



BELLAVISTA

NEWSLETTER

A SAFE HARBOUR SCHOOL

29 May 2023

Dear parents

Academic rehabilitation and recalibration - what it's all about.



As our quality assurance team collates the results of staff, parent, pupil and Board surveys, my musings turned to 'what is remedial school all about, really?' Deeper than the obvious, which includes intervention through curriculum and therapy in an integrated way, it is my conviction that placement here is about academic rehabilitation and personal recalibration for each individual, over time. Parents write us letters expressing that they 'have their child back', that their lives as well as their child's life have changed, that their child is understood. Past pupils write that they were with 'teachers who cared', that they were 'given a chance', that they were helped, that they belonged and were valued, that we 'believed in' them. Emails and text messages express gratitude, warm memories and acknowledgement for what 'Bellavista gave me'. Just this month we had a visit from a founding pupil in 1967. He came to check in on the school that believed in him, made a safe space, and set him on course for a rich and rewarding life.

On the matter of academic rehabilitation, I am likely stating the obvious when I say that many children (and parents) arrive here shattered and tired, worn down by trying to meet the

demands of the mainstream environment. Even good and admirable intentions to assist and support a child in an inclusive setting deplete energy and stamina over time. If we were to use the analogy of an 'energy bank' then they are spent and even overdrawn. Parent roles are blurred with that of a case manager and tutor and the child often loses the access to Mum or Dad for downtime, pleasure and recreation, because it's all about home programmes, facilitation, extra lessons and therapy. Parental anxiety is reflected in the child who experiences their concern internally. The young learner loses free time to play and exercise, relax and recharge, as the whole day becomes scheduled to put in the 'extra'. Emotionally, the message is 'not good enough' and 'needs help', even if this is never verbally expressed. Anxiety creeps to an intolerable level, expressed in swinging moods, depression, aggressive behaviour and agitation, if not school refusal, demand avoidance, poor sleep, inappropriate appetites, social withdrawal and tears. Scripts and dietary supplements become a theme as every effort is made to hold the young 'un together in order to cope with the relentless expectation that school has come to represent. When a referral is made to remedial school, it can seem either the inevitable second prize or an enormous relief.

For the first three to six months of placement, even longer for some children, we set about academic rehabilitation, both intensely and deliberately. Teachers and therapists establish what he or she *can do* and work from there, building esteem more than skill at this point. We learn their ways and anxieties, and hear each child's story. We seek to hold the safety of structure, rhythm and routine in school in tandem with emotional comfort. Positive reinforcement will dominate over negative or punitive discipline when it is needed. Connecting with the child and earning his or her trust is more important than neat writing and straight sheets initially. Facilitating the feeling of legitimacy that comes with communicating and sharing their own ideas is a primary focus. Basically, we spend months and then years restoring children's faith in 'schooling' by celebrating and developing each person's individuality. This is what children take with them when they leave us. Yes, strategies; yes, skills to deal with pervasive difficulties that won't go away; yes, facing a hard high school slog. Also yes to knowing 'my challenge' and holding a vision of a future with my dreams, interests and aptitude in mind. They take grit.

The recalibration is the respite from a perpetual sense of failure coupled with an exposure to practical strategies that work. An important part of our role at school is helping every child know his or her personal strengths and weaknesses. We talk openly about this balance once the trust is established. We also engage plainly on strategies that are researched and effective, and the various supports that the child expresses as useful. This may be medication. It may not be medication. It may be diet, exercise and sport, anxiety management tools like sensory calming activities or psychological strategies. It may be ways to learn the tables or apps that type when the children dictate their thinking. It may be firm discipline and high expectations exercised by teachers until internalised by the child. Perhaps it will just be kindness and consistency. Maybe it will be individualised therapeutic intervention or access to a curriculum that is structured to support how the child learns.

Make no mistake, and hold in your mind as a parent when you start to compare Bellavista's activities and approaches to a mainstream school, everything we do here has *intention*. The intention is to facilitate your child's academic rehabilitation and recalibration at every turn: when we have sweetie tuck; what seamless clothes we wear; the time we allow for sport; the outings we plan; the homework or not; the cycle test demands; the frequency of therapy; the

way we write reports; the issues we call your child up on; the awards we give or don't. Nothing lacks consideration and intent. As educators and therapists often say, "trust the process".

Dates to diarise for your development as parents

There are a few wonderful opportunities in terms of your education and your beliefs about your child's potential as parents up ahead, i.e.:

- A new series of the popular *Coffee and Cognition 1* workshops commence 30 May - you will receive separate notices to confirm your attendance.
- A workshop for parents who have children struggling with Mathematics on 14th July at Bellavista School, presented by leading expert Judy Hornigold from the UK. You can click on the image to indicate your interest [here](#).

Nuts and Bolts

Staff news

Our sincere condolences are extended to the Behrens family on the loss of their father and grandfather last week.

From 1 June, Liela Voget moved from Reception to the Tomatis team. When you call or reach the school, you will initially deal with Portia Masiyiwa and Cindy Ebersey, both well known to the children and many of you as parents.

This week we welcome Mrs Ashley Raubenheimer and Ms Shakira Mohamed, both skilled Occupational Therapists, who will take caseloads from Mrs Romy Saunders and Mrs Tamara Victor as they take maternity leave.

Absenteeism and illness

Whilst not reportable, it is responsible to advise that there have been multiple cases of H1N1 (Swine Flu), Whooping Cough, Covid and Influenza A. This has impacted teachers, therapists and the children. Many have been exceptionally unwell and their recovery periods slow.

Please support our collective health by:

- reminding children to wash hands often and use available sanitiser.
- keeping children with symptoms at home until better.
- reinforcing good nose blowing and tissue usage.
- teaching your child to cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- being sensitive to staff health and meetings. If you are unwell, a video call is better.

The "Health" tab on the Bellavista School app has guidelines for you to follow. Note, Covid positive cases are still regulated for schools as a minimum of five days quarantine.

Grade Six and Seven examinations

If you are a parent in Grade Six or Seven, please do take note of the exam week falling 10-14 July 2023. Examinations are standardised and can only be taken in the programmed

schedule. Please ensure that you do not make any travel arrangements for your child over the period.

Sports

Derby Day results:

- U/11 Netball
 - 1st Game: BV vs Japari: 6-2
 - 2nd Game: BV vs Newton House: 3-2
 - 3rd Game: BV vs Japari: 1-2
 - 4th Game: BV vs Newton House: 2-3
- Gr 6 Netball
 - 1st Game: BV vs Japari: 1-1
 - 2nd Game: BV vs Newton House: 0-4
- Gr 7
 - 1st Game: BV vs Newton House: 9-3
 - 2nd Game: BV vs Japari: 9-0

- Soccer U9/10: friendly matches
- U11 BV vs Newton House: draw
- U12s second place overall for the day
- U14 Bellavista Team 1 first and Bellavista Team 2 second place overall for the day

Soccer Results vs The King's School Robin Hills

U9 won 3-2

U10 lost 3-0

U11 lost 3-1

U13 lost 3-0

- This week's soccer fixture is against Holy Family School.
- The popular 'Parents vs Kids' winter sports event is scheduled for next week, 6 June. Details are expanded in the calendar, but for your easy reference:

This **Gr3-7** event has become an annual tradition and a much loved occasion for some of the children. It is open to all the children, not only the netball and soccer players. On a VOLUNTARY basis, and quite informally, each child will RSVP for participation when the call goes out. Those who prefer not to play can continue their day as planned including their extra murals. The children in GrR-2 continue their day as normal. Strictly, there is no pressure, lots of fun and just a sharing of time as we connect. Please expect casual proceedings. If you have any queries, please email: Ashley.Button@bellavista.org.za (coach) or Anien.Evans@bellavista.org.za (HOD)

- **2024**
The 2024 academic term calendar is published. The new school year commences 17 January for Grades 1 -7. You can find the calendar on both apps (Edana and Bellavista School) and on the website: <https://bellavista.org.za/calendar-2/>

Bellavista Legacy Rose Order

Please do look out for separate, direct correspondence from the Parents Association about ordering your magnificent Bellavista Legacy rose.

Enjoy the week!

Alison Scott
Executive Principal