

Testimonial from Murilo

Exchange Student at St John's College

Hello! My name is Murilo Batista De Lima Morano from Brazil and I took part in the Brazilian Government Scholarship Exchange programme in New Zealand. These past few months have truly been some of the most meaningful and transformative of my life—and I owe so much of this incredible journey to the warm community of St John's College: its dedicated teachers, friendly students, and especially Mr. Edward Park, Dean of International Students.

Leaving Brazil—my family, friends, and everything familiar—wasn't easy. I remember wondering every day in the beginning, "When will I go back home?" But thanks to the kindness, support, and guidance I received from everyone at St John's College, that feeling of uncertainty soon faded. I started to feel less like a visitor and more like a true *Johnny boy*—a proud part of something special.

At school, I had the opportunity to experience a completely different education system that was both challenging and inspiring. I joined classes that pushed me to grow: in Geography, I learned how to use a compass and read maps—something I never thought I'd study. In Music, I held a violin for the first time and learned to play it with the support of a very patient teacher. I enjoyed English class, where I gained the confidence to express myself in a second language. I even learned to appreciate subjects like PE, where we tried new sports and worked as a team.

What stood out the most was the support of the teachers. Every one of them was incredibly patient, always willing to help and explain things, whether it was an academic task or just helping me feel more comfortable in class. They saw me not just as a student from overseas but as part of their community, and that meant a lot to me.

Outside the classroom, I participated in school trips that allowed me to discover the breathtaking beauty of New Zealand—hiking to the top of Mount Pirongia, venturing deep into the Waitomo Caves, and fulfilling my childhood dream by visiting the magical land of Hobbiton. These adventures, often organized or supported by the school, were unforgettable.

The friendships I made at SJC were another highlight. From the very beginning, the students were welcoming, respectful, and genuinely curious about Brazilian culture. Some of them even tried to speak Portuguese with me, which made me feel proud and connected. I became especially close with other international students, and my friendship with Gabriel, another Brazilian student, became like a brotherhood.

And to Mr. Edward Park—thank you. Your leadership, care, and commitment to international students made everything possible. You checked in on us, guided us, and made sure we were never alone in this journey. Your support turned what could have been a lonely or difficult experience into the best six months of my life.

To all the teachers and students of St John's College: thank you for your generosity, your encouragement, and your willingness to open your hearts to students like me. You didn't just give me knowledge—you gave me memories, friendships, and a sense of belonging. I will always carry the Eagle with pride and remember that once a Johnny boy, always a Johnny boy.

This isn't a goodbye—it's a "see you later."

With deep gratitude,
Murilo