

Tōtara Syndicate Newsletter – Term 1, 2024

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

After a great summer of clear blue skies and temperatures touching thirty degrees it is now something of a relief to get back to our air conditioned school classrooms. I hope you and your children have had an enjoyable and restful break.

We have a reasonably long first term this year, although the first two weeks have been punctuated by Waitangi Day and we have an Easter break that falls within the last couple of weeks, before we finish on the 12th of April. This newsletter will touch on the key dates and events over the next 11 weeks.

Before I wade into the details though, it is great to welcome back our full contingent of teachers from last year - John Kelleher, Jen Squire and Shane Dalton. We will also be ably supported by Holly Dalton as our release teacher for the first term and then, when Holly takes maternity leave, we welcome back the familiar face of Bianca van Berkel.

Curriculum

Our overarching focus for the first half of the term is an inquiry we have called “Kō wai tatou”, or “Who are we?” This takes in aspects of citizenship, cultural identity, what defines us as individuals and as a group. We will be integrating our learning into a series of recounts, reports and reflections. After we return from camp we will shift our literacy focus to a short sharp unit on poetry.

Our maths focus will be on number knowledge and strategy with a series of targeted workshops throughout the term. We will also be exploring Statistics through class-based investigations.

Languages will be starting in Week 3. Students will get an introduction in either French, Spanish, German or Japanese. Technicraft has started already, with our first trip to Brandon Intermediate having taken place on Thursday. Can I remind parents that students need to be at school by 8.30am on Thursdays as we need to have our rolls taken and students shuffled onto the buses by 8.45am. As a safety precaution, can you also ensure that students don't wear crocs or any other kind of open footwear to technicraft.

Sporting opportunities within school will take the form of numerous team sports. Can you ensure that your child has appropriate footwear such as sneakers with them at school, so they can participate fully in these activities. You will shortly be receiving separate notices about Basketball and Netball school trials and teams.

Senior Camp

The highlight of Term 1 will undoubtedly be Senior Camp. This is scheduled for Week 6 and runs from Tuesday the 5th of March through to Friday the 8th of March. Thank you to all the people who put their hands up to come along as a parent helper. We have managed to make our selection of 9 fearless individuals.

We still have two grant applications pending, so I can't give you an exact figure on what camp will cost this year. I still hope to bring it in at around \$350 per student, but should be able to firm this up over the next month.

In the meantime we still have a number of parents who need to fill out their child's personal/medical information form. I will be collating this information over the course of this week. So if you haven't done this yet, can you please click on and fill out the following link - [student information](#). It should only take you about 10 minutes to fill out.

I am also attaching a link to our [kit/equipment requirements](#) for camp. Hopefully most of this is reasonably standard stuff that you will have tucked away in wardrobes and garages.

There is much more that we will be putting into play over the course of this year, too much in fact to mention in this first newsletter. I would like to close though, by saying that we are all excited not only by the new opportunities and challenges, but also by the prospect of working with such a great bunch of students and supportive community.

Thanks and regards on behalf of the Tōtara Syndicate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Hughes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Hughes