

Issue 77 February 12 2021

Thornhill enews



Dear Thornhill Family,

This is the first eNews of the term, we are pleased to welcome back our existing parent body and a very warm welcome to all those that are new Thornhill parents. Under normal circumstances, Mr Greaves would be writing this introductory section, but while he is making good progress, it falls to me to do this. In years gone by, this would serve as a 'heads up' for all the events that would have packed this term to bursting point, with staff members rolling their eyes, blowing out their cheek and wondering if we really had bitten off more than we could chew this time.

Alas, this is once again a COVID term, the situation that looked so promising in December, when we dared to hope, has been replaced with a much bleaker and harsher one in January. This has an effect upon all of us, as we are once again faced with a reality that none of us wanted to see. It has affected all of our lives and Thornhill is no exception to this. It is worth pausing and remembering while we follow the numbers and statistics, that behind those numbers are real human beings whose lives have been plunged into fear, uncertainty, in some cases a long, debilitating recovery or, most tragic of all, a death. Where we can help at Thornhill, we shall do so, but one of the worst parts of this disease is the isolation from the very support networks we would naturally turn to in a time of crisis.

We will do our best to make the students' experience a happy one and where we once packed a term with activities, we will pack it with learning and the joy of learning, there will be other things too, but we have to plan these very carefully to ensure the safety of all.

Staff News

We welcome Mrs Bradley into Std 7. She eventually made it from the UK, despite several flights for her and her family being cancelled in January and hurriedly had to prepare for a new role in Thornhill. We also welcome her twins into Std 1. We wish her all the best.

Mr Jogee has moved into his new role in Std 5 as Mrs Botes moved to take up a position in Std 6. Good luck to the both of you. Miss Marais will be working with Reception as begins her career as a teacher. We hope it is a long and successful one.

Holiday work

Over the holidays we performed the following upgrades:

- New security quarters: the old wooden shed has been replaced with a purpose built brick building.
- Floors were replaced in Std 1 and Std 2.
- The astroturf was extended in the Std 1 play area.

COVID News

In the first few weeks of Term 1 2021, we have seen an unprecedented rise in Coronavirus transmissions within Botswana, as I said earlier, this has impacted on the academic life of Thornhill Primary School. It has been very challenging for all of us and along with it, comes a sense of fear and foreboding, we feel it too at Thornhill.

Better Safe than Sorry

At Thornhill we are an immediate community of 750+ students and staff, this by any current standards, is a large group of people to have in one place. Yes we are subdivided into bubbles, bathed in sanitiser and currently we never meet in large groups, but the fact remains, there are many of us and when you look at the wider picture with siblings, parents and extended families, the numbers become staggering. If I take myself for example; I am a nexus for three schools, Thornhill, Broadhurst (Mrs Warwick) and Maru-a-Pula (My son). That's over a thousand people without the extension of the families.

What this means is that it is vital that we ensure that this virus does not get into these environments and if it does, that it does not spread. We have, as you know, taken precautions to prevent this happening. At the end of this is a list of those protocols currently in use at Thornhill. These, I believe, are very strong, but not impregnable and we are constantly vigilant in their maintenance and review them regularly. This term they have also been, all too often, put to the test.

We have also learned a lot in a very short space of time and I would like to share with you some of those lessons, information is essential in our response and the newer the information the better:

- If you are or anyone of your family are feeling unwell, do not send your child to school. This is vital, it may be something benign, but it may not be. I understand the worry, the stress that it may cause, but please make the right decision and stay at home until you can establish what it is that is making you feel unwell. Please keep us informed as well. Please use the COVID checklist to guide you in your decision making.
- As soon as you are affected, either by contact tracing, or your own knowledge of a positive contact, please keep your child at home. Then please contact us either by email or phoning the office.
- If you have had to be tested unexpectedly, (we know some companies have initiated regular test regimes) please keep your child at home until the result of that test is known, please inform us of that test result too.

I know that as a parent body you are doing this, but if it helps stop one other infection, it has been worth it. It is not my intention to preach, but we have a huge responsibility to keep students and staff safe and we take it very seriously, your help and support in this, is as always, greatly appreciated.

Information

We know that when the communication of contact tracing or infection occurs we are dealing with old news and time is not on our side. Often results of tests come in later in the day, after school has closed and we have to contact people in the evenings. We work as fast as we can with the information we have to assess the risk to other people and take the best course of action.

Closing classes

We have had to close classes and switch over to learning at home. We do this to try and limit the transmission of the virus within the class and within the wider school environment. We do not do this lightly, but please remember that we really have only a very limited number of effective responses to this disease at this moment in time. Indeed the world only has a limited set of responses to this virus for the time being.

Bubble testing is a way of assessing the closest contacts to try and determine if there has been transmission within the group. I know it is frustrating if your child is within one of those bubbles, but this has proved a valuable tool for evaluating our safety protocols. Having said this, in my experience in talking to parents is that they are very understanding when they receive the news, thank you for that.

Stigma

At Thornhill we have not and will not attach any stigma to this disease, it has hit us at the heart of our organisation and we feel for every one of our families either directly or indirectly affected by COVID-19. Any child returning to school will not be treated any differently, whether previously positive or negative, I can assure you of that. Please understand that we are here to help in any way possible, we have certain requirements about this, but they are there for everyone's safety and we will welcome you back as soon as those are fulfilled.

Again as I said, Information shared with us is key to our response, so please help us with ensuring that any information reaches us in really good time.

F Warwick (Deputy Head Curriculum)

Welcome Reception



Our new Reception children have settled in well and there is a lot of energy and enthusiasm on show when you go down to the unit for a visit. After a few weeks, the children feel like they are at 'home' and that is fantastic for us to witness. They greet me and always have a story, which the next child will try and 'better.' It is an exceptional privilege to have them with us at Thornhill and we trust each family will enjoy a magnificent and successful journey with us.

Std 3 Bird Feeders

Std 3 have been studying Living Things in Science. As part of our Science we tried designing and making bird feeders out of recycled material at home. The results were pretty amazing. Well done to all the children who gave it a try and a big thank you to the parents for helping out. The bird population in the Std 3 area is looking remarkably sleek and well fed.



Love in a Box December 2020



Thornhill Primary School concluded the erratic 2020 with commitment and as always, consideration and compassion. The Love in a Box project at Christmas time was a great success, donating in excess of 350 beautifully wrapped gifts and monetary contributions that were ready to bring joy to so many children. The cupboard was overflowing. The love gifts were distributed to six Charities namely: Princess Marina Hospital Pediatric Ward, SOS Children's Village, an Old Naledi Education Programme, Stepping Stones International, Maipelo Trust and parcels are also ready to be delivered to St Peters Daycare Centre and Orphanage too.

After such a difficult year, it was evident that donations were running low, so when we handed over the enormous bags of presents they were gratefully and joyfully received. We delivered the first lot to Princess Marina hospital and the gifts were graciously received by the matron in charge of the Pediatric Ward. The COVID restrictions prevented us from seeing the beautiful faces, but we know it would have been priceless. Thornhill continues to be a community conscious school and its generosity was felt in many hearts last December. From very young our pupils are encouraged to BE KIND and they are! Keep it up always, Thornhill Families. You made a tremendous difference.

Cambridge Exam Results

Last year our Std 6 students, as always, sat their Cambridge Primary Checkpoint exams in the core subjects of Maths, English and Science. This is a big moment in their lives, their first external exam. However, as we all know, 2020 was a far from normal year. 2020 was year marked by uncertainty, disruption and fear. It was, up until as late as the end of September 2020, far from certain that these students would sit these exams.

We were determined that we would find a way to sit these exams, the student's hard work and preparation demanded that. The students sat their exams in shifts and all involved awaited their results. We did not know what to expect or how much impact the disruption would have on this groups learning.

When I received the results I had to check them twice, the students had performed brilliantly, there was no hint that 2020 had had anything but a positive effect on their learning. Well done to them and the teachers who taught them.

Below is a list of students that scored either one two or three 6.0's in their exams, this is the top grade that Cambridge award at this level. Well done to the students on these lists, you can be very proud of your achievement. I would also like to mention, at this point, the students whose names may not be on this list, but for them the their grade was equally impressive, a personal best, a goal achieved and the realisation of all that hard work and determination. There are many of you, I know, and I salute your personal triumphs.

Students with three 6.0's

Vaishnav Subeesh, Chiche Mpoloka, Srivats Sivaramakrishnan, Joshua Steenkamp, Kathryn van Tonder, Joshua Bonna, Erin Dennehy, Muhammed Hoosan, Shubham Patil, Shaila Thomas, Esné Campher, Aisha Khan.

Students with two 6.0's

Shaan Haddad, Tinodana Makandwa, Petar Nikolic, Daniell Makuyana, Tatenda Kadzirange, Reece Hanke, Annika Smith, Leah Bruwer, Muhammed Chand, Savuti Chappelle-Molloy, Kagello Malumo, Leah Kokabi, Shamit Velambath, Zeeshan Khan, Amy Williams, Ishaan Modak.

Students with one 6.0's

Lefika Kalane, Etsi Morekisi, Nishita Shah, Madison Bradford, Reneiloe Mogamise, Farhaan Kala, Thobo Motsu, Matthew Arthey, Shriya Mudili, Lefa Ziga, Liam Chappelle-Molloy, Hector Arthey.

Std 6 Fun Hour 2020



Std 7 Fun Hour 2020



COVID Protocols at Thornhill

Hopefully you are all aware of what protocols we use at Thornhill to try and ensure the safety of all who learn and work at Thornhill.

School opens at 06:50

Entry into the school is not predetermined, but the entries are manned and the flow and distance between each student strictly regulated. Masks are to be worn at all times, two should be provided for your child each day (unless there is a specific medical condition that prevents this). Students without a mask will be provided with a disposable mask at the point of entry to the school.

Students sanitise and have their temperature screened on entry into Thornhill. If a student's temperature is elevated (37.4°C or above) on entry then they are taken to one of three isolation rooms until that temperature normalises or a parent is contacted to take them home.

Before entering class, students are again sanitised and then they sit, read or catch up on work before 07:15 in their classrooms. At 07:15 registers are taken as are temperatures. These temperatures are recorded and absences noted. Temperatures are recorded on a shared spreadsheet so they can be accessed by Standard staff, administrators and the school nurse. Unforeseen absences are then followed up by class teachers or the front office. Any student with an elevated temperature or who is unwell is taken to the school nurse, where they are further assessed and either returned to class or taken home by their parents.

Desks are spaced to prevent close contact and in some cases they have a screen to prevent direct droplet spray.

Students must bring all their own equipment as there will be no sharing of equipment. In the case of the Foundation department they will be provided with individual stationery.

Each time a student enters a class they are sanitised, wherever they have come from.

Students stay within their class bubbles at break times and do not mix.

Temperatures are taken again after break and all students sanitised. These are recorded and if necessary the elevated temperature procedure is followed.

Movement between classes has been reduced to a bare minimum, but when this needs to be done; prepositioned dots on the ground have been sprayed to ensure that students line up in a socially distanced manner. When moving we use the simple "check your front" rule. Students are responsible for their own distance from the person in front of them. They are also escorted by a staff member to ensure that they are adhering to our distance rules.

Entry into and exit from the class or learning environment is controlled and in a phased manner to ensure distancing is maintained at this time.

Classrooms are cleaned at least twice a day and the toilets areas are cleaned very regularly. Break time areas are sprayed down with sanitisers after each break. Classrooms and other indoor areas are fogged by a specialised aerosol machine on a regular basis and immediately in a case of a known infection within the school. Halls, ICT labs and other areas also are sanitised after each use by anyone.

Entry into Thornhill is strictly controlled and wherever possible meetings with parents and other stakeholders are conducted online.

Students are released from school in a predetermined and staggered manner and from predetermined exit points.

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Thornhill ICT Department



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