



Otorohanga College

Ko te mana mō mua i te whakamana
Honour before Honours

Principal: Ms Traci Liddall Dip Tchg, Dip TEFL, BA, PGDip Ed, M Ed (hons)

20th May 2020

Kia ora e te whānau, staff and students

Re: School Community Update

COVID-19

We hope that you, your families and loved ones are all well after our once in a lifetime experience that was the COVID-19 Lockdown. After this unsettled period, we are excited to see the return of students to school and we celebrate the focus on wellbeing for all.

Our Board of Trustees (BOT) extends our very grateful thanks to Traci Liddall, her leadership team and all staff who worked under quite extraordinary and constantly changing circumstances during Levels 3 and 4. We also appreciate that teaching, administration and Hostel staff are currently providing three layers of support during Level 2, for those students who remain at home; are at school part time; and, are at school full time. We acknowledge that this is a tremendous organisational and teaching feat - thank you to you all.

BOT complaint to Waitomo News and Media Council

Many of you will be aware that the Waitomo News published an article in December 2019 that revealed sensitive and legal employment matters at the College. The BOT believed that the article, and some previous Waitomo News articles, were damaging to our College, our students and staff, and would negatively influence the public's view of the College over matters that were not accurately or fairly reported. We remain of this view.

With a strong and relentless determination to always put the needs of the College community first, in January the BOT made the decision to submit a formal complaint to the Waitomo News about this article. In our complaint, we submitted that the article breached the following four media principles:

- Accuracy, Fairness and Balance;
- Privacy;
- Comment and Fact; and,
- Confidentiality.

The BOT was not satisfied with the Waitomo News' response to our complaint and accordingly, we directed our complaint to the Media Council about the same December 2019 article. The BOT received the Media Council's decision regarding our complaint on Monday 18th May. Their decision was to not uphold our complaint. This means the Media Council did not accept the facts and evidence that we put forward to demonstrate what we considered to be breaches of the above media principles.

Whilst disappointing, we accept the Media Council's decision and seek to build a more collaborative and respectful relationship with the local paper, in the best interests of students and our school community.

The Waitomo News will exercise their own discretion regarding what to publish, and when, regarding our complaint, however, we assure the College community that the matters reported on are managed appropriately, with correct support, and away from the public arena - which is required of us. A dilemma

faced by schools is striking the difficult balance of determining what is in the public interest when we have legal obligations around confidentiality, natural justice, and employment contracts.

The Media Council's decision does not deter us from championing our students and College. We will continue to put students and staff first, and ensure correct decisions are made to raise the profile of the College - for all. We, along with Traci and her team, remain hopeful, optimistic and determined in our leadership.

Since the article was published, we have made significant gains in the recruitment of excellent staff, supporting current staff and putting measures in place to advance the College.

Staffing

We extend a warm welcome to the following staff who have recently taken up positions at the College:

- Rebecca Rapley - Head of English Faculty
- Sione Pole - Pathways Coordinator
- Annelies Black - Librarian
- Louise Sowerby - Guidance Counsellor
- Areta Kahura - Junior Learning Programme teacher

We say farewell to Lillian Williams who has taken up a position of Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour. We also farewell Joyce Sneddon who will be pursuing further studies in the field of counselling. We wish Lillian and Joyce all the best in their future careers and we thank them for their contribution to the College.

The BOT will resume our monthly face to face meetings on the 28th May and after that we will continue with our regular monthly updates to our school community. The BOT is in the process of selecting a person to fill the casual vacancy on the Board, and when that process is complete, we will advise our community of the selection.

We once again thank you for supporting our local College and for understanding that the 'shop local' mantra also extends to supporting our local schools. Supporting our local schools will not only ensure our students' and schools' success, but also the success of our wider community.

Stay safe, be kind and commit to doing something every day that enriches your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around you.

Ngā mihi nui



Lorraine Fox
Board of Trustees Chairperson
On behalf of the Ōtorohanga College Board of Trustees
botchair@otocoll.school.nz