

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Thursday 14 May 2020, 7.30 pm, via Zoom



Present: Jess Gorman, Nick Booth, Haidee Westwater, Amelia Handscomb, Yadana Saw, Victoria Esson, Louise Conwell, Mark Brown, Keith Hutton, Wanwan Liao, Alysha Stephens, Rania Abdul (for part of the meeting) and Jo Gould (minutes).

- 1. Karakia**
- 2. Planning for COVID-19 Alert Level 2**

After introductions, Jess noted that the purpose of this special Board of Trustees meeting was to discuss the school's plans to reopen under the COVID-19 Alert Level 2 restrictions.

Mark opened with thanks to parents and caregivers for their engagement and encouragement of their children learning from home. Staff had seen the creativity, innovation, and hard work that parents and caregivers have put into their children's learning.

The school's planning for the return of the majority of students on 18 May 2020 is well underway. A lot of this work is captured in the documents circulated by Mark ahead of the Board meeting. Staff are onsite Thursday and Friday to continue with the planning and preparation. Mark emphasised that the school under Alert Level 2 will not be operating 'business as usual'. The school will be complying with government and Ministry requirements.

Items discussed included:

- The initial focus will be on welcoming children back to school, acknowledging what has happened, and celebrating with the children their achievements. Karakia and waiata will be used to help bring focus and purpose to this process.
- Staff, students and whānau will have different feelings about coming back to school. Some may be anxious, which is a normal response to change. Teachers will take the time to listen and allow experiences to be shared, through a range of activities. The emphasis will be on rebuilding

relationships, providing a sense of security, acknowledging different feelings and responses, and making it clear that it's okay not to feel okay all of the time. Some teachers are really good at noticing changes in children, and will also look out for staff as well.

- Louise reported on the school culture meeting held earlier in the week, attended by representatives from each teaching whānau. Wellbeing and school cultural values remain central, even though the school days may look a little different (both in the period of remote learning, and through the transition period back to school). Staff and students valued maintaining connections through using a number of different platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Seesaw etc).
- Learning from home options will continue for the first two weeks, as not all children will return on 18 May (for example, those who are vulnerable or live with vulnerable family members, or those whose families moved out of Wellington for the lockdown and haven't yet returned). During this time the school will need to report to the Ministry the number of children not attending.
- School drop off processes (to help maintain physical distancing) and contact tracing for those that enter the school buildings will be communicated to parents and caregivers over the weekend. The school has worked on clear messaging to help ensure consistency is what information is communicated to the school community. There will be some flexibility for drop off and pick ups, particularly for new students (around 10 are expected in the first week) and new entrants who require more support from their caregivers. Three different ways of collecting contact information will be used - paper forms in classrooms, the rippl app, and the school iPad in the office.
- The school is considered to be its own bubble, so can operate outside the physical distancing rules. Children will be encouraged to keep some distance from each other, and certain activities (singing in the school hall, hugging friends etc) will be discouraged.
- Parents will be asked to keep children home if they have runny noses, sore throats etc. Mark commented that the school is aware that a lot of children have coughs in colder temperatures because of conditions like asthma. Any child that is sick and at school will be taken to the sick bay, which is easy to clean, until a parent can collect them. Another area will be used to treat children's injuries. The reading recovery room can also be used if necessary.
- Melissa will have support in the office. Trish is working full-time until 22 May. Her position has been advertised, and shortlisting is underway. Staff have been approached to act in a temporary position until a permanent replacement for Trish has been appointed.

3. Next meeting

Jess suggested holding the next full Board of Trustees meeting on Wednesday 17 June 2020. This should allow time for subcommittees to meet, actions to be progressed, and any reports to be circulated the Friday before the Board meets.

ACTION: Jess to talk to Mark about how to continue with the Zoom meeting format going forward, to allow parents and staff to join for some or all of the meeting.

