



Dear Parents

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Introduction

Today you will have received your child's mid-year report, and for the first time, reporting on National Standards has been included, apart from those 5 year olds who have recently started school.

The Government's aim of National Standards is to lift achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by being clear about what students should achieve and when. I applaud the aim, however, there has been on-going debate among many groups within the education sector about aspects of National Standards.

I do not believe there is anyone in the education sector who is against standards and excellence of achievement. There are though, many in the education sector, myself included, who are concerned whether the system as introduced by the Government, via the Minister of Education and Ministry of Education, will meet the stated aim.

Some of the issues that we are concerned about are as follows;

National Standards and NZC Levels

National Standards require us to assess and report using the NZ Curriculum levels. The NZC levels are a way of organising the curriculum into broad levels of achievement objectives related to school years rather than a definitive standard. As such, the broadness of the levels lack definition and are open to subjective interpretation. A diagram showing how curriculum levels relate to year levels is included in a separate newsletter 'Reporting on National Standards' which was also distributed today.

Time Frame

The speed in which the Standards have been designed and are being implemented is a concern as this has left no time to trial the Standards to establish if they have been set at the correct level.

Moderation

Teachers, NZ wide, have not had sufficient time and professional development to develop effective moderation processes both across and within schools. Effective moderation of National Standards across schools is critical to ensure National Standards are reliable national benchmarks of achievement. The implementation of NCEA some years ago and the issues experienced with establishing a reliable moderation system, illustrate the importance of this.

League Tables

Schools are required to report their results from National Standards in their Annual Reports, starting with their 2011 annual report. The Government has stated it is not using this information to create league tables, as has occurred in other countries with detrimental results. The results will be available to the Ministry of Education and where schools are identified as struggling, extra support will be provided. Whilst there are no plans for government mandated league tables, this does not preclude the media from creating league tables comparing school results. Internationally, league tables have created an incorrect perception of schools' performance, as they do not take into account variants in intake and they generally provide only a 'snap shot' of achievement. For instance, a low decile school could be having a good impact on its students' progression in regard to the National Standards, but, the league table would only recognise the students' low achievement relative to the Standards. This information does not help parents make an informed choice on what is a good school to send their child and ends up unfairly labelling some schools. League table accountability has not been found to improve student learning, making them unlikely to improve student achievement, one of the aims of National Standards.

Standards and Achievement

Finally, and most importantly, National Standards aim to identify students who are struggling to meet the standards, enabling schools and teachers to provide them with extra support. Notably, it is not the identification of students that leads to improved educational achievement; it is effective teaching and learning support that is provided to students that improves achievement and that will always be the focus at St Heliers School.

At the Annual General Meeting at the NZ Principals' Federation that I attended last term, a number of resolutions were adopted. The essence of the resolutions are;

- That the NZPF, representing professional leaders, has determined that the National Standards will not deliver the outcomes as intended and will advise the Minister accordingly.
- That the NZPF's professional judgement is that the only way forward is to seek a complete revision of the National Standards system in a partnership with the sector and the Minister, and that this process be actioned with urgency.

The NZPF has entered into dialogue with the Minister and her officials and we now await further developments.

Safety Programme

This term our school is participating in Auckland City Council's 'Chaos at the School Gate safety programme.' Chaos at the School Gate has been very successful in helping reduce the danger to children when streets are busy before and after school.

During term time, you may see parking officers on the streets around school. The officers are there to make sure people are cooperating with our normal parking rules as set out in the New Zealand Road Code, and they will issue tickets to those illegally parked. Before and after school is a busy time for everyone, please help us keep our children safe by sticking to the rules.

St Heliers Got Talent

What: St Heliers School production featuring music, dance, drama and art, starring students representing Years 1-8 choirs, cheersquads, dance groups, Kapa Haka, musical groups.

When: Wednesday 15th September 2010 -7pm; Thursday 16th September 2010 12.15pm and 7pm

Where: School Hall

Tickets: Adults \$10, Students/Children \$5. Tickets on sale from late August

Rehearsals are continuing to go well and the students are getting very excited about the production. Year 3-8 students have been working on an optional poster competition to help advertise the show. Look out for these displayed around the school soon!

Kerry Herbert

APPA Choir

At the end of last term I took the APPA Choir to another massed rehearsal in preparation for the APPA Music Festival in November. As per usual the choir were outstanding, both in behaviour and singing and I received some lovely comments from teachers about that. A big thank you to the following parents who helped me with transport - Mrs Hofer, Mr Pillay, Mrs Stephens, Mrs Clements, Mrs Morris, Mrs Sheridan and Mrs Campbell. I really do appreciate your assistance!
Kerry Herbert

Y5 & 6 Auckland Botanic Garden Trip

The Year 5 & 6 team went on a field trip to the Auckland Botanic Gardens in Manurewa to take part in the Learning Enrichment Programme offered by the Auckland Regional Council. The focus of the field trip was to give the students an opportunity to see first-hand the traditional uses of harakeke (flax) weaving as part of our topic study of cultures in the past. The students were given the opportunity to firstly tour the Botanic Gardens and learn about the many properties of harakeke. These included a variety of traditional uses including medicinal purposes, cloth making, and basketry. The facilitator Kura Walker, a traditional Maori weaver and environmental educator, explained to the students the importance of certain protocols before flax cutting and weaving began. After this the students prepared the flax and wove it into two shapes – a kita or angel fish, and a caterpillar. A highlight of the day was for the students to all plant their own harakeke seedling in the nursery to bring back to school to nurture and grow. Many thanks to our parent helpers who assisted on the day.

On Thursday, August 5 Mr. Nevalagi's and Miss England's classes go on this same field trip. **Adrian Young**

Parent Teacher Interviews

A reminder to all that next Wednesday 4 August 2010, are Parent Teacher interviews.

School closes at **12:30pm** and we ask that all children are collected promptly at this time. Thank you.

Kind regards,



Principal

Stonefields School Trivia Night

4th September—7:00pm
Auckland University Rugby Club
Colin Maiden Park, 85 Merton St, St Johns

Enjoy a fun night out, great items up for auction with all proceeds to fund the school playground

Tickets: \$25.00 including dinner and two drinks

Contact Diane on 570 4244

