

Room 5 Class Newsletter

Term 1 2010

Kia Ora - Welcome back to school! Thank you all for organising the children's books so promptly, and for helping your children to arrive at school each day with healthy lunches, sun hats, swimming togs and book bags. Most of the children are wearing their vests or bag covers to help keep them visible and safe on their way to and from school too. These may seem like very small things, but it's really great to have basic routines in place, with home and school working together.

I'm really looking forward to working with your children and seeing their skills develop over the course of the year. In fact I expect many of your children will have 'graduated' to Room 6 before the end of the year as they develop confidence, appropriate classroom behaviours, learning skills and key knowledge in reading. It's another great opportunity for me to put into practise some of the new strategies I've been working on for helping young children to master reading and writing skills more quickly. There is no doubt that reading is the cornerstone of success. Research shows that children who read more, achieve more. Beyond education, reading continues to be a vital skill throughout our lives. Reading at home should be... fun! I have included some notes on how parents can help with home reading on the back page of this newsletter.

Our **timetable** is designed to deliver a balanced curriculum, and enable your children to take advantage of the strengths of the three teachers in Rooms 5 and 6. Most days we start the day with 'circle time' - roll call, a song and news - followed by some outside time for fresh air and gross motor skills. Back inside we split into maths groups, followed by handwriting just before playtime. After play is the literacy block: reading activities with me in Room 5, followed by writing activities in Room 6 with Mrs Fenwick. After lunch every day Pene takes over in Room 6 and the Room 5 children join her for stories, Visual Arts, music and Te Reo Maori prior to swimming, and then come back with me for Dance, Drama or Topic time. Our **term 1 topic** is Learning Together at School, based on the new New Zealand Curriculum Key Competencies: Managing Self; Relating to Others; Participating and Contributing; Thinking; Using Language, Symbols and Texts. We are also touching on Essential Learning about New Zealand which is the school wide topic for the term - you might well interpret this as History and Geography of NZ, but we're not aiming to learn everything in our first few weeks at school. Our focus is on learning how to conduct ourselves as members of a learning community (our class), how each of us is different and learns in our own way, how to 'have a go' and risk making mistakes, respecting other people's mistakes as they learn (including the teacher's mistakes) and how it feels to be a successful learner - because we are all learning all the time, just not the same things at the same rate. Thursdays are different. As Assistant Principal I have a days release to attend to paperwork and professional development relating to the junior classes, and my roles as literacy leader and numeracy resource person for the school. My **release teacher** is Trudi Fersterer and she will be in class with the children each Thursday. Thursday mornings will be give over to Topic and Visual Arts activities with Pene and Trudi. Poetry books will usually come home on a Thursday with a new poem to share. Do read over the accumulation of poems in the book and not just our new one. The children will usually change their library books with the class on Thursday afternoons after assembly and swimming - if the pool is really warm and we swim for longer we have a library slot available on Friday morning but it will be best if the children return library books to the blue basket by Thursday morning at the latest.

Please remember that while Thursday is our ART skills morning, we do art activities arising from reading, maths and topic work on other days too. Encourage your child to wear comfortable **clothes** that can be taken on and off in layers according to the (un)expected changes in weather or temperatures - and PLEASE! no clothes so good that if your child (or another) adds grass stains, lunch or drink spills, paint or dye to the existing colours there will be scolding, alarm or tears.

Parents' Help is much appreciated. I am looking for regular helpers 9:50 -10:20am to help with maths and 11-12:30 to assist with reading and writing. If your child is not yet settled into school well enough for you to help in class, or you have preschoolers to care for, or school rooms just aren't your thing don't stress - time changes all things.

Classroom Management: Respect and consideration for others is emphasised. Positive attention for appropriate behaviour and good work through praise and occasionally STAR badges, stickers or certificates is the main tool, along with 5 - 15 minutes "special time" on the adventure playground or 'free choosing' when everyone has been behaving in the best possible way. Discussion of inappropriate behaviours at the time, and agreement on what would have been a better choice, is usually sufficient to bring young children into 'settled into school' mode, however where children are repeatedly making poor choices I will begin recording these instances in a notebook and if there is no noticeable improvement begin 'Consequences'.

Consequences for repeated poor behaviour choices include:

- i Practising an action correctly;
- ii Sitting quietly away from the group 'to have a think' about the choices made - sometimes this might be in "The Red Circle" outside the staff room.
- iii 5 minutes inside at playtime or lunchtime after the other children have gone outside;
- iv Leaving our room to be supervised in another classroom.
- v Mr Batten visited/parents contacted.
- vi Go onto STEPS programme. This is our Takaka Primary school wide discipline programme.

Listening to Your Children Read each day gives the children opportunities to practise what they have been learning in their reading time at school. Let them show you what they can do - pointing to and saying one word at a time, learning to identify 'Basic Sight Words' or to use first letter sounds and pictures to work out what would make sense and look right. Above all, your child must **ENJOY the time you share with books** - and if you don't enjoy it they won't. At any time if your child is reading to you and it's not a happy time, find another book and read it TO your child instead... and talk with me if this persists.

At whatever reading stage your child is at these GOLDEN RULES for listening will apply:

- Praise, praise, praise! Praise everything they can do.
Listen. Don't jump in with corrections. Then you can praise them when they notice and/or correct their own mistakes.
Don't put pressure on children. "We had this before. Why can't you remember?"
If they could, they would.
- Don't go back through the book quizzing children on letters or words - unless it's fun, and even then it would be best to stick to looking for their STAR word(s).
- Help with problems at the time. For example, after children have tried working out a word say how close the attempt was, give some other clues, ask for another try, then tell your children the word.
- **DON'T** be cross or impatient if they can't remember the word the next day. Expect to give the clues again, praise your child if they remember with fewer prompts or without prompting.
- Believe that your children will learn to read. Help children to know that they are successful. (Wow! Last week you didn't know how to read this book. Now you can!)
- If you're frustrated read to your child instead - please.

If your child usually travels home on the bus in the afternoon and you are picking them up instead, please remind your child to let their bus monitor know after school before leaving with you... otherwise the whole bus line has to wait while we search for them or find an adult who has seen you pick them up.

Please send a note prior to your child being absent from school, or ring the office 525 9035, or text me on 027 242 9049 on the morning of the absence.

Please do come and see me for more information or if you have concerns regarding your child's progress at school. I'm usually free after seeing children away on the buses, from around 3:15 on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday afternoon.