

5 May 2023

Principal's Message

Welcome to our first newsletter of term two and an especially warm welcome to our new families who joined St Thomas's School this term.

I would like to acknowledge Claire Fromow for her wonderful work as Acting Principal while I was away during term one and my other leadership staff who played a critical role in ensuring the school ran smoothly. Thank you also to the Board of Trustees for supporting my award and I am excited to be back in St Thomas's School and look forward to enhancing our programmes and environment as we move forward.

The Ministry of Education sabbatical which I was away on provided me with a great opportunity to reflect on how we will go about implementing our environmental science programme across the school. The cyclones and storms which hit New Zealand over the summer was further proof that we need to lift our knowledge around environmental issues, and it is especially important that our students develop interest and knowledge in this area. Over the coming years we will develop our school site to support environmental programmes and perhaps in the future some of the environmental solutions we seek will emerge from our current students.

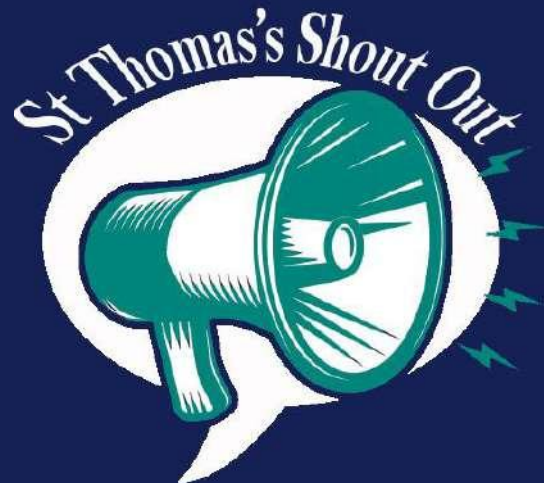
As we move into the colder months the Ministry of Health have indicated that this year's flu could be a lot more serious than previous years. Covid is also prevalent in the general population which suggests that we may have a lot of our students and/or staff falling ill. Now is a good time to revisit the immunisation status of your child to ensure everything is up to date.

It is important for families to have a backup plan if their child is home for a period of time and especially important that students who are sick are not sent to school as it puts all the other children and teachers at risk.

While away from St Thomas's School during term one I missed the lovely interactions I have with students and families at the gate in the morning and the wonderful staff we have here.

It is a pleasure to be back.

Michael Maher
Principal



To all the family members and teachers who are helping at our Year 8 & Year 6 camps this term – thank you!

Upcoming Events

May

- 11 Junior Assembly (M2 hosting)
9.45am – 10.30am (school hall)
Senior Assembly (M6 hosting)
11.45am – 12.30pm (school hall)
- 15 Board of Trustees Meeting
(Staffroom 6.30 p.m.)
- 16 Y7 – Y8 Mountain to Sea Programme
- 18 Bay Suburbs Football (Yr 5/6)
- 19 Pink Shirt Day
- 19 Year 2 Trip to Auckland Museum
- 24&25 Y6 Camp – Carey Park
- 24 Eastern Zone Girls Football (Y7&8)
- 24 Y3 Tiritiri Matangi Trip (M2/M1)
- 25 Y3 Tiritiri Matangi Trip (M3/M1)
- 26 Formal Assembly 9.45am – 10.30am
- 30 Eastern Zone Boys Football (Yr 7)

June

- 01 Eastern Zone Boys Football (Yr 8)
- 02 Junior Assembly (J2 hosting)
9.45am – 10.30am (school hall)
Senior Assembly (S9 & S10 hosting)
11.45am – 12.30pm (school hall)

Cybersafety – Do you know what your child gets up to online?

Schools regularly receive communication from concerned parents expressing their distress over online content or friendship issues that are affecting their child. Usually, these incidents occur out of school hours (at home) and on social media platforms.

St Thomas's School's WIFI network is managed by N4L (Network for Learning) which ensures access to social media sites is blocked and inappropriate content is filtered. Despite these efforts, with increasing frequency we see students using their own data allowance to access content from personal devices brought to school.

While student wellbeing is a major focus for schools, it is very difficult to unpack these issues because of the nature of social media, the devices being personally owned, and the issues happening while students are at home, usually in the evenings or over the weekend. Additional to this, it is important for all parents to be aware, that the minimum age to open an account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok and Snapchat is 13. YouTube requires account holders to be 18, however a 13-year-old can sign up with a parent's permission.

Most primary school children will only turn 13 at the end of their Year 8 year. However, schools are seeing serious issues with students in year levels as young as Year 4.

As a parent, if you choose to allow your child to engage via social media before they are 13 years old, it is vital that you have complete visibility over what they get up to online. It is also important that you take responsibility for teaching your children how to manage themselves online and what to do should issues arise. Agreeing on rules and guidelines for internet and app usage is a good idea.

The fall-out from online incidents and general social media issues, including cyberbullying, inappropriate and late night messaging, drastically impacts teaching and learning time within most schools.

We have recently had Constable Gordon in to talk to our senior students about Cybersafety and the responsibilities of being online. We appreciate the support from parents and caregivers to reinforce this message.

To work together as a team towards online safety, parents are encouraged to consider how the issues mentioned might affect their families. Netsafe has put together the following tips for parents and whānau to begin the conversation.

SEVEN STEPS TO HELP YOU

The seven steps from Netsafe's [Online Safety Parent Toolkit](#) are designed to enhance your digital parenting knowledge and have been developed with parents in mind.

1. **Understand:** Read about the potential online risks, challenges and sometimes illegal behaviour young people face to understand what may happen
2. **Learn:** Ask your child about what they do, how they use devices and who they talk to learn about their activities. Check in regularly to see what has changed
3. **Explore:** Take the time yourself to explore the sites, apps and technologies your child uses to improve your knowledge and understand their experience
4. **Agree:** Create a family code with your child to agree on what they can do online including sites to visit, appropriate behaviours, privacy settings and limits
5. **Teach:** Recognise each child has unique needs, but some online safety concepts are universal. Start by teaching yours the Five tips to help your child thrive
6. **Model:** Be a good example to your child. Make sure you role model the sort of behaviours you want to see your child use online and offline
7. **Plan:** Make a plan so everybody knows what to do if something goes wrong and where you will be able to get advice and support in challenging times

People Doing Awesome Things

- Miriam Gwyn, our amazing STEAM Department leader, has recently started auditioning students for places in our upcoming School Production (showing at Selwyn Theatre in Week 9 of Term 3) "Bumps in the Night". Putting a production together is a huge undertaking and we are grateful to have Miriam's talent and prior experience in putting productions together to make it a reality in 2023. We can't wait to see the show and more information will be sent out to the community closer to the time.
- Our Future Problem Solving (FPS) teams have, yet again, received awards for their latest submissions into the Term 1 topic of 'Cleaning up space junk'. Our FPS Gifted and Talented Programme is run by Mandy MacDonald who we have been lucky enough to have on our staff for the last 3 years. This term Mandy is working with our teams on three different topics:
 - Saving the Great Barrier Reef using synthetically grown coral (Years 5&6)
 - Saving the Orangutans in Sumatra with the help of drones (Year 7)
 - Effects of illegally imported e-waste into Lagos, Nigeria (Year 8)
- Our Year 5 Team Leader, Nicky King (M6 KI), heads up our PB4L team who have been working hard to get PB4L initiatives up and running in the school. In Term 1, we had a very successful focus on manners and we all noticed the improvement in our students' Tikanga Pai as a result. This term Nicky is leading the PB4L team in implementing a focus on our school values – Respect, Resilience and Responsibility. This new initiative sees students gathering house points tokens which will be cashed in by the winning house for a special mufti day just for them! Students are also looking forward to a school-wide afternoon of activities when our whole school target of 100,000 house points is reached.
- Joyce Bolland, Elodie Thiriez and Lydie Faure, three of our fabulous parents, have been instrumental in helping to set up a new Walking School Bus as volunteer coordinators. Soon we will be introducing a 'Park and Ride' service to our Walking School Bus which will further help reduce traffic congestion at the school gate. Without this volunteer support, we wouldn't be able to run the Walking School Bus. For more information, contact the school office.



Winter Illnesses and Staff Shortages

As we come into the winter months and cold/flu bugs become more prevalent, it is likely that we could experience staff shortages as many other schools already have.

In the event of a number of classroom teachers being absent, the leadership team works through a process to keep the school operating as normally as possible. Our priority is to avoid classroom and/or school closures and measures taken may include:

- Relief teachers in classrooms as would normally happen when a staff member is sick
- In the event of a reliever shortage - using our non-classroom teachers such as our SENCo, literacy support teachers, ESOL teachers and STEAM teachers to take over classrooms until teachers return
- In the event of insufficient suitable staff being available:
 - Splitting classes across a year level
 - Using staff in shared spaces (Years 4-8 only) to 'monitor' both classes
 - Closing individual classes or year levels
- In the event of widespread prolonged staff absences - closing the school

The above measures will be rolled out in a scaled manner depending on the situation we find ourselves in. Closing the school will obviously be a last resort and will only be considered after we have exhausted all our resources and/or our low staffing levels have become a health and safety concern for our students and a risk for our staff to manage.

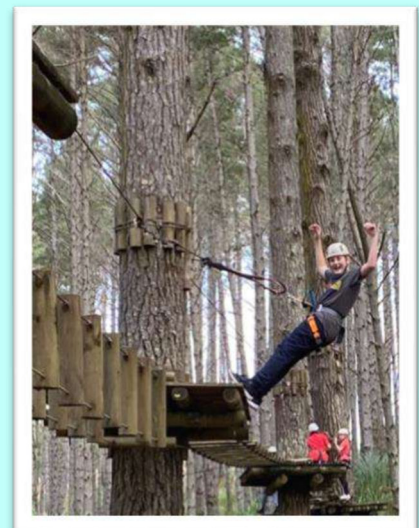
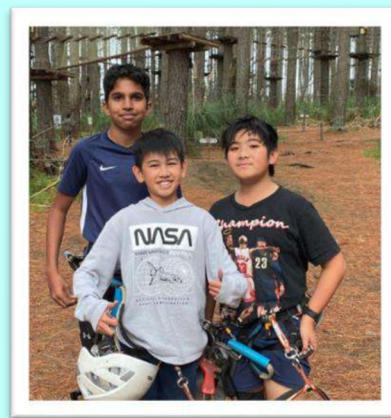
Year 3

The Year 3 students enjoyed a fantastic day at Kohimarama Beach. We explored our local environment and celebrated the end of a great term. Thank you to all the parents that joined us and supported our trip.



Year 8

On Tuesday 2 May, Year 8 students went to Tree Adventures in Woodhill Forest where they challenged themselves on a range of suspended obstacles and zip lines. The day tested balance and confidence, with some students unleashing their inner monkey! Students accomplished different courses through the treetops, ending with an exhilarating flying fox ride to bring them swiftly back down to earth.





Walking School Bus News

We now have Walking School Buses (WSB) to St Thomas's School!

Do you want to reduce the congestion outside the school, help the environment, meet new people, teach your tamariki about road safety and incorporate exercise into your daily routine? Then, the perfect solution is the Walking School Bus (WSB).

Currently there are two routes operating:

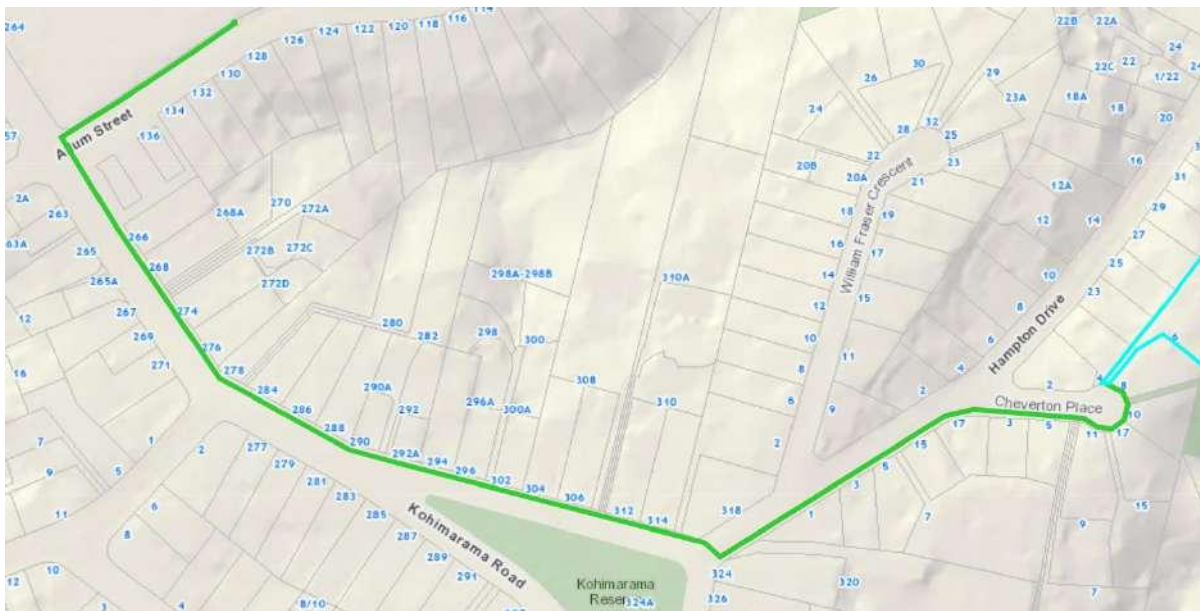
Route A: Cheverton Place/Hampton Drive WSB Drive on a **Thursday** (see map below)

Departure/bus stop 1: Corner of Cheverton Place/Hampton Drive at 8.15am. To join the Cheverton Place/Hampton Drive WSB, please email **Elodie Thiriez**: elodiemevel84@yahoo.fr

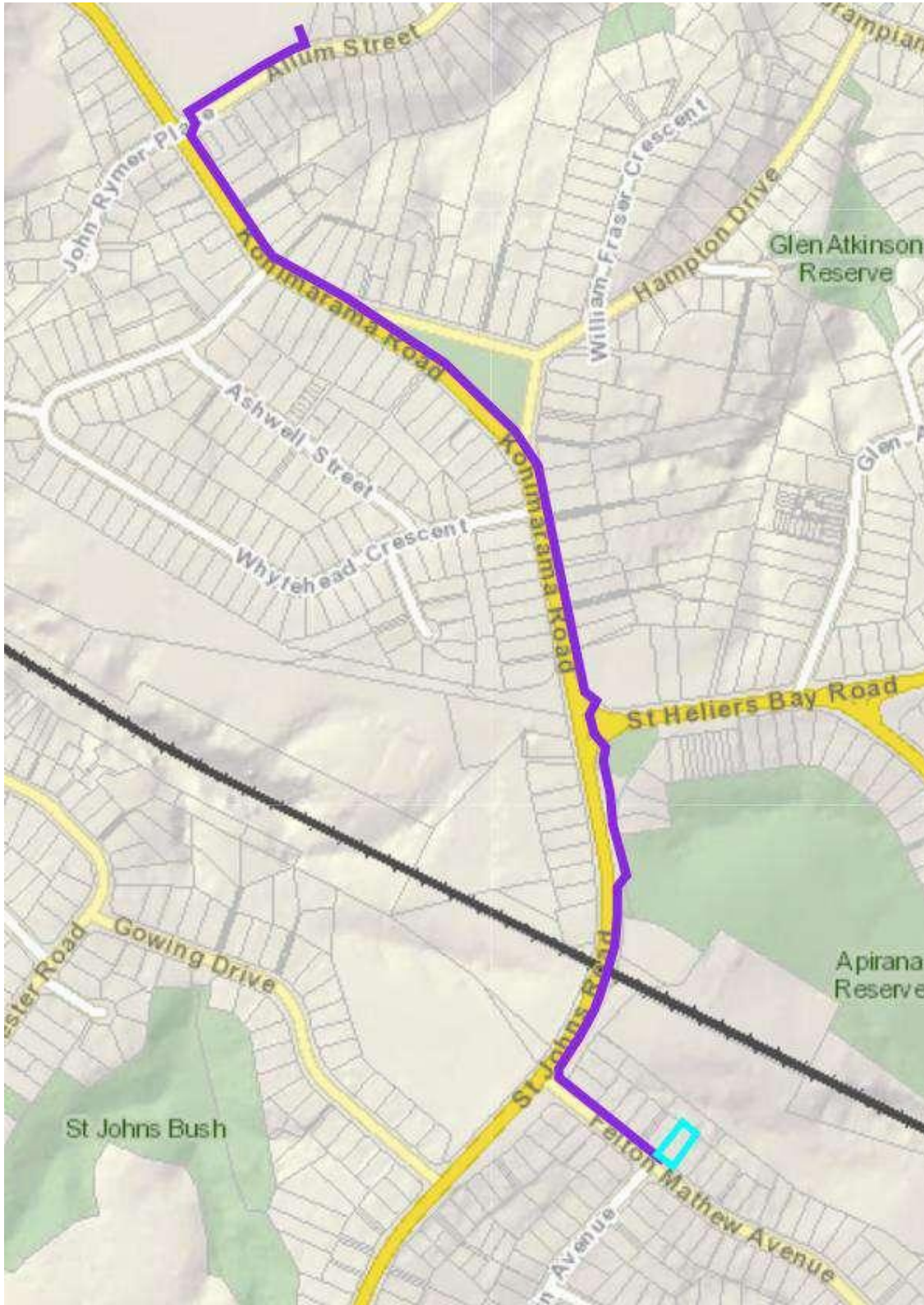
Route B: Felton Matthew Ave/ Sunhill Garden Centre/ St Johns Rd/Kohimarama Rd WSB on a **Monday/ Tuesday/ Friday**. (see map below)

Departure/bus stop 1: Corner of Felton Mathew Ave and St Johns Road at 8.15am. **Bus Stop 2**: Sunhill Garden Centre at 8.20am for those parking and dropping off students to meet the WSB. (First run commencing Friday Week 2 – 5th May). If you're interested in joining this WSB, please email **Joyce Bolland**: jyncheah@gmail.com

Route A: Cheverton Place/Hampton Drive WSB



Route B: Felton Matthew Ave/St Johns Rd/Kohimarama Rd WSB.





Kind A-Thon

A-Thon's are the PTA's biggest fundraiser of the year, raising \$17,751 last year! All money raised this year will go towards our 2023 fundraising goal being a new full-sized outdoor basketball court and upgrading existing courts.

Our A-Thon this year is based around kindness practice into a fun game where each student will get sponsored to complete as many kindness tasks as they can. The kindness task will vary in length and topic depending on what year level they are in.

The Kind-A-Thon will happen from Monday 1st May to Wednesday 31st May. Sponsorship collection will take place during weeks 7 of term 2 from Tuesday 6th June – Friday 9th June.

There will be a class and an individual prize at the end of the Kind-A-Thon. Spot prizes will be awarded each day of collection week.

WATCH OUT FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

- Calendar Art – collected in June
- Musical Showcase – End of term 2



REMINDERS

Gorilla Bags:

Book through Kindo now - \$50 goes to the school for each bag sold.

Second Hand Uniforms:

Donate your preloved uniform for us to on-sell. Please drop off at the office.



Why not consider joining the PTA in 2023? It's fun, rewarding and most of all, benefits the school and our Tamariki. Contact us on the email below, or come along to our next monthly meeting to find out what we do. Next meeting **7pm Wednesday 7th June, 7pm in the school staffroom.**

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



MT WELLINGTON AREA

WE'RE HIRING!

Get paid to have fun!

WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU ON OUR TEAM!

We are looking for fun, friendly staff who love to work with kids for our before and after school care and holiday programmes! Training provided.

For more information, chat to our coordinator or visit kellyclub.co.nz/jobs

Send your CV and cover letter to
ryan@kellyclub.co.nz