

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019

## **Board of Trustees Panui Term 4, 2019**

Tēnā Koutou Katoa,

As the year draws to a close, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the year and let you know a little bit about what next year will bring.

### **Mr Dave Sim's Retirement**

The most significant event of the year has been our principal Mr Dave Sim's retirement. He has led the school through significant changes over the past 15 years including the introduction of innovative teaching and learning programmes, pastoral care programmes and a substantial building programme. Under his leadership, hundreds of well rounded students have left Thames High School and gone on to excel at tertiary study, sports and the arts, in their careers and in life. What Mr Sim will be remembered most for is his humility, kindness and genuine care for every student and every member of staff. Under his leadership, Thames High School has developed a culture of caring, nurturing and supporting every learner, no matter who they are.

One of the constants in schools as in life, is change. And so with Mr Sim's retirement comes change. Today it's time to acknowledge the past and embrace the future.

Over the next few weeks, we will begin the process of looking for a new principal. Appointing a principal is the most important job a board undertakes so we are engaging professional support to assist us with this process. We will be reaching out to whānau, taiohi (students) and kaimahi (staff) for their thoughts on what we should be looking for in a new principal.

The board hopes to have a new principal in place sometime during term 2, 2020. In the meantime, Whaea Maria Baird will remain in the role of acting principal. The board is very grateful for the support staff, whānau and the school community have shown Whaea Maria over the past two terms as she tackles the difficult job of managing the transition. Ms Anna Perry will also remain in the role of acting deputy principal until a permanent principal is appointed.

### **Board Elections 2019**

Our new board took office in July. The following are the trustees for 2019 - 2022: Mary Hamilton (chair), Bruce Hinson (deputy chair), Hannah Cook (student rep), Krishna Duffin, Raewyn Grey (staff rep), Mel Reidy, Martin Rodley, Jared Stein and Murray Wakelin.

### **Changes around charges and donations and how these will affect our kura**

You may have heard in the news that the government has made it very clear to schools that they must not require parents to pay for a lot of extras including class materials and school camps. Schools can continue to ask for donations but these are voluntary so students will not miss out if whānau choose not to pay.

The government recognises that most schools rely on payments from parents to fund a lot of extras. With this in mind, they have offered to pay a discretionary grant to any decile 1 - 7 school who agrees to not ask whānau for voluntary donations. While the intention is for the grant to make up for the funds schools would have received from charging parents or collecting donations from them, the reality is that in many schools it will only go part of the way. The main issue for secondary schools in particular, is school camps. Many schools see immense value in school camps but do not have the resources to fund them. That is why the Minister of Education has made an exception around school camps. Schools who have opted in to the donations scheme can ask parents for voluntary donations towards the cost of camps.

After careful consideration, our board has decided to opt in to the donations scheme. This means we will get the government grant and we will not charge parents for any curriculum related expense. 90% of eligible schools across the country have also decided to opt in.

We are still reviewing what the changes will mean for us in terms of what programmes we can provide under the new scheme. It is our intention to continue to provide the same quality of education our taiohi/students have come to rely on us for.

For more information about the school donations scheme, download [What families/whanau need to know about school/kura donations](#).

### **Addressing the needs of Māori and At-Risk Learners**

The board wants to do more to address the needs of those students, especially Māori, who don't do as well in our school as others. It is our responsibility to ensure that all students achieve their best at Thames High School. We have been working with local iwi and experts from the Ministry of Education to look at how we can do this. We look forward to sharing more about this with you in the coming months.

This focus fits well with the direction the Ministry of Education is heading. They are telling school boards that schools need to change to more closely reflect their communities. Our education system is based on a system developed in England more than a century ago. Schools of the future will better reflect life in New Zealand, our history, our stories, our aspirations, and our opportunities. Schools will be encouraged to develop learning programmes relevant not only to our country but to our region and our own town.

These changes open up some exciting opportunities for our students! We will be asking for your involvement in this discussion as we move forward and make plans over the next few years.

### **Learning Environment**

We've made more progress on upgrading more school buildings this year. The remodelling of the international department block was completed in the first half of the year and we kicked off our biggest project in many years - the refurbishment of A Block - in the second half. The ground floor is being completely rebuilt with the old science labs being replaced with multipurpose teaching areas which have the latest lab setups. The first floor windows have been replaced with modern windows that will do a better job of keeping the noise and elements out. The teaching spaces on the first floor will be remodelled at a later date. The work on A Block is scheduled to be completed before the start of the 2020 school year so for those returning students will be the first to use these modern learning spaces.

### **Board of Trustee Meetings**

Board meetings are held twice a term and are open to the public. We strongly recommend you attend at least one board meeting if you are considering standing for election or at any time if you're interested in how the school is run. The next board meeting is on 6 December 2019 at 6PM. Just a reminder that copies of the minutes of board meetings are available on request at the school office.

We have a lot to be thankful for and a lot to look forward to. Change can be uncomfortable but it can also be exciting. We have a chance to harness this opportunity and make this next phase in the chapter of the Thames High School story a remarkable one.

Ngā mihi  
Mary Hamilton  
Board chair

### **Thames High School Board of Trustees**

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