. How we handle these little ones represents the essence of our values. How we hold the children, at every age, and handle their emerging personhood is at the heart of a healthy village.

The collective noun for hedgehogs is 'an array of hedgehogs'.

These small creatures lure us with their cuteness but caution us with the 5000 spines that bristle and protect it. They're lactose intolerant and can cover about six feet a second on running. They can be domesticated but never quite 'blend'. Over seventeen species are identified, some immune to adder venom. They have poor eyesight but enjoy heightened senses of smell and hearing. A baby hedgehog enjoys the endearing term, 'hoglet'.

In our village, the adults have an array of hoglets and hedgehogs. They are cute and we choose to handle them with care and caution. We need to hold each one just firmly enough not to drop him, but not so tightly that we either provoke a spike or prompt a rapid bolt from our company. We need to exploit the hedgehog's strengths and offer support for the areas of difficulty. When they're cute, they are ours. When they are not, they are ours. We hold too tightly at our peril. We snatch too impulsively at risk of hurting ourselves and even dropping them. We must approach our hedgehogs with commitment, forethought, planning and love to hold them 'just right'.

Honey badgers are not thought of as fondly as hedgehogs.

Also known as 'ratels', these fearless creatures wreak havoc wherever they go and might even squirt a stinky liquid in their wake when threatened. These 'cute' furry creatures dig like crazy and go underground to escape danger or capture prey. They shamelessly invade and occupy another animal's den or lair. They are rude and mean, eagerly picking a fight! They eat anything. Honey badgers are thick skinned and also immune to snake venom. In fact, they eat snakes. They bite. They're gritty. They are content to be alone but teams of honey badgers will work together with any materials to escape capture.

We all know a few honey badgers and they are ours. They're smart, they're resilient and they are creative problem solvers. Honey badgers will survive the big wide world. These ratels test our limits and our resources. They have potential to divide and conquer, rendering chaos that ultimately affects the whole village. Should they bite, or dig, or squirt in their wake, they remain ours. Ever in 'fight or flight' mode, the honey badger is wired to self protect. It is our role to create a safe space, to reduce the threat and to build constructive limits. Regardless of their disposition, like hedgehogs and retrievers, the honey badgers are ours; ours when they break the school rules; ours when they are fractious and ours when they're mean. How we create and maintain their boundaries is everything and we need to be united and proactive as we do this, in agreement, staying steadfast and consistent. After all, if push comes to shove in this life, we want a honey badger on the team.

Hedgehogs and honey badgers, like retrievers and all others, find their place in the sun and how we hold them matters.

Three suggestions:

- Firstly, hold hands.

Hold hands with the hands that have been given hedgehogs and honey badgers to love and raise. Together, we have a better chance at softening the prickles and containing the chaos.

- Secondly, make a choice and be intentional.

Choose to hold the hedgehogs, spikes and all. These spiny little creatures are a gardener's best friend, but need to be handled with care. Although the cute factor can

soften our boundaries, a child who is all bristles is not going to be sociable and accepted in his peer group. Even cuties need parameters!

- Thirdly, take care.

Carefully approach the honey badger – she’s volatile and, quite frankly, doesn’t need you, or so she thinks. Just as honey badgers work in teams, so should we with our strong willed, feisty kids. Parents, teachers and therapists should talk together. Au pairs and extended family should be in the loop. We should study the honey badger’s ways, observe the cues, recognise the triggers, define the boundaries, hold hands and hold on!

Back to the original question: what does it mean to be a school, in a community with the community’s children in our care?

It means we need to hold all the children, from hedgehogs to honey badgers, in the palms of our hands, at the centre of our purpose in the community, in our minds, in our strategy and within agreed parameters that create safety for all: children, families and staff. It means the children are ours and always will be ours. They are our purpose and mandate. Their needs are everything: safety, acceptance, development and nurture needs. It means that we are the collective, all of us together.

We need to hold hands.

Staff News

Congratulations to the following Bellavista Staff as they take on greater responsibility in the school:



Bernadette Pascoe

HOD SEEK and Admissions



Daniela Allan

Deputy Principal
Director of Academics



Lauren Davis

Deputy Principal
Director Cognitive Education



Karen Archer

Deputy Principal
Director of SHARE



Roan Cruickshank

HOD Curriculum Leadership



Welcome to Trevor Majola as he takes on a full time Bellavista School position as Assistant Caretaker. Trevor will still be meeting and greeting the children and parents at the Wingfield gate at pick up and drop off time. During the day, David Zikhale will assist with access and security at the gate.

Nuts and bolts

Cricket fixtures: we have endured two let downs for confirmed fixtures already this year, and one lightning disruption. As a school, we have expressed our disappointment to the league



Presented by
Alison Scott & Lauren Davis
8 February | 19:30 – 20:30
bellavista.org.za/Bellavista-share

organisers. In the interim, to secure some competitive games for our children, we have started setting up direct fixtures with neighbouring, reliable schools.

Parent information: In our first Bellavista S.H.A.R.E. webinar of the year, Lauren Davis (Director of Cognitive Education) and I will be addressing our perspective on Self Regulation. As parents, tune in!

Sweetie Tuck: this week is Grade Five Sweetie Tuck.

Camp: Grade Sevens have been issued camp letters ahead of their leadership camp at the end of February.

Valentine's Dress up Day:

On Friday, 17th February, we will celebrate Valentine's Day with a civvies day. We are combining this event with Flip Flop day where we contribute to CHOC. This is a mini-council initiative. There is a R10 contribution for Valentines Day which will go to CHOC. The children should wear their flip flops to school with their civvies outfit.

Class of 2022: children who left the school at the end of 2022 will get together for an 'alumni connect' this Friday 10 February.



Enjoy the week!

Alison M Scott (Mrs)
Executive Principal

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