



Te Kōhure (Year 7/8) Newsletter, Term 1 2024

Dear Parents and Caregivers

Welcome to old and new members of the Year 7/8 team Te Kōhure (the developing tree). We hope you had a relaxing holiday with family and friends. We look forward to working with you and your children this year. Term 1 is always busy, with Year 7s transitioning into the team, as well as Korfball, swimming (starts week 4), swimming sports, cross-country training, plus our usual learning programme. We enjoyed meeting with you during interviews and together, setting goals and discussing how best we can support your child's learning. We extend a warm welcome to teachers working in the new Te Ura classrooms - Michelle Duxfield (TU1), Ashley Nuttall (TU2), Phil Innes (TU3), Kerry Aitken (TU4), and support teachers Rochelle Paul and Christy Greenall.

Learning Programme: Our learning programme incorporates literacy and numeracy, and we integrate learning across curriculum areas around key concepts or big ideas to ensure students make connections and link their understanding. This term, Te Parito Kōwhai Russley School looks at the following concepts: "Who we are/Kō wai ra" - where we come from: ourselves, family, community, New Zealand/Aotearoa and further afield. We'll also look at Waitangi Day and later, ANZAC Day. In science, students will investigate electricity and magnetism.

EOTC Forms: please complete the Education Outside the Classroom forms and bring them back to us as soon as possible. These are important for us in our planning and participation of activities throughout the year.

Swimming: We will have lessons at Canterbury Swim School (Yaldhurst) in Weeks 4 and 5. The cost of this programme is fully covered by Te Parito Kōwhai Russley School through Ministry of Education funding. The expectation is that every student participates in swimming, to acquire a survival skill that can also build fun and involvement across many water activities in New Zealand. On a sadder note, New Zealand has a very high proportion of deaths around water - last year there were 84 preventable drownings in New Zealand. Swimming is part of the school curriculum, and with the school covering the cost of swimming lessons and transport we don't anticipate any barriers for participation. We would appreciate all parents to support this position. (There is no swimming on Wednesdays as we are at Technology.)

Students will need to bring their togs, towels, goggles, and swim caps every day. Please note that all students must wear a swimming cap.

Year 7/8 Camp: Week one of next term (1 - 3 May) at Hanmer Springs. More information closer to the time.

Korfball: We are learning about the sport Korfball early this term. There is no charge for this activity. Please ensure your child takes a change of sportswear to school on Korfball days.

Home Learning / Excellence Awards: The compulsory component of homework will include spelling, reading, and occasional mathematics and is to be completed weekly. The children will record their spelling words and any other important information in a notebook. The notebook can also be used as a form of communication between home and school. We encourage reading for at least 20 minutes per weeknight.

We continue to use the optional school home learning programme. This programme incorporates an Excellence Award system in Year 7/8. This acknowledges and encourages students to have ownership and contribute to their own learning. The optional programme allows students to take on specific roles and responsibilities in the following areas: Community Involvement, Physical and Sport, Leadership, Academic and Creative/Cultural. They will be rewarded for their efforts by achieving points that will enable them to earn an Excellence badge in the aforementioned areas. The students can complete tasks either at home or at school.

Technology: Te Kōhure students will all attend weekly technology classes at Hornby High School from 9.30am - 12pm starting Wednesday 7 February. For health and safety reasons, long hair must be tied back. We travel to and from Hornby by bus. Thank you to those parents who have already paid the technology fee which covers the cost of materials. An amount of \$25 per term will be charged to your child's term 1 activity account and emailed to you. Please note that the Russley office is now cashless and requires payments to be made online.

Devices and Mobile Phones

Students are encouraged to bring charged Chromebooks to school; however, they need to take responsibility for these devices. They are to be taken home at the end of each day.

At this age, some students bring **cell phones** to school, however, they need to take responsibility for their own phone. Mobiles must be turned off when students arrive at school and are not to be accessed without teacher permission before the end of the school day. Occasionally they may be used in classrooms for learning. Please assist us with these rules by not contacting your child via mobile phone during school hours; instead, phone the office who will inform your child. Our students are usually very respectful of these guidelines, and we appreciate their support.

Wellbeing, Sleep and Social Media: Many of the children in Te Kōhure will have access to social media. Whilst they access social media outside of school hours, we are increasingly seeing the negative effects of some children not using this positively. This can impact relationships at school, affecting schoolwork and in some cases increasing anxiety and affecting student's wellbeing. **We strongly recommend that our parents and caregivers are vigilant and proactive in the monitoring of their children's social media accounts if you aren't already.** We ask parents to be mindful that some teens bypass monitoring apps and may have accounts or groups that parents are not aware of. In the past we have had to contact some families who have been surprised and disappointed at what their child has been doing on social media without their knowledge. Children at this age do not have the social or emotional maturity to deal with many of the issues present on social media without parental support.

Some tips:

- Regularly check the history of internet searches on **ALL** devices. If History is empty, ask why.
- Be "friends" with your child on **ALL** their social media sites and regularly visit them. Are they old enough to be on the site anyway?
- What to do if they say you are not allowed to be a 'friend'? Easy - take away their access to social media.
- Investigate apps that allow monitoring of your child's social media usage. Some parents in the team do this actively already and find these very helpful.

- Be aware that most gaming sites have a social media component.
- **We recommend no devices in bedrooms, at any time.** How can parents monitor what is happening behind closed doors? Collect their devices and put them on the kitchen bench when it's time for bed. Buy a cheap alarm clock rather than allowing their device in their room.
- **Using devices in bed can inhibit sleep patterns.** We see the effect of this in class at Russley! You may want to check this BBC story which looks at the effect on sleep patterns and the growing connections between social media usage and depression: <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20180110-the-vital-time-you-really-shouldnt-be-on-social-media>
- Recent research from Otago University suggests limiting teenagers' use of devices before bed. Quality sleep is a predictor for good mental health.
- Set time limits for device usage.
- A thought-provoking question: How much time do we as parents/adults spend on social media? What do we role-model to our children? Would it be interesting to monitor how much device time is spent by ALL members in the family?

Hats, Drink Bottles and Uniform

We ask students to bring a named drink bottle to school every day - only water, please.

The start of the year is a good time to revisit your child's food requirements: our timetable schedules frequent snack breaks, and our students burn a lot of energy during the day!

We would rather they had too much food in their lunch box than not enough; they can take leftovers home.

Please ensure your child brings their hat (wide-brimmed blue hat) to school and that their **uniform is named**. Hats are compulsory for Terms 1 and 4. We have high expectations that the Year 7/8 students will follow the uniform code for Russley School and set a good example to the younger students. This includes no nail polish or jewellery. Family or cultural jewellery is fine if we have communication from home. If you are unsure of the uniform requirements, please check the [school website](#).



School Photos

Class and individual photos will be taken on Monday 5 February. Please ensure your child is dressed in regulation uniform on this day and arrives at school on time.

Please don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions or require further information. Contact your child's teacher by phoning the office or emailing us on the addresses below. We look forward to working with you and your child this year.

Yours sincerely

Te Kōhure teachers

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