

## School Newsletter

9 November 2012



Mr E A Benton  
Principal

*The Principal's address at our Senior Academic Prize Giving Ceremony*

### Message from the Principal

Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers  
*Tena Koutou Katoa*

I am pleased to be able to report that this has indeed been another settled year in the life of our school, a year with many successes, with students happily going about the business of learning and growing as young adults. I am very proud of our school and our achievements and I am absolutely certain that students in our school do as well here as they would anywhere. However, it is very hard for us to be fairly represented for all that we do when nationally the thrust more than ever before is to measure school against school with criteria that can be totally unfair. This is true for us because while we are officially a decile 7 school because of the community that we are located in, in reality we are not because more of the A and B quartile students go elsewhere than remain here for secondary school. Each day about 60% of the local secondary school age population leave this area to go elsewhere to school. While I totally respect the right of parents to choose to send their children to whatever school they wish, by passing us by they help skew results in favour of those other schools and to our disadvantage. We find ourselves really up against it when compared in league tables to other decile 7 schools or the larger, apparently popular schools on the Shore. My point is this, we are happy to be held accountable for the achievement of our students but let's be fair about it. The only fair measure to use in comparing schools would be a value added measure, measuring how much individuals and groups have added to their knowledge and skills in their time in a school. There is no such measure used of course because it would tell a totally different story, one unpalatable to the power brokers. The current climate mitigates unfairly against us by allowing some schools to attract most of the cream and enjoy the resulting self fulfilling prophecy while leaving others struggling to prove their worth. Making cream from cream is no achievement but here we turn milk into cream. Here we have to fight every inch of the way to prove ourselves, to make sure that every student's needs are met. Here there is no room for complacency.

We are fortunate however, that some parents see beyond league tables and see value in the local school and choose to send their child to Glenfield College. You are all in that category. Congratulations on being powerful, independent thinkers. You see, our best students do extremely well here as our "excellence" and "merit" endorsement statistics confirm but there's more. Our job is to get the very best out of every one of our students, to maximise the potential of each individual and to produce wonderful citizens. We are small in number so we know all our students well and we care about their progress. We are not an impersonal factory processing two to three thousand students annually where those at the very top of the academic or sporting ladder get noticed and supported and the rest don't. We are a family that cares about each individual personally. What is more, we see real value in our students growing and developing in a community as diverse as ours. We expect everyone in our school community to respect difference and diversity, differences in gender, ethnicity, ability and age, so that we can all get on with the job of teaching and learning in a positive environment. Our students not only learn English, Maths, Science and a raft of other subjects but they also learn to be considerate of others and that others sometimes face huge challenges in their lives but with support, will prevail. Our school leavers have great qualifications but also a very balanced empathetic view of society which I believe sets them up to be the very best of business, civic or political leaders. We turn milk into cream of the deepest and sweetest texture. While we enjoy seeing our best and brightest excel academically, we sometimes get even greater satisfaction when we see a student who has challenged us in every way, mature and turn up trumps, leaving us well qualified, well adjusted and self-confident. We don't give up on them. That's who we are. That's what we offer, but you won't see it in a league table.

Some special features of our school, things that we can do that many others can't.

Most schools these days no longer have a full school athletics sports day because falling participation rates have made it unjustifiable. We do, a day where no classes are held, a day where all students and staff are out all day participating together as competitors, officials and supporters. A day where our true character comes out, where everyone enters into the spirit of the day. It's more about *whakawhanauntanga*, building relationships, than athletics but all students do three events at least and when not competing, we all support those who are. This is something special about our school. It's about community and exercise. It's a great day.

Also, in 2012 we took a large step towards becoming a fully restorative school by dropping punishments for breaches of school rules and working with students and families to modify and stop concerning behaviours while at the same time avoiding the ever expanding list of detentions that students received. The outcome hasn't seen an explosion of appalling behaviour, far from it. The school has remained settled and purposeful. Students have respected the trust placed in them by being given the opportunity to right wrongs and move on through restorative conversations and meetings. Parents have appreciated being fully informed more quickly and involved in finding solutions. The general thrust of restorative procedures is about openness and honesty and a will to make good and learn from mistakes. As educators, we see this as much more positive long term than anything a punitive approach could deliver. In short, our students learn from mistakes and repeat offences diminish while the experience in punitive systems is very much the opposite. Few schools have had the courage to take this step.

We took another significant step forward in 2012 towards involving parents as much as possible by opening the Parent Portal into our Student Management System. In short, parents can log in at any time, day or night to check their child's attendance right up to the minute, their child's results and their pastoral record which might show up any concerns over classroom behaviour and work ethic. With this and the opportunity to contact staff at any time and vice versa, we look forward to working much more closely with parents on a day to day basis over your child's education. We know that together with parents, whanau and caregivers, we can successfully steer our students through their secondary school years and the closer we work together, the better it is. These teenage years are not the time to relax and step back from active parenting and we won't let you.

#### *Some highlights from 2012:*

In sports, our 1<sup>st</sup> XI Girls Hockey Team won the North Harbour 1A Competition for the third time in a row (about 13<sup>th</sup> in Auckland) and our Boys Senior A Basketball Team finished 12<sup>th</sup> across Auckland. Kate Southee was once again selected in the North Harbour U18 Girls Hockey Team. Lomano Manuhaapai was selected in the North Harbour U18 Boys Rugby Team and Baseball emerged to come 2<sup>nd</sup> in the North Island.

In the Performing Arts, our Dance groups excelled once more with Bollywood being judged top school in Auckland, with groups again selected for Christmas in the Park, with four Year 13 students being the first selected by audition for the Unitec School of Dance from more than 50 applicants for the 20 places available and our Concert Band ranked about 4<sup>th</sup> across Auckland in the KBB competitions while up against many larger schools. The biennial Glenfield Has Talent showcase at the Bruce Mason Theatre was a credit to our students and school. Students in our school are noticed, get the chance to shine against the best available and never let themselves down.

In Media Studies, Glenfield College won first place for the best documentary in the National Association of Media Educators (N.A.M.E.), led by Inga Tu'itahi.

As the year draws to a close, I hope that more local families take the time to look at what is the special character of their local school and at the successes that we have and opportunities that we provide and give their youngsters the chance to shine here rather than sending them off to be lost amongst the 2500 elsewhere.

#### **PUM (Paid Union Meeting)**

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> November, classes finish at 12:30pm for the day as most staff will attend a meeting from 1:00pm allowable under their contract. If you want your child to remain at school until the usual time, please phone the Student Centre and supervision will be provided.

#### **TOD (Teacher Only Day)**

On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November, there are no classes as teachers use the day to work on new NCEA Level 3 programmes for 2013. This is a Minister approved TOD.

#### **Junior Exams**

These take place from Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November to Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November. On the Monday and Tuesday, all students will have exams morning and afternoon. However, on the Wednesday and Thursday, the exams are for option subjects some of which do not have written exams. On these two days, students are only required to attend to sit exams for subjects that they take.

#### **Communication to Students at School**

A reminder to parents that students must have their mobile phones turned off during the school day. We would appreciate parents contacting students through the Student Centre. This avoids disruption in classes and learning. In addition, if students are sick for any reason and need to be sent home from the Sickbay, the school nurse will contact parents directly.

### **Important Dates**

Wednesday, NOV 14	Whanau Hui
Monday, NOV 19	PUM ( <i>Classes finish at 12:30pm</i> )
Monday, NOV 26	Junior exams commence ( <i>All junior students-all day</i> )
Tuesday, NOV 27	Junior exams ( <i>All junior students-all day</i> )
Wednesday, NOV 28	Junior exams ( <i>Option subjects-as per timetable</i> )
Thursday, NOV 29	Junior exams ( <i>Option subjects- as per timetable &amp; catchup</i> )
Friday, NOV 30	Teacher Only Day ( <i>No classes</i> )
Friday, DEC 7	Y10 Activities programme
Monday, DEC 10	Y10 Activities programme
Tuesday, DEC 11	Y10 Activities programme
Wednesday DEC 12	Junior Prize Giving at 10:00am

**School finishes at 11:15am on the last day  
of school for 2012**