

Dear Parents, Caregivers, and Students,

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Last week the Minister of Education released recent updates to our assessment and reporting systems. As we head into this new academic year, I want to ensure you are clear on what these changes mean for your child.

New Reporting Standards for 2026

While our school will continue to provide the rich, detailed feedback you value, including comments on school values, social development, and individual goals, our reporting will now feature a specific focus on the refreshed curriculum in three core areas:

- **Reading**
- **Writing**
- **Mathematics**

These areas are the primary focus for 2026. The new reporting guidance is designed to give you a clearer, more consistent picture of your child's progress and achievement. As the curriculum for other learning areas is finalised, further reporting supports will be introduced.

Why the Change?

The goal is transparency. We want every parent and whānau member to know exactly where their child stands and what their next steps are. This shift is supported by comprehensive new resources, including progress descriptors and exemplar reports developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and key education groups like ERO (Education Review Office).

Written reports take the form of the comprehensive goal sheets that are discussed at our 3 Way Conferences (set in Term 1 and Term 3). At the end of the school year a full and indepth report is sent home showing each child's level of achievement in the curriculum areas and we include comments around attainment levels of our school values. More information will be released around how you can support your child's learning including links to ministry websites to further explain the changes.

We look forward to sharing your child's learning progress with you throughout the year. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's learning I encourage you to contact the classroom teacher in the first instance.

Have a fantastic week!
Gene and the 'H' Team

Foxton Beach Trip - THURSDAY!

Thank you to all those who have offered to provide transport for our big trip on Thursday. You'll find a note in your child's KIT Book with details. A reminder that we will be leaving school at **8.50am** (don't be late), and will be back by 3pm.

Gear List:

- shorts & t-shirt (no singlets please)
- jandals/scuffs/sandals/crocs (no shoes and socks please)
- morning tea and lunch, including a drink (water only)
- warm sweatshirt
- togs and towel (girls: wear togs underneath clothes, boys: wear togs and a t-shirt)
- we encourage children to wear rash suits
- underwear/clothes to put on after swimming
- sunhat & sunblock (please ensure students come to school with sunblock on already)

Senior Camps Coming Up

Best wishes to R7 and R8 for their camps which are coming up over the next couple of weeks. They'll be staying at the Kawhatau Outdoor Education Centre, inland from Mangaweka. Camps are a real strength of school life at Halcombe, and we are sure our students will enjoy bonding with their classmates and teacher, having adventures and making memories.

Halcombe School Triathlon

We are all go for the Halcombe School Triathlon being held on Friday 27 February. This is an event for everyone and is suitable for all ages and skill levels (please let us know urgently if your child doesn't have a bike - we can help). We have designed this event to be all about fun, and giving it a go. This is a fantastic spectator sport too, so we hope to see lots of parents there, cheering on the kids! Parents please note - you'll need to stay in your designated spaces, and it is not necessary/appropriate for you to run alongside your child at any time. Please see the attached advertisement for more information, or come and see Di if you have any questions.

Basic Facts Testing: Year 4-8

Quick recall of basic facts is a fundamental skill in maths. Those who know their basic facts are able to apply their skills to all areas of maths, and achieve more success. Without doubt, those students who do not have immediate recall of their basic facts, struggle to make progress in maths once they reach Year 6. This is something teachers keep a very close eye on. We test our students on their basic facts three times a year, and parents will be familiar with seeing the results in KIT Books. We test on up to $10 + 10$, and 10×10 , and their reversals. If they haven't already, students will be completing this test over the next week or so. When you look at the results, please take note of any areas your child needs to improve. We expect students to be scoring 90% or above in all four operations by the end of Year 6. We have a number of students in Year 7 and 8 who are not there yet. We are hopeful parents across all year groups will support their child to practice their basic facts at home - some ideas are attached. Don't wait until the teacher discusses this at 3WCs, get started now! We cannot overstate the importance of this. Thank you for your support.

Scholastic Book Club

The latest catalogues are out now. You have the option of ordering online directly from Scholastic via the LOOP website or pay cash at the office. See the catalogue for order forms and full details. Orders close **20 February**.

Interhouse Competition

The 2026 interhouse competition has begun! The first event of the year is flippaball. Today was our second day of competition, and already everyone has their game face on! Good luck to all four houses - may the best house win!

Check out this action shot of the game between Kauri and Matai yesterday!



HELPING AT HOME WITH BASIC FACTS

Basic Facts are fundamental to achieving success in maths. They form the building blocks for higher-level math concepts. When a child masters their math facts, these concepts will be significantly easier and the student will be better equipped to solve them faster. Basic facts need to be KNOWLEDGE, like children knowing where they live, or how old they are or $1+1$ - they just KNOW it and don't have to think about it or work it out.

If your child is younger than Year 6, we want to see them develop their known facts: start with addition, then subtraction, then multiplication and finally division.

Examples from our tests are:

Add up to 10 + 10	Multiply up to 10 x 10	Subtract up to 10 - 10	Divide up to 100 ÷ 10
$5 + 9 =$	$7 \times 7 =$	$10 - 3 =$	$28 \div 4 =$
$10 + 3 =$	$7 \times 9 =$	$8 - 1 =$	$10 \div 5 =$
$5 + 1 =$	$6 \times 6 =$	$7 - 5 =$	$40 \div 8 =$
$3 + 9 =$	$6 \times 9 =$	$8 - 0 =$	$72 \div 9 =$
$4 + 8 =$	$8 \times 9 =$	$6 - 1 =$	$30 \div 5 =$
$3 + 0 =$	$9 \times 1 =$	$7 - 2 =$	$48 \div 6 =$
$3 + 3 =$	$8 \times 8 =$	$6 - 0 =$	$42 \div 7 =$

- Division facts are the most difficult for children to learn quickly and off by heart.
- Teach children how to divide by turning the equation around, then multiplying eg $48 \div 6 =$ can be worked out by multiplying $6 \times \square = 48$. This starts to build a 'family of facts' eg. $3 \times 4 = 12$, $4 \times 3 = 12$, $12 \div 4 = 3$ and $12 \div 3 = 4$.
- In multiplication start with 1x, then 10 x, 2x and 5x. Move on to 4x, 3x, 6x, 7x, 8x and lastly 9x.
- Use the words 'groups of' instead of 'multiply' or 'times' to begin with eg. 4 groups of 5 = 7 groups of 3 =
- Practice basic facts often. It's not much use doing a whole lot for the first two nights, then nothing for the next week. Learning basic facts takes time and it takes LOTS of practice. Little and often is the key.
- There is nothing wrong with learning basic facts by 'chanting' or rote learning.

FUN WAYS TO LEARN BASIC FACTS:

- Learn them in the car - look at number plates and add or multiply the first two numbers, or subtract the lowest number from the highest.
- Use playing cards or dice - add or multiply the numbers together. Cards and dice can be used in many ways to help consolidate learning in basic facts.
- Write the facts on cards with answers on the back. Sort into two piles of known and unknown.
- Teach the patterns and connections eg. If I know 5×5 , then I must know 5×6 , because it's just 5 more. This leads easily to more difficult facts, for example if I know 2×3 is 6, then $20 \times 30 = 600$.
- Find apps that reinforce basic facts. Choose carefully - some of them are a waste of time. Limit this screen time to five minutes at a time, perhaps twice a day.
- Look for the 'rules' eg. if multiplying by 5, the answer will always end in 0 or 5. So if I multiply by 15 or 35, the answer will also end in 0 or 5.
- Make up word rhymes for the key unknown facts eg. six eights are forty eight, I saw the bull jump over the gate; eight eights are sixty four, we love Richie McCaw, seven nines are sixty three, there's a monkey up that tree.

Whatever you do - keep it fun and keep the pressure off if it starts to affect their attitude to maths.

If you need any more suggestions about how to help your children with learning their basic facts, please ask your child's teacher. They will be able to help you.

Halcombe School Triathlon

27 February 2026

10.30-12.30pm

run - bike - swim

students must bring:



togs & towel
running shoes
bike & helmet



(make sure the tyres are pumped up)

THIS EVENT IS ABOUT GIVING IT A GO AND HAVING FUN!

WHĀNAU WELCOME

**If you don't have a bike,
please let us know so
we can get something
organised.**



GROUP	RUN	BIKE	SWIM DISTANCE
YEAR 1 & 2	collect 2 bands	collect 3 bands	50m (4 lengths)
YEAR 3 & 4	collect 3 bands	collect 4 bands	50m (4 lengths)
YEAR 5 & 6	collect 4 bands	collect 5 bands	100m (8 lengths)
Year 7 & 8	collect 5 bands	collect 6 bands	100m (8 lengths)

If students cannot swim the distance, they can walk, run or use a flutterboard. Any stroke is acceptable.