

29 May 2026

## Principal's Message

Tēnā Koutou Katoa

We had a wonderful turnout of parents at our information evening on *Smartphone Free Childhood*, presented by Rob Cope. It was highly informative about the risks our children face online. Those attending were quite shocked by what young people can be exposed to - either accidentally, through curiosity, or via friends' devices. The fact that adults disguise themselves as young people and lurk in online gaming rooms to entrap unsuspecting children is frightening. Many of the games mentioned by Rob are certainly played by our students at home.

The impact of smartphones on the brain development of young children is significant and can lead to a lack of self-regulation, an inability to focus on topics for longer periods of time, language delays, and a lack of resilience. Essentially, research indicates that there is no benefit to children using smartphones, and there is increasing evidence pointing to their harmful effects on young children. Some key messages from the talk included: Never allow your children to use smartphones in their bedroom or bathroom. If they enjoy games such as Minecraft, these should be played in shared spaces like the lounge, where adults are present, never in bedrooms. Do not let technology companies (or your child!) dictate smartphone usage; you, as the parent, are in control of what happens in your home.

If you must provide a phone for your child, consider a 'dumb phone' that does not have internet access. If you thought there was a 1 in 500 chance of your child encountering an adult predator in your local playground, would you let them go there alone? If not, then why allow them to roam the internet freely and out of your sight? They are far more at risk online than in the physical world.

Ngā mihi nui  
**Michael Maher**  
**Principal**



**A big thank you to our Moth Pod teams for earning St Thomas's the Top School title for 2026 - fantastic work!**

### Upcoming Dates

#### June

- 01 King's Birthday Holiday
- 04 Yr 2 Zoo Trip
- 11 Māori Whānau Hui 3.15pm
- 13 PTA Quiz Night 7pm  
(School Hall)
- 15 Yr 7&8 House Assembly  
(Kohimarama) 12pm to 12.30pm  
(School Hall)
- 16 Board of Trustees Meeting  
6.30pm (Staffroom)
- 19 AIMS Movie Night 5.30pm to 7pm  
(School Hall)
- 22 Yr 4-6 Assembly (M4 Hosting)  
11.45am-12.30pm (School Hall)
- 22 Eastern Zone Hockey
- 23 Bay Suburb Netball
- 26 Yr 1-3 Assembly 9.15am  
(School Hall)

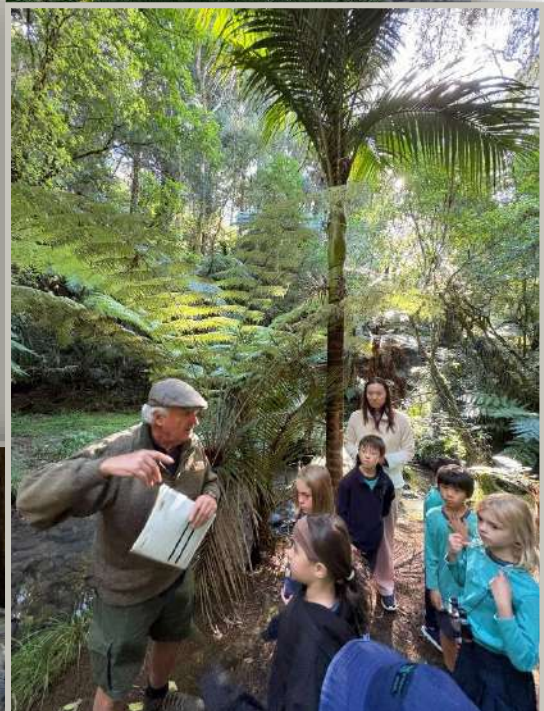
#### July

- 03 Last Day of Term 2
- 03 Matariki Celebration
- 20 First Day of Term 3
- 22 Cross Country Carnival 9.30am

## **A Day of Science and Exploration**

The Year 4 students recently headed off on an exciting adventure to Tōtara Park, where they transformed into stream scientists for the day! With testing kits and curious minds, they explored the stream to discover how healthy the water was. Students tested oxygen levels, checked the water temperature, and measured pH levels like true scientists. They also searched carefully for tiny stream critters, learning how these fascinating creatures can help tell us if a stream is healthy.

Students also enjoyed a bush walk through the beautiful native surroundings, taking in the sights and sounds of nature. Special shout out to the Year 4 whanau for giving up their time to help out on the trip, the kids and their teachers are very grateful.



## St Thomas's School Wins Top School in Local Moth Pod Competition

On Wednesday, 27 May evening St Thomas's School hosted the prizegiving for the 2026 Orakei Board Moth Pod competition. With many schools competing, we were delighted to be awarded the top school for the most vines and pods picked thanks to the hard work and effort of our amazing students and dedicated parents. Special shout out to the Moth Pod Squad and Pod Patrol teams who were specifically recognised for their efforts, and to Ava McBeth for her engaging presentation on last year's winners prize trip to Tiritiri Matangi Island.



## Young Leaders in Action at Wenderholm Park

A team of four Year 8 students recently attended the Environmental Sustainability Orienteering Challenge at Wenderholm Regional Park. Competing alongside over 90 teams from across Auckland, they had a fantastic day - successfully collecting all available points by navigating the course and solving environmental challenges. Two more events are scheduled in local regional parks this year for Years 6-8. If this sounds like something your child would enjoy, please contact Alison Snell for more information.



## Mana Ora Youth Climate Resilience Day

The Enviro Leaders recently attended this event run by Auckland Council. With a focus on trying to restore the carbon cycle we came away with a lot of learning and more wonderings. Did you know that the total amount of carbon on earth is constant? It is the same amount now as it was when the dinosaurs walked the Earth; it is simply recycled and moved between different storage reservoirs. What has changed over time is the reservoirs that carbon is stored in. With the interference of humans burning fossil fuels and cutting down forests, more carbon than ever before is being stored in the atmosphere resulting in those extra carbons acting as atmosphere blankets and keeping in earth's heat. Watch this space St Thomas's - we have a lot of ideas to put into play!



## **Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Updates for 2027**

Schools across Aotearoa New Zealand are currently preparing for significant changes to assessment and reporting requirements introduced by the Ministry of Education. These changes aim to provide parents and whānau with clearer, more consistent information about student progress and achievement. We have been carefully reviewing these changes to ensure any transition is well-tested, reliable, and supports high-quality reporting for our families.

### **What is SMART?**

SMART (Student Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Tool) is a new national online assessment tool for students in Years 3–10. It is gradually replacing e-asTTle and supports assessment in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

### **SMART is designed to:**

- provide clearer and more consistent assessment information
- support teachers to identify next learning steps
- monitor student progress over time
- help parents and whānau better understand student achievement.

Importantly, SMART supports teacher judgement rather than replacing it. Teachers will continue to use classroom observations, conversations, and learning tasks alongside assessment data to build a full picture of each learner.

### **New Reporting Requirements**

Since introducing the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum in 2025, we have been reporting against the new curriculum progressions, online in real-time through HERO, including Overall Teacher Judgements at the end of Terms 2 and 4.

From 2026, all New Zealand schools are required to report student progress against the refreshed English and Mathematics curriculum areas. Reports must continue to be provided to parents and whānau at least twice yearly.

The updated reporting requirements include:

- progress descriptors for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
- visual representations of progress over time
- information explaining how judgements are made
- assessment information supporting reporting decisions
- attendance information included within reports.

### **Future Changes at St Thomas's School**

In 2027, we plan to introduce SMART alongside an updated HERO reporting system currently in its final stages of development.

Throughout 2026, we will:

- trial and evaluate SMART
- ensure HERO integrates effectively with the new requirements
- test systems thoroughly
- ensure there are no gaps or disruptions in reporting to families.

While some schools have already begun using SMART, we believe it is important to implement these changes carefully and responsibly to ensure systems are stable, reliable, and meaningful for student learning and reporting. We will continue to keep our community updated as these developments progress.

## New Ministry of Education Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance is essential for student learning, wellbeing, social development, and long-term success. The Ministry of Education has recently strengthened expectations around attendance monitoring and follow-up for all New Zealand schools.

As part of these requirements, schools must now monitor attendance more closely than in previous years.

### What Does This Mean for Families?

Under the Ministry's attendance framework, schools are required to monitor attendance patterns and contact families when a student has been absent for 5 days or more within a term, even when absences are explained.



### What Happens When Attendance Becomes a Concern?

The Ministry now requires schools to follow a staged attendance process, which may include:

- contact from teachers or office staff
- check-ins with families to understand attendance barriers
- attendance support plans
- ongoing monitoring and communication
- referrals to external attendance services where needed.

This process is compulsory for schools as part of the nationwide focus on improving attendance outcomes.

### Why You May Hear from Us More Often

We understand that many absences are genuine and unavoidable due to illness, appointments, or family circumstances. However, schools are still required to track and follow up attendance patterns under the new guidelines.

As a result, families may hear from teachers or the school office more regularly than in the past as we work together to support positive attendance habits and student success.

We greatly appreciate the support and understanding of our whānau as we implement these new expectations.

## Uniform Reminder

A reminder to please name all school uniforms, especially sweatshirts. If you have purchased second-hand items, please ensure they are relabelled with your child's name.

## STS News

To watch the 44<sup>th</sup> episode of the series, click [HERE](#).

To watch the 45<sup>th</sup> episode of the series, click [HERE](#).

To watch the 46<sup>th</sup> episode of the series, click [HERE](#).

## Please See Our Website for Details About:

### Clubs and activities:

<https://www.stthomas.school.nz/clubs-and-activities/>

### Community notices:

<https://www.stthomas.school.nz/community-notices/>

### School holiday programme:

<https://www.stthomas.school.nz/school-holiday-programmes/>

### Music lessons right at

**school** 🎵 Personalised lessons designed to support your child's confidence, focus, and learning — with no extra travel for families. 🙌 **Enrol**

**here:** <https://musiceducation.co.nz/pages/mis-enrolment>

**Piano, Guitar, Bass  
Drums & Violin Lessons**

**RIGHT AT SCHOOL!**

Why not give it a go this term?

Help your child boost essential learning skills that make a real difference in the classroom.

All with zero extra travel for families

Scan the QR code to enrol

0800 89 39 39  
Or call us!

Learning music supports all areas of learning through developing

- Confidence & Creativity
- Concentration & Memory
- Discipline & Focus
- and so much more!

[musiceducation.co.nz](https://musiceducation.co.nz)

# ST THOMAS'S INTERMEDIATE

## What's happening in our Intermediate School

### YEAR 8 MOUNTAINS TO SEA EXCURSION: SELWYN BUSH

On Monday May 4th, the Year 8 students headed to Selwyn Bush for an environmental field day centered on waterway health and ecological stewardship.

Led by the Mountains to Sea team, students engaged in scientific data collection including chemical water quality testing, eDNA sampling to detect local biodiversity, and macroinvertebrate surveys to assess the stream's biological health. The hands-on learning extended to land conservation as students worked alongside Turfa from the Pourewa Community Hub to remove invasive weeds. Through these diverse activities, the cohort gained a practical understanding of kaitiakitanga, successfully bridging the gap between scientific theory and active environmental protection.

The final stage of their Mountains to Sea journey is creating an action plan and carrying it out.

So far we have seen a fantastic activity motivating students to pick up rubbish around our school, and have had some students recognised in our community for picking up rubbish at our local beaches!



### YEAR 7 WILLIAM PIKE: WHITE WATER RAFTING

This year, 32 year 7 students are taking part in the William Pike Challenge. The challenge requires students to complete 5 outdoor adventures, a passion project and 20 hours of community service.

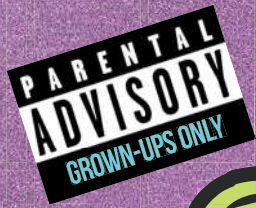


One of these outdoor adventures took place on 12 May at the Wero Whitewater park. Students put on wetsuits and lifejackets before being given a lesson in safe river crossing, then bravely navigating across the rapids, solo, in pairs, and finally in teams of 4. Then it was into the rafts for some whitewater rafting!! Students were in groups of 8 with a professional guide. They were taught how to paddle as a team, steer the rafts and navigate white water, before heading up the mechanical ramp and down the rapids – over and over again!!



Finally, everyone got the chance to jump into the river, float on the current, and safely make their way down stream. It was a fabulous adventure and a super fun day was had by all.

Don't Miss Out, Tickets On Sale Now!



# NOT YOUR GRANDMA'S BINGO



MUSICAL BINGO • DJ • ONLINE AUCTION

## Saturday, 13 June

7pm-12am @ the St Thomas's School Hall

### Book Tickets & Pre-Order Food Via Kindo Now!

**\$30**  
PER TICKET



Scan the QR code or visit

**[StThomas.School.nz/pta/events](https://StThomas.School.nz/pta/events)**

for all the details on our parent's night

**Online Auction:** Details to come. Keep an eye out for more!



**Contact:** Ian Palmquist  
**Phone:** 021 0803 3666  
**Email:** stthomas@kellyclub.co.nz  
**Website:** kellyclub.co.nz/st-thomas



## KELLY CLUB ST THOMAS'S UPDATE

### What's been happening...

We turned up the tempo to whip up some delicious microphone cupcakes, dodged, ducked, and danced through a high-energy game of Powerball, and got totally in tune with our crafty side, making DIY harmonicas and rain sticks. It has been a week that truly struck a chord, full of rockin' creativity and fast-paced rhythm!



**OSCAR PROGRAMME SUBSIDIES AVAILABLE!**  
\*Conditions apply

### YOUR KIDS' HOME AWAY FROM HOME!

★★★★★

Rated 4.44 stars out of 5 by our parents in our 2023 national survey.

**BOOK NOW** [www.kellyclub.co.nz](http://www.kellyclub.co.nz)

### What's happening next week!

		<b>THEME: Kids Choice!</b>				
	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	Weekly Activities Plan Kelly Club St Thomas's
7:00 - 8:15 am		Nerf War & Structured Free Time	Origami & Structured Free Time	Card Games & Structured Free Time	Forts & Structured Free Time	
8:15 - 8:30 am		Game: Electric Piggy	Game: Bob the Weasel	Game: Infinity Tag	Game: Kids Trivia	
3:00 - 3:10 pm		Sign In & Free Time	Sign In & Free Time	Sign In & Free Time	Sign In & Free Time	
3:10 - 3:30 pm		Intro & Afternoon Tea Sammies & Fruit	Intro & Afternoon Tea Pizza & Fruit	Intro & Afternoon Tea Sammies & Fruit	Intro & Afternoon Tea Fairy Bread & Fruit	
3:30 - 3:45 pm		Game: Octopus	Game: Finch	Game: Red light, green light	Game: 4 Corners	
SENIORS 3:45 - 4:30 pm		<b>GAME</b> Dodgeball 	<b>SPORT</b> Football 	<b>BAKING</b> Brownies 	<b>CRAFT</b> Necklaces and Wristbands 	
JUNIORS 3:45 - 4:30 pm		<b>CRAFT</b> Necklaces and Wristbands 	<b>GAME</b> Dodgeball 	<b>BAKING</b> Brownies 	<b>SPORT</b> Football 	
4:30 - 4:40 pm		Tidy Up	Tidy Up	Tidy Up	Tidy Up	
4:40 - 5:15 pm		Playground	Playground	Playground	Playground	
5:15 - 5:30 pm		Homework & Quiet Time	Homework & Quiet Time	Homework & Quiet Time	Homework & Quiet Time	
5:30 - 6:00 pm		Snack Time Oreos	Snack Time Crackers	Snack Time Muesli Bars	Snack Time Popcorn	

E: stthomas@kellyclub.co.nz

[kellyclub.co.nz/stthomas](http://kellyclub.co.nz/stthomas)

P: 021 080 33666



**BOOK ONLINE NOW AT** [www.kellyclub.co.nz](http://www.kellyclub.co.nz)

# Programming Classes at St Thomas School



Join us at St Thomas School for fun and interactive classes designed especially **for children aged 6 to 13** to enhance their skills in mathematics and programming. Perfect for students of all levels!

## Event Details:



**Free Trial classes Available!**



**Location:** Cooking Room

## Class Time:

**Every Friday  
3:00 PM- 5:00 PM:**

**For \$44.95 per week**

## LEARN MORE:



## Contact us:

☎ 021 245 1839

✉ [northshore@skillsamurai.com](mailto:northshore@skillsamurai.com)

🌐 [skillsamurai.co.nz/st-thomas](http://skillsamurai.co.nz/st-thomas)