



BELLAVISTA

NEWSLETTER

A S A F E H A R B O U R S C H O O L

3 July 2023

Dear parents

Sitting on a cactus

Raising a child can be rosy but raising a child with learning difficulties can be like handling a cactus at times.

A bouquet of roses offers a soft scent and bursts of colour. The blooms gently unfold as the flowers are watered, fed and sheltered. People spot the roses and comment on their magnificent unfurling. Some long-stemmed varieties have thorns, but these are obvious to all, and the handler accommodates them with deliberate tactics. Some people even name roses after themselves. Cacti and succulents are not quite the same deal. These plants start off looking nebulous and relatively unattractive. They are hardy and they are long-suffering. Some varieties bloom with violently colourful flowers in time. Others have arrays of leaves that swirl and draw the eye in. Many have thorns. Some have many needles and spikes, making them impossible to handle, and certainly placing 'he who dares' at risk for a bleed. Unlike roses, the cacti are life long and the reward they offer is rich. In their leaves and sap there is often healing power and sustenance for others.



Perhaps you have been given a cactus to raise. The thing with a cactus is that you don't have to sit on it! You don't need to add more challenges to your journey like anger, blame shifting, squabbling and disgruntlement. When parents bring their anger, their wounds, their disappointment and their pain to bear on the people who are *choosing* to support them, they are sitting on a cactus. Their pain and troubles will persist because they don't allow anyone close enough to raise this cactus with them. They land up alone on this journey.

Given the high prevalence of 'parent burnout' when a child with learning difficulties is involved, parents need reliable partners to raise their child. They *need* special needs teachers to deliver the best practice available. They *need* human beings who care and genuinely commit to the wellbeing of their child. These professionals are positioned and ready – they are the people at our school.

Teachers and therapists who dedicate their lives to supporting children with learning difficulties often bear much of the brunt from parents who are troubled and worried about their child. The teacher can carry the emotion with the parents for a while. These professionals choose the harder education route and put themselves up for the challenge. They studied further. They sought work in a narrow job field. They take on more load and responsibility than their

mainstream colleagues. Their work is weighty with accountability but they know what they are doing – they see the team's goals and they are determined to do their best to enhance these. Such teachers are hard to find; actually, they are rare.

Parents need to nurture their relationship with the professionals who choose to do this work by deliberately and actively building trust and opening up transparent, honest and direct relationships with their child's team members. The teachers and therapists have committed to this relationship by electing to teach at this school in the first place. It is for parents to grab the opportunity and take the unique flavour offered – the discipline, the patience, the care, the correction, the kindness, the praise, the guidance, the skill, the humour, **the hope, the belief** and the curriculum or therapy delivery.

On retiring as Headmaster of Eton College, UK, Tony Little (2015) wrote a book in which he poses questions that he wishes parents would ask themselves before considering his school.

- Do I believe my child is almost perfect?
- Do I like rules and regulations until my child breaks them?
- Am I happy gossiping about the school to anyone who will listen?
- Do I go in at the deep end when someone criticises my child?

As Little explains, if the answer to any of the above is 'yes', he would rather you sought another school for your child. His questions continue:

- Am I prepared to work with the school and pull my weight?
- Can I strike a balance between being a velcro parent and a ghost?
- Can I support my child and support the school through difficult times?
- Can I suppress my frustrated ambitions and let my child be herself?
- Will I deflect rumour and find out the facts from the school?

By contrast if the answer to any of these is 'yes', Little would welcome you with open arms.

I add a couple more questions for parents at Bellavista School:

- Will I share all that I know about my child and allow the school to do the same?
- Can I accept that the person working with my child is a human being, and just like myself, has difficult days managing my child?
- Can I commit myself to believing in the full potential of my child, to finding my child and to celebrating the child I find?

Ask yourself if you are sitting on a cactus or if you could join Little's school. If it's the latter, you are sitting on a wealth of heart and experience at this one, and it's there for you to take, you don't need Eton!

Nuts and Bolts

Staff News

We warmly welcome Baby Victor on his safe arrival 19 June 2023. We wish Tamara and her family only joy and happiness. Kerry Landsman steps in as Occupational Therapist for Tamara, and we look forward to her competence and expertise.

Recent waves of emigration have not been without impact to our little school community. At the end of the term, we bid farewell to Tayla Smith who will be joining her husband, Alex, in Shanghai, China during August. Tayla has served Bellavista School with distinction for many years and I can but thank her for her dedication and commitment here. Even in this decision, she held the children in her care front of mind. Mrs Natalie Ferreira will be taking the class from September 2023. Natalie is an experienced teacher who is well known to Bellavista School and we welcome her warmly.

Dates to diarise for your development as parents

There are a few wonderful opportunities in terms of your education as parents up ahead, i.e.:



A workshop entitled "Minimising the Battles with your Children", delivered by Dr Miriditza Erasmus-Mans, one of our Remedial Therapists.

Tuesday 11 July at 17h00-18h30 in the school hall.

There is no charge but please reserve your seat with: cindy.ebersey@bellavista.org.za



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 to book [here](#). There is a ticket price attached to cover the costs of the international speaker delivering the programme, Judy Hornigold.

Grade Six and Seven examinations

Grade Six or Seven enter their exam block falling 7-14 July 2023. Each grade has their timetable. Examinations are standardised and can only be taken in the programmed schedule. The children do have an earlier home time in the period.

Winter School

We warmly welcome our Winter School cohort to the property and the intensive RAVEO programme. You may see some of the children in their smart Winter School hoodies.

Extramural Notice

Netball, soccer, yoga, robotics, dancing, cross country and art will finish off the week of 4th & 6th July.

During the weeks from 11th July until 27th July, all children in Grades Three to Seven will take part in an athletics rotation on the field during extra murals, between 14:00 and 15:00. These activities are done to collate points towards their houses, Blankfield, Griffiths and Yorke. These points are then added towards the scores on sports day next term. Grade R - Grade Two will also do this during the Integrated time within their school day.

The athletic activities will include:

Running 60m/80m as per age groups [Gr.R-7], long jump [Gr.R-7], high jump [Gr.6&7] / jumping activities [Gr.R-5], hurdles [Gr.6&7] / jumping activities [Gr.R-5]. Although some children might find some of the activities challenging, they are encouraged to try their best to participate. Their different abilities will be considered during these sessions.

Gr.6&7 children will not take part in extramurals 11 - 18 July. This is exam week and the children will be going home at 12:15 every day. Collection point is the main school gate on Wingfield.

- Gr.6 will start their extramural programme again on Tuesday 18 July until 15:00 and Gr.7 will start from Thursday 20 July until 15:00.
- There will be no extra murals on Thursday 13 July for all grades, due to the Mathematics conference the teachers are attending. On this day all children in Grades Three to Seven should be collected at 14:00 from their usual gates. This information was sent out in a previous communication.
- Thursday 27 July will be the last day of extra murals for the term and school will end at 15:00 for Grades Three to Seven.
- On Mon 31 July, Tues 1 Aug and Thurs 3 Aug pick-up times are at 14:00 for Grades Three to Seven; Wed 2 Aug pick-up time is 13:30
- Fri 4 Aug pick up time is 10:00 for the whole school as we close for the August holidays.

Congratulations to Blankfield House on winning the cross country competition. Griffiths house came in second and Yorke, third.

2024

The 2024 academic term calendar is published. The new school year commences 17th 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/>

Mandela Day

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" Nelson Mandela

SPREAD THE WARMTH



TUESDAY
18 JULY
2023

This Mandela Day we are collecting

- ♦ Jam
- ♦ Teddy Bears (used but still loveable)
- ♦ Blankets
- ♦ Peanut Butter



Collection ends on Mandela Day
Bellavista school with the Teddy Bear Clinic at Charlotte Maxeke hospital

All queries can be directed to Drew at drew.holman@bellavista.org.za

Enjoy the week!

Alison Scott
Executive Principal