



OTAGO GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS **NEWSLETTER** TERMS 1 & 2 2025

Message from our Principal, Mrs Bridget Davidson

Kia ora koutou, greetings and hello to our friends all around the world.

We have had a wonderful start to 2025, welcoming many international students to our school. We are delighted to have many new students enrolling and staying for both short and long periods of time. Our Department of International Students is an important and valued part of our school. International students add a global dimension and enrich the lives of both host school students and visiting school students by the friendships and connections they make here.

Learning has been significant and we enjoyed top results in New Zealand over all levels of NCEA and Scholarship when final results were released in February. International students are able to have NCEA recognised internationally for entrance to universities worldwide. Of course many of our students stay on in Dunedin to study at Otago University and Te Pūkenga – the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology. Dunedin is famous for its student culture and friendliness. It is



a compact student city which offers unique learning experiences – inside and outside the classroom. Wildlife, outstanding natural scenery, activities, school camps, extra-curricular activities and friendships are international student highlights.

Jessie McGrouther is our Head Student this year and is leading an energetic group of prefects. Our Global Prefect is Allison Han and we have a Global Leadership Programme, which is available to all students. International students will have a head start in this as they are already bi- or multi-lingual in many cases and bring international experience and perspective. Students receive badges for each stage of the programme.



In Term One, we enjoyed Sports Day, our Welcome Barbeque, Year 9 Camp with the Year 9 and 13 'Sisters' programme, Year 12 Borland camp for Biology and Geography, Active April 'Get Active' day, Outdoor Education climbing, biking and hiking camps, production rehearsals, the first Enviroschools workshops of the year and our whole school Cross-country running event. Life is busy and rewarding at Otago Girls' High School.

Term Two started with our whole school Cross-Country run and the start of Winter Sports, including rugby, basketball and ice hockey! Many internationals attended the camp at Mount Cook. In the Arts we had our Jazz Band, Showquest Dance, Production and Choir performances as well as a Pacific Art exhibition, Rockquest and House Haka competition.

Rose Gilani (rsg@otagogirls.school.nz) is our Director of International Students and Katherine Boomer (bm@otagogirls.school.nz) is our Dean of International Students. The Department of International Students looks after our students really well and makes sure that every international experience is amazing and memorable. Please get in touch to visit or enquire about future enrolments. We love to welcome international students to our school.

We look forward to all of the learning and activity in this third term as we approach the end of the winter months. Don't forget to follow our Facebook and Instagram pages [otagogirlshighschool](#) and [otagogirlshigh](#) to see all the latest stories and achievements at our school. Our [website](#) continues to be the place to go for all official information.

Ngā mihi nui
Bridget Davidson
 Tumuaki ~ Principal



Message from our Director of International Students, Mrs Rose Gilani

So much has taken place in the first half of 2025, yet somehow it has all passed by really quickly. Thank you to everyone for their support during the challenging times. While saying goodbye to our leaving students, for the very first time I saw our students crying and crying and crying because they had had a really good time and they did not want to leave. Seeing this made everything worth it.

I would like to thank our Principal, Mrs Bridget Davidson, for all her support and for always being there to listen to my suggestions. Another big thank you to our Dean of International Students, Mrs Katherine Boomer, for her positivity and care of our students. I would like to express sincere gratitude to Mrs Jill Grant, our Attendance Officer, who has always been there to help our Department, giving us support in all areas -- from report sending, to taking care of our sick students; to uniform shopping, joining us on outings and always being there to support. Mrs Grant completed 22 years in our school at the end of Term 2 and we will miss her presence and her contributions, specifically to our department and our international students.





Thanks to an increase in our number of students, and with Mrs Davidson's blessings, we were able to start our International Council. This is a real opportunity for international students to help other international students and it is something that will benefit future international students in the years to come. One of ideas which came from an international student was to improve the orientation process for international students. Another idea was to design a new international badge for our international students. We also had several new activities planned by the Council to make student life more colourful for international students. There's always room for improvement and having the opportunity to receive the ideas directly from international students themselves is a brilliant way to do it.



We had some wonderful visits from overseas delegates. Mrs Miki Shimada, Vice President from our sister school Bunkyo Gakuin High School (Japan), spent a few days in Dunedin with us. We also welcomed Miss Jutamas Poprasit from Chitralada School (Thailand). We look forward to fostering the special relationship we share with both Chitralada School and Bunkyo Gakuin High School.

It has been a busy and exciting time! We're looking forward to more memorable and exciting days ahead as the year progresses.





International Team

Mrs Rose Gilani (Director of International Students)

Mrs Bridget Davidson (Principal)

Mrs Katherine Boomer (Dean of International Students)

NCEA Endorsements from 2024

Level 1: none

Level 2: Allison Han (Excellence)

Level 3: Grace Dong (Excellence), Jara Rabbe (Excellence), Hebe Leung (Merit), Marlana Pfeiffer (Merit), Pauline Strauss (Merit)

Term 1 International Students

YEAR 9	YEAR 10	YEAR 11	YEAR 12	YEAR 13
Plearn Taiborwornpitak	Moana Li	Yiling Zhang	Ada Hu	Allison Han
	Ai Yoshikawa	Silei Chen	Sumika Moriya	Mai Someya
	Nu-bua Yodmani	Lucia Shen	Zifeng Chen	Juliane Stormanns
	Moji Lertariyanunt	Kincsoe Szabo	Kira Linnewedel	Marlena Seifke
		Shion Omori	Antonia Barten	Lea Graichen Diaz
		Olivia Yang	Hiroka Nakazawa	
		Haruki Ueda	Gaeun Park	
		Sana Takeuchi	Lia Frederike Koch	
		Akane Kurihara	Shiho Sakai	
		Tsubaki Takayama		
		Nayu Okada		
		Sakune Fujita		
		Chika Kajiyama		
		Yua Watanabe		
		Tamaki Ishii		
		Haruko Suzuki		
		Saki Amao		
		Annika Huebner		

Term 2 International Students

YEAR 9	YEAR 10	YEAR 11	YEAR 12	YEAR 13
Plearn Taiborwornpitak	Moana Li	Yiling Zhang	Kira Linnewedel	Juliane Stormanns
	Nu-bua Yodmani	Silei Chen	Gaeun Park	Marlena Siefke
	Moji Lertariyanunt	Lucia Shen	Zifeng Chen	Lea Graichen Diaz
		Kincsoe Szabo	Sumika Moriya	Allison Han
		Shion Omori	Ada Hu	Mai Someya
		Tamaki Ishii	Tammy Honda	Esther Huang
		Haruko Suzuki	Christine Cai	
		Saki Amao		
		Annika Huebner		
		Chika Kajiyama		





Reflections from our Dean of International Students, Mrs Katherine Boomer



What a whirlwind start to the year! It was wonderful welcoming new international students to our school and seeing how so many of them were very keen to quickly join sporting and cultural groups. Their ability to adapt to life in Dunedin went smoothly and many were quickly making new friends and having new experiences.

We are extremely proud of the 2024 NCEA results from our students who have demonstrated how well they adjusted to New Zealand education and can excel in their chosen subjects. Providing such a wide variety of subjects at OGHS allows students to follow their passions all the way through high school and lead them into further study and careers.

Delighted is one word to describe how we feel when we get visits from former international students. Yuki Mitobe from Japan, who was here in 2019, popped in for a short visit. Yuki continued her high school and university study in Japan. Will and Well Chomchoei, along with their parents and grandparents from Thailand, surprised us when they turned up at the school gate. It was so wonderful to meet the family. They started with us in 2018 with Will in Year 11 and Well in Year 10, and finished in Year 13. They have both now completed their university degrees in New Zealand and will move to Australia to complete further study.

We held our annual barbeque for our international school community, then we had the Dunedin Mayoral





Welcome at Ōtākou Runaka marae where about 250 high school international students gathered to be welcomed by the mayor of Dunedin. It was a real Dunner Stunner of a day with clear blue skies and a calm harbour making the event more special.

Some other highlights have been the colourful sports day in February, croquet, ice skating, outdoor education and other subject outings, and Borland camp. I was lucky to go to Borland camp in Fiordland National Park, where I saw the young people enjoying the glorious scenery and taking on kayaking, rock climbing, hiking, downhill mountain biking, biology work, a campfire, as well as seeing a beautiful starry night sky.

The International Student Council has been newly formed, with students from different countries and cultures with a shared vision to enhance the lives of students at our school. They are a very keen group of outgoing young people who are interested in helping others and enjoying school life.

Students and teachers have been busy in Term Two with a huge variety of activities from cultural to sporting to academic. A lot of assessments were undertaken, including the Level One literacy and numeracy CAAs (common assessment activities), but there were also so many co and extra curricular activities. The school cross country event is always colourful and there are opportunities for all levels of participation. Swimming sports followed on and was once again full of colour, enthusiasm, and great displays of aquatic excellence. The last dressing up spectacle was our Library Day with the theme From Page to Screen where students and staff could dress up like a character from a novel or movie. It is always a highly-anticipated day and the fun of the costumes and laughter of the day was evident.





The Otago University and Otago Polytechnic Open Days provide insightful chances for the Year 13 students to attend some lectures and get a feel for life at those educational institutions. The Dunedin Careers Expo was attended by all Year 11s and they were interested in the number of options available to them. Year 11 Geography had their annual trip to Mount Cook where they were able to be part of the beautiful wonders of Mother Nature. Outdoor education classes continued to push the students with an array of physical (and mental) challenges throughout the term. All the Year Ten students attended a day trip to the stunningly located Puketeraki Marae at Karitane.

A number of our international students were part of the school choir and performed in the Big Sing competition in town. Fortunately, the choir was impressive and successful and will perform at the next stage. Unfortunately, those students have



returned to Germany and will not be singing again with the school. They even practised a song while waiting to see the little blue penguins at Taiaroa Head.

We had been out of the school hall for many weeks and it was very exciting to return there recently for our assemblies. Construction continues at the school with work presently being undertaken in the office area and the staffroom. We are looking

forward to the next stages and to the improved layout and usage of the areas.

Thursday 26 June was the Year 12 Formal which was held at Otago Museum. This is an event that our international students don't get to experience in their home countries so they jumped at the opportunity to don stunning dresses, hair, and make-up. I am not sure how many hundreds (or thousands) of photos and videos were taken that evening.

It is always sad when we have to farewell students when they return to their home countries. Many tears were shed when saying goodbye but they are also tears of happiness as it shows their time at our school has had a positive impact on them. We had a farewell party at the end of each term, as well as many little ones in class which often included cooking and treats. We wish everyone well for their studies back home and hope they return to see us one day.

We always look forward to welcoming new international students each term, and continue to see all students excel and create new and lasting memories.



FAREWELL TO OUR LEAVING LEADERS TERM 1





Olivia Yang
I loved cooking
in food class.

Ai Yoshikawa
I really loved my
social studies
classes.



Nayu Okada
I will never
forget having
lunch with my
Kiwi friends.

Antonia Barten:
I had the time
of my life.



Shiho Sakai
Everyone at school
was so kind to me
that I no longer
felt scared of
speaking English.



Akane Kurihara
Because the
school has many
international
students and is
multicultural, it
is easy to make
friends and fit in.



Lia Koch
I loved how there
were so many fun
things that we did
in class.



Yua Watanabe
Sports Day is
one memory
that I will never
forget.

Haruki Ueda
I loved the
dance classes
that are not
available in
Japan.



Hiroka Nakazawa
I really love the
architecture of
the main school
building.



Sana Takeuchi
I will never
forget the day
we played
croquet.



**Tsubaki
Takayama**
I had a lot of
fun going to
different places
with other
international
students.
Thanks to that,
I also gained
the courage to
speak up.



Sakune Fujita
Wearing a
costume for
Sports Day felt so
unique to me.



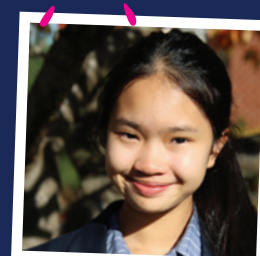
FAREWELL TO OUR LEAVING LEADERS TERM 2

A sad farewell to our international students from Chitralada School, Thailand: Plearn Taibowornpitak, Moji Lertariyanunt, and Nu-bua Yodmani. Thank you for the impact you have made on our lives in such a short time! We look forward to hearing all about your successes in the future.



Plearn Natchaphat
I love the relaxed study and having so much free time. It is really different from studying in Thailand.

Moji Lertariyanunt
I will never forget Market Day because there was a lot of delicious food.



Nu-Bua Yodmani
I will never forget the cross country event because I could walk in such a beautiful nature.



Wow ,



Shion Omori

Nationality: Japan



1. How long did you study at OGHS?
For six months.
2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?
I was able to meet many friends and I got good memories.
3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?
The sports festival. Because it is totally different from Japanese sports festivals!
4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?
I enjoyed it!! My host family was so kind and always talked to me.
5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?
Before I came to OGHS, I was shy and not very confident when speaking English. But thanks to the supportive teachers and friendly students, I became more comfortable expressing myself. This experience helped me grow not only in language, but also in confidence and independence.
6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?
Yes. Because OGHS is good at supporting me and always teaches me in English.



7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?
I think you are nervous before you go to study abroad. But it's okay! If we go to study abroad, we just have to do our best.

Thanks to the supportive teachers and friendly students, I became more comfortable expressing myself.



Kincsö Szabo

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

For 6 months, which is two terms.

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

The variety of subjects I could choose from, and outside of school activities like the Outdoor Education camp.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

There are many but I especially enjoyed the Outdoor Education trip to Long Beach, as the beach was beautiful and I loved rock climbing there.

4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

My homestay family is really lovely and they immediately made me feel welcome. We are having a lot of interesting conversations and they are very engaged in showing me the NZ culture, which is a lot of fun. I enjoy the time we spend together on excursions, where we visit beautiful places, like a lighthouse and waterfalls, or just in the living room, that we call the "library", watching a movie or reading.

5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

I got more open as I had to talk to a lot of new people and experienced a new culture and way of learning that I found strange and had to get used to in the beginning. But I could make so many new memories and try out new things, from a variety of sports and subjects to a Māori welcome and a traditional kiwi barbecue.



6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

I would encourage others to study at OGHS because you get the chance to get to know a completely new way of education and learning. In the beginning I had to get used to everything and I also switched subjects if I realised I did not like them. I liked the support I got from the International coordinators with that.

Through OGHS I also got to try out classes that we do not have in Germany, like Dance, Drama and Outdoor Education, that I really enjoyed.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

Be open to a new culture and do not be afraid to talk to other people. Try to not just stick with other internationals but make connections with kiwi students too!



I could make so many new memories and try out new things, from a variety of sports and subjects to a Māori welcome and a traditional kiwi barbecue.

Marlena Siefke

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

I studied for 12 months at Otago Girls'; from the beginning of term three in 2024 until the end of term two in 2025.

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

What I loved most probably were my friends. They created the best moments and made every class a bit more special.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

For me that would be sports day. Sports day was an incredible experience. It was hot and you sweated a lot but the atmosphere and the good companionship made the day extremely memorable in my opinion.

4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

My host family is a lovely small family with my host mom Tracey, her daughter Lillieana, my Japanese host sister Sumika and me. I loved staying with Tracey. She is an incredible woman, who always made me think more about things and encouraged me to enjoy every moment. And to be fair Lillie's incredible baking probably made me super biased about my host family. I enjoyed every moment with them.

5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

The most obvious answer is that it helped me a lot with my English. It improved my speaking and writing, as well as how fast I can answer in a



conversation now. But it also helped me to grow up. For a year I lived without parents, who would do my washing for me or tell me to sit down and do my homework. I needed to do all of this by myself and I think I gained a lot of independence in my year here. I've grown up a bit.

6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

I would encourage other international students to attend OGHS. It is a good school with great teachers and opportunities for everyone. They have a big variety of people and activities you can meet and try out. You will find something for everyone here and you know that somebody will share your interest, which will create great friendships to enjoy.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

DO IT!! It is a great experience, that I would not trade for anything. I enjoyed every moment and so will you. Of course it is expensive and you will be far away from your family but to be honest it is so worth it. Now that I've been so far and long away from my family and friends I learned to appreciate them even more. This year will create great memories and those are worth every penny and of course there might be bad moments but the good ones will always stand out more.

My host family is a lovely small family with my host mom Tracey, her daughter Lillieana, my Japanese host sister Sumika and me. I loved staying with [them].

Kira Linnewedel

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

One year - term three 2024 to term two 2025.

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

The way that teachers try and make classtime interesting, for example, looking at the school stratification in Biology class.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

When I was in the hospital with a broken leg and all my friends came to visit me and bring me candy.

4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

My homestay family were the best. They made me feel as part of their family, took me on many trips and overall were everything and more than I could have asked for.

5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

I have made new connections, friends and memories that will last a lifetime.

6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

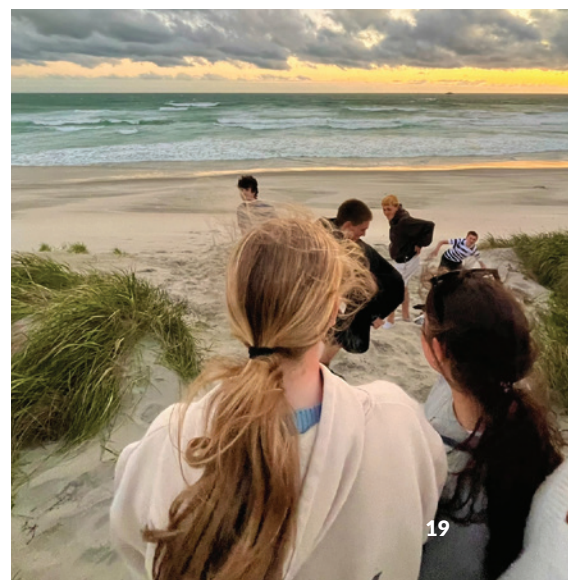
Yes, the school is very exciting with lots of events such as sports day, swimming, sports, fundraisers, and many more. Therefore, I would encourage others to study at OGHS.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

This will be the best year of your life, even if it's hard sometimes. Cherish every moment because they will be over sooner than you think.



My homestay family were the best. They made me feel as part of their family, took me on many trips and overall were everything and more than I could have asked for.



Juliane Stormanns

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

One year (Term 3 2024 to Term 2 2025).

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

I really enjoyed my classes and spending time with my friends. The relaxed atmosphere during class is really nice and different from my experience in Germany.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

Probably all of the trips that I got to go on, like the Outdoor Education trip or the ski trip, as well as any school events. I really enjoyed Celebration and sports day. It was fun to experience all that, as we don't have anything similar in Germany.

4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

My homestay family took me to new places and showed me life here in New Zealand. I always felt comfortable, supported and welcome.



5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

I think I have become more independent and more open to new experiences.

6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

I would definitely recommend OGHS to other international students, as I always felt supported and welcomed by my teachers, peers and friends. It is a nice environment for International students.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

Be open to new things and take every chance you can get. But most importantly just enjoy your time abroad.



I really enjoyed my classes and spending time with my friends. The relaxed atmosphere during class is really nice and different from my experience in Germany.



Lea Graichen Díaz

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

One year.

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

I loved meeting new people and making new friends.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

I will never forget the ski trip and the Year 13 Geography class trip. I got to meet a lot of new people and I will never forget how much fun I had.

4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

I got along very well with my homestay family and I am very thankful and happy that they let me stay with them.

5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

I learned how to be more independent, and that I don't have to be afraid of changes.

6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

Yes, Otago Girls' has a really good support system and everyone is very nice and understanding.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.



I will never forget the ski trip and the Year 13 Geography class trip. I got to meet a lot of new people and I will never forget how much fun I had.

Annika Huebner

Nationality: German

1. How long did you study at OGHS?

Two terms.

2. What did you love about studying at OGHS?

I like the connection between the students and the teachers, and all the opportunities and different subjects you can take. I like the look of the school -- every little detail of decoration and Māori culture.

3. What is one OGHS memory that you will never forget?

The international connections I made here and how much I learned.



4. Describe your homestay family. Did you enjoy the homestay experience?

I enjoyed it very much. I loved it. My homestay family always tried to entertain me as much as possible and show me around Dunedin as much as possible. They were always looking after me and asking me if I needed something.

5. How has your experience at OGHS transformed you?

It was amazing. I really loved the school. I am a lot more confident in nearly everything. I got more independent and can deal with problems a lot easier now. I think I had a big mental growth at this school.

6. Would you encourage other international students to study at OGHS and why?

Yes, you have a lot of opportunities that you don't have at most schools. The really good connection between teachers and students is really great. It's not like I'm the boss and you're the employee. A very beautiful school.

7. What advice would you give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad?

I would really say they should socialise. As long as they are new they should try to find new friends. It is a lot easier to find new friends when you are new. So get new friends and talk to a lot of people. Even a smile in the hallway helps.

The really good connection between teachers and students is really great.





Artist of the Week

Congratulations to our international student, Ada Hu, in Year 12 Photography for being featured this term as our school Artist of the Week! Here are her fascinating photographs.



Mai Someya: Rugby Superstar

Our international student Mai Someya is making a real impact in local rugby league. Southern Zone Rugby League have recently selected her as part of their first group of 2025 players for the Southern Zone Academy, in association with the One NZ Warriors.

Mai will be part of a carefully selected group of talented young league players. They'll be focusing not only on strength, skills and conditioning, but also off-field development.

We're very proud of your success, Mai!



Winner of Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025: Chika Kajiyama



Our international student Chika Kajiyama has been selected as one of the winners of the Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025. She has won \$1,000 from the Dunedin City Council to be spent during her year here in Dunedin. We are so proud of Chika for receiving this special award! Here are some excerpts from her insightful application.

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Chika Kajiyama. I live in Fujikawaguchiko town in Japan which is very close to Mt. Fuji. This town has a lot of variation in temperature throughout the year. I think, in some ways, my town and Dunedin might be similar. In other ways, the animals and plants are very different, so I am looking forward to seeing these differences in person.

I joined the Japanese tea ceremony club at my high school and learned how to make Matcha, Japanese green tea. Matcha is a historical and cultural drink, and there are many rules to make it properly. I

would love to serve it to people in Dunedin.

My favourite subjects are English communication and PE. Also, I'm interested in art and design. I want to actively try subjects in Dunedin, and I want to try some others which might be different to Japan.

When I chose Dunedin, I was the most interested in the architecture of the city. For example, Dunedin railway station. I feel it looks like a palace. In Japan, I haven't seen a station shaped like this. One more is Otago Museum. I felt the colours and appearance blended in naturally. Also, I'm looking forward to learning there about Dunedin and New Zealand history, culture, and more.

When I studied the different regions of Japan in elementary school, my teacher told us to pay attention to the structure of the buildings in each area. Japan is as long as New Zealand from north to south, and because it is in a volcanic region, it has a lot of rugged terrain, and each region has a completely different climate. Areas with frequent typhoons have roofs that are resistant to rain and wind, while areas with heavy snowfall have the roofs that are built to withstand the weight of snow. One example, in Japan, Gassho-style Houses (steep thatched roof houses). This roof is used at in heavy snow areas. Also, this roof can catch snow and prevent collapse. The area near Mt. Fuji, where I live, is 1,000 meters above sea level, and winters are very cold. Old buildings are made of wood, but they are built to cope with the cold. In Kyoto, which is one of the most historical cities in Japan, the town was built in an orderly grid pattern more than 1,000 years ago. The Imperial Court was placed in the center of the grid, and people lived in townhouses built in the divided long, narrow spaces. What I have noticed in focusing on buildings and architecture is that climate and history determine buildings, townscapes, people's lives, and ways of thinking.

When I researched Dunedin, I was most interested in the architecture. For example, Dunedin railway station because the architecture was completely different from anything I had seen before. And I thought they were cool. Also, I'm interested in Winter Garden. The greenhouses are located in a more natural setting than in Japan, slightly separated by glass but integrated with nature, and the roofs look like umbrellas, which I thought were unique features not found in Japanese botanical gardens. The fact that there are buildings that I have never seen before means that Dunedin has a different culture, history, and way of thinking from



Japan. I would like to see the buildings and streets of Dunedin in person, live there for a year, have conversations with the people of Dunedin who live there, and gain new ideas and perspectives.

Ever since elementary school, I have wanted to realise a world where everyone lives with a smile. However, I have not yet determined what I should do to achieve this. I believe that Dunedin has a culture and history that I have never experienced before. By getting to know this town and conversing with its people, I would like to gain new values and perspectives to help me better decide what I should do in the future.

At the moment all of my understanding is based on Japanese culture alone and I would like to combine the best of Japanese culture with the best of New Zealand's culture so that I can make decisions which are informed by two very differing cultures instead of just the one I'm familiar with now.

Firstly, I want to learn and understand the history, culture and thinking by immersing myself in everyday life, the building and streets of Dunedin which are of course completely different to what I am familiar with in Japan. Secondly, I would like the people of Dunedin to experience aspects of Japanese culture through myself and observe their reactions to better understand my own culture from someone else's perspective and re-evaluate all of the things I am too familiar with or take for granted in Japan. For this purpose, I would like to perform the Japanese tea-ceremony and make Matcha (Japanese green tea) and make sweets which go well with it for local people and engage in conversation with them.

Now that I have discovered the Study Dunedin Ambassador Programme 2025, I feel that this is a very attractive path to take in my personal development. Through experiencing first-hand New Zealand life and network expansions, this programme feels like a good fit for me. If I am lucky enough to be accepted, I intend to actively participate in the programme through cultural exchange with the intention of both cultures benefitting from this interaction and helping to spread knowledge and understanding of NZ culture in my own country.



International Maths Competition Success



Moana Li has been crowned an International Maths Challenge Champion! This incredible achievement places her among a select few from New Zealand who scored above the 95th percentile.

This has earned Moana the exciting opportunity to compete in the final round of the two-round Open Challenge. Well done Moana on her remarkable achievement!



Home & Family Away from Home Campaign

On 21 January 2025, the Department of International Students launched the Home & Family Away from Home campaign.

This is in line with:

- Strategic Goal 3.2 #3: SI#2: Develop and implement workshops for homestay families on best practices for engaging with international students.
- Strategic Goal 4.6 #4: SI#6: Launch Home & Family Away from Home campaign promoting and preparing Home Stay Host Families (HSHF) the ability to provide a memorable and experiential home stay for the international students whilst they study at OGHS.

Thank you to all our wonderful homestay families who came for the orientation and training session.



HEARING FROM THE HOMESTAYS

A joy to have Nu-Bua as part of the family

By 'homestay mum' Shelly Pullar

It has been an absolute pleasure to be "mum" to Nu-bua during her time in New Zealand. Nu-bua is such a beautiful young lady with a big future ahead of her. From the day she arrived she became part of our immediate family and then the wider family with my parents. She had the opportunity to stay in Timaru for a few days with my parents during the school holidays. It has been such a lovely experience to learn from Nu-bua about Thai culture.

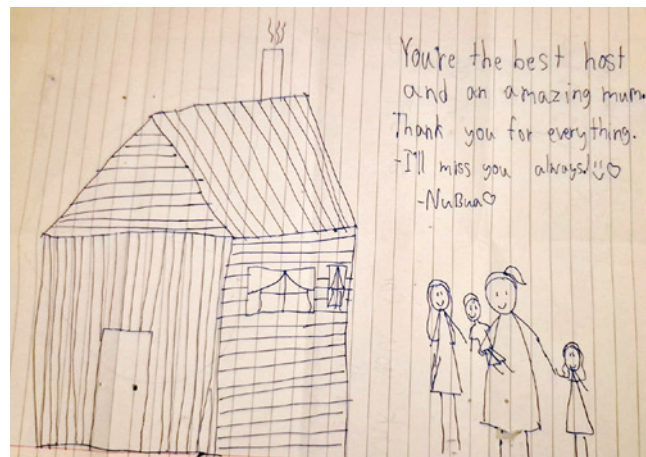
An absolute highlight for all was the celebration of Songkran which is the Thai New Year. We hosted Moji, one of Nu-bua's friends and celebrated Songkran by having a big water fight in the garden followed by a lovely dinner.

We loved showing Nu-bua what a beautiful city and country we have by taking her to a few of our favourite spots.

Hosting Nu-bua has been such a privilege for our family, we very much loved having her in our family. If you have the opportunity to host an

international student, I would highly recommend it as a learning experience for your children to learn about a different culture.

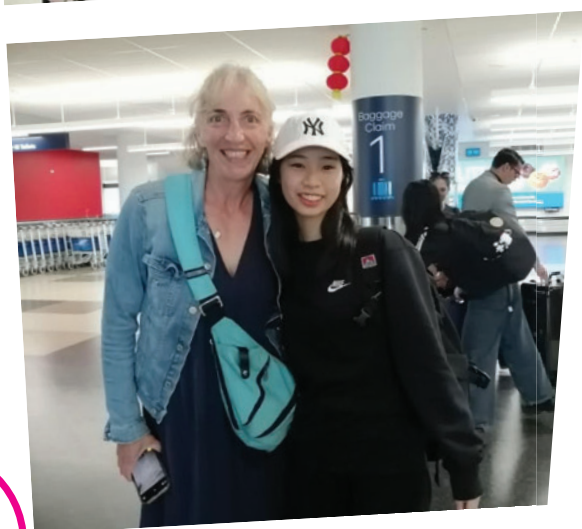
Thank you to Nu-bua and her parents for such a wonderful experience. We miss you.



Scenes from the Airport

In late January 2025, everyone was all smiles at the airport as we welcomed our new international students and introduced them to their homestay families.







International Welcome BBQ

In February 2025, the Department of International Students organised a wonderful BBQ for our international students and homestay families. It was a really good turnout and lots of students and teachers had the chance to meet and mingle with our international students and homestay families. The fact that we ended really late in the evening is evidence of how much fun it was!







2025 Mayoral Welcome for International Students

Over 200 exuberant international high school students from ten Dunedin schools attended the annual Mayoral Welcome at Ōtākou Marae on Thursday 13 March. It was a real Dunner Stunner day where everybody soaked up the warmth of the sunshine, the beauty of the location, and the excitement of the event. For most students, this was their first experience at a marae and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They chatted and took photos with new friends and very much appreciated the morning tea. It was sad to leave such a stunning location and fun time but we returned to school with happy memories.





Borland Camp - Year 12 Biology and Outdoor Education

The darkness of the cave is complete. Darker than dark. But then, slowly, the glow worms come into view, shyly displaying their blue light to lure in the prey. But we are not afraid, because we are all together. We are a group of twelve students with an experienced instructor and confident teachers. It is not a silent cave either, for laughter and footsteps, and words of encouragement are always in our ears. And in what is for one afternoon only, The Chambered Nautilus is sung in a cabin in the depth of the Clifden Caves. With the verses still bouncing off the limestone stalactites, we turned on our torches and strode through the rest of the cave system.

This was the experience of one of ten groups that went through the cave as part of Borland Camp, located south of Te Anau. But this was not the only activity. We also did a stream study, collected data on the forest, and went rock climbing, kayaking, tramping and mountain biking. At night time we sang songs around the campfire, completed our Biology internal assessment on beech forest stratification, did yoga with the teachers or simply hung out with our friends. We ate wholesome food (but not as much ice cream as we would've liked) and enjoyed spending time in Fiordland's pristine natural environment and ancient beech forest. Thank you to all the students and staff that made Borland Camp a week to remember!





Surfing Fridays

Riding the waves and making memories! Our Friday afternoon surfing lessons are an awesome way for students to get out on the water, build confidence, and have fun. Who wouldn't want to end the school week like this? 31 January 2025



A Visit to a Beautiful Home Garden

On 27 February 2025, our Year 12 Food and Nutrition class had the opportunity to visit Mrs. Bazsika's incredible garden! A fantastic hands-on experience, seeing sustainable food practices up close and learning about the journey from garden to plate.





Exploring Dunedin's Unique Nature

On 6 March 2025, we explored Dalziel Road and Fraser's Gully Reserve with our lovely internationals. We were all in awe of the mesmerising nature right here in Dunedin.







International Lunch

On June 18 our Department of International Students enjoyed a wonderful lunch to celebrate our Term 2 2025 leavers.



MOU supports Seamless Educational Pathway for Otago Girls' High School International Students



A new agreement between the University of Otago and Otago Girls' High School aims to create a seamless pathway between secondary and tertiary education for international students wanting to study in Dunedin.

In a region-first, the Memorandum of Understanding – signed today by Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson and Otago Girls' High School Principal Bridget Davidson – encourages closer collaboration between the institutions with a particular focus on providing teaching and learning opportunities for the school's international students.

Under the agreement, the School's Department of International Students will work closely with the University's Pathway department to seamlessly transition their international students wanting to go onto tertiary study at Otago. Pathway| Te Huarahi offers university preparation programmes to assist all students (international and domestic) achieve university entrance in New Zealand.

Bridget says the agreement helps provide prospective international students and their parents an opportunity to chart a long-term educational pathway before joining the school.





“The parents of international students need this certainty when making decisions about where their child may go to live and study,” she says.

“The MOU is a win-win in that it provides this certainty, while also making both Otago Girls’ High School and the University of Otago a more attractive option in a competitive market.”

University of Otago Vice-Chancellor Hon Grant Roberston and Otago Girls’ High School Principal Bridget Davidson sign a memorandum of understanding aims to create a seamless pathway between secondary and tertiary education for international students wanting to study in Dunedin.

Grant says the MOU signing carries on the tradition of Otago being a place of many firsts.

“The University of Otago was New Zealand’s first university, while Otago Girls’ High School was the first state-run girls’ high school established in the southern hemisphere. Today our institutions are signing the first agreement of its kind in this region.

“It’s fantastic to work together in this way and highlight the region’s longstanding and outstanding reputation for educational excellence, at all levels, to an international market.

“Otago Girls’ High School international students going on to study at the University of Otago will also be eligible to apply for the generous and highly competitive suite of international scholarships we have on offer,” Grant says.

Otago Girls’ High School currently hosts about 50 international students each year.

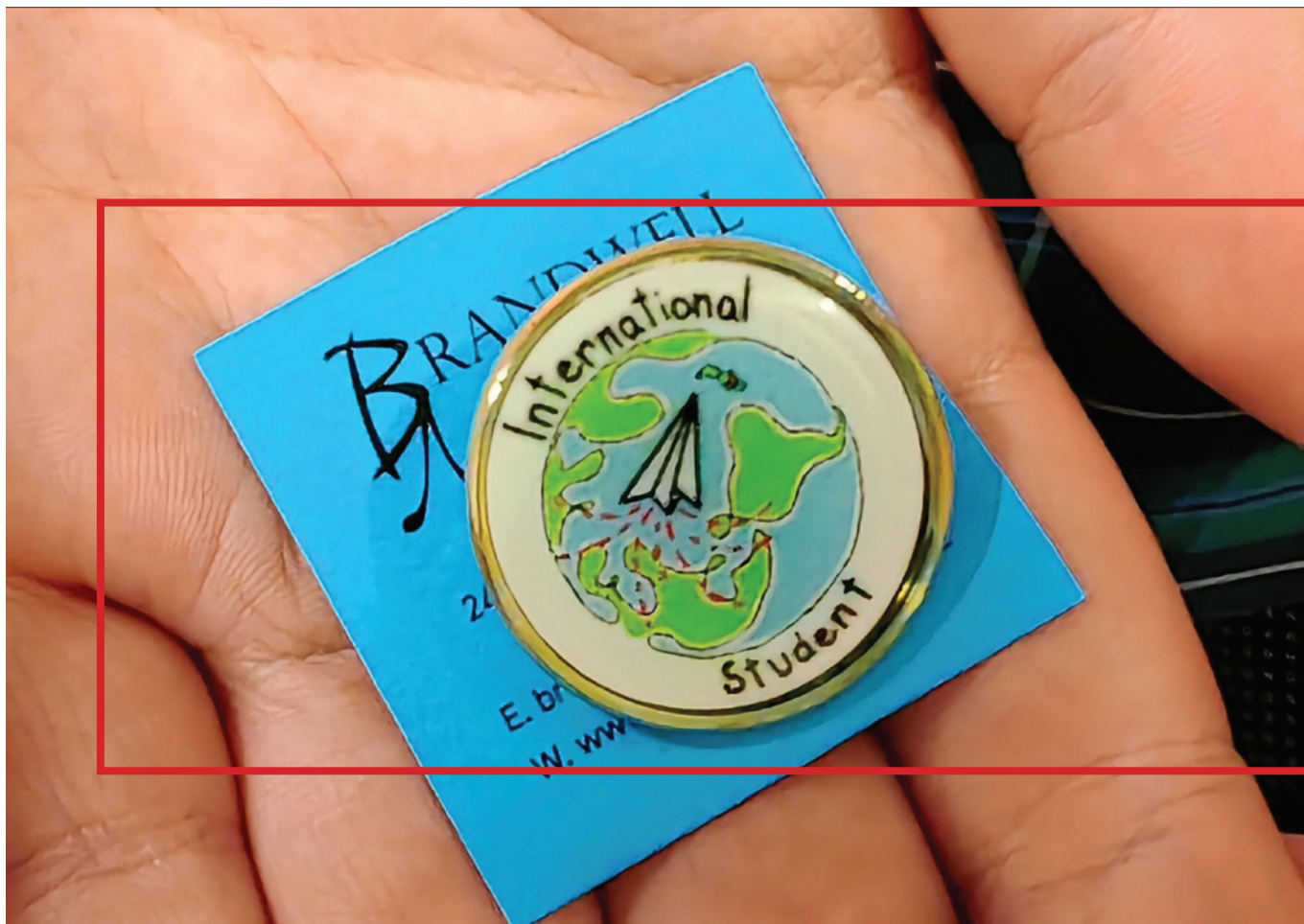
The University of Otago currently welcomes about 2,500 international students each year. Under Pae Tata, its strategic plan to 2030, the University plans to significantly increase those numbers over the coming years.

“Growing our international connections and student cohort adds depth and richness to our student experience, while also enhancing our global standing and reputation, and contributing to our financial sustainability,” Grant says.



New Badge for International Students

Introducing our new international student badge: a paper plane from all around the world, making its way to the heart of New Zealand. This badge perfectly encapsulates what it means to be an international student and the adventures one takes on their way to New Zealand and in their new home of Dunedin. Thank you to Marlena Siefke, Juliane Stormanns, and Lea Graichen Diaz for the wonderful concept. Your design will live in the hearts of international students for years to come.



Year 12 Formal



Pertinent Visit from Chitralada School

On the 11th of March, Otago Girls' High School welcomed Miss Jutamas Poprasit from Chitralada School in Bangkok, Thailand. Miss Poprasit met our Principal Mrs Bridget Davidson and spent the day exploring our school and catching up with her students who are currently studying at Otago Girls' High School. It was also a good opportunity for Miss Poprasit to bond with the Department of International Students. We thank Miss Poprasit for her time and we look forward to fostering the special relationship we share with Chitralada School.



Visit from Valued Sister School in Japan

On 19 February 2025, our Principal, Mrs Bridget Davidson, and Mrs Miki Shimada, Vice Principal of Bunkyo Gakuin University Girls' High School, signed an MOU to renew and strengthen the 30-year relationship between the two schools. The Department of International Students looks forward to strengthening this relationship and welcoming more Bunkyo students in the future.





Visit from Thai Delegation

Our Department of International Students hosted the Ministry of Education Thailand and 17 accompanying Princess Chulabhorn Science High School Principals for a study visit and collaboration session. The delegation members thoroughly enjoyed learning about our high-quality school and education management as well as exchanging ideas on future collaborations.



Visit from Kyoto Gaidai Nishi High School

The Department of International Students recently welcomed Mr Kuboi Kazunori, the International Director and Head of International & Cultural Studies at the Kyoto Gaidai Nishi High School in Japan. It was lovely to meet you and to exchange ideas with you. We look forward to working closely with you in welcoming international students from Kyoto to our school.



Pertinent Visit from Ryugaku LAU

Yesterday, our Department of International Students welcomed Mrs Akiko Sugure, Managing Director of Ryugaku Office LAU Co. After catching up with her students, Mrs Sugure spent the afternoon with us exchanging ideas and discussing opportunities. Thank you so much for your time. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you for years to come.



STUDENT ARTICLES

The International Council

By Edelweiss Von Hofler



The new International Council has now been set in motion and we are ready to bring a culturally rich experience to Otago Girls' High School!

The purpose of this newfound International Council is to represent the international students and this means giving the international girls the ability to share their ideas with the school. On top of that, it's a brilliant opportunity to share the various cultural heritages from the diverse cultures at Otago Girls' High School.

The International Council members include: Edelweiss Fatima Von Hofler (Malaysian), Sumika Moriya (Japanese), Ada Hu (Taiwanese), Allison Han (Chinese), Juliane Stormanns (German), Lea Graichen Diaz (German), Marlena Siefke (German), Hazar Al Sary (Lebanese), and Zainub Nafees (Indian).

Our council has meetings every two Thursdays and we come up with ideas to improve international student life at Otago Girls' High School. Although

we have only started our council, we have already launched two projects: a brand-new international student badge and an Instagram account.

The Instagram account - [Intl.council.oghs](https://www.instagram.com/intl.council.oghs) is an exciting project that everybody in the council has been getting involved in! The account itself is a platform for us to share about different cultures, ongoing international student programmes, and also international student achievements. All of this is done through interactive, informative, and fun posts. Every council member takes a turn every week to update the account with these vibrant posts.

We truly hope that our ideas will help shape a better future for international students at Otago Girls' High School. Moreover, we also hope that all students at Otago Girls' can learn more about international students at Otago Girls'. I'd like to express my gratitude to talented girls in the Council as well as Mrs Gilani and Mrs Boomer for supervising the Council. Assalamualaikum (Peace be upon you)!



Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

By Lea Graichen Diaz



My day started with getting ready for Sports Day. I was sleeping at a friend's place that day as my host family was away. We painted our faces after changing into our cupid costumes. When we met another friend and the prefects who gave us a nice, small note for Valentine's Day. My note (that I got from another friend) said: "You're my Babe" with a small heart next to it.

After everyone arrived and our teachers took the roll, the chants started. Cruickshank was the second house to start marching. We walked a whole lap singing our chant. That put everyone into the sports day mood. We started doing some of the activities like the 200m run. Juliane and I decided to run that one with Evelyn and Jamie. After every activity, we needed to report to the teacher that was running that activity and tell them our name, what house we were in and what place we came so that they could give us participation points. That would help us win in the house competition and

hopefully win the house cup competition.

In the background we could hear Miss Dick announcing the next activities that we were able to participate in. Every activity that we participated in gave us participation points. And you would get more points if you won an activity. Those points were important as we needed them for the house competition that everyone wanted to win.

After participating in fun activities, having fun with friends and just enjoying the day, the year 12 and 13 from the houses Cruickshank and Benjamin were called over to participate in the tabloids events. The tabloids are some small games. We played among other things sack race, pass the chicken, and rope skipping. All of us had so much fun. That was probably one of my favourite things we did that day.

The last thing we had on the programme was the finals and the relays. Everyone who won one of the running activities got into the finals for their year. One of my friends (the same one who gave me the Valentine's note) got into one of the finals for the Year 13s. Our whole friend group came together to cheer her on. She did extremely well even though she didn't win in the end.





And, as the last step on the program, we held the relays. Those were so much fun. We had every house competing against each other. Starting with the relays of Year 9 and ending with the Year 13 relays. Everyone who wasn't running was sitting in the stands supporting and cheering the students on. The most exciting relay was the prefect vs. teacher relay. As the prefects and teachers were getting ready, our friends told us that we hadn't won against the teachers in some years now. That made us even more excited for the last relay. We had a very strong prefect team so we all believed we could win against the teachers. And with that, the relay started. We were all cheering and screaming, supporting our prefect relay team.



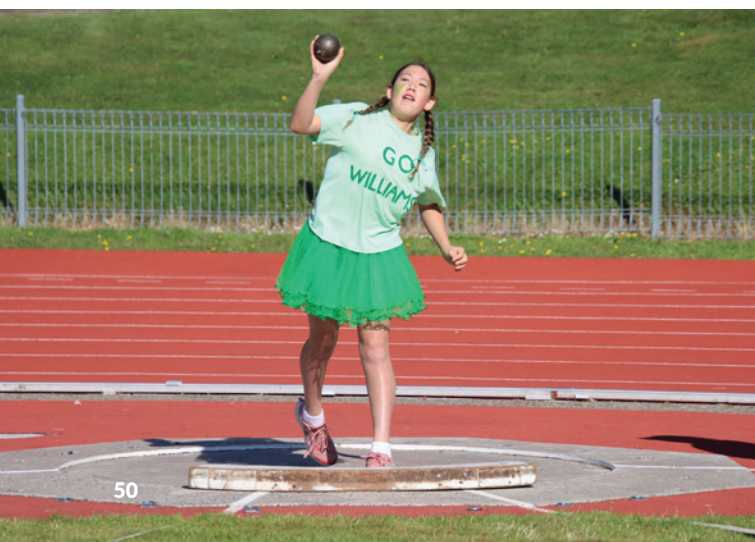
Luckily, we had a very strong start which allowed us to win the prefect vs. teacher relay.

And then it was time to see which house won the competition, to see which house got the most points. The whole day long our teachers were updating the points on the board.

In the end, the Cruickshank won first place with quite a lot more points than the second place house. Winning the sports day competition is something I will never forget. It was a wonderful experience that I will never forget.



Looking back at it now, we realise that it was a very nice day with lots and lots of fun. We will never forget it. We will never forget all the joy and fun we had while getting ready, while we had the house chants and while we were doing the activities. We are so happy and thankful for this once in a lifetime opportunity. We are so happy that we were able to experience this with our friends. It was a wonderful experience.



A Day Unlike Any Other

By **Juliane Stormann**



Sports Day was a day unlike any other that we have experienced here in New Zealand. It was a day filled with fun activities, full of laughter and time spent together. The house spirit was the highest we have ever seen. Everybody was dressed up according to their house theme. Allan's Apprentices, Benjamin Boxers, Cruichshank Cupids and Williams house was dressed in a western theme. Most people spent a lot of effort on their costumes, body paint and fun makeup as well as fun accessories and clothes. Showing these costumes during the chants at the start of the day was fun and the chants were a good thing to get everybody's motivation going. The atmosphere was incredibly welcoming and even the weather was seemingly in a good mood as the sun was shining the whole day.

I arrived a bit earlier than my friends at the Caledonian ground. I contemplated waiting outside, but the grounds and the stands filled with people looked way too interesting to not get a closer look. The prefects made for a fun welcome walking onto the grounds, handing out sweet notes and wishing everybody an amazing Valentine's Day. Soon after, I was in the grounds, and my friends arrived and joined me. We looked for a space to sit in the stands that had beautiful banners of each house hanging from them.

I have to admit, I was a bit nervous going into Sports Day, as I didn't know what to expect. I did not know how competitive the sport events would be and how the day would go. I was pleasantly surprised to find that while some of the events had the option to be competitive, there was always the option to just participate outside the competitive rounds.

In the days leading up to Sports Day, the students had to sign up for the events they wanted to participate in. As my other international friends and I didn't really know what to expect, we weren't sure what events we wanted to participate in. I signed up for only three events, but on Sports Day I found myself wishing that I had signed up for more. Turns out, I was still able to do many of the events that I didn't sign up for on the document!

My first event of the day was the 200 m run, where my friend Lea and I were asked to join Evelyn and Jamie. This meant that we were lightly jogging rather than running, but it was fun nonetheless. I also





participated in the 100m run as well as the 400m run. It surprised me how much fun I was having because I usually don't really enjoy running. I think all the people in the stand cheering the runners on and running with my friends really changed that and I was excited to participate in even more events. My friends and I did the long jump, as well as the high jump, threw discus and participated in the shot put event. The tabloids were quite interesting as well. When I first heard about the tabloids, I wasn't really sure what the other students were talking about, but I was happy to see that I was basically a bunch of fun games like rope skipping, dribbling a ball or "pass the chicken".

At the end of the day, the relay races happened. My favourite was the prefects vs. teachers relay. It was fun to see the teachers having fun and to cheer the prefects on. Everybody participated in cheering people on throughout the whole day and I felt as if I was in a very supporting environment.

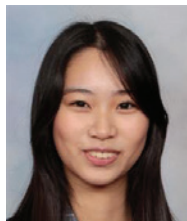
I really enjoyed dressing up for the day, and I feel our theme, Cruickshank's Cupids, was perfect, as Sports Day and Valentine's Day were on the same day. As we gathered our costumes in the week leading up to Sports Day, one of my friends had the idea to hand out fake roses on SportsDay. I was hesitant at first, but on the day itself it quickly showed that it had been an amazing idea. Handing out roses to friends and teachers and seeing their reactions will be one of my most cherished memories of the day.



The perfect ending of the day was made, when it was announced that Cruickshank house collected the most points and won Sports Day. This made me quite happy, as some of my friends and I are in Cruickshank house. Most people were in a very good mood when photos were taken of Year 13 after everything else was done for the day.



Outdoor Education Camp By Tamaki Ishii



I went to an outdoor education camp on the 27th and 28th of March.

The first day was raining, so we couldn't climb at the beach. However instead we went to Logan Park High School and then I climbed inside. After that we went to the campsite, and we put up a tent. It was easy. I ate ramen for dinner. Making ramen is difficult but it's so fun and delicious.

The highlights of the first day was walking on the beach. The beach view is very nice. The sky is

blue and pink. I can't watch it in Tokyo. It's a good memory.

The second day, I woke up early. It was sunny so we could climb on the beach. I tried to make new friends that day. I could make new friends. I was so glad. They are so kind and funny.

The rock climbing was so hard and high for me, but I liked it. Because when I was on top, the view was very beautiful. And I feel a sense of accomplishment. When we were climbing the rocks, we talked to each other and gave each other advice, and I think that this strengthened our relationship.

I made a lot of good memories and made new friends, so it was the best camp for me.





Unforgettable Memories

By Lia Koch



I studied at Otago Girls' High School for one term. I loved how there were so many fun things that we did in class like biking and climbing in Outdoor Education and sewing my own dress in Textiles class. Going to a primary school and coaching children in PE was very fun as well. A memory of Otago Girls' that I will never forget is Borland Camp. I feel very lucky to be able to experience this and it was very fun. Spending time with friends, but also with the teachers was very nice and the activities we did were amazing.

My experience at Otago Girls' has made me more independent as I faced new challenges. My English has definitely improved too and mastering different challenges has made me more confident.

I would definitely encourage other international students to study at Otago Girls' High School because this school really cares about their international students and makes sure they have an amazing time in New Zealand. The teachers and students are also very nice and happy to welcome you.

My advice to students who want to study abroad is to not be scared, everything will work out and don't worry about the people at home; you will come back to them and in the age of technology, you will stay in contact with them.



This school really cares about their international students and makes sure they have an amazing time in New Zealand.







The Time of My Life

By Antonia Barten



I studied at Otago Girls' High School for nine months. Studying at Otago Girls' was really relaxing because you are not under pressure at all. One memory I will never forget is my surprise goodbye party. I was stepping into the living room expecting to have a relaxing movie or sleep over with one friend, but instead my whole friend group was waiting for me.

My experience at Otago Girls' has taught me to be more independent. I would always encourage other international students to study at Otago Girls' High School. I had the time of my life, I think I have never had so much fun at school. I would wake up each morning and I was excited to go to school. School has never been so much fun.

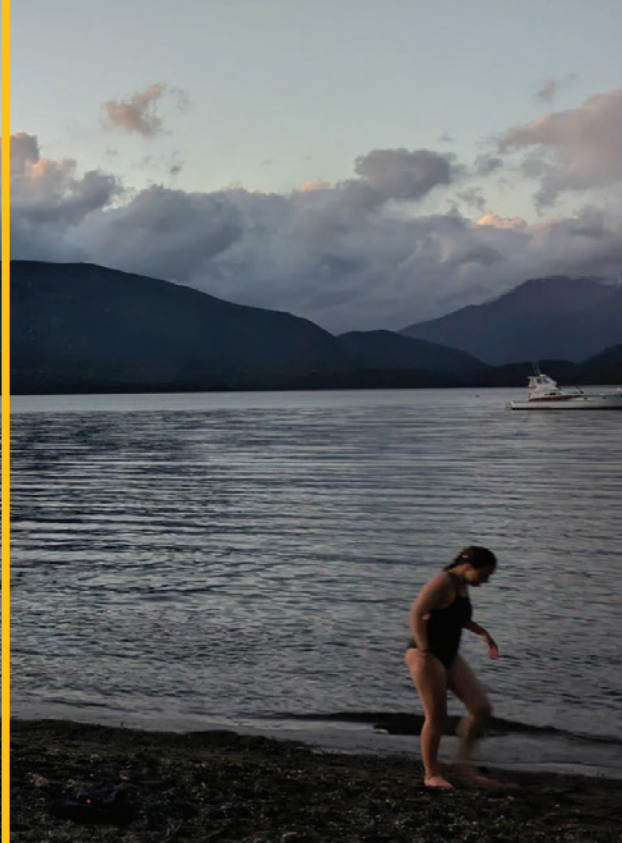
The advice I would give to other students who are thinking about studying abroad would be to relax and give it time. And then, when you find a good friend, you never want to leave again.





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NZET Tour

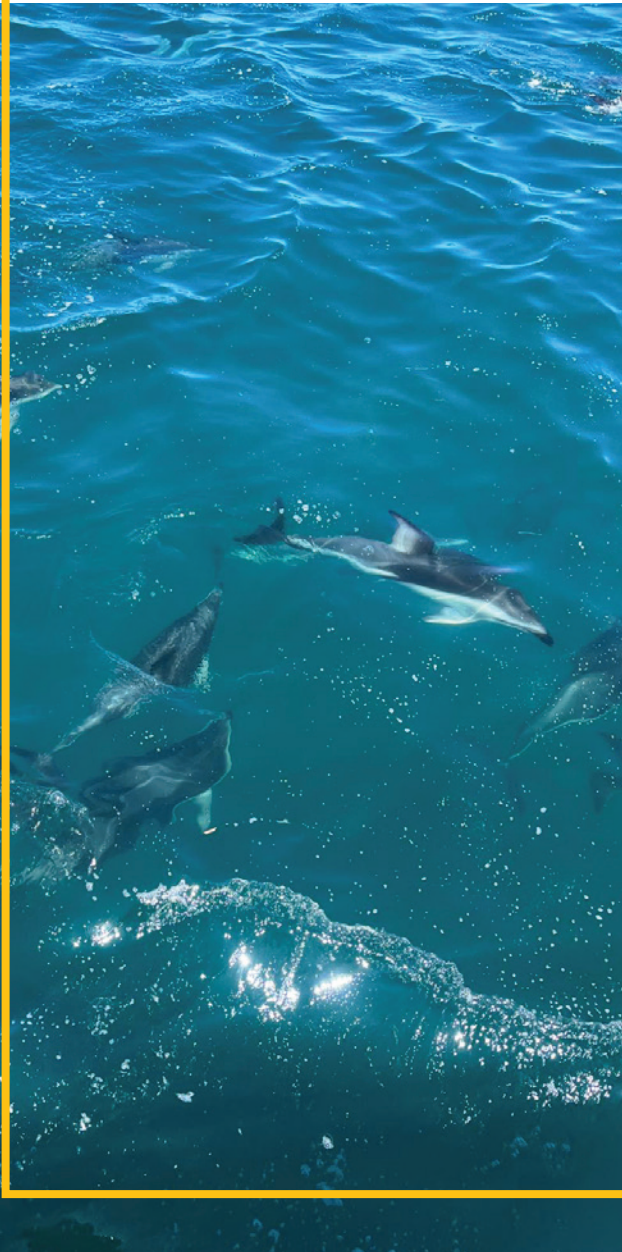
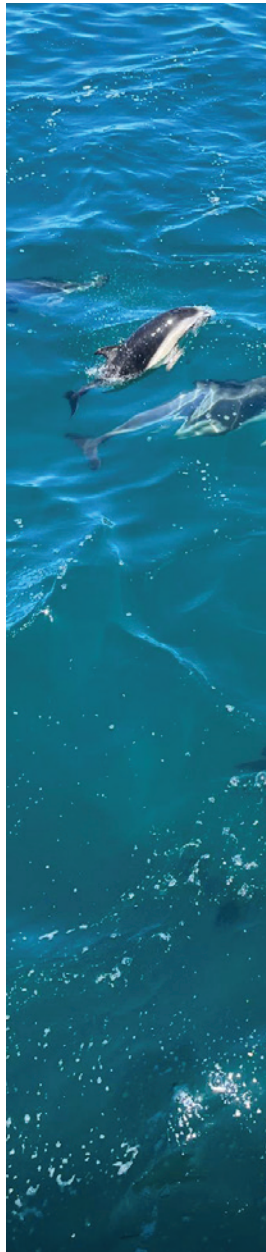
By Juliane Stormann



During the summer holidays, I took part in a tour across the South Island. This tour was offered by NZET, an organisation that does tours in New Zealand for international students. At first, I was a bit sceptical and questioned whether I should do the tour or not, but after some thinking, I figured why not try it. It turned out to be the best decision.

The tour started in Christchurch, where we met everybody else, as well as the adults that would supervise the tour. In total, there were about 35 international students, some from Italy, France, Switzerland, Thailand, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Germany. We quickly got to know each other and everyone was super friendly. Together we drove in a bus all around the South Island. We stopped in beautiful cities, drove past gorgeous views and saw the most amazing wildlife and nature.

Sometimes we had activities together like a jetboat tour or a kayak trip, while other times, we had the option to book things additionally. A surprisingly big amount





of people did a bungee jump or went skydiving! My busiest day was one of the days we spent in Queenstown. In the morning I did a canyon swing. During lunchtime, some of my friends and I were able to do the parasailing in Queenstown and right after that, we did a rafting tour.

But not every day was spent this busily. Many hours were spent on our bus, driving to our next location. During these drives, you could see how well everyone got along. We got talking to one another, listened to music, and on some occasions even did karaoke.

One of the students even mentioned how he will positively remember these bus rides in his poem that he shared during our talent show that we had one evening. Most evenings were spent doing something together as a group, even if this was just swimming in the pool together or a very funny fashion show.

While we had lots of opportunities to do things together in the big group, we also had lots of free time. This was amazing if you wanted to relax for a bit or go wandering around.

During the NZET tour, I met so many amazing people that I wouldn't have met otherwise. I hope I will forever remember how much fun we had together on the boat ride across Milford Sound or our late night talks or relaxing together in the sun. I will cherish the memories of this tour and am grateful for this experience. The only thing I can say, if somebody would ask me if I would recommend the NZET tours is YES. It really is worth it.



A Memorable South Island Road Trip

By Yiling Zhang



During the term holiday, my parents and my cousin flew to New Zealand from China to spend the term break with me. We decided to go on a road trip around the South Island, beginning in Christchurch and finishing off in Dunedin.

Along the journey, there were both highlights and a few minor disappointments. For example, when we first arrived in Christchurch, the weather wasn't ideal – it was raining for a few days straight. At least, we went to this local restaurant, where the food was surprisingly delicious, so that definitely made us feel a lot better and gave this trip a good start. Another slight disappointment was when we were at Milford Sound, we weren't that lucky – you are probably going to get surprised when I say this – but yes the weather was too sunny for the day and the place was sort of too dry so we didn't get to see many waterfalls, which is kind of unfortunate. But still, the scenery was pretty good under the sunshine and we had a lovely time there.

Out of all the places we have visited, my favourite city of the whole trip was actually Queenstown where we experienced the luge and the Shotover Jet. It wasn't my first time in Queenstown, but definitely the first time trying the luge. It was fun and a unique experience; it always feels good when trying out something new, especially when you are sharing the moment with your family. The popular Shotover Jet ride was an absolute thrill. The driver did several 360-degree spins, and the water was just splashing over us constantly. Under the conditions we were wearing waterproof jackets, but still not surprisingly, we were completely soaking wet after it. There were many other amazing activities that we didn't really have the time to try, so in the future when possible, I would definitely want to go to Queenstown again with my parents.

Another memorable moment was the horse-riding experience at Wānaka. The view there was stunning; we rode past open fields, spotted some deer in the farm, and even made our way to the riverside as well. We appreciated that it didn't rain for the majority of the time. It was a relief since it had been raining heavily when we were on our way to the stable. Although I am not a first time horse rider, it has been quite a while since last time I rode a horse, and I thoroughly enjoyed being back



in the saddle, as it brings the fun moments and the good memories back once again.

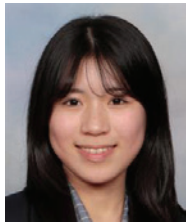
A little sweet surprise was that during our stay in Wānaka, we met an adorable cute puppy that just kept sitting in front of the doorsteps quietly and was always wagging its tail, hoping we could come out and play with him.

Overall, the two weeks holiday was incredibly well-spent, I had the chance to experience new things but most importantly, enjoy spending time with my family.





My Life until Now By Haruko Suzuki



My name is Haruko Suzuki and I love talking to people and eating food. I'm studying abroad in Dunedin, and I'd like to speak English fluently for my global life. I was born in Tokyo, Japan in 2008.

When I was small, I liked bullet trains because I lived near the Shinagawa station where bullet trains frequently pass through. When I was in elementary school grade 2, I started to study English in earnest. The English teacher was so strict, but I remember it was so much fun. It was because I have the opportunity to go to Hawaii to travel with my family every year.

Since then, I love speaking to people in English and I'm always thinking that I want to become better at English and I want to speak other languages.

That's why I 'm studying abroad now. Now, I'm talking a lot in English. That is my favourite thing to do, as well as eating a variety of kinds of food because New Zealand respects different cultures so there are many kinds of cuisine and restaurants. And also, my host family is from New Zealand of Filipino origin.

I also learn Māori and Korean now, so my goal is to be able to speak these three languages fluently by the time I finish studying abroad.

When the goal is achieved, I'd like to travel to a lot of countries. It's going to be a great life.





My Holidays By Nu-bua Yodmani



In my holidays, I went on two trips. For the first one I went to Timaru with my host family, and for the second one I went to Queenstown with my other Thai friends.

In the first week of the holidays, I went to my host parents' house in Timaru. It's a very big house and it has a lot of activities to do. We did lots of garden work and cooking. I like to help my host parents cook. In the middle of the week, my host father took me and his granddaughter into town to go shopping and swimming. We had lots of fun.

After I came back to Dunedin, I went to Queenstown with my Thai friends (they are exchange students, too). On this trip, I went for a total of three days. On the first day, we drove from Dunedin to Queenstown, which took five hours, but we stopped along the way to do some hiking in Cromwell. It was called Parallel Track. I was very tired, but the reward for walking up was the beautiful view of river and mountains. After we finished, we drove to Kawarau Gorge. It is a dramatic river gorge carved by the Kawarau River in New Zealand's South Island, connecting Queenstown and Cromwell. It has an amazing view!

After we arrived at the camp, we played a game and had dinner. On the second day, we had breakfast at camp and then we went out to Frankton Recreation Reserve. We walked around there for about one hour; after that we went into town to take a jet boat. It was so fun and it was my favourite thing that I did on this trip. And then we walked to the Kiwi park; it was my first time that I saw a kiwi!

Overall, both the first week and the second week was a wonderful and very memorable holiday.



My Term 1 Holiday Travel Journal

By Lucia Shen



Last term holiday, my friend, her family and I travelled to many places in South Island, New Zealand. It was a wonderful time for all of us!

On the first day, we drove from Dunedin to Cromwell at 9:00am. and arrived around noon after a three hour drive. There were many orchards along the way, and the beautiful scenery was something I had never experienced before. We had lunch at The Stoaker Room, which served food smoked in oak wine barrels and also offered wine. In the afternoon, we tried the famous yogurt ice cream at Jackson Orchards. Then we visited nearby attractions, including Arrowtown and the Shotover Jet. The jet boat ride was one of the most exciting parts of the trip. We waited under the hot sun, watching other tourists enjoying the ride. The sound of the boat was loud and strong, and the smell of gasoline came in waves. Luckily, we didn't wait too long. When I finally got on the boat, I felt excited as it floated on the water. We sped between mountain cliffs. The sun was blocked, and the water was green and clear. The wind roared past my ears, louder than I had ever heard before. The ride lasted for 20 minutes, which felt long but amazing. In the evening, we checked into our hotel and rested.

The next day, we travelled from Cromwell to Queenstown, leaving around 8:00am. and arriving after one hour. Queenstown was full of beautiful views, especially from the gondola, where we saw the whole town. We had time to go shopping and try local food. Queenstown is beautiful, though I think it looks even better in winter. That day, it rained heavily. Since we forgot to bring umbrellas, we had to run quickly from one shop to another. In the evening, we returned to Cromwell for the night.

The day after that, we travelled from Cromwell to Christchurch. We left at 8:00am. and drove for about five hours. The scenery along the way was stunning. We passed through some of the most beautiful places in the South Island, including Lake Pukaki, Mount Cook, Lake Tekapo, and the Church of the Good Shepherd. We got out to skip stones on the lake and it reminded us of our childhood. That evening, we arrived in Christchurch and stayed at a homestay.





After that, we explored Christchurch and visited many places. My friend and I were in one group, and her family was in another. We visited different dessert shops and cafes. The barbecue we tried in Christchurch tasted just like the kind we eat in China, which made us feel at home. On our way back to Dunedin, it rained on and off. When we were close to Dunedin, the mountain roads were covered in clouds and fog, making it feel like we were driving through the sky.

This trip gave me many great memories. I saw new places, tasted new food, and experienced exciting adventures. I also spent more time with my friend and her family, which made the holiday special. I will never forget this journey.



ALUMNI NEWS

Letter from Li (Letitia) Shen

Dear Mrs. Boomer,

I hope this email finds you well. It has been a couple of years since I graduated from Otago Girls, and I wanted to share some exciting news with you!

I have recently completed my Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and have been awarded a place on the Vice-Chancellor's List for Academic Excellence, placing me in the top 2% of RMIT higher education students in 2024. Additionally, I am honored to have won the Garland Magazine Innovative and Storied Object Award.

I have also been selected to exhibit my work in the Biennial Exhibition: Contemporary Jewellery and Object Award at the Australian Design Centre. Unfortunately, I am not yet allowed to share images of my work until after the opening, but I can't wait to show you when the time comes!

It's an incredible honor, and I am beyond grateful for the support and encouragement I received during my time at Otago Girls. I would especially like to express my heartfelt thanks to you, **Mrs. Alison, Mrs. Newall, Mrs. Seward, Mr. Simmon, Mr. Otley, Ms. Robinson, Mrs. Cole, and Mr. McLaren.** Your guidance has played a huge role in shaping my journey—whether it was helping me refine my language skills, nurturing my creativity, or supporting me in different ways.

I truly miss my time at Otago Girls— everything and the best bacon and egg sandwiches in the canteen! I nearly had this everyday for lunch. The second best is the cranberry chicken one. It's a shame that I'm currently renewing my visa and unable to travel overseas, but I hope to visit you all in the future and catch up in person.

Thank you again for everything!

Love you all,

Li (Letitia)





Surprise Visit by Alumni Will and Well Chomchoei

What an absolute treat to finish the term! We had a surprise visit from OGHS alumni Will and Well Chomchoei, along with their parents and grandparents. Will (pictured with glasses) graduated in 2020 and Well in 2021. Since then, Will has completed her degree in Architecture and Well in Product Design — and now they're both off to Australia for their master's studies. Will is heading to Sydney and Well to Brisbane.

During their time at OGHS, both Will and Well were heavily involved in school activities and made the most of every opportunity. They were also outstanding students, particularly in DVC, and it was so special to see them catch up with Mr Pickard in the workshop.

We wish you all the best for your exciting adventures ahead!



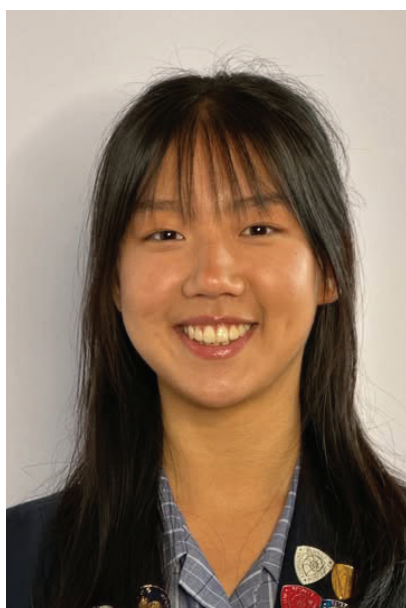
Lovely Visit from Former International Student Yuki Mitobe

It was lovely to welcome back Yuki Mitobe, who studied with us in 2019 as a Year 12 student from our sister school, Bunkyo, in Tokyo! Yuki has since completed a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics and is now job hunting in Japan. At OGHS, she was involved in the Environment Group, rock climbing, and ice hockey. Mrs. Boomer was delighted to catch up with you, Yuki—wishing you all the best for your next adventure!



Grace Dong Accepted into Prestigious University

Exciting news! Our international student Grace Dong (Class of 2024) has been accepted into École Centrale de Nantes in France to study Engineering. Congratulations Grace, you are set for an incredible journey ahead.



Special Visit from 2021 DUX Sol Kwon

On Friday 7 February 2025, Mrs Boomer had the pleasure of catching up with Sol Kwon, our 2021 DUX. She was also a valued member of the OGHS orchestra. She was visiting from Australia with her family and made a special trip to Dunedin to reconnect with friends.

Sol has graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Biomedicine, majoring in Immunology, and is continuing her studies and research. Sol, we wish you well in your next steps.



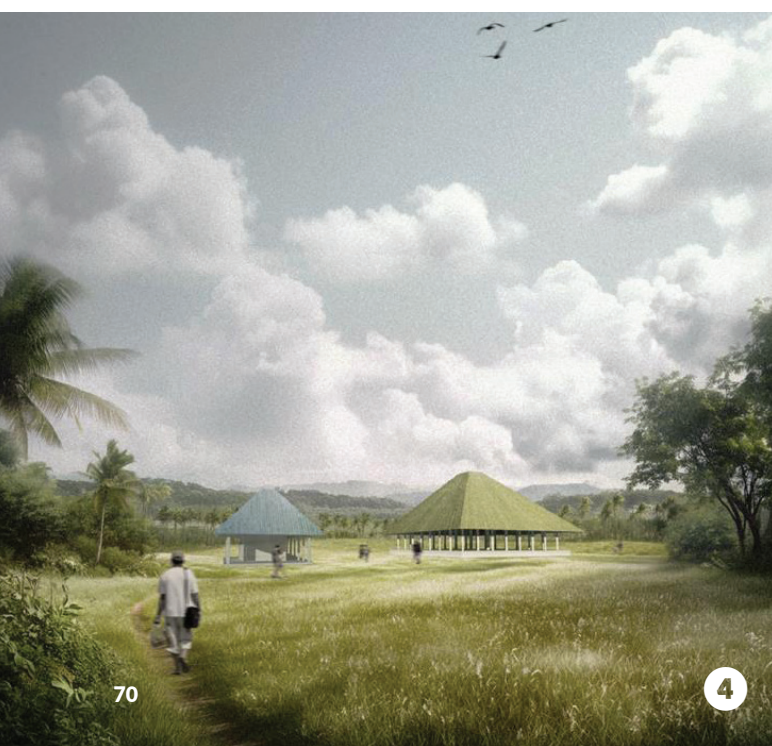
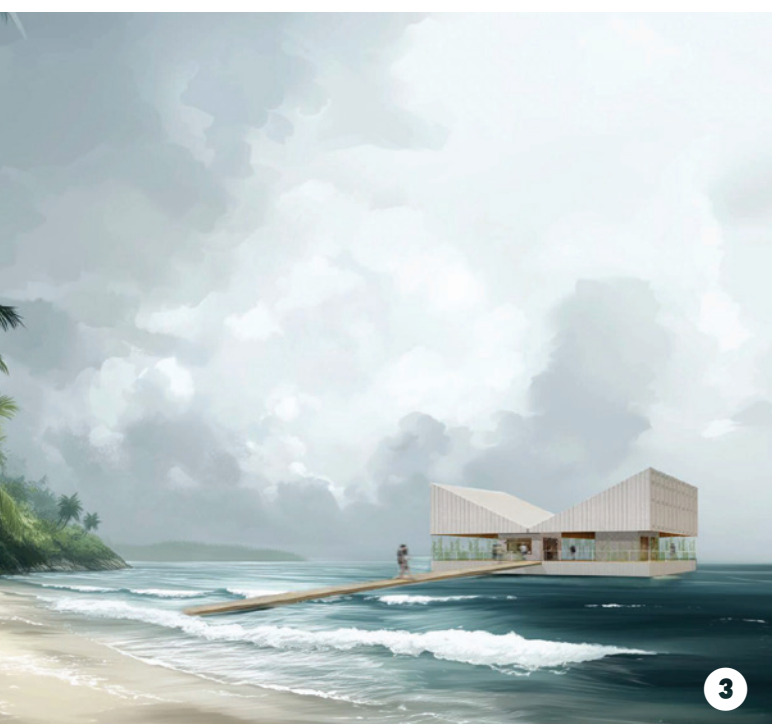


Former International Student Wins Major Design Award

We are so proud of our international alumna Will Chomchoei, who has been recognised with a win in the Dulux Colour Awards (student category).

Will finished her schooling at Otago Girls' in 2020, and has since completed a degree in Architecture. She was heavily involved in school activities during her time with us, and made the most of every opportunity. The warm welcome of her Samoan host family shaped her award-winning project --'Pātaka Kōrero / Fale o Tala (A Storehouse of Narratives)'

Will had this to say about her project: "I'm grateful it has been recognised. It's a reflection of values I came to admire and a learning experience I'll carry with me."



PHOTOS:

1. Will Chomchoei
2. The Fale Tele in a natural green to blend into the surrounding tropical foliage and serving as a space to gather and Talanoa; and the Fale Umu, the communal kitchen, in a deep ocean blue representing Sāmoa's enduring connection to the sea and food traditions.
3. Olo Matamata, a bold red tower functioning as a seed bank and a lookout post. It is symbolic of strength and resilience, built to withstand severe weather events and protect biodiversity by safeguarding native plant species.
4. Moana, which floats partially in the ocean, is painted in a soft white-cream hue. Designed to reflect sunlight and resist overheating, it is a forward-looking symbol of adaptability and survival in the face of rising sea levels, while also representing the openness and freedom of the sea and sky.



Newsletter Credits



Co-Editor:
Rose Gilani



Co-Editor:
Katherine Boomer



Copyeditor:
Eleanor Ross