

Thorndon School Newsletter

4/2009

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26 February 2009
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"I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework."

Lily Tomlin

Action List

Do we have all your contact details?

Have you sent in your donation?

Have you paid your activity fee?

Have you diared our curriculum evening on April 1?

Dear Parents

Kia ora

I got a good deal of pleasure when I read an article in the weekend paper on homework. According to the article schools are beginning to not set the traditional homework because the research tells us that it is not useful. This is a position that we have taken for years so it is gratifying to read an article like this in a mainstream paper which has tended, in the past, to take a different stance.

We have an expectation that children will read daily at home and we anticipate that they will practice their basic multiplication facts and learn their spelling lists. Beyond that there are many more useful things that parents and children can do than sweat over school homework. It is of much more value for parents to engage with their children in conversation, games, outings etc, and this is the position we have taken and continue to take. Children doing things with their parents and their friends, talking with their parents and friends, engaging in activities that will exercise body and mind are gaining far more than they will from school homework, especially at the primary school level. The class blogs will help you keep up to date with what is happening in classrooms so that you can talk with your children about these activities.

I mentioned last week that invoices for various activities would be coming home shortly along with reminders about the school donation which, while voluntary, is a hugely important element of the school's income. If we got all the donations from the current enrolments we would get just short of \$43,000. We have never yet managed this but we live in hope. Next week we will have something in the newsletter about the way the school uses its locally raised funds and something about a wishlist we have drawn up.

Bill Sutton

Contacts

We really tested our list of contacts last week, emailing and texting to let you all know that the barbecue and Meet the Teacher had been postponed.

Everything worked beautifully and we discovered that there were only about 4 families we were not able to reach electronically.

This means that we have email addresses for almost everyone and we just need to persuade a few more to get the newsletter by way of the website and we will be almost completely digital.

There are still a few parents for whom we don't have the right email address and we will try to make sure these are corrected over the next week.

Meet the Teacher

We will try again tomorrow and the forecast is good. I know that a number of people will have plans to head to the stadium for the Twenty 20 match between India and New Zealand but with the barbecue starting at 5:00 and the match not starting till 7:00 perhaps there will still be an opportunity for you to come along and say hello to teachers and other parents.

As I said last week, the intention is that this should be a relaxed and informal occasion with a barbecue, drinks available and the opportunity to meet teachers and other parents and to take a wander around the school.

Banking

As I mentioned last week, we have recently made the decision to change banks. Thorndon School will now be banking with ASB Lambton Quay branch.

If you make any automatic or online payments to us (whether it is for school donations, activity fees or After School Care, we will need you to update our details so that your payment reaches our new account.

Our new account number is:

12-3140-0336925-00

In order to help us make a smooth transition we would appreciate it if you could update our banking details before 13 March 2009, roughly a fortnight away.

If you have any questions, please contact the office and ask to speak to Julie Prout, our accounts manager.

We have made the change in the best interests of the school and your assistance and cooperation during this changeover period will be appreciated.

New Children

We have had three children start since last week's newsletter.

They are:

Daniel Yang	Y7	Ruma Koromiko
Emma Yang	Y3	Ruma Karaka

Daniel and Emma have recently returned from China and are not really new pupils as they were part of the school community before their shift to China.

Welcome back Daniel and Emma.

New to the school is:

William Tapu	Y1	Ruma Nikau
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William is brand new to the school and to schools in general having turned 5 just the other day. He is with Sue Holman in the Art Room.

We welcome William and his family to the school.

Coin Trail

Last Friday, in spite of the rain, senior pupils went ahead and organised a coin trail to raise money for disaster relief in Victoria and South Australia.

They raised a little over \$100.

Well done to the organisers and to those who contributed.

Term 1 Calendar

Feb 26	R 9 (Y7/8) to the Dowse Gallery
Feb 27	Meet the Teacher
Mar 2	Building Project begins
Mar 4	World Maths Day
Mar 4	Visit from John Key and Anne Tolley for World Maths Day
Mar 4	Girls Soccer Tournament
Mar 4	Group from Hataitai School to visit to look at artworks around the school.
Mar 11	Year 1 – 3 to Capital E Arts Festival
Mar 11	A group from the Dept of Education in Singapore visit the school.
Mar 17	Year 4 – 8 to Capital E Arts Festival
Mar 17	Central Zone Cricket
Mar 18	School Swimming Sports
Mar 23	30 Year 5/6 children to Westpac Sports
Mar 23	Trainee teachers start in the school.
Apr 1	Curriculum Information Evening.
Apr 3	Curriculum Evening.
Apr 7	BoT Meeting – 6:00 staff room
Apr 7	Central Zone Swimming
Apr 8	Kids Lit Quiz
Apr 8	Term ends – 3:00pm
Apr 9	Teacher only day
Apr 27	Term 2 begins

As you can see in the calendar, we are expecting a visit from the PM and the Minister of Education next Wednesday.

March 4 has been designated World Maths Day and they are coming to school to see some of our children using *Mathsletics*, a web based maths programme. Some of you may remember that we used this for a while last year enjoying a great deal of success in an online competition at school, class and individual level. This year we have signed up to make the programme available to middle and senior school pupils for the whole year.

You will also see in the calendar that on April 1 we have a Curriculum Information Evening. This will provide an opportunity for you to hear from a Ministry representative about the revised curriculum, why it was revised and what they hope the out comes will be. We also intend to use this time to gather information from you and to generate some discussion on priorities for the school. We hope to see as many of you as possible.

The second curriculum evening in the calendar is a sharing of what children have done during their current Inquiry Unit on *Me and My Environment*. Two evenings in one week might be overkill and we will look to change this.

Roots of Empathy

This year one of our Year 5/6 classes will be involved in a new and growing programme. Roots of Empathy, is a cross curricular research based programme developed in Canada which teaches children about feelings - their own and the feelings of others. It was first introduced to 10 schools in Auckland in 2007, 10 more in 2008 plus 10 in Wellington, 10 more in both Auckland and Wellington this year plus, for the first time, 10 schools in Christchurch.

Once every 3 weeks for a total of 9 visits a baby, Liam, will visit the classroom while a trained ROE instructor works with the class and together they observe the baby's development make predictions and celebrate developmental milestones.

The discussion that results is used as a lever to talk about emotions and relationships and helps children develop empathy.

The programme has been studied and researched intensively and the results have been extremely positive.

We are fortunate in having Natasha Jackson as the RoE teacher and even luckier in that the mother of baby concerned, Liam, is a past teacher at Thorndon School, Rosalie Hill. We very much look forward to seeing how things go and in positive effects on children's attitudes and behaviour with each other.

School Banking

Each child will be bringing home a letter and a pack today explaining the School Banking programme being offered by ASB.

The system is very simple for the school to operate with a box for children to drop their banking into and someone collecting it each week.

There is a small number of children who already do banking through the National Bank and this will continue.

Trout Fishing

Give your child a fly fishing experience

Capital Trout Centre
Landfill Road, Ohiro Bay

Sunday 8th March

Free Licenses available from:
Steve's Fishing Shop, Ghuznee St or
Hamills Wellington, Hutt Road

Te Reo Lessons

Last week I mentioned that we were able to offer Maori Language lessons after school. Philippa Thompson, the tutor who took these classes will take these classes and has Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons available.

Lessons last for 1½ hours and the charge last year was \$120 per term.

A number of people have indicated their interest in these classes already. Please let us know if you would like your child to take part.

Successes

One of our pupils, Jonathan Rogers recently competed with some success in the Swimming NZ 2009 Junior National Champs last weekend, having qualified through the regional champs

<u>Event</u>	<u>Regional</u>	<u>National</u>
Boy 12 yrs 400 IM	1 st	4 th
Boy 12 yrs 200 IM	3 rd	6 th
Boy 12 yrs 200 Fly	1 st	6 th
Boy 12 yrs 200 Back	2 nd	6 th
Boy 12 yrs 100 Back	3 rd	6 th
Boy 12 yrs 50 Back	4 th	9 th
Boy 12 yrs 200 Free	4 th	9 th

Congratulations Jonathan. Competing at national level is a considerable achievement.

Extension and Enrichment

As I have already mentioned, our extension and enrichment programme is up and running and there has been intense interest in the Sports Squad and the Young Leaders Group in particular. We have received nominations from parents, teachers and children and have had a lot of applications to go through. We will make our final decision tomorrow morning and announce the names for these two groups at an assembly tomorrow.

Because we have limited the size of these groups some of the children who have been nominated and have applied will not make it, but we will talk with them all to explain the process and the reasons for our decisions. We hope that they will use this as a spur to go on and try again. Those who are selected cannot rest on their laurels either as their participation and performance will be evaluated each term and they may find themselves out if they do not meet our expectations.



Entertainment Books

We can now take advance orders for the next edition of the Entertainment Book which is valid from June 1 2009 till June 1, 2010. Anyone who orders and pays now will get a page of vouchers which are able to be used immediately. This page includes a 2 for 1 offer for a ticket to the Hurricanes versus the Bulls on March 20.

Books cost \$55 and the school keeps \$11 of this. We aim to sell at least one book per family – 198 – but hope to do better than this.

Last year we managed to sell 204 and it would be nice to beat that.

Remember, we are happy to take orders from friends, family and colleagues. We will be able to provide A4 flyers to put up on work notice boards if anyone would like this.

Please give Hela a call if you would like to put in an advance order.

Discovery Learning

Discovery Learning is a new version of what used to be called “Choosing Time” or “Developmental” in junior classrooms and our classes have adopted the approach in various ways. It tends to be rather more targeted and structured than it used to be but essentially recognises that children learn a great deal through play and make believe.

Children’s play can be seen as “practice” for adult life and they use and develop an amazing array of physical, social and intellectual skills through their play.

In order for “Discovery Learning” to operate successfully we need a fair bit of material some of it “junk” but much of it real stuff.

We would very much like to get hand drills, hammers, nails and screws, saws, screw drivers etc and wonder if there are any parents who might have contacts which would enable us to get these things at reduced rates. We would also like a woodwork bench or two if we can get them.

We are also in need of parents to take cooking (more cooking as we already have one parent coming in each fortnight), knitting perhaps, sewing, stitching, weaving – the possibilities are limitless. If you can help please contact the office or your child’s teacher.

Internet Safety

As part of our internet use processes we ask that all children and their parents sign an agreement which sets out expectations for the way they use the internet and ICT at school.

The use of ICT continues to grow and the internet is a tool that schools, teachers and children use more and more. We are protected by Watchdog but, while it is very secure, no filter system seems to be completely foolproof. The agreement details our expectations of children when they are using equipment and the internet.

The form will come home today or tomorrow and children will not be able to access the internet until we get the signed form back.

Effortless Music

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- Well-structured teaching from trained, working musicians

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House for Rent

4 bedroom house for rent
Wadestown area, available from 14th March

Please phone QUINOVIC on 477 4754 or:
Judy on 976 3933

Swimming

The programme is well under way now and everyone has their child’s swimming day. Please make sure that children have their gear on the right day as our swimming times are more limited each year and we need to make the most of what we can get.

Swimming is an integral part of the PE curriculum, not an extra, and as such we expect that all children will take part regularly. Some children are reluctant participants and we need your help to make sure that they are talking part. There were a lot of drownings over the summer holiday period number and in a country with such a lot of coastline we need to make sure that everyone has at least some water skills.