

Houghton Valley School Board of Trustees **Information about Houghton Valley School Buildings and Grounds.**

Kia ora whanau,

Houghton Valley School surely has one of the best locations of any school in New Zealand (some would say the world!), but the climate and our aged school buildings also pose challenges with regard to upkeep and maintenance. School donations, fund-raising and hands-on parent involvement such as working bees go a long way towards ensuring we can stay on top of the work that needs to be done. We have some significant building work coming up, and would like to provide an update on this and other aspects of our school environment. Please contact any member of the Board of Trustees or Raewyn if you have any further questions, comments or thoughts.

Nga mihi nui

Houghton Valley School Board of Trustees

Classrooms

Extra Year 3/4 class

As you know, this year we have received funding for another teacher, but not for a new classroom. We are therefore using the library for our new class (Rimu), and are doing our utmost to ensure that students remain as unaffected as possible by the use of the library as a classroom.

Couldn't we have juggled the classes so that we don't need a tenth class?

The teaching staff spent many hours looking into all possible scenarios of classes for 2017. The consensus was that smaller class sizes across the junior and middle school and the class configuration we have come up with is the best option for the school.

Why don't we build a new classroom?

We have been talking to the Ministry of Education (MoE) for over 2 years about our need for another classroom. Increased student numbers and the fact we have space to build (next to Rata) are two key factors in our favour.

However, the MoE has extremely limited resources for building classrooms, and we are competing with several other schools in the same situation. The MoE must first decide (mid 2017) whether the South Wellington area will need more classrooms, and then determine exactly where those classrooms should be. We should bear in mind the fact that the data the MoE uses to predict student populations, e.g. census data and building applications, actually indicates, after a 2017-2019 peak, a significant fall in the number of children of primary school age in the Houghton Valley area. We have provided a separate document with the MoE's data. We hope that the MoE will make more information available to us to share.

When will we know whether a new classroom is possible?

Advice from the MoE is that we may have a clearer idea by the middle of 2017 as to whether or not we make the cut for a new classroom. Even if we were to be successful, approval for the 2017/18 financial year would not mean a quick build. Whatever the decision, it is clear that there will be no additional classroom in 2017 or 2018.

Would we change our school zoning to limit student numbers?

Until we know for sure that a new classroom is not possible for HVS, we will not pursue a re-zoning process, but this is something that may be explored further down the line if necessary. There would be extensive community consultation, and no children already attending HVS would be affected.

Why don't we put a mobile classroom or library on school grounds?

The MoE no longer provides any funding for temporary classrooms. We have researched the options available to us and have found that the cost of a library-sized structure would range from \$50,000 to \$150,000. We are not able to commit to this expense until we see how renovations on other areas of the school are progressing and whether we need to spend money elsewhere.

Won't Rimu class feel as though they are camping in the library?

The students of Rimu have told us that they love their classroom. We have invested in new classroom equipment and Rimu functions in exactly the same way as any other classroom. A section

of the library is partitioned, so that Joanna can continue to work on the cataloging and issuing of books. Other children do not use the library when classes are in progress.

How is the library functioning?

Joanna is employing innovative ways of ensuring the books in the library are as accessible as ever. She has a display area for specific collections, and there is easy access to the quick read section. Careful scheduling means that the rest of the school can use the library at times which do not interfere with Rimu class. Picture books are rotated around classrooms and Joanna also goes 'on tour' toting books to other classrooms. We will continue to assess the situation throughout the year.

Renovations to Rooms 1 and 2

A major renovation is about to begin for Rooms 1 and 2.

Why does this work need to be done?

Many of you will have had the experience of children in these rooms being freezing cold in winter. This was somewhat improved with the installation of heat pumps in 2015, however the rooms are poorly insulated and in poor repair inside.

What work will be done?

These two classes will be completely renovated. After the scaffolding has gone up, the building will be wrapped in PVC. This will serve to keep water out, to ensure work can proceed whatever the weather, and to contain dust. Work will then begin in earnest to put in new cladding, new windows and new roof and spouting. The verandah roof will be re-done, the decking re-piled and re-laid and the porch outside Room 2 replaced. There will be new internal wall linings, including an extra fibre cement layer, insulation, new carpets and built-in furniture, and each room will have a heat pump. The walls where coats and bags are currently stored are to be removed, and at the end of all this work, the whole building will be painted inside and out. The rooms will be almost unrecognizable when they are finished! Only the toilet areas will remain the same.

How much is the work costing?

Initially, we were trying our best to make the necessary improvements and keep costs low. We are allocated money for repairs and maintenance from the MoE every 5 years, which we have to spread throughout the school. During the planning stages, the scope of work increased significantly following further inspections and council requirements. The project therefore triggered the threshold for the MoE scheme where, if a school spends half its 5-year budget on a major project, the MoE will fund the remainder of the work. This helped us ensure the scope of the work was expanded as much as possible. Although it meant a delay while the architects went back to the drawing board to revise the plans, we now have a major renovation, which will result in fantastic classrooms. The cost to us from our 5-year budget will be approximately \$282,000, with the MoE committing to the remaining \$315,000.

Does this building contain asbestos?

Yes. This building is of an age where we were not surprised to find asbestos in the walls. The asbestos is type B, which poses a lesser risk than type A, and is not dangerous when undisturbed. There is no current threat to our children's health. All asbestos will all be removed as part of the upcoming renovations. Great care will be taken during the removal by the expert builders to ensure that dust is contained, for example the building will be fully wrapped.

When will work begin and how long will it take?

We are excited to say that work may begin by the end of this term. Council consent has been granted and we have selected our builder from the tenders received. We are now only waiting for the green light from the MoE.

It is estimated that the work will take approximately eleven weeks. During this time, the children from Pohutakawa and Kowhai will be accommodated in the school hall, as has happened successfully in previous years. Ideally work will begin just before the upcoming holidays, which will minimize disruption. Every effort will be made to ensure that teaching continues as normal during this period before the children return to their awesome new spaces.

Capacity of the Hall

The configuration of the school hall is currently such that we are pushing the capacity limits when we hold our whole school assemblies and have teachers, parents and siblings in the room. We have every confidence in our evacuation and emergency response procedure, but of course we want to meet regulatory requirements. For this reason, we have decided to hold mainly split assemblies this term. Split assemblies are also less crowded and stuffy for the children and give more opportunities for class presentations.

The scheduled work on Rooms 1 and 2 includes the necessary upgrades to increase the capacity of the hall. This work involves upgrading the fire alarm system and simply reversing the swing of one door. Once that work is completed, capacity will no longer be an issue since the hall will be able to hold 338 people!

Renovations to Rooms 3 and 4

The MoE is planning and funding an upgrade of Rooms 3 and 4 as part of a pilot to address buildings with weather tightness issues.

Why do we need to renovate Rooms 3 and 4 as well?

Historically we have had problems with mould and damp in this classroom block. Although this has been addressed and there is no immediate health issue for our children, there is real room for improvement to get rid of the damp and make the classrooms warmer and brighter.

What work will be done?

Since the MoE is funding the work we are somewhat in their hands with regard to the scope of the work and timelines. We very recently had clarification from the MoE on the work planned, which will include: addressing leaks by removing some cladding to replace the horizontal flashing, replacing any rotten timbers; cleaning out the floor space and adding polystyrene insulation, placing a polythene cover over the asphalt and putting in a lineal drain at the back of the building; lifting the verandahs and installing alternate steel and clearlight panels. This work will all be carried out at no cost to the school.

It may be that the Board decides to fund additional enhancements to these rooms from our 5-year budget. It makes sense to do this work at the same time, to minimize disruption, and we are currently looking into our options.

Does this building contain asbestos?

Yes. There is a small amount of asbestos (type B) on one side of the building only. This will be carefully removed during the renovation in accordance with the relevant protocol.

When will work begin and how long will it take?

Wheels are turning rather more slowly on this project: we are anticipating that work *may* begin later in the year. The children will be relocated to the hall while the improvements take place, although the builders may only work on one classroom at a time. The building will not be wrapped so work will be weather dependent. We have been informed that the job should take approximately 6 weeks to complete, although we estimate it will be longer, particularly if we are doing additional work funded by the school.

Main School Block

We are currently looking at the main school entrance and ways to address the cold draughts which whistle down as far as Room 8. We are also considering updating the interiors of the classrooms in this block. There is heaps we would love to do, but we only have a certain amount of money to work with, so all options have to be considered very carefully. We will keep the community posted on any developments.

Dotty

Our cute and now somewhat famous (as you will know if you are a follow of Radio NZ) caravan is being used for small classes and some teacher meetings, as well by the Now News team. We anticipate that when Rooms 1 and 2 move to the hall and lack of space becomes more of a reality that she will be used more. Big thanks to Alex and Charlie Barton for lending Dotty to us.

Outdoor School Spaces

Playground

The adventure playground is being well-used and enjoyed by the students (and the local community!). We still have playground equipment under Room 9 to install, and we also have plans to put up swings, build more paths, install seating and generally continue to improve our play environment. We will need to complete most of this work with whanau involvement, such as working bees. If anyone has building skills and is able to help us with the playground development, please let us know.

Bike Track and Flying Fox

The Bike track is proving to be hugely popular, in and out of school hours, as is our famous flying fox. Maintenance of the track and the flying fox is covered by Home and School fundraising, and topped up as necessary from school funds.

School Grounds

Our school grounds are huge – we are so lucky! but with this comes the need for maintenance. Weed eating takes place once a month, and we will periodically spray weeds with an organic spray. We need to keep on top of weeds, so if you can pull out one or two whilst waiting for your child at pick up time it would be much appreciated! We are considering introducing a rotational monthly 'grounds duty' where each class takes responsibility for weeding, picking up litter, sweeping, etc one weekend a month. We hope that this will be a way to strengthen our school community as well as to keep our school looking beautiful. Your feedback on this would be appreciated.

We have just applied to Wellington City Council for 500 plants to further enhance the school grounds. This will also support the ongoing initiative of having each new entrant to the school plant a tree or shrub.

Tremendous project

At the end of last year we were thrilled to be chosen as one of four NZ schools to obtain a \$10,000 grant for a school makeover. We will create a funky, interactive outdoor learning environment behind Room 9, running down to the field, and then along the slope to the school boundary with the car park to the south. Exciting plans for wind sculptures, a viewing platform, coastal planting, rata and more will be implemented later this year. Look out for more information and an invitation to be involved soon.

Community Garden

The community garden is run by volunteers from the Houghton Valley Community. The gardeners are happy for children to visit the garden, and to use the paths through the garden on their way home, and on their way to our 'outdoor classroom', which sits just beyond the garden. The gardeners also contribute their time and plants at the school fair, when they organise and run the plant stall. We are very lucky to have this awesome venture on our doorstep!

Chickens

It has now been some time since chickens occupied the coop by the community garden. However, a comeback is planned, and we will soon be able to enjoy free-range eggs again! If you are able to help with this project, please let us know.

Rainforest

Houghton Valley School is famous for its 'rainforest', which is looked after by the local community and enjoyed by locals and the school. This area of native bush provides a great opportunity for educating our children about native bird and plant life and fostering an understanding of and appreciation of our environment. It is also part of our cross-country running course. Working bees are occasionally organised in the forest to clear brambles, plant natives (500 plants also on order for this area) and so on. There is currently an exciting project underway to restore a wetland area on the western slope of the bush. There are lots of opportunities for whanau to be involved with the rainforest area.