



Term 1, 2026
Year 8 Learning Overview



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We look forward to working with you and your child to make 2026 a memorable year and to help them achieve their goals. Listed below are the contact emails for your child's Homeroom Teacher.

Year 8 Teaching Team Contact details:

Josh McCabe (Dean) - 8JMC	josh.mccabe@southwell.school.nz
Sarah Gregory - 8SG	sarah.gregory@southwell.school.nz
Candy Hart - 8CH	candy.hart@southwell.school.nz
Pen Holah - 8PH	penelope.holah@southwell.school.nz
Mark Pearson - 8MP	mark.pearson@southwell.school.nz
Rebecca Stark - 8RST	rebecca.stark@southwell.school.nz

Upcoming events and useful things to note about Year 8:

The Week Ahead

This will be emailed to Parents and Caregivers every Friday from the School Administrator. It is important that you are receiving this and that you read it carefully, as it has useful information about what is coming up in the week ahead. The School's Weekly Themes can be found here [School's Weekly Themes](#).

Timetable

You will notice on The Week Ahead that we have labeled our weeks as Week A or Week B. This is to help us run a balanced timetable across two weeks and maximise our resources. For example, there may be PE

on a Monday and Thursday in Week A but a Tuesday and Friday in Week B. Bringing gear on the right day will help students to keep organised.

Komodo

Student wellbeing is central to what we do at Southwell. We have a network of support to help us engage with our students to achieve good outcomes. We add to this network by partnering with Komodo, a wellbeing survey platform that can help us with levels of student wellbeing. It is also another avenue that students can use to 'check in' with their teacher. We have been using this successfully for the last few years.

Wellbeing surveys are sent out fortnightly, but it will not be compulsory for students to complete these. Here is a link to an [information sheet about Komodo](#).

Learning Conferences

Learning Conferences will take place in Week 3 on the 9th -12th of February. Boarders' conferences are on Friday, 13th February. Please book online as soon as possible to get your preferred slot. The link will be emailed to you from the School Administrator. Learning conferences are a great opportunity for you to get to know your child's teacher, and for the teacher to learn more about your child. A short questionnaire will be sent home with your child in Week 2. Please bring this to your conference.



Specialist classes

Your child will be made aware of their timetable and may need your help initially to get them into a routine. They need to have their P.E. gear and library books at school on certain days. For Science lessons, covered shoes need to be worn in the Lab. It is important for our students to work towards being organised and self-managing.

Uniform and Behaviour (On and Offline)

Please refer to the [handbook](#) for the correct uniform details. We have discussed the expectations and [Code of Conduct](#) with our Year 8 students. In our Home Rooms, we will be working together to create an Online Safety Agreement, agreeing on specific boundaries that will help maximise in-class learning time. Students have been informed that if they do bring a phone to school, it must stay in their bag from when they first arrive at school until the last bell of the day.

School hats are compulsory in Terms 1 and 4. All children must wear their hats during break times. Please ensure your child brings their hat to school each day this Term or leaves it hanging on their hook at school. Please make sure all items of the school uniform are clearly named. This is very important.

Sport

Trials and practices start in week 2. Year 7 & 8 Summer Sports musters are scheduled for Tuesday, 3rd and Thursday, 5th February. Once the sports programme is underway, sports gear will be required at school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in addition to the days your child has PE. If the weather is inclement, coaches will supervise teams in their classrooms until normal collection times.

Sport practice days and times

Tuesdays 2.30 - 3.15pm

Thursdays 3.20 - 4.10pm

NB: There is no after-school sports training in Week 3 (Thursday 12th February) due to Learning Conferences.

Communication with your child

If you need to communicate with your child during the school day, we ask you to call or email the office, and the message will be forwarded to the Homeroom teachers.

Students do not have access to their phones during the day.

We also remind you that students need to sign out at the office if they are leaving the school grounds during school time. They are also required to wear their full school uniform.

Homework

The homework guidelines for Year 8 are as follows: Homework, as a general guide, should be able to be completed within 45 minutes per evening. We would like all students to read daily for at least 20 mins, complete class-related tasks and any specialist/ Maths Buddy tasks set. If, for any reason, your child can not / has not completed the tasks assigned, they need to communicate with their teacher.

How You Can Help at Home

Supporting your child's learning doesn't have to mean sitting down for hours of extra work. Often, the most valuable support is simply showing interest and providing a space for them to practise what they are learning in class.

Support with Mathematics: MathsBuddy

This year, we are using MathsBuddy to support our classroom learning. It is a fantastic tool that allows students to learn at their own pace and revisit tricky concepts.

- **Encourage the "Pause and Rewind":** One of the best features of MathsBuddy is the video tutorials. If your child is stuck on a problem, encourage them to watch the video, pause it, and rewind until they feel confident. Often, students will skip past this step, so it is important for them to make sure they understand the concept they are working on before diving into the activities.
- **Weekly Reports:** You can choose to receive weekly email reports to see how your child is progressing. This is a great way to celebrate their hard work and identify any areas where they might need a little extra encouragement.
- **Short Bursts:** 15–20 minutes of focused practice on MathsBuddy a few times a week is often more effective than one long session.

Support with Reading and Writing

- **Be an Active Reader:** Year 8 students still benefit from seeing the adults in their lives reading. Whether it's a novel, a magazine, or the news, sharing what you are reading can spark great conversations.
- **Real World Writing:** Encourage your child to take charge of "real" writing tasks at home. Write the weekly shopping list out, send an email to a relative, or even draft a letter to a community leader about an issue.
- **Talk about the 'Inquiry':** Ask your child what they are discovering in their Inquiry theme this term. Discussing the big ideas at home helps them form stronger opinions and better vocabulary, which

directly improves their writing and comprehension.

Stationery

Each student has been issued with a stationery pack to start the year. As teachers, we have also found that it is helpful if students bring in a set of inexpensive headphones to keep in the classroom to assist with audiobooks and text to voice apps on the computers. All stationery to be named, please.

School Hours

Children will be supervised in the classroom from 8.00 am onwards, and the school day finishes at 3.20 pm. Any children who are not collected by 3.45pm will be supervised at After School Care in the Library.



Camp 2026

Thank you once again for all the kind offers of help. We will have a small team of parents joining us on camp. To those parent helpers, please mark Friday, February 13th, 5.30 pm on your calendars, as there will be a short Camp Parent Helper Meeting. It will be in 8JMC, above the library.

Please read the information in [this link](#) carefully, as it covers everything you need to know regarding Year 8 Camp. It has a link to the OPC Form. Please complete it ASAP - still a few to come in.

School Calendar

Click [HERE](#) for the Term 1 School Calendar. Please note this is updated regularly so you do need to check for changes.

Learning in Year 8

Term 1 Inquiry

We will be looking to hit the ground running with our inquiry learning, with students having an opportunity to explore a few different themes throughout the first term. We will be continuing to work through and align with the IB Curriculum as we explore our themes of work.

Whole Year - How We Express Ourselves

Term 1 - How the World Works + Sharing the Planet

Reading - Year 8 Teachers

During the first few weeks of term, teachers will focus on getting to know our Year 8 students as readers. We want to understand their interests, their habits, and what they are capable of. A big part of our work will be showing how reading and writing go hand-in-hand; the more we read, the better we write, and vice versa. To make learning meaningful, the books and articles we use in class will link directly to our Term 1 Inquiry theme.

Southwell values reading for pleasure, and there is a huge amount of research which extols the value of reading for pleasure. As such, we timetable 10 minutes a day for all children and staff to just read.

Children should still be encouraged to read at home, but we want to get the message across loud and clear that reading is non-negotiable. Feel free to pop in and chat to the librarians about daily reading and how you can help your child.

Writing - Year 8 Teachers

Our writers will be guided through the "Writing Process", which helps them take an idea from a simple brainstorm through to a published final piece. We will be teaching a variety of 'Writing Tools'; specific techniques they can choose from to make their writing more powerful. We also want to help students become more independent; teachers will support them as they set their own writing goals and reflect on what they have achieved.

Mathematics - Year 8 Teachers / Mr Rees-Gibbs / Mrs Van Heuven

This term is all about setting up good routines and clear expectations so everyone can succeed. To make sure every student gets the right level of support, our maths classes are organised into groups based on specific learning needs.



- **Number:** We will focus on strategies for solving problems with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. Our goal is to show students how to apply these skills to solve real life problems they might meet outside of school.
- **Algebra:** Students will become pattern seekers, investigating how number sequences work and learning the rules to solve more complex problems.

Science - Mrs Steffert

This term, Year 8 students are charging into a practical unit all about energy. Through hands-on investigations, students will learn to identify input and output energies and write transformation equations. We will take a closer look at thermal energy (conduction, convection, and radiation) and the concept of waste. Understanding renewable and non-renewable energy sources will encourage students to explore how design and innovative thinking can create a more sustainable energy future.



Physical Education - Classroom Teachers, PE Teachers

What in the World?

Students will explore a variety of national and international cultural games, focusing on transferring their skill sets, including tactical understanding, into unfamiliar games. Reflecting on the question, "How can I use my sporting knowledge in games I don't know?" Covering Kho kho (India), Kabbadi (India) and an individual Inquiry.

Swimming

Students will refine their swimming techniques and reflect on their performance by exploring swimming drills appropriate to their ability level. They will work toward showcasing their progress at our School Swimming School.

Just let me play!

Students will have the chance to simply enjoy participating in physical activity, whether revisiting a previous activity, discovering something new, or playing old favourites

Technology - Mr Williams

The students will use STEAM to solve fun technology challenges.

Healthy Choices - Mrs Bradding

Healthy Choices in Term 1 will be looking at minimising food wastage and the technology used for preserving fresh food. Our students will also build on their general cooking skills with a focus on knife skills and a range of different cooking techniques. Akonga will also be learning about how to maintain and enhance their own health and wellbeing across all areas of their lives.

Christian Education - Reverend Canon Troon

This term, all Year 8 students will be centring their learning around the major seasons of the Church's year - Lent and Easter. Secondary to this, students will be exploring a range of personal experiences young people have had on their spiritual journeys.

Music - Mrs Albery

Students will experience the practical use of the musical element harmony. This will be achieved by learning to play chords on the guitar. During this unit of work students will learn the difference between practising, rehearsing and performance.

Drama - Mrs Walker

This term, all Year 8 students will experience and explore the techniques and conventions of drama. In groups, they will learn to express their ideas and work collaboratively to structure and perform dramatic scenarios. After Camp, all students will have the opportunity to audition for this year's Southwell Opera, "Annie".



Te Reo - Whaea Whetu

This term, aakonga will continue to build their understanding of te reo Maaori and tikanga Maaori through meaningful, real-life contexts. We will learn and practise karakia to open and close each session, as well as karakia used to bless kai. Students will also investigate Maaori place names, with a particular focus on our local area, exploring how these names came about and the stories and meanings behind them. In preparation for camp, we will look at place names we may encounter, helping students make connections between language, history and the whenua around them.

Languages and Culture - Mrs Grant

Gakusei (students) will explore Japanese language and culture — Nihon (日本) and Nihongo (日本語) — through the lens of modern and traditional Japan. Students will discover cultural icons, rituals, and traditions alongside pop-culture favourites like anime, manga, and iconic characters. Using these elements as inspiration, students will create a Japanese language book to share with junior classes. This project will foster connection, creativity, and cultural awareness, while preparing students for Book Week next term.

Art - Mrs Wing

Year 8 students will be working towards creating a Dr Seuss mixed media artwork, which demonstrates a variety of techniques, processes and ideas that are used and valued in art. With a focused learning goal to develop their artistic skill base using a range of techniques, materials, tools and technologies.

This term ART EXTENSION is happening and is being offered to the Year 8's.

If your child would like to be part of art extension please ask them to come into the art room to sign up with Mrs Wing & Mrs Wathen. Spaces are limited.

Art extension will be on a Wednesday afternoon 3:20 - 4:30 pm

Pottery - Mrs Wathen

Students will explore and build on their clay techniques using pinch, slab, and hand-building methods. Inspired by the imaginative world of Dr Seuss, they'll discover how artists use shape, balance, and playful design to bring their ideas to life in three-dimensional form.

Library - Mrs Walch

The focus throughout the year in the library is primarily to reinforce a love of literature and reading for pleasure as students negotiate increasingly busy schedules. Each library session includes some time for children to choose a book and read, and also a teaching session, which will often involve a short conversation around how to navigate online mis and disinformation.

We look forward to a great year together.

Thank you for your support from the **2026 Year 8 Teachers**,

Josh McCabe (Dean)

Sarah Gregory

Candy Hart

Pen Holah

Mark Pearson

Rebecca Stark

