



REPORT

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION RENAISSANCE TRUST

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Since we last wrote...

- ❖ Another international teachers conference has brought teachers from around the world to the glorious setting of Villa Boccella.
- ❖ We are supporting four gap year students and a trainee psychology teacher at St James Prep and Senior Girls Schools.
- ❖ We paid for two students from Ficino School in New Zealand to join the school's trip to Europe.
- ❖ We continue to support Little Stars School for disadvantaged children in Varanasi, India.
- ❖ And we're helping four boys take part in the St James Senior Boys School activities week trips next March.
- ❖ We continue to receive generous donations and legacies to help make all these things happen. Thank you!

News from St James Durban

'St James Durban is a small school that has faced its fair share of stormy seas. Thankfully, its ship was built and is consistently guided by the many St James schools around the world who share the same philosophy. Our school is now entering a new era with new leadership, and we are excited for where this journey will take us.

'Mr Noel Moodley has taken over as our captain, and he comes with many years of experience as a head and deputy head at prestigious Durban schools. We are confident that we will continue to fly the St James flag high and produce children that stand apart from their peers.'

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This Gift to Education will last

Next May we celebrate 50 years of the London St James schools. For a remarkable 27 of those years from 1995 Laura Hyde served, first as headmistress of the Senior Girls School, and then from 2014 as Director of Education. Her knowledge and practical experience of the St James education is unequalled.

She summarised this experience in a booklet, '*St James Schools – The principles of a St James Education.*' The booklet has already been presented to teachers, headteachers and governors of schools of the worldwide St James family. Laura has now adapted this book for distribution to a wider audience. It will soon be published as '*The Essential Elements of a True Education.*'

Encouraged by the way this book is already being used, Laura has spent the past few years writing a full-length book, '*Living Well, Wisely: A Guide for Young People.*'

It's a wonderful read. Based on Laura's deep insight into the nature of adolescent girls and boys, it takes the reader on a journey from birth to death. Along the way it examines what is needed at the intervening stages to ensure the best chance of a happy life.

Alongside the book will be a series of courses which secondary school teachers can use to help their students engage in conversation about the bigger questions of life.

Laura leaves no stone unturned, posing questions for discussion. They range from the practical to the deeply existential. For example:

'What is meant by a separate identity?

Do you feel you have changed as you have become older?

What have you discovered about 'patterns of thought' which tend to repeat?

Do you recognise the distinction between thoughts and being the witness of them?'

ERT trustee Marita Brewster has taken on the job of getting the book published. Marita is a governor of Erasmus School in Melbourne, where she delivers a weekly course on philosophy to all staff. She has recently met with senior school teachers at John Scottus School, Dublin, and introduced them to the new book.

In the introduction Laura writes: *'I sincerely hope that those who read and work with this book understand why it is that its approach rests on attention in listening, reflecting, and giving voice to whatever wisdom we can share together as we journey through life.'*



The Education Renaissance Trust promotes schools and supports teachers around the world who provide a spiritually-based education. This ERT newsletter REPORT is published twice a year, to keep friends and supporters in touch with our work. If you no longer wish to receive it, please contact the editor, Hugh Venables.

Teachers Conference

The good news is that we have another conference in Villa Boccella to look forward to next year. The owner has generously pledged not to sell before the conference, which will run from July 5 – 12 2025.

The 2024 conference was a great success, enjoyed by everyone. Hilary Wyatt, headmistress of St James Prep School, led the event with customary brio.

Teachers from England, South Africa, Australia, Argentina and New Zealand enjoyed the Villa's peace and beauty, studying and practising Sanskrit, history, painting, drama, singing and yoga.



Singing at Villa Boccella

It was also a great opportunity for Hilary to sit down with Emma Best and Rick Clarke, heads of the Senior Girls and Senior Boys schools, to work through the St James ethos. Chair of trustees Jeremy Sinclair, and trustees Annabel Lubikoski and Helen de Mattos were on hand to pool their wisdom.



Westminster Abbey – a highlight of Ficino School's Renaissance trip for Summer Chen

Ficino School's European Journey

The three-week Renaissance Trip is one of Ficino School, Auckland's flagship programmes. A party of Year 8 students and volunteers toured Italy and England, visiting classical and renaissance sites. Two of the students wrote up the experience for us.

Summer Chen wrote: 'Of all the breathtaking sights we saw in England, Westminster Abbey left the deepest mark on me. To stand amongst the memorials to scientists, poets, leaders and great thinkers was truly awe inspiring. I first saw Westminster Abbey on television in 2022, during the Coronation of King Charles III. This year, I've had the privilege of walking through those very halls I marvelled at a few years ago, a dream come true. Being in a place of such grandeur, swimming with the echoes of the past, and a palpable sense of history made this visit to Westminster Abbey, an experience I'll cherish for eternity.'

Chloe Zhao wrote: 'I am immensely grateful to the Education Renaissance Trust for their generous support for the whole trip.'

For me the highlight of the trip was the frescoes in Waterperry House. My personal favourite story was of the man who went to the ends of the earth to collect holy water in his pots, only to sacrifice the holy water on the way back to relieve a donkey of its thirst. I think this story teaches us to think of others around us. Sometimes we are so engrossed in ourselves that we aren't awake to our surroundings.'

Tidings from Trinidad

We were delighted to receive an update from Ravi Debie, headmaster of the Renaissance School, Trinidad.

'Renaissance keeps to a strong tradition of study and reflection. Every morning, teachers engage with Mr Debie to discuss how the founding principles can be implemented in the classroom. This daily practice is a cornerstone of the school's daily rhythm, shaping the school's identity.'

We adapted quickly to the challenge of the pandemic, launching an online school system. This has worked out well for the school. It continues to operate a parallel learning system, allowing students to log in from anywhere and participate in live-streamed classes. Each session is simultaneously available on the school's digital platform, where all content is uploaded daily

The Renaissance School has a stellar reputation in Trinidad, ranked among the top schools in the country. Students do well in national exams for secondary school placements.'



THANKS FOR READING! NOW CAN YOU HELP US?

Many readers now support our worldwide work through regular standing orders. Some help with the development of St James Durban. Others donate to the wider work of the ERT. The Chancellor kindly increases every donation from a UK taxpayer by 25%, via Gift Aid.

Contact us (see overleaf for details) and we'll send you a Gift Aid form.

One-off donations, large or small, are equally welcome, cheques or cash! Or you can donate by bank transfer to our account at HSBC: The Education Renaissance Trust, sort code 40 11 58; account no. 90125105.

You can now support us via [PayPal](#). There's a button on the ERT website – go to the *How You Can Help* page and then to *Becoming a Donor* (or click <http://www.education-renaissance-trust.org.uk/help2.htm> if you're online.)