



ST THOMAS'S SCHOOL  
KOHIMARAMA, AUCKLAND

## Newsletter

1 May 2020

This week we opened for our first students to return to our school site. We had 18 students each day in 3 bubbles with teachers and teacher aides. Coming from our own family bubbles, returning to a large school building and engaging with multiple colleagues was a challenging experience.



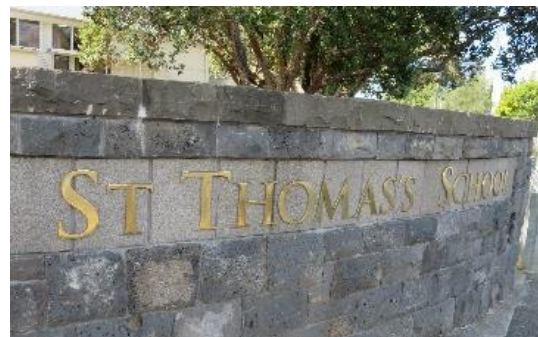
Parents were not allowed into the school and students were signed in at the school gate each morning and the gate was locked at 9am. Social distancing, handwashing and hand sanitiser use was enforced across the school site. Desks were removed from rooms to allow students and staff to social distance and cleaning of high traffic areas was carried out regularly throughout the day.

The administration area had screens set up at the front office counter and contact tracing stations set up for everyone to sign in. As staff manoeuvred their way around each other in offices and classrooms it was a very strange feeling which took most of us several days to adapt to.

This week has allowed staff to put systems in place and to prepare us for a full return to school whenever that is allowed. When that time comes it will be challenging for some families and staff as we all get used to a new way of operating. Schools are social hubs of a community and teachers teach best when they are working closely with colleagues and students in a tightknit environment. Social distancing is challenging to good teaching practice however this is our new reality for now. When we can safely return to some sort of normality in our schools the better it will be for all our learners, staff and wider community.

### Property Update

Our builders returned to work this week and they now control all our front staff carpark. Access to the school hall is closed from the carpark. A temporary path will be created to allow access through the back of the hall and a new temporary gate will be installed on Allum St for parents and students to use when the before and after school care programme is allowed to restart.



### **Canopy over Junior Playground**

Yesterday the builders drilled holes which will be filled with concrete today to support the structure for our canopy. Protective fencing is installed around the junior playground which will be off limits for several weeks until the components arrive, and the canopy is installed. We expect that this will be completed sometime this term.



### **Partnering with the Education Review Office**

To gain some insights as to how students are coping with learning remotely and to check about students wellbeing, St Thomas's School is working with the Education Review Office (ERO) and 70 other schools to gather feedback from our student community. Once we have sorted out the final details with ERO we will gather feedback from our students and use this to inform our programmes going forward. ERO will publish the combined results in a paper which will not identify any individual school but will share some common insights from across NZ.

### **Disaster Response and Recovery**

As families come to grips with the continuing fall out from Covid-19 I have included a piece from Professor Carol Mutch (from the University of Auckland), who is a researcher in disaster response and recovery.

- You are not super-human. While your personal losses might not seem as extreme as those from an earthquake or tsunami, you will have lost your ideas of safety and security - as well as some of your freedoms and regular activities. You might have been ill, know someone who has been ill or even know someone who has died from the virus. You are allowed to take time to process what has happened and to reflect or grieve as necessary.
- This is shaping up to be a very stressful time. Sooner or later, you will need to stop and take stock of the emotional and physical toll. Some of you will bury yourselves in your work; others will find that the strain of managing multiple expectations is too much. Everyone will have different strengths and limits. Don't be quick to judge. Each of you will need to find your own coping strategies and support mechanisms.
- Don't be too hard on yourself or others. Reach out for help and be compassionate towards your colleagues. Because we are all in our bubbles, you may not be aware of all the issues in someone else's life. These events might bring up issues from the past, meaning some people are struggling in ways that you might not always know about.

*Kind Regards,  
Michael*

### **Related Learning Task Worksheets for Year 1-4 Students**

If you have a child/children in Year 1-4 and you need to have a hard copy of the worksheets these will be available for you to collect from outside the front office on **Monday 3rd May 9.30-2.30**. Each pack of worksheets will be placed in a zip lock bag and put into a year group box. Please make sure you only take one zip lock bag per child.

### **School Library Opening Hours**

Our school library has been open this week for parents and their children to choose some new books. This has been very successful, and it has been great to see families coming in to exchange old reading material

with new. We will continue to open the library for Monday and Tuesday of next week, and open days beyond this if the demand is still high. **If you wish to visit the library, you must book a time slot during which to visit via the following link.**

<https://www.schoolinterviews.co.nz/code?code=dab2h>

**The event code is: dab2h**

Please do not just turn up to the library, no one will be allowed to enter the library unless you have booked a slot and you will have 15 minutes to choose your books and exit the library.

On your visit to the library please return any readers or books which you received before lockdown. Pop them in a plastic bag with your child's name and room number on the bag and leave in the marked bins in the library.

If you do not wish to visit the library, we would still like to have all our readers from pre-lockdown returned and will have a bin set up outside the office door where you can deposit them. Please write your child's name and room number on the returning plastic bag.