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Dear Parents

I trust that you have had a lovely Easter break and have managed to spend some family time together. Term 1 is of course now part of history and I am very much looking forward to the new term and all that it holds.

During the break as I reflected on the start of the school year, I was struck by the amount of activity we had fitted into ten weeks: I am sure you will agree with me that life appears to be speeding up. Such a statement, one would think, would not stand up to much analysis; surely every generation has felt they are doing more, and in a shorter time, than the previous generation. And, no doubt we also feel the pressures we must cope with in this new, hyper fast, interconnected world, are fresh to us and uniquely stressful.

In a book I read during the break, 'The Great Acceleration', Robert Colville, argues that this perception is in fact a reality. He writes about how research clearly shows that those who live in larger cities are doing more, and doing it more quickly, than those who live in smaller communities. So, it is true: life in the rapidly expanding Auckland really is getting faster. If you do not believe me, try this experiment: the next time you walk down Queen Street look at people's feet. You'll soon notice that everyone is walking in perfect 'lockstep'. Try as we might to assert our own individual stride, we will inevitably revert to following the same walking pattern and pace of those around us. And if those around us are moving quickly so will we. This process of imitating the natural rhythm of others is called 'entrainment' and it all adds to the great acceleration. With this acceleration comes a dwindling of patience; we expect everything instantly and as soon as we know that things like pizza delivery by drone is possible we want it. Speed seems to define our times like conflict defined the previous century, we want it all and we want it now and it seems that in the very near future, we will want it even faster than that!

As parents (and I count myself here too), time takes on a peculiar new velocity. If the social and professional worlds around us move in a blur, how much faster it goes when we have children. As the father of two (15 and 13-years old) I find myself asking regularly: where did the time go? What did that baby you once held in your arms turn into? Can he really be that giant boy constantly holding open the fridge doors? Who is that fearless and confident teenage girl who races around the netball court? Was she really once the same girl who believed in the tooth fairy? Where are those children now? I miss them.

School, it seems, accentuates this sense of time passing. Indeed, time dominates the lives of teachers, students and parents: the school year runs its own idiosyncratic calendar, shaped by terms along with fixtures, concerts, lunchtimes, intervals, holidays, trips, lessons and exams. What we are trying to achieve in the Middle School is to ensure that every student can flourish and thrive within these time constraints, and to grow up as individuals. We want to foster an independence of mind. We are also very aware of the need for students to conform, follow the rules and to develop within certain parameters. Our students understand there is a strong safety net beneath them to catch them if, and when, they fall. We are, in our own way, trying to encourage a complex community of children and teenagers to follow the same patterns; or to put it another way, to work in 'lockstep' and in a closely related movement of entrainment.

We believe we do this by creating clear identities which students respond positively and strongly to: they are proud of their school, their House, and their class or homeroom. Following the rules is simply adhering to the expectations of common sense and

decency. So, just as the world is speeding up, so are schools and Kristin included. I have worked in schools for 25-years, much of that time in boarding, and the big difference between now and when I started out is the impact that technology has on almost every aspect of everyday life. Our students socialise differently, sometimes choosing online friendships over face-to-face contact. They learn differently, sometimes choosing the internet over the library. They also relax differently, sometimes gaming with others around the world rather than kicking a ball around outside. Another key area of change is how parents and students interact during the school day: many are in constant contact either email, text, FaceTime, social media or voice calls. This, of course, brings new challenges as the boundaries between home and school blur and can, at times, undermine the school's authority. A teacher at a previous school once told me that she gave an assignment back to a student with a low grade on it and before the lesson had finished the teacher received an email from the parent asking to discuss this serious issue; the student was in Year 7.

There are, of course, many positives to this new form of school and home entrainment and, by working in close conjunction with each other, schools, parents and teachers are better informed about issues that affect the students for whom they are responsible. I am constantly impressed by the depth of knowledge and understanding my staff have of the wellbeing of their students and this is supported by the positive relationships between parents and teachers. Speed, and the fast interchange of information, really does help here and I encourage you again to use your child's Dean as your first point of contact for any issue relating to their education.

The best teachers model behaviour they want their students to aspire to and, collectively, Kristin as a school does the same. To this end, we want all our students to push into what is called 'desirable difficulties'. This means playing some form of sport, pushing oneself in subjects that are not 'favourites', participating in a cultural activity, singing in a choir, taking part in community service. Most of the activities at Kristin happen in real time, away from a screen, and while technology might be speeding things up and adding to life's complexity, we will always keep things in perspective and I call on you as parents to support us in this endeavour. This term we will be actively encouraging students to be active at intervals and lunch time, to put devices away and to engage with others.

Ultimately, school is essentially a social place where there is laughter, tears, mud, mess, mistakes, as well as joy, inspiration and aspiration. This, I believe, is our strength in the Middle School and there is always time to slow down, to reflect and be offline and nurture the qualities that make us who we are, free from the lockstep of collective endeavour to allow enough time for our students to form and develop their own dreams.

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of key events for the Middle School this term. We start the term with our rescheduled Middle School Cross Country event which will take place on Thursday 4 May starting at 8.30am. Parents are of course very welcome to attend and support, and I look forward to seeing you there on the day. The Middle School House Music competition is another event I would like to draw your attention to and this takes place on Thursday 1 June starting at 1.30 pm. Last year this was highly successful and showcased not only our student musical talent but also the House spirit and a strong competitive element. This year promises more of the same with the theme being ABBA! So why not be a Super Trouper, Take a Chance on Me and see if The Winner Takes It All on the day? Come along and see what promises to be a great fun event.

Finally, welcome to the new students and families starting at Kristin this term. I hope that the transition goes well and I look forward to meeting you all in person in due course. Have a wonderful Term 2 and please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

Dave Scott
Middle School Principal