

Welcome

This special edition newsletter has been created to reflect, thank and congratulate our teachers, students and families on a hugely successful (and busy) 2017.



As a school we have reached so many milestones this year, some of which you know and some which may be news. Either way, I invite you to take a minute to read this 'year in review' as we reflect on **what was** and prepare for **what will be** in the year ahead.

A growing community

As we all know, the demographics of Lower Templestowe and in particular, the Manningham Municipality, are shifting. More young families are moving into the area due to empty nesters selling, while sub-divisions are increasingly more noticeable. Due to these factors, the population of Manningham is growing rapidly and all 44 schools in our district have seen a significant increase in student enrolments.

At THPS, our student population has steadily grown from 250 students at the start of 2015, to approximately 370 at the start of 2018. Our growth is managed carefully so we maintain our strong community culture and individual learning approach.

Growth is not all bad. Indeed at THPS, this growth has translated into wonderful opportunities for the children, as the increased number of students has resulted in increased funding for the school. Some of the ways we have invested our additional funding include:

- 11 different lunch time interest classes for students to select from
- Purchase of 5 new interactive TV/whiteboards, 20 tablets, 40 laptops and two 3D printers
- Strengthening our sustainability program (introduction of our community garden and school chickens)
- Class sets of Lego and Dash robots
- Upgrading facilities such as concreting existing footpaths, more garden beds, strengthening our Wi-Fi capability and importantly the chicken coop (designed by our students and built by Templestowe College students)
- Further developing our teachers skills and knowledge in instructional practices that are shown by research to have a high impact on learning

I am sure each and every child has mentioned something at home about at least one of these initiatives. It has been a gift to be able to expand our students' exposure to new things, and we hope to continue to broaden their horizons again in 2018.

However I also understand growth can sometimes raise concerns and some parents worry about losing what makes us special. I am very aware of this, and it is something Andrew, School Council and I take very seriously and review regularly.

The biggest concern I hear from parents is potentially increased class sizes. Given this, it is important to recognise that while our school has grown, our average class size has **remained the same**, and **well below** that of other local primary schools in Manningham, and the State's expected average of 26 students per class.

In 2018 we will have 16 classes in the school. Our projected class size across all 16 classes is 23 students (our smallest at 21 and largest at 24). As I said, these class sizes are well below the other schools in Manningham, and within Department's guidelines. That being said, our desire to maintain an individual approach to each student's learning remains important. Due to this, we are investing in additional support in 2018 for our two prep grades during the morning literacy and numeracy classes, led by Lisa Clark. We will also be appointing an experienced teacher in gifted education, to enrich the

learning experiences of our year 3-6 students. Whilst **not** having this additional support would **not** negatively impact a child's development, given we have the financial resources and importantly willingness to invest these resources into our students, we look forward to seeing the results ahead.

Celebrating our learning achievement

Over the past two years, we have invested heavily in developing teachers' skills, knowledge and understandings to ensure we are delivering high quality lessons. This coupled with a new whole-school approach to reading, spelling and mathematics has contributed to strong results in our annual NAPLAN tests. Our belief is that NAPLAN must measure the school "as it is" without additional study, over-preparation or putting extra importance on the test. We pride ourselves on THPS being an inclusive community which means we encourage all students to participate in NAPLAN. We want every child to be reflected in our results, as every child is valued and should be part of our overall outcome.

Given this, in 2017 we had a 100% attendance rate (unless the child was absent) for the NAPLAN testing, and our results demonstrated all the hard work the school and children have made. Everyone is to be congratulated.

Specifically, over the past 3 years, compared to ALL Victorian schools, THPS has **significantly**:

- High levels of students achieving medium and high learning gains (i.e. measuring the growth of a student's position from grade 3 to grade 5)
- High levels of students performing at the very top two band-levels of the test
- Very low levels of students performing at the bottom two band-levels of the test

These wonderful results were acknowledged by the Department when I received a call congratulating us. Whilst this is very much appreciated and valued, what I am most proud about is it reflects our teachers' commitment to improving their practice to deliver high quality learning experiences.

A special acknowledgement to Lisa Clark who has played a significant role in our literacy intervention program and to the Templestowe College Tutors, who provided another tier of literacy support. This combined approach has given our reluctant readers the confidence to enjoy reading, and is reflected in our pleasing NAPLAN results.

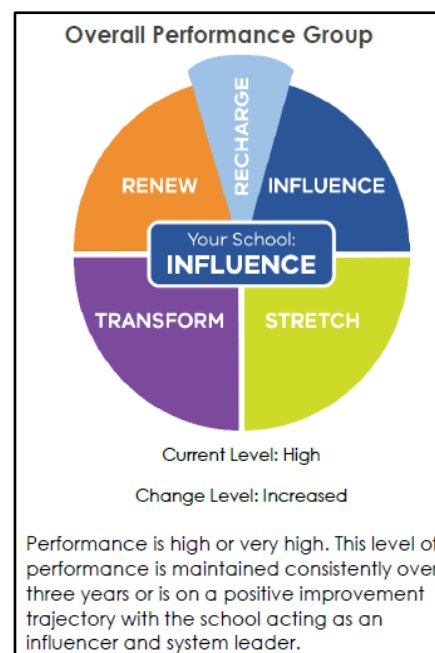
Recognised as a Leading School

Last month we also received a huge vote of confidence in our school.

The Department of Education now groups schools into five categories, the first category "renew", identified schools that have declining results over time and their performance is low, right up to "influence", which means a school with high or very high performance, that is maintained consistently over 3 years. Schools in this category are seen as an "influencer and system leader".

There are 44 primary and secondary state schools in Manningham. THPS was recognised as being an "influence school", an honour that went to only 4 out of the 44 primary and secondary schools in Manningham.

This is a significant achievement and endorsement that we should all be proud of; as it shows us we are on the right path in our journey of school improvement. The result affirms that the research-based curriculum initiatives we have implemented, the focus on developing teacher practice and the introduction of new assessment tools to inform our teaching and learning are world class. It also



demonstrates that our **teachers are learners**, that they have embraced the challenge to be the best teacher they can, and that they are delivering high quality lessons to our students.

Staff profile

As I mentioned earlier, we will be having two additional classes in 2018, bringing us up to sixteen. To support this we will have employed five new classroom teachers to cover our three staff who are taking family leave (Amy Williams, Clare Harding and Angela Makris) as well as coverage for the additional classes.

Like all schools, we wish to attract the best teachers who can help lead change, drive standards and help our school move forward. But most importantly we want teachers who are **learners**. To support this approach, in 2017 we changed our teacher selection process to focus on observing potential candidates teach lessons in our classrooms. That is, we have moved away from the traditional approach of interviewing candidates where they would **tell us** what they could do, to an approach where they need to **show us** what they can do.

Due to evidence that our approach is working, and our continued steady growth, we will also be appointing another teacher, someone who has extensive experience with gifted education. This teacher will specifically support students in the year 3-6 levels and will be a great asset to our teaching staff.

Finally, with Matthew Erickson leaving, we have appointed an experienced *Music/Performing Arts* teacher, Jayne Setford for three days per week. Jayne will continue our music program (including uke) however she will also deliver drama lessons. In 2018, each class will have a weekly lesson of music/performing arts (historically we have only been able to sustain classes for one semester per year) which is a wonderful addition to our school curriculum.

Our teaching and staff structure for 2018 will be:

Administration	<i>Rhys Coulson (Principal), Andrew Veal (Assistant Principal), Margaret de Haas (Business Manager), Anna Sanos (Office Administration)</i>
Foundation	<i>Cassandra Dykstra, Ashleigh Danes, Lisa Clark</i>
Yr. 1/2	<i>Celene Black, Brittany Chipman, Tania Martini, Julia Laidlaw, Mary Tran</i>
Yr. 3/4	<i>Jeanette Breen, Liz James, Linda Spencer, Louise Wood, TBC*</i>
Yr. 5/6	<i>Ross Toogood, Julie Gibbs, Jacqui Nicolazzo, Sam Wang</i>
Specialist	<i>Kate Stacker, Lisa Clark (EAL, literacy intervention, enrichment) Joy Birrell (Art), Dina Velona (Italian), Jayne Setford (Music & Performing Arts), TBC* (yr. 3-6 Enrichment)</i>
Education Support	<i>Vikki Brereton, Kerryn Clark, Kirsty Creek, Navaara Matherson, Yvonne Tan, Mary Wakefield, Angelique Giacomini</i>

Our 2018 Goals

The financial focus for 2018 is to continue to invest in resources for our newly developed Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) program, including continued funding for our robotics and 3D printers. 2018 will also see us fitting out our new classrooms with mobile touch screen TVs to provide more ways for our students to engage with learning experiences.

We will continue to invest heavily in our teachers, including professional learning with instructional literacy coaches and a teacher observation model which supports our target of developing teachers' skills, knowledge and understandings to deliver high quality lessons. Our **School Improvement Team** leaders will also facilitate professional learning sessions aligned to our strategic goals around writing, spelling, positive education, STEM and assessment.

The provision of a specialist literacy EAL/intervention teacher, the appointment of an experienced gifted education teacher for years 3-6 and greater employment hours for our music/performing arts teacher next year will provide more opportunities for our students. To this end, our plan is to take 2 of our 4 yearly allocated curriculum days at the commencement of Term 1, 2018. The focus on these days is to induct our new staff, discuss our measures for the year and further invest in developing our teachers, as early into the year as we can.

On the topic of curriculum days, I also understand from parents that these days prove challenging for working parents. Given this, another small, yet important 2018 initiative is that we have secured a school holiday program for the Monday (29th January) and Tuesday (30th January) to operate during our first two allocated curriculum days.

Staying community-focused

As I stated, our growth has resulted in incredible achievements, yet rest assured we carefully balance this growth with maintaining our strong sense of community and individualised learning approach.

The community at THPS is one of the strongest I have seen and the generous donations to our community garden, chickens and library funds have further enabled our success. Our *Parents & Friends (PAF) Association*, led so competently and willingly by *Cath Hanslow* and *Clare Stephens*, and supported by so many giving parents have raised over \$12,000 in 2017, allowing us to purchase 100 new seats for our multi-purpose room. In addition, other community benefits this year have included:

- One third of our students now participate in our school basketball program (18 teams in 2018), that is coached and managed by parents (and led by *Kate Stacker*, *Sarah Mabin* and *Fiona Allsop*).
- Our community garden, generously supported by *Laura David*, *Jeanette Breen* and *Brittany Chipman*, that was recently recognised with a regional award, has grown (pardon the pun) into something that is a source of pride within our school and connects students, parents and siblings. Weekly gardening clubs, a watering roster and a host of after school harvesting markets has been very successful.
- The introduction of chickens, driven by our very assertive student voice leaders, has taught our students responsibility. It has been greatly supported by *Jeanette Breen*, *Brittany Chipman* and so many keen families.
- Our volunteers from class reps have not only supported the families that commenced at the start of the year, but also warmly welcomed our new families throughout the year.
- The many community-focused events that the PAF organise and run.
- Our School Banking parents and our many classroom helpers who stay after 9am to listen to children read.
- The huge support we receive at every working bee, and functions we run – your time and skills are incredibly valued

In summary, thank you to you the parents, your children and our teachers for making 2017 a wonderful year. As December commences, may you have a wonderful Christmas and I look forward to hearing you all sing this week at the school carols evening.

Regards,



Rhys Coulson