

BACK TO SCHOOL

The end of warm, languid days, sleeping in, and no homework – seven Auckland kids tell us about being back at school after the summer holidays.

TEXT INDIA HENDRIKSE — PHOTOGRAPHY CAITLIN MCKONE

The first day back at school after the summer break is different for everyone – there can be nerves, there can be tears and there can be excited giggles. Some don't sleep the night before and others have been counting down the days, awaiting the first-day-back gossip. Arriving at Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School – a decile one school of 172 students in the heart of Māngere – there didn't seem to be a sense of dread, but palpable excitement. It was the kids' first week back at the small school on Court Town Close, and everyone still spoke in hurried voices; too many things to say after the long break. The heavy clouds had burst at the seams and the ground was damp, yet nobody moaned. Being 12 and 13, they teetered between being children and teenagers, having big ideas yet also just wanting to swing on the slippery monkey bars. Culture is valued at Sir Douglas – the school is 91 percent Māori and Pacific Island students – and there was chatter among the kids about a cultural show some of them had performed in front of the school the previous day. Sitting down and talking to each of the seven kids that patiently waited to have their photos taken, I asked them simple questions and got simple answers; at that age, there's no frilly bits and no pretenses. School's school, and you know what you like.

Right Jashara U-Fagalilo (left), Crystal Fineaso and Martha Peo, pupils at Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School in Māngere.





Aaren Narayan, 12

What are your goals for this year?

To concentrate on my education.

Cool, what subjects do you like?

Writing.

What do you write about?

I write about crime and scary stories. I like ghosts and horror stuff.

What do you like about this school?

I like that the teachers are so kind and they'll always be there for you. They'll help you.



Crystal Fineaso, 13

Who's your favourite teacher?

Ms. Bland. She gets involved with all the students, co-operates with us, and I feel like she really gets us cultural people and she really loves diversity. I like to dress up culturally with my puletasi [a traditional Samoan two-piece garment].

Do you know what you want to do when you grow up?

No, not specifically, but I do want to work at the airport.

How come?

It looks fun. I don't want a stressful job that will stress me too much, but I want a fun job that I'll look forward to every day and look forward to in the morning.



Jojo Ouanine, 12

How do you feel about being back at school?

Happy, excited, I dunno, it's cool. I get to meet a lot of my friends again.

What's the hardest part about coming back to school?

The work. I'm not good at maths and writing, but reading is a little easier.

What books do you like?

Goosebumps and these mice books.



Martha Peo, 12

Are you excited to be back at school?

Yeah. I missed my friends and missed the teachers over the holidays. It was boring in the holidays.

What would you like to do when you grow up?

I want to be a lawyer. I like debating against people, and I think if you become a lawyer, debating is number one priority.



Fatima Hussaini, 13

How do you feel about being back at school?

Excited, because I want to be a leader for year sevens. You have to be a good leader for them so they can be good leaders as well, next year.

Do you have any goals this year?

I want to have a medal for sports.

What sport?

Basketball.

Jashara U-Fagalilo, 12

How do you feel about school?

I like coming to school so I can get away from home.

Why's that?

So I don't have to do chores. Mum makes me wash dishes, clean up the house and do the washing.

So what's the best part about school?

Making new friends in class and sharing life stories.

Do you play any sports?

All the sports they have.

Ofa Lalahi, 12

What do you like to do after school?

Walk home with my friends. We get chicken and chips, or KFC maybe two days a week.

Who are your best friends at school?

Junior, Louis and Ernest.

Why are they so cool?

They don't leave me hanging or anything.