

# Thorndon School Newsletter

40/2007

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20 December 2007  
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A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a thunderstorm, and we all go through it together.

Garrison Keillor

## Action List

Have a great Christmas and a wonderful holiday.



Kia ora

Well, last week was the penultimate newsletter after all and here is a shortish one to finish the year.

Reports first of all. The sorting and collating of 250 reports and all the associated information has been a much bigger job than we had anticipated so they were not posted until last night. They should be with you on Friday together with class placements and other information about the new school year.

We said farewell to our Year 8 pupils at the Leavers Dinner on Tuesday evening and yesterday we held our final assembly at which we presented our Principal's Award and Sports Award. These awards recognise not just overall excellence but are also awarded on the basis of attitude, cooperation and influence within the whole school.

The winner of the Principal's Award was Kaylie Potaka from Room 5 and the winner of the Sports Award was Celine Antipas from Room 7. Congratulations to both of them. They have both made significant contributions to the school culture. They take home cups and their names are displayed on the new honours board in the foyer of the hall.

We also presented certificates for what, for want of a better expression, we are calling citizenship. These went to pupils who have contributed in a range of ways over the school year, taking on responsibility, showing initiative, and helping to make the year the success it has been. We wish all our Year 8 pupils all the very best as they make the transition to the next stage of their educational careers and hope to hear about and from them in the years to come. They have, as a group, provided the rest of the school with a model for years to come.

Today we farewell Melanie Stinka who is moving to Christchurch after struggling with a long distance relationship this year. She has a teaching job at Opawa School and our loss is very much their gain. Melanie originally worked at Thorndon as a Teacher Aide and enjoyed it so much that she decided to train as a teacher. After she graduated she spent a year at Ridgway School before we reclaimed her. She is an outstanding young teacher who has made a wonderful contribution to the school and has, this year in particular, been part of a senior team which has worked exceptionally well. It has been very heartening to read the pupils comments in their reports and to see how many of our leavers have said that this has been their best ever year at Thorndon. Melanie has been an integral part of this team and we will miss her. I am sure you will all join us in wishing her well for a new life in Christchurch. We will keep in touch I am sure.

We also say goodbye to Nickie-Jean Hunia who has stepped into Madeleine Sefton's shoes so ably this term. Nickie has made the (temporary) loss of Madeleine an easy one to manage and we wish her all the very best for her relocation to Hong Kong.

And finally, thank you to all the parents who have trusted us with their children and who have helped the school in a variety of ways over the year. Have a wonderful Christmas and a relaxing summer holiday and we will see you next year.

Bill Sutton

### A Brief Review 2007 at Thorndon School Chairperson's Report

This report outlines some of the highlights of our year at Thorndon School.

#### *Perceptions*

The preparation of this report required much comprehensive and scientific research, on my part, including asking individuals from three stakeholder groups how they felt the year went.

Our Principal, Bill, responded "its been a great year without any major dramas".

Melanie, our teacher representative on the Board responded that "it had been an extremely exciting year for her and the students, and she felt sad to be leaving".

My son Kahurangi having completed his 6<sup>th</sup> year at Thorndon, responded "I can't wait until next year dad, I hope my teacher is as good as Theresa".

And as a parent, I'm delighted to have observed in 2007 a continuing excitement and enthusiasm for learning in the eyes of my son and his friends - who have been the most fortunate beneficiaries of the diverse and positive culture of Thorndon School.

I think that if we read between the lines of these comments, it is clear that from four key perspectives, Thorndon has had what can only be described as a very successful year.

#### *Changes to the Board*

This year the Board said farewell to Peter Boyle, Alisdair McIntosh, and Ralph Toussaint. Peter did a great job as board chair for the two years prior to the elections, and all three members added to the depth of skills, experience and genuine affinity for the school and its community, that made the Board a highly effective Governance unit.

Joining myself, Bill, Carol Weston and our staff representative Melanie Stinka, were three new parent representatives - Mandy Hancock, Carleen Needham and Karen Scott-Howman. We applaud these parents for making this commitment, and I think it is fair to say that the new team gelled immediately and the transition for business as usual was seamless.

#### *The Staff*

Although there have been a number of changes within the teaching staff this year, we have maintained a good level of stability and depth. We have a very positive mix of youth and senior staff experience. Our ratio of male/female teachers of 4/13 is not ideal, but more balance in this regard is something all primary schools are struggling with, and the quality of the team overall more than compensates for this.

Our school donations this year allowed us to add a tenth classroom teacher and a part-time teacher to the team, with Natasha Jackson leading extension and enrichment programmes including the sports squad, leadership group, extension writing, and problem solving (creativity in thinking). These programmes added a new dimension to the school promoting leadership among the kids particularly in the middle and senior school, and developing inspiring role models for behaviour and learning to harness positive peer pressure.

Jay Smith joined the senior school teaching staff at Thorndon this year after 10 years in the United Kingdom, strengthening our capability particularly in the areas of information communication technology and drama. Jay, Melanie and Rebecca Brown operated as a cohesive team facilitating success for the senior school this year, and Melanie's move South will be felt by her colleagues. We wish her the best of luck however, and extend our sincere thanks for the contributions she has made to the Board and the leadership she has demonstrated with the numeracy and language learning programmes at Thorndon.

#### *Achievement*

Success at any school is ultimately measured by 'achievement'. The Board is confident that it has been a very successful year for our students. Particular highlights across the school include:

- High levels of achievement in literacy skills
- Significant gains in achievement in numeracy skills
- A burgeoning competency with inquiry learning

With the introduction by the Ministry of Education of the exciting new curriculum this year, we look forward to implementing it in 2008 and building on these successes.

*Other highlights of 2007*

Some of the other achievements deserving a mention for this year include:

- The Stage Challenge – in which senior students produce arts-focussed drama and dance. As one of only two primary schools entered, they competed over three nights against almost 30 secondary schools, and came away with two awards.
- A very successful fair raising nearly \$45,000 – up by \$15,000 from previous years.
- Writing and Art Competitions – Our very successful Art Week at Thorndon this year flowed out of a number of successes in local and national Art and writing competitions. For example, two of our students had their work published in the Journal of Young Peoples writing.
- Bronze award for Enviroschools – Thorndon achieved the bronze award in one year, an achievement that usually takes 2 – 3 years. The award was given for the students efforts to plan and design for the improvement of our school environment. This included planning for recycling, composting, and reduced energy use, and the students take ownership for implementation and continuous improvement of the school's plan.
- Water polo – A team from Thorndon joined the local school competition late in the last term of this year, but managed to win almost all of their games. We are looking forward to the teams continuing success the first term of 2008.
- Film Competition – Thorndon students won a local school film competition this year with a production for which they wrote their own scripts, and filmed and edited all their own footage.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the Principal and staff for their efforts in 2007. Their commitment and passion is fundamental to the success of Thorndon School and provides a supportive, healthy, happy and exciting learning environment for our children.

Anaru Mill  
Chairperson  
Thorndon School Board of Trustees

**Term Dates 2008**

I know I have had this in the newsletter already but I also know that these things get lost so it will do no harm to put it in here again.

Thurs 7 February	Term 1 begins
Fri 21 March	Good Friday – school closed
Mon 24 March	Easter Monday– school closed
Tues 25 March	Easter Tuesday– school closed
Fri 18 April	Term 1 ends
Mon 5 May	Term 2 begins
Mon 2 June	Queen's Birthday–school closed
Fri 4 July	Term 2 ends
Mon 21 July	Term 3 begins
Fri 26 September	Term 3 ends
Mon 13 October	Term 4 begins
Mon 27 October	Labour Day – school closed
<b>Sun 7 December</b>	<b>The Thorndon Fair</b>
Fri 19 December	Term 4 ends

**Holiday Programme**

A number of children from the school are attending a holiday programme being run by the YMCA and they have advised us that they will be running a shuttle service from and to the school.

There is a charge for this service of \$1:00 each way.

Please phone Diva on 027 600 5496 if you would like to use this service.

There is also a holiday programme running from the school, something we do from time to time, and those people planning to use this should already have booked and paid.