

20 May 2020

## Thank You

To all the parents who have emailed or spoken to our staff and management team thanking us for the work we did and continue to do during the lockdown I would like to say how much it is appreciated. There is a lovely feeling of singular purpose among our parents and teachers to ensure that St Thomas's School returns to normality as soon as possible and continues to be the heart of the community.

As we successfully complete the first week back on our school site it is timely to reflect on how it is all going.

We had over 95% student attendance this week which is above average for this time of year and indicates that parents are comfortable with the COVID-19 procedures that the school has put in place. Teachers have worked on settling students back into school and focused on wellbeing as well as academic learning. Generally speaking, students have returned in a settled state and we have used our special needs coordinator and school counsellor to catch up with individuals who needed a little extra support. There is no sign of heightened anxiety among our students at this stage.

Indeed the Learning from Home survey which 344 of our students completed, had 85% of students indicate that they felt their home bubble was doing well, had adults at home they could talk to if worried (87%) and that they felt safe from COVID-19 while learning at home (86%). Parents and caregivers, you need to give yourself a pat on the back for safely steering your families through the lockdown and managing the stress in such a way as not to impact on your children.

As this week has progressed, we have opened up our sports shed, and students are enjoying the freedom of our fields. Next week our sports coordinator, Devish, will organise a sports programme to get our students more involved in outdoor activities as we return to normality. We will also expand our teaching bubbles and teachers can buddy up with another classroom for collaborative teaching.

The most surprising aspect of returning to school is the positive feedback from parents and staff about students only allowed to access the school after 8:30 in the morning. Parents, particularly in the junior areas have been very positive about their children arriving after 8:30 and then walking into school on their own. This has made for a smoother transition as students have quickly adapted to leaving their parents at the gate and dashing into school to catch up with their friends and teachers. One little 5-year-old remarked to his teacher that the best thing about this week was that he could walk into school on his own. For teachers it has meant that they can continue uninterrupted with preparation for the day ahead and meet within their teams. They have noticed a marked difference in how students are ready to engage with their learning straight away and students seem far more settled. The caretakers have appreciated the time it allows them to mow the lawns, use weed eaters and other noisy equipment before children arrive on the site. These were unexpected but pleasing outcomes from having the gates closed until 8:30 and something that we may



To the St Thomas's  
Community for their  
amazing support  
throughout the Lockdown.

## Upcoming Events

### May

29 **TEACHER ONLY DAY**  
(School closed to students)

### June

1 **QUEENS BIRTHDAY**  
(School closed to students)  
2 Y7&8 Vaccinations

### July

3 Last day of Term 2

continue as we move to lift the current restrictions of Alert Level 2. Of course we still want to maintain St Thomas's School as a welcoming community and after easing of the current restrictions we will again allow access after 3:00 so parents can come onto the grounds and pick up their children if needed.

### **Survey Results**

As mentioned above, results are back from our student Wellbeing and Learning Survey. The majority of students (79%) reported that they were able to learn at home, that teachers were providing feedback which helped with learning at home (71%), learning resources that the school had provided were useful and easy to use (71%), students knew how to contact their teacher if they needed help or have a problem (82%) and that 65% had enjoyed learning at home. The average score of how students rated their wellbeing during the lockdown was 80% and the average score for learning was 75%. Considering that distance learning was something that we had never tried to put in place across the school and only planned it in response to the lockdown these results were reassuring.

### **Construction Update**

The back entrance to the office area and staffroom is going to be fenced off to allow construction of a walkway from the new block to the administration area. Aline are planning to install temporary fencing between the front office and Allum Street to allow students and staff to access the office and staffroom safely. During the school day students and staff can enter the office from the front of the school and the temporary fence will prevent students from going near the road.

There will be gates in this temporary fence to allow parents to access the office area and for the students to enter and leave the school. The fencing will be removed once construction is complete at the rear of the office area.

### **New Staff**

Ricky Buchanan joined our staff as a Year 7 teacher. Ricky is an experienced New Zealand trained teacher from Dunedin who had to cut his travels in Europe short due to COVID-19. With a keen interest in the outdoors Ricky is a welcome addition to the senior area of our school.

### **Queen's Birthday and Teacher Only Day**

In 2019, all schools in New Zealand were allocated two teacher only days and our first one is scheduled for next Friday May 29<sup>th</sup>. On Friday the school will be closed to students and staff will be involved in professional development around wellbeing. It may seem strange to be closing for a day after only returning to school however this was planned from last year and is part of the Teacher's Collective Agreement.

### **Are there any changes to Alert Level 2 in school next week?**

No. We will continue with the gates opening and closing times. We will also continue with extra cleaning of surfaces in classrooms, hand sanitisers in rooms and no assemblies will be held. Students may notice some changes as two classes can choose to work collaboratively together, and sporting opportunities increase across the school. Next week we will update our current practices and share in our newsletter what the following two weeks are going to look like.

### **Junior Playground**

The playground is fenced off for safety reasons as there are wooden panels covering concrete piles and we do not want any accidents to happen. The contractors are due back this coming week to erect the canopy and work through the next stages.

We understand that students will be finding it hard having the playground out of action but hopefully it won't be for too much longer.

## **To our School Community from the Board of Trustees**

We hope you are doing OK in what has been a very troubling time for the country and the community with the outbreak of Covid-19 impacting our everyday lives.

At the school it has been a very busy and stressful time managing the school closure and re-entry over the past few weeks. It has not been easy navigating the advice from Government and balancing the health and safety, wellbeing and education needs of all our students, staff and our community.

Health and Safety of our students during this global pandemic is of paramount importance and at St Thomas's we also have the added pressure and associated hazard of a major construction site within the grounds of the school. This building site is operational 6 days per week at the moment as the construction company tries to make up some of the time lost over the recent lockdown.

With all of this in mind at this week's Board Meeting the Board unanimously voted to keep the school grounds closed after hours and on weekends. This means all entrances to the school grounds, including the gates to neighbours properties through our boundary fences, will be closed until further notice with entry to and exit from the school only through the controlled front entrances between 8.30-9am and 3.00-3.15pm on school days. At all other times everyone must go through the school office and sign in and out. If you need to meet with your child's teacher, we still encourage you to do so, we just ask that you please make an appointment and use the sign in process at the front office.

We know how much the school grounds are used and how much they are a hub to the community. Many board members themselves regularly use the grounds in weekends with their kids. We will therefore review this decision as soon as possible and as soon as it is deemed safe again, we will reopen the grounds to our community for everyone to enjoy.

Thanks for your understanding at this really tough time.

St Thomas's Board of Trustees

## **Update Contact Details**

If you or your emergency details have changed e.g. email, contact numbers and or address please email these to [office@stthomas.school.nz](mailto:office@stthomas.school.nz).

## **Library Book and Readers**

Just a reminder about sending back all Library Books and readers as soon as you can so we can replenish our Library and Resource Rooms.

## **Week 6, Term 2 Property Report**

Hello! Welcome back to school, the worksite, and my report! Although the builders were only allowed on site last week, a whole lot of stuff has been done. Here's a recap of what's happened!

The workers have started to connect a walkway between the admin block (staffroom), and the new block, which means it will be a lot easier for teachers to get to their classes after all this construction is done. The floor of the library and sickbay is complete, as well as the roof for the latter. All the windows and doors have been installed, and the ceiling panels, along with lights might be put in soon, as the grid that holds them up is completed. Finally, the gib stopping (plastering of the walls) has been finished and painting has started.

Wow! What amazing progress! The construction workers have obviously been working very hard, so a big thanks to them. Also, thank you, teachers, who are continuing to work after this crisis. It's good to be back and you're all doing great! See you in a fortnight!

*By Alex Heaton*

## Uniform

Now that all the students are back in school and the weather is getting cooler it is time to remind our students of the correct uniform.

<b>Dress Code – Years 0 – 6</b>	<b>Dress Code – Years 7 &amp; 8</b>
<b>Summer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culottes or shorts</li><li>• Hat (compulsory terms 1 &amp; 4)</li><li>• Short sleeve t-shirt</li><li>• PE Uniform (years 5&amp;6 only)</li></ul>	<b>Summer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culottes or shorts</li><li>• Hat (compulsory terms 1 &amp; 4)</li><li>• Senior shirt</li><li>• PE Uniform</li></ul>
<b>Winter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culottes, shorts or track pants*</li><li>• Polycotton sweat or polar fleece</li><li>• Long sleeve t-shirt</li><li>• Undershirt (optional)</li><li>• PE Uniform (years 5&amp;6 only)</li></ul>	<b>Winter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Culottes, shorts or track pants</li><li>• Polycotton sweat or polar fleece</li><li>• Undershirt (optional)</li><li>• Senior shirt</li><li>• PE Uniform</li></ul>

\* Track Pants are not available from Argyle Schoolwear but can be purchased from The Warehouse. They are the Straight Leg Pongee Trackpant. Here is the link: [Visit Link](#)

## Extra Items

### Footwear

- Plain shoes, sandals: black, brown or navy
- Running shoes
- No jandals or crocs allowed
- For safety reasons, students in years 7&8 must have closed in shoes when attending technology classes at Selwyn College

### Socks and Tights

- Plain white, navy or black ankle or knee high socks
- Navy or black tights

### Headgear

- Caps, scarves and bandannas are not permitted. The principal must approve head-wear worn for religious/cultural reasons (dark navy where possible).

### Jewellery

- Necklaces of cultural or religious significance are permitted. Watches, plain stud earrings and small hoop earrings may be worn. No other jewellery is permitted.

## **How Our Students Feel About Being Back**

It's great to be back! We were interested in getting student voice about being back at school, so we interviewed students from each year group about their time being away and the highlight of being back. Most of the students seemed to miss their friends more than anything, which doesn't surprise us!

*Year 1 students started this Monday, welcome to St Thomas's!*

### What did you miss while you were at home?

'Having a Birthday Party, I played a game with my family instead' - Axel, J5, Year 2

'I missed my friends and there was no one to play with at home' - Amairaa, J5, Year 2

'Maths problems the teacher gives us' - Caprice, M8, Year 3

'I missed writing and art' - Belle, J1, Year 4

'Homework, because there wasn't much to do at home' - Jesse, S1, Year 5

'Dance classes, because they were cancelled' - Katherine M, S4, Year 6

'Hanging out and playing since we were in quarantine and I didn't get to go outside very much' - William S8, Year 7

'Missed hanging out with friends, especially since we haven't been in contact' - Paris S9, Year 8

### What is the best part about being back at school?

'Writing, I like to write stories' - Ollie, J12, Year 1

'Having a playdate after school, we are going to play lord of the rings' - Axel, J5, Year 2

'Making things out of paper' - Amairaa, J5, Year 2

'Playing sports with my friends' - Caprice, M8, Year 3

'At home it's hard to do home school, I like to have a teacher around' - Belle, J1, Year 4

'I haven't been contacting my friends that often in quarantine and seeing them again was exciting' - Jesse, S1, Year 5

'Learning and my friends although we were in contact, I still missed them' - Katherine M, S4, Year 6

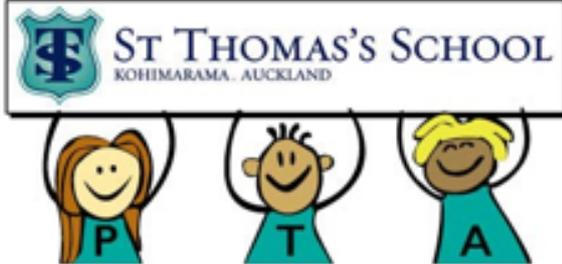
'Having teachers help you and explain the question' - William, S8, Year 7

'The best part about being back at school is seeing your friends and teachers' - Paris, S9, Year 8

Welcome back to school, we hope you have a great rest of the term!

*Kamila (Hauraki House Captain) and Paris, Year 8.*

## PTA News Issue #4 2020



### WELCOME BACK!

We hope you are all safe and well and are making your way back in to the new normal.

We will be convening shortly to work through what events and fundraisers we go ahead with for the remainder of the year. Watch this space for more soon.

If you have any suggestions on fundraising ideas, we'd love to hear them. Contact us at [stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com](mailto:stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com)

### YUMMY STICKER & LABEL COLLECTION

Don't forget to collect your Yummy stickers & labels – these can be found on Yummy apples & their bags. The stickers & bag labels are worth points, and the accumulation of these points determines how much DG sports gear the school can get in return from Yummy. Last year we received over \$4,000 worth of FREE sports gear! So collect your stickers & labels, stick them to the Yummy collection sheets; copies of which can be downloaded from [yummyfruit.co.nz](http://yummyfruit.co.nz) – or bring them into school & stick them on to the sheets available in classrooms.

Once your sheet is full, bring it into the school & hand in to the office.



Make sure you follow our Facebook page; St Thomas's School Community where we'll keep you updated with up-coming events and news from the PTA and the school.

Facebook/[StThomasSchool/PTA](https://www.facebook.com/StThomasSchool/PTA)

We're always looking for more members. If you'd like to know more, contact us at [stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com](mailto:stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com) or come along to the next PTA meeting – date TBC. We'd love to have more members – many hands make light work!



We encourage you to contact us with your thoughts & suggestions any time at [stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com](mailto:stthomasschoolpta@gmail.com) and don't forget to Like us on Facebook!



Facebook/[StThomasSchool/PTA](https://www.facebook.com/StThomasSchool/PTA)



We encourage all families who wish to enrol their child at Selwyn College in 2021 to complete our online enrolment process. Our Enrolment Officer will then contact you to arrange an enrolment interview time during the week of 22<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> June.

Enrolment application forms for In Zone and Out of Zone are available on our website [www.selwyn.school.nz/New Students/Enrolment](http://www.selwyn.school.nz/NewStudents/Enrolment)

Due to COVID-19, our **Open Evening** has been postponed until further notice.