



Board Newsletter

Term One 2022

To the St Heliers School Community

In March of 2020, I wrote a newsletter that spoke of a strange time where we were learning to navigate a path in a direction that was only apparent on a day-to-day basis. Two years on and we have all had a term that felt very similar in terms of navigating the unknown, but for completely different reasons. Embracing school life with the very visible presence of covid amongst us has been a test of operational systems, of flexibility, sheer determination, and of faith for all who are connected to our school.

My words of thanks to our staff, can only feel inadequate when attempting to acknowledge the new heights they have risen to. All staff remained completely committed to ensuring that St Heliers School children could have the very best term possible, regardless of how unconventional the landscape became. With class numbers varying by the day, students disappearing mid-lesson, a lack of valuable contact with colleagues, all while managing their own health and that of their families. Our staff continued to grab the positives and to be that calm consistency that has been so essential for us all. All staff have extended themselves this term, and I simply can't fathom how 300+ learning packs have been personally delivered to our families over the course of recent weeks. A simply amazing team.

We also must remember that on top of these challenges, our staff were navigating the significant change of welcoming a new Principal to the school. I would like to sincerely congratulate Sean Valvoi for what he has achieved at St Heliers in circumstances that have been far from ideal when settling into a new role. Sean has made connections without being able to shake a single hand. His warmth and smiles were seen and felt even though a mask was in the way. He managed a sense of welcome through gates that were closed to our parents, and he instilled a level of confidence from those around him, during a time when nothing seemed particularly certain. He has been outstanding.

Thank you to our Deputy Principal's, Patsy and Alex, for their constant support of Sean since his arrival, and for walking alongside every staff member and every student for the past 9 weeks, with their dedication and their genuine care.

A final thank you to all parents and caregivers. Your unwavering support and gratitude have been felt by the staff and have sustained the energy levels on the days when it was difficult to feel the sun through the clouds.

Beyond the challenges, wonderful things have taken place this term. Many moments of joy were to be found on Year 7 Challenges Week, class trips to Tiritiri Matangi, Constable Gordon driving our youngest students around the playground in his police car, school swimming sports, and the morning Merit, Excellence, and Citizenship Assemblies - those proud photos are beyond special.

The governance work of the Board has continued this year with a particular focus on:

Health & Safety

The Board made the pro-active decision before the term began, that we would not wait for the Ministry of Education delivery of a small number of CO2 monitors. We purchased a monitor for every classroom to ensure that we were providing safe, well-ventilated spaces for our students and staff. We also pre-empted the delivery of RAT tests to schools by matching the provision of the Ministry and ensuring staff had the tests they needed to maximise safety and confidence.

Property

Although delays have occurred, the plans continue for the school's name and logo to proudly adorn our lovely new stonewall by the Maskell St intersection. We hope this will be completed next term.

Work will begin in the upcoming holidays on the terrace and canopy installation in front of Rooms 4 - 6. These are our only classrooms without an adjacent sheltered area, and we look forward to the children enjoying a new outdoor learning space, as well as a covered area to eat their lunch. The new addition will be in keeping with the style of the existing building and will be very similar to the facade of Rooms 1 - 3, utilising timber rather than concrete.



Tuckshop

Thank you to Amanda Aitken, for the work she has put into investigating a new provider for our Tuckshop service. The Year 7's enjoyed sampling the menu and after receiving parent feedback at this week's PTA meeting, final decisions will be made shortly. The start date for the new service will depend on a return to a single lunchtime for our students rather than the current split breaks. Thank you once again to Gillian, for her commitment to the tuckshop over recent years. She enjoyed her time in the school, and I know she will miss everyone greatly.

Principal Appraisal

The Board is responsible for ensuring that our principal continues to meet all professional standards and an external appraiser is engaged for this purpose. This year we will work with David Ellery of The Education Group, whom I look forward to meeting this week. The appraisal is a rigorous and comprehensive process over the course of the year, providing essential assurance of skills and competence that we know Sean possesses.

Kahui Ako

This is a very significant time for our kahui ako (Community of Learning - COL). Our COL sees us work alongside Glendowie Primary School, Churchill Park, and Glendowie College toward shared achievement goals. Churchill Park and Glendowie Primary also have new Principals this year, so with Gordon Robertson of Glendowie College in the role of Lead Principal, the COL enters an exciting new era. The Board will attend a COL Combined Board event this week, and we look forward to meeting both Dr Paul Crowhurst, and Marie Todd.

Professional Development

Although opportunities have been limited, the Board continually seeks to upskill, and have attended workshops this term discussing giving life to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the school context.

I am continuing to enjoy my role as Chair of the Auckland Regional Executive of the NZ School Trustees Association and am grateful for recent opportunities provided to engage with The Secretary of Education, The President of the NZ Principals Federation, The Office of the Children's Commission, The Teaching Council, The Privacy Commissioner, The NZ Qualifications Authority and more.

Please note that this is an **election year for our school Board**, and the school will be calling for nominations in July. If being a Board member is something that interests you, and you would like to understand more about the role, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to meet and chat over coffee.

Survey

Early next term we will conduct a survey of our parent community to seek your feedback on our school values, student learning, environment, communication, and future priorities. This feedback plays an important part in the formulation of our strategic goals, and annual plan. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

To close, can I wish our staff, our students, and their whanau a wonderful upcoming holiday break. Take the opportunity to re-set and re-charge ahead of a Term 2 that I hope brings us more freedom for strengthened connections. May next term enable our parent community to enjoy being a part of St Heliers School, as much as their children do.

Stay grateful, hopeful, and brave, and we look forward to seeing you next term.

Kathy Harding
Board Chair
Ph 027 2818 007



The Board from left to right: Chris Browne- Property, Janine Wiles Cosgrove - Policy, Amanda Aitken - Health & Safety, Kathy Harding - Chair, Finance, and Human Resources; Sean Valvoi - Principal; Lizanne Franklin - Staff Representative. Below, Luis Cass - Health and Safety.

