



Board Of Trustees Newsletter Term 1, 2020

Welcome to 2020, a huge year for the school as we look forward to the opening of our brand new classroom block and library. To all our returning students, teachers, parents and whanau we hope you had a great summer break and have got back into the swing of school. We would also like to extend a very warm welcome into the St Thomas's community to our new teachers and families.

It has been a busy start to the year with the Year 6 camp, the annual School Picnic organised by our awesome PTA, a 2020 Parent Information Evening giving our Junior School parents more information on our Learning Through Play philosophy and Year 7&8 parents were informed about the opportunities for their children and what learning looks like in their learning spaces. Plus we held our first welcome Powhiri on Monday this week for our new students, teachers and families where we were wowed by an amazing performance from our ever expanding Kapa Haka group.

As part of our aim to keep you more informed and engaged with goings on at the school this is our first ever Board Newsletter and in it we will cover what the Board does and also provide some updates on the Board's areas of responsibility.

What does the Board Of Trustees do?

We get this question a lot. The Board has overall responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of the school with the primary objective of improving student achievement. The board also oversees the schools finances, curriculum, property, staffing and health and safety. Each of these topics are discussed at each monthly Board Meeting. Anyone is welcome to attend these public meetings. The dates and also the minutes of each meeting can be found on the website <https://www.stthomas.school.nz/bot/>

The Board consists of the Principal, an elected staff representative and 5 elected members from the St Thomas's community. This ensures there is a community voice in how the school operates.

The mission and goals for the school are set out in a 3 year Strategic Plan which is submitted to the Ministry of Education each year. The St Thomas's Strategic Plan that has just been signed off by the Board can be found on our website. The Board will keep you up to date with progress against this Strategic Plan.

What the Board does not do is get involved in the day to day running of the school. Once the strategic direction is agreed the annual operational plan to bring this to life and execute is up to the Principal and his Leadership team.

Student Achievement

The Board has just reviewed what is known as the 'Analysis Of Variance' report. This is submitted to the Ministry of Education and it identifies the progress in 2019 and areas of focus for 2020. There were some great results in 2019 particularly in Maths within our Year 7&8 cohort. Other notable highlights were reading improvements for our Maori and Asian students, significant reading progress by our junior readers attending literacy support, learning progressions rolled out school wide and St Thomas's achieving at a higher level than "Schools Like Us" in e-asTTle testing across reading, writing and maths.

Congratulations to all our students who sat the ICAS Assessments during 2019. St Thomas's students received 6 High Distinctions and 34 Distinctions. Details for this year's testing was sent earlier this week on FlexiBuzz.

In 2020 our key areas of focus are improving our Pasifika students' performance, writing amongst our boy students, raising achievement for our Maori students in Maths and maintaining our Year 7&8 Maths achievement levels.

Health & Safety

As you will have noticed there is work going on at the school to upgrade the perimeter and pool fencing. This was identified as a risk to our students and you would have seen a lot of work making sure the school site is safe and secure. This is due to be completed by the end of Term 1.

Property

1. Without doubt the new 12 classroom building is the focus for 2020. To date there have been no delays and this is scheduled for completion by the middle of the year. Stay tuned for details of a grand opening, most likely during Term 3. Here is a recent drone photo plus a reminder of what the completed building will look like.



2. There will soon be a new UV and Weather Proof canopy installed covering the entire junior playground pictured on the left below. This will be a great addition and provide our youngest students with all year round access to their playground, rain or shine. This work is due to get underway this term and will look similar to this picture on the right.



3. At the February Board meeting the Board approved funding for a new covered deck outside the Hall. Apart from providing additional usable space in that area what this will mean is the children can get to and from the Hall under cover from almost anywhere in the school and without having to go outside the school grounds onto Allum Street or cross the staff car park.

Finances - School Donations

We have now closed the books on 2019 and one area that was noted as being behind expectations was our level of Parent Donations. The school received around 70% of parent donations which is considered low when compared to similar schools.

The Ministry of Education Operations grant meets the basic needs of the school but we seek the support of parents and caregivers in ensuring there is extra funding available to enhance our programmes and enrich our students' learning experience. Your generous donations also help to provide the funding necessary for an additional teacher in the Junior School, teacher aides, special needs staff, ESOL staff, sports coordinator and to provide a school counsellor. Without the generosity of your donations it makes it difficult to continue to fund all these really beneficial extra programmes.

Board Of Trustees Chair & Deputy Chair

The first Board Meeting of the year was held on Monday 17 February. The first item on the agenda of any given year must be to elect the Board Chair. Richard Klipin stepped down as Chair and was thanked for his time and efforts at the helm of the Board. He remains on the Board as an elected Trustee. Michael Morton, parent to Coco (Year 5) and Ivy (Year 2) was chosen as new Board Chair. The Board also voted in a Deputy Chair, Georgia Houlker, parent to Toby (Year 3) and Max (Year 1).

We need your help

There are numerous Grants and Funding available for New Zealand Schools. These can range from sporting grants to academic related funding to community initiative funding. These can really help us improve what we offer our kids by providing the additional funding required. The hardest part is working out what is available and how we gain access to it.

In order to maximise this opportunity we are looking for someone in the St Thomas's community to work alongside the Board to research and identify potential funding and then to help complete any necessary applications.

This could have a huge impact for our school so if you or anyone you know would be perfect for this please let the Board know by emailing us at BOT@stthomas.school.nz

Thanks and have a great Term 1,

From your St Thomas's Board Of Trustees,

Michael Morton (Chair)

Michael Maher (Principal)

Georgia Houlker (Deputy Chair)

Claire Fromow (Staff Representative and Deputy Principal)

Richard Klipin

Claudine Crabtree

Jake Shand