



TĒNĀ KOUTOU KATOĀ,

## *Nga mihi o te ra (Greetings of the day)*

Last week with a move to Covid-19 Alert Level 3, the Government relaxed school closures and allowed them to open for children of those who were required to return to work away from their homes and for whom no alternative care for their children was available for them.

## *Ngakau Pono - Trust, loyalty, honesty and integrity*

For a number of families that meant extending your 'bubbles' to engage the help of extended family but for a very few, children returned to school and on the 29th of April Gordonton School reopened, as I said in the last newsletter, with 5 students. We are operating at the reduced hours of 8.45 - 2.15 with the students engaged on their own distance learning programme with their own teacher.

This week we had a couple more students start on Monday as other families returned to their workplaces bringing our roll to 9, or 3.4% of our students. My thanks to all of our community who were able to minimise the school bubble, keep their learners at home and continue to support them in their learning. Special thanks also to the staff who have come to school during this opening week and supervised the learning on site.

Our nation-wide response to the virus has resulted in a sharp decline in transmissions and yesterday for the first time we saw 0 new cases. This bodes well for a move to Alert Level 2. At the time of writing, there was not yet any information from the Ministry of Education as to what that will look like for schools, however, one could properly assume that it may well see us return to the situation prior to lock-down with school as normal aside from assemblies, large gatherings and specific focus on hygiene and cleaning.

I'm told this will be laid out by the Prime Minister on Thursday and decided on by cabinet on Monday 11th May. I will communicate the changes as I receive them and we develop our plan.

## *Manaakitanga - Kindness, care and respect*

I have received unanimously positive feedback from families regarding the home learning and the quality of the work submitted by the children remains high. As with any enforced response, the gloss is starting to wear off a little and as we emerge from the higher levels some of you are experiencing frustration balancing work and home learning commitments.

My enduring advice to all of you is to adopt a pragmatic approach and if your situation is proving onerous to reduce the structured learning in favour of home-based activities for your children that allow you to attend to your own commitments. Nothing will be lost and well-being needs to be to the fore. All I ask is that you signal that to the class teacher so our expectations can be moderated.

I am positive that next week will see an almost total return to some sense of normality. The staff and I can't wait to have children learning in the school again as it should be.

### *Ako - Quality teaching and learning*

### *Awhina - Supporting others to be the best they can be*

Later this week I will share with you a questionnaire where you will get the opportunity to assess your child(ren)'s learning. This will be in regard to the key competencies (or learning behaviours) of thinking, participating, using language and text, relating to others and managing self. All of these are assessed by observation of the learner.

I will be describing what these competencies look like, asking you to assess your child's learning behaviours on a scale and provide a brief comment. The information will be used to inform each student's mid-year report. I feel it is important information. You, as the teacher at home, have had a huge input into their learning over the last 5 weeks which is a significant portion of the learning year to date.

### **Staffing**

During lockdown we received some sad but exciting news. Amanda Emery has resigned and is moving her family back to the UK. This is something they have been thinking about for a while and her husband has been fortunate enough to secure employment there.

Amanda has been with Gordonton School for a number of years as a parent and teacher aide and currently works in Te Kakano supporting our youngest learners to have the best start at school. She will be missed by all and we are sad to see her go. We wish Amanda, Steve, Chloe and Rob the very best in their new adventure.

Hopefully we will be back at school before Amanda finishes at the end of the month so we can farewell her in person.

I hope you are all still well and like me eager to see this response end. My hope is next week's newsletter will have some very positive news around a total return to school based learning.

Here are some photos of our younger learners at home. Tanga (top right) getting involved in some maths learning at home.

And Macy (bottom right) weaving some colours through her fish art.

That's about all for this week. Stay safe everyone.

*Heoi anō tāku mō nāianeī (That's all for now).*

*Keith O'Donnell, Principal*



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