



3 February 2025

Te Māhuri (Years 4-6) Newsletter - Term 1, 2025

Dear Parents and Caregivers

Welcome to Te Parito Kōwhai Russley School after the summer break, and more specifically, welcome to an exciting year in Team Māhuri (Year 4-6). Our team newsletter has important information for Term 1, as we look towards a prosperous 2025. Russley School welcomes new teacher Lucy Handford to Team Māhuri and to Room 5.

The team:

There are 6 classes in Team Māhuri: 4 x composite Year 5/6 classes and 2 x Year 4 classes.

Vanessa Ireland (Room 2, Year 5/6) – I thoroughly enjoy teaching Year 5/6 at Te Paritō Kōwhai Russley School. This year, I am excited to have moved into a spacious new classroom and look forward to transitioning into the new building block later in the year, where I will share a space with Miss Thwaites and her students. School camp is always a highlight, and I'm excited to return to Living Springs this year. My husband and I have two daughters and two dogs who keep us busy! I love books, enjoying audiobooks on the go and making regular visits to our local library with my daughters.

Maria Thwaites (Room 1, Year 5/6) – I have been teaching since 2015 with close to half my teaching experience being in international schools in Asia. I have been part of the Russley whānau for just over a year and am excited to continue my journey here. I am an active and outdoorsy person with interests in hiking, yoga, and tennis. When I'm not doing something active, I am binge-watching shows on Netflix or attempting to learn a Taylor Swift song on the guitar. I thoroughly enjoy teaching literacy, science, and incorporating digital technologies. I am super excited to get the year underway and see what 2025 brings!

Pete De Wit (Room 4, Year 5/6 / Team Leader) – I am originally from the Deep South (Invercargill). I attended Otago University and have previously taught in Auckland. My personal interests are based around the arts and sport, especially basketball, rugby, touch rugby, and drawing. At home, I have two energetic teenage boys and a lovely wife. My favourite subjects when I was at school were reading and spelling and my favourite subjects to teach are writing and sport. I really enjoy the exuberant, creative elements of working in a classroom environment.

Sophie Lennon (Room 3, Year 5/6) – I have been teaching for about 15 years and love working at Te Paritō Kōwhai Russley School. As most of you know, I come from the junior end of the school but joined Te Māhuri last year and have loved working with Year 5/6 learners. I lead all things Performing Arts at Russley, and music and art are my favourite subjects. I also love to read and enjoy teaching literacy. At home, I live with my daughter Aoife who is in Year 4, our two fluffy ragdolls Serafina and Pawpaw and our pomeranian Roxy. I look forward to a full and exciting year, including my first visit to Living Springs!

Rachel Simmonds (Room 6, Year 4) – Happy New Year, Russley whānau, and welcome! I am looking forward to working with your tamariki this year. I am passionate about incorporating te reo Māori, the arts, social sciences and ICT into everyday learning. Our classroom culture is built upon the values of whanaungatanga (warm, reciprocal relationships), manaakitanga (care and respect for others) and tangata whenuatanga (place-based education). I have two sons, Liam and Luke. Both boys are much taller than me! We also have a cavoodle named Bear. He is super cute but uses this to his advantage. I love exercising in nature and dinners out with friends and whānau.

Lucy Handford (Room 5, Year 4) – I'm excited to join Te Paritō Kōwhai Russley School and I'm looking forward to being part of the Team Māhuri whānau. I'm especially excited about getting to know your tamariki. When I was at school, I loved visual art and anything related to writing and reading. I'm still a voracious reader and managed to read lots of books over the summer holiday. I live with my daughter Mia, my partner, and our tuxedo cat, Toby, who adores lots of snuggles. I love getting out and about for walks, going to the gym and going to a gig when I can. But most weekends, Mia and I are either at Willowbank, the library, or at one of the awesome playgrounds that can be found all over the city.

Classroom programme:

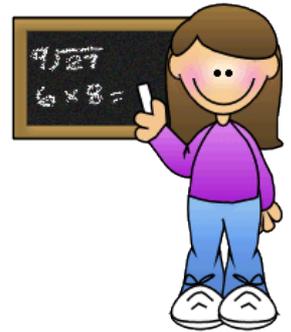
We have a fantastically busy programme planned for Term 1. Understandably, the main emphasis for the first weeks of school will be on creating a positive, collaborative environment in each class and across the team. The classroom focus will be on effective numeracy and literacy; other curriculum focuses this term are:

Inquiry: Ko wai au: Who We Are, Social studies: Waitangi, Migrations and Voyaging

Numeracy: Number Knowledge, Addition/Subtraction, Problem-solving

Literacy: Writing Revolution, Poetry, Instructional writing

PE: Gymnastics/Parkour, Camp fitness, swimming sports, cross-country training



The Russley Values continue to be a major focus for Māhuri and across the school, as all our work will filter through the dispositions of: **Hauora (Healthy), Manaakitanga (Respectful), Whānaungatanga (Team player), Auahatanga (Creative, problem-solver).**

Through these dispositions, we will continue to have an increasingly more collaborative, integrated team that will enable us to provide much greater flexibility in groupings, activities and approaches to the curriculum to meet individual learning needs. It's going to be an exciting year with lots of opportunities for the kids to establish positive learning habits, work with a range of teachers and peers, and become self-directed learners.



Year 5/6 Living Springs Camp:

As communicated at the end of last year, Team Māhuri (Year 5/6) students will go to Living Springs Camp in week 8 of Term 1. Camp is an excellent opportunity for students to get to know their class, team, and teachers. It is also a great way to build students' confidence and co-operative skills in a variety of outdoor activities.

We depart for camp on **Wednesday 26th March** and return on **Friday 28th March 2025**. All Team Māhuri Year 5/6 students will attend camp at the same time. More details regarding camp (permission slips, gear lists, medical information, parent helpers, etc) will be sent home shortly.

Flips & Tumbles:

This term, Māhuri learners will participate in a gymnastics programme onsite at Te Paritō Kōwhai Russley School. Flips & Tumbles NZ is a tumbling-based gymnastics club that provides sessions at which children of any ability can learn how to fall safely, tumbling, parkour and acro-skills in a safe environment with instructors who have backgrounds of both artistic and trampoline gymnastics.

With Flips & Tumbles, our learners can progress through skills such as cartwheels, flick flacks, handstands and aerials.

There is no cost associated with this educational activity however, Flips & Tumbles does require tamariki to bring tight-fitting sports clothing for these sessions. No earrings, buckles or domes. Hair should be tied back.

Important dates:

Week 1 – Thu 6/2 Waitangi Day (school closed)

Week 2 – Fri 14/2 School photos

Week 4 – Mon 24/2 Teacher only day (school closed)

Week 6 - Mon 10/3 Yr1-4 school swimming sports, Fri 14/3 School swimming sports Y5-8

Week 8 – WEDNESDAY 26/3 - FRIDAY 28/3 - Year 5/6 Camp at Living Springs

Week 9 – Flips & Tumbles

Week 10 – Flips & Tumbles. Last day of term, Fri 11/4.

Reminders:

- Please ensure your child brings a named, wide-brimmed, blue sun hat to school. Hats are **compulsory** for Term One. If students do not have a hat, they must sit under the sunshade at morning tea and lunch. Children are encouraged to bring a named water bottle for use in the classroom.
- School starts at 8.50am. Children need to be at school with everything they need for the day before that time.
- Headphones are a useful addition for students using digital devices. If students have their own headphones they are encouraged to bring/keep a pair at school to use during the day. It is helpful if they are named. Retailers such as The Warehouse have good options that work well.



Questions / Queries:

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or queries. We look forward to meeting you all and having a great year working with your child.

All the best for 2025.

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