

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 28 August 2019, 6.30 pm, school staffroom

Present: Jess Gorman, Nick Booth, Haidee Westwater, Amelia Handscomb, Victoria Esson, Mark Brown, Nicki Read, Louise Conwell, Kim Narsi (items 1 - 7) and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: Yadana Saw, Gabrielle Harvey

1. Karakia

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes from the Board meeting held on 24 July 2019 were approved (moved Jess, seconded Nick) and the action items discussed.

3. Conflicts of interest

Mark stated that he has an interest in the item raised by a parent in correspondence, about a post on the school's Facebook page with photos of children wearing stickers in support of pay equity for the school principal.

4. Co-opting new Board member

The Board agreed that Victoria Esson be co-opted to the Board for 18 months (moved Jess, seconded Amelia). Victoria will pick up the role of Treasurer.

5. Principal's report

Mark tabled his report. Items discussed included:

- Swimming pool - The Wellington City Council has previously entered into an agreement with the school to contribute \$500,000 towards refurbishing the school pool to a “fully functioning” state. Given the cost overruns, the Council is aware that the project will need to progress in stages, with the first stage focused on making the pool safe and usable. The Council has sought from the school a plan for the second and third stages, which outlines possible funding sources and contingencies if things don’t go as planned.

ACTION: Mark to clarify with the Council what their expectations are around a fully functioning pool.

The school has established a trading account which covers the pool running costs, plus any ongoing minor maintenance costs. The school will not be receiving any funding from Aquazone for the duration of the refurbishment. Ben from Aquazone has indicated that he will return to Newtown school pool once the refurbishment is complete.

The pool refurbishment costs cannot come out of the school’s operating budget. Plans are underway to seek some grant funding for the project. Chris, a parent, has volunteered to help, and Yadana has met with Lucy.

ACTION: Mark and Yadana to develop a plan for funding the various stages of the pool refurbishment, and to discuss this at the next Board meeting.

There was some discussion about the project management fees, and whether the school would be reimbursed by the Council for these costs if the project didn’t go ahead for any reason. Clarification of this issue is needed, as consultancy fees of around \$19,000 are about to be signed off by the school.

ACTION: Mark to clarify with the Council about reimbursement of project costs.

- SAF (Student Achievement Function) – SAF practitioners are part of the Ministry of Education, working alongside schools to raise student achievement and improve their cultural capability.

Mark has had an initial meeting with the woman who may be facilitating this work in Newtown School, and was impressed with what she could potentially offer the school.

Action: Mark to invite the SAF practitioner to address the Board about this project.

- School dates for 2020 - after some discussion about the pros and cons of an earlier start to the year or a later finish, the Board agreed that Newtown School would start back on Monday 3 February 2020 (which aligns with the start date for new students at SWIS), and finish on Tuesday 15 December 2020.
- Teacher only days - 8 teacher only days over the next 3 years have been agreed with the Ministry. This is time available to teachers to complete work that they might otherwise have to do in their own time, like reporting. There are a number of ways the school could manage these days, for example, they could be full or half days, the school could be closed, or the school could provide alternative supervision. Needs to be coordinated with proposed Kahui Ako days. Feedback from staff will also be sought. Mark suggested Board members consider these options, and discuss them again at a future meeting.
- School enrolment scheme review – this is being completed with the Ministry. The issue for the Board is whether to set aside a number of positions for out of zone children to be offered a place in Newtown School through a ballot system. Mark observed that the roll has come down, levelling off at around 390 – 400. Approximately 60-70 new students enrol each year, with a similar number leaving. Mark thought there was capacity for a limited number of positions for 5 year olds (plus any siblings) to be set aside. After discussing the possible advantages and disadvantages of this approach, **the Board agreed that 10 places would be available to out-of-zone students in 2020.**

6. Staff representative report

Louise had invited the various whanau to provide short reports on what is happening in their areas, and these were read out to the Board. Positive (and well attended) learning conversations with students, parents and teachers was a common theme, with some different approaches being applied with successful results.

In future, one area that Louise could seek staff feedback on was suggestions for items that could be funded through grant applications.

7. Reporting on achievement

Nicki presented on how Newtown School measures and reports on student achievement and progress.

Nicki highlighted the range of documents that inform this work – the curriculum (both Maori and English medium), National Education and Administration Guidelines (NAGS and NEGS), teacher codes and standards, the school's charter and strategic and annual plans. These all feed into the Newtown Curriculum (which includes our vision, values, purpose, and culture) and Student Achievement Plan (which includes signposts for progress and achievement, actions to accelerate learners, and effective classroom practice). The belief that all teachers are leaders is reflected in the school's leadership pedagogy, which has various leadership roles (curriculum, learner support, school culture and effective teams) for all teachers in each whanau.

Newtown school has used PaCT (Progress and Consistency Tool) over the last four years. This is a software package that supports reliable and valid overall teacher judgements (OTJ) across maths, reading and writing. It is a comprehensive way to measure progress over time, for individuals, groups, whanau and the whole school. The results are used for reporting, programme design, and deciding next steps for teaching. The school doesn't use PAT or STAR testing.

In terms of reporting, it is a Ministry requirement that two written reports are provided each year. Schools can vary the style of the reports. Typically they cover where the child's learning is at, highlighting next steps, and celebrating success. Supplementing the written reports are two parent-teacher conversations, plus postings on seesaw, informal conversations and IEPs (individual education programmes) for those needing supported programmes.

The school wants to consider how and what is reported to parents, as not all parents value written reports to the same extent. Learning across the wider curriculum also needs to be covered – for example, the arts, science, Te Reo, school culture, engaging with school values, etc. The school is looking at facilitating some (targeted) parent workshops to find out what parents would like. These need to tap into and reflect the wider school community.

Is it worth looking at whether there are any exemplars in local schools? Ask the Kāhui Ako.

Kim Narsi shared some of her concerns, and comments she had received in response to an email she sent around Te Whanau Pohutukawa about reporting on student achievement. While there were a range of views expressed, there were some suggestions for improvement. Some parents also observed that the learning conversations didn't align with what was covered in the reports.

Mark and Nicki commented that the school wants to be responsive to parents' wishes in a way that is manageable. There is not a "one-size fits all" when it comes to what parents would like to see in reports. Parents need to know what tools the school uses (PaCT), and that they can talk to their child's teacher about their child's progress through various communication channels.

Mark and Nicki also invited the Board to consider what they would like in terms of reporting on student achievement and progress. The Board was keen to hear about achievement across the curriculum, not just the learning areas that are measured in PaCT (reading, writing and maths). Some of this is more qualitative in nature, and could continue to be covered in the "staff spotlight" slot on the Board's agenda.

The Board was also interested in a whole school picture of achievement and progress, as well as specific groups that should be a focus (for example, Maori achievement, and achievement of "new New Zealanders").

Board members were encouraged to read the mid-year PaCT analysis that will be sent out, for discussion at the next meeting.

8. Policy

Amelia reported that the school policies will be moving to the school docs platform. The first step is for Nicki to complete the questionnaire, then the policy site can be built by the school docs team. Some of the policies are lengthy, but can be streamlined when they come up for review.

Amelia has looked at the delegations policy, and is happy with this. There is one part of the policy that isn't complete, which relates to the number of paid professional development days for non-teaching staff. The policy will provide that the Board's approval is only needed if the number exceeds five half days a year.

The Board discussed how key policies could be communicated to the wider school community. This was recently highlighted with the lack of awareness of the healthy food and nutrition policy. These policies could be mentioned in whanau and school newsletter, plus in staff briefings and conversations in

classrooms with the children. A gap has been identified with release and relieving teachers, which will be addressed.

A possible new initiative around a zero waste policy for school events was discussed. Nick will consider this as part of his community engagement role.

The Board discussed whether there needed to be a policy around student involvement in political or advocacy campaigns. The issue arose from correspondence received from a parent about a Facebook post showing photos of children wearing badges in support of school principals' industrial action around pay, and the apparent lack of awareness children had when a parent asked about the issue at pick up time.

The school, at the time of enrolment, does ask for parent/caregiver consent for photos of their children to be posted on the school's Facebook page. Only a small number of parents have not given consent.

The Board was supportive of children being active citizens and raising issues that they care about at school. The Board is comfortable with children being involved in activities of a political nature on the condition that are community-led, with children (and sometimes their caregivers) making informed choices about being involved in the activities.

ACTION: Amelia and Jess to consider whether a policy or learning from this experience could be documented.

9. Community engagement

Nick reported that the draft Ngati Kotahitanga representative position description has been created. The Ministry of Education rep has been contacted, who will provide some advice about whether the ex-officio position could be created without any constitutional change. In the mean-time a Ngati Kotahitanga representative could be co-opted on to the Board.

Nick also mentioned that a parent who runs design thinking sessions professionally had offered to run one on "communication to and from the school". It would be good to elicit a range of views from the school community in these sessions, possibly tapping in to school meetings/groups that already exist.

10. Property

ACTION: Jess to ask Yadana if she has any property-related issues that she wants to draw to the Board's attention (via email).

11. Health and Safety

Haidee reported that the Health and Safety Committee met on 16 August. One of the items discussed was the requirement, under the new health and safety legislation, for all groups that use the school (including the Sunday church group, German language group, etc) to come together to look at health and safety issues. Other health and safety issues are included in Mark's Principal's Report.

12. Finance

Victoria pointed out that Education Services hadn't provided a report on the July 2019 finances.

ACTION: Victoria to circulate the July financial report once she receives it from Education Services.

ACTION: Victoria and Mark to meet with Education Services to discuss how to improve their current level of service to the school.

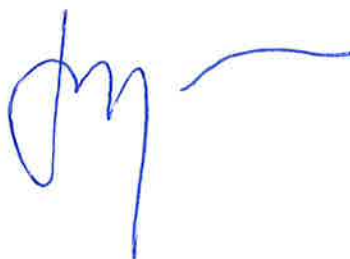
The Board approved a change of operating authority on bank account to replace Jill Forbes (the school's accounts clerk, who is retiring) with Nicki Read.

13. In-Committee

The Board moved into committee at 9.48 pm to discuss personnel and other matters. The Board moved out of committee at 9:58 pm.

Next meeting date

25 September 2019 at 6.30 pm.

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