

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 21 October 2020, 6:30 pm

Present: Jess Gorman, Nick Booth, Haidee Westwater, Amelia Handscomb, Yadana Saw, Victoria Esson, Mark Brown, Nicki Read, Joe Winkels and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: Louise Conwell

1. **Karakia**
2. **Board membership**

Jess welcomed Joe Winkels, a parent from the Ngati Kotahitanga whānau, to the meeting. Jess commented that the Board has been working with the Ministry of Education to establish a permanent position for a Ngati Kotahitanga representative on the Board but this hasn't been possible to date. The other option is co-opting a representative onto the Board.

Jess reminded the Board of the considerations they must have regard to under the Education and Training Act 2020 (Schedule 23, clause 1) before co-opting a new member. These include that the Board should reflect the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student body of the school, the fact that approximately half the population of New Zealand is male and half female, the character of the school, and the character of the community (whether geographical or otherwise) served by the school.

Jess moved that Joe Winkels be co-opted on to the Newtown School Board of Trustees for the remainder of the Board's term. The motion was seconded by Amelia and approved unanimously.

ACTION: Jess to arrange for an induction for Joe, including arranging for access to get the Board's Google drive and ensuring the necessary paperwork is completed.

Victoria will be leaving the Board at the end of the year, when her youngest child finishes at Newtown School. Jess acknowledged the experience and expertise she brought to the Board. Nick Booth is



interested in taking on the Treasurer role. He will work with Victoria through to the end of the year, with an initial focus on the budget for 2021.

Amelia has resigned from the Board, effective 2 November 2020 when she takes up a new role at the Ministry of Education. Jess and Mark thanked Amelia for her commitment, energy, enthusiasm, positivity and the great work she has done in the policy portfolio. Jess will pick up the policy portfolio until a replacement Board member has been found.

The Board discussed the options available to fill the vacancy left by Amelia – either holding a by-election or selecting someone. The Board resolved to go for selection, with the first step being an expression of interest process to see who in the school community may be interested in the position.

The Education and Training Act 2020 sets out the requirements for selection, which include formal notice to be published within 14 days about the vacancy and the resolution to fill it by selection. If, after 28 days after the notice is published, fewer than ten percent of eligible voters have asked the board to hold a by-election, then the board may fill the vacancy by selecting someone. The selection must be made within six weeks of the end of the 28 day notification period and the person selected takes office on the day of selection by the board.

ACTION: Initiate an expression of interest process for Amelia's vacated Board position, with anyone who is interested invited to chat with Jess. Formal notice of the vacancy and decision to fill it by selection to be published within 14 days of the Board meeting (i.e. by 4 November 2020).

3. Previous minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 23 September 2020 were approved. Action items were discussed and updated.

4. Conflicts of interest

None declared.

5. Enrolment scheme

The Board discussed the school enrolment scheme, which currently allows 10 out-of-zone Year 1 children to enrol during the year. The scheme doesn't apply to Ngati Kotahitanga because of its special character. By the end of 2020, the school roll is expected to be around 400, which is less than the Ministry's maximum capacity of around 453 students (although this figure has been revised down slightly).

Mark recommended that the school continues to manage the roll up to around 400 – 410. After some discussion, the Board agreed to retain the current out-of-zone allowance of up to 10 children in Year 1.

6. Principal's report

Mark tabled his report. The main item that was discussed was the proposal to offer bilingual education, where the curriculum is taught in te reo Māori for one day of the week, on a pilot basis in 2021. The proposal aligns with one of the new objectives for the Board under the Education and Training Act 2020, which is to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including by taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.

An EOI had been released to explore interest in the trial. Mark reported that 37 whānau had responded to the EOI so far, which represents around 50 children. The school is meeting with parents and caregivers next week to discuss the proposal and what it might look like in practice. To deliver the trial, the school needs staff capability to deliver the curriculum in te reo and English. An ad has been placed in the Education Gazette for a bilingual teacher.

The Board had questions about the trial, many of which raised issues that are still to be worked through. The school is keeping an open mind about these, as they are keen to work through them with the parents involved. In response to one comment, Mark assured the Board that the school is keen to ensure that the proposal strengthens, rather than takes away from, Ngati Kotahitanga.

Mark indicated that he was keen to have a couple of Board members who would be available to act as a sounding board between meetings as the proposal develops – Jess and Nick indicated that they were happy to be involved.

7. Mid-year student achievement reporting

Nicki presented an analysis of the mid-year student achievement data from PACT, which covers progress with reading, writing and maths across the year groups in each whānau. Ngati Kotahitanga is not included, as it would be easy to identify individual children given the small numbers in each year group.

The analysis identifies areas of strengths, concerns and actions to increase progress and engagement for learners who are performing below expectations. Nicki pointed out that the context and stories behind the data are important, especially given the number of English as second language students who come into school with no English.

The PACT analysis was undertaken in September this year, which was later than usual due to COVID-19. The end-of-year report will cover the groups that were the subject of targeted teaching, as well as progress over the year. The end-of-year results may not show as much improvement from the mid-year data given the short timeframes involved.

Board members noted the limited focus of PACT – there are eight curriculum areas, but PACT only reports on literacy and maths. Board members were interested in insights into student achievement across the other curriculum areas. Nicki will give this some thought, but one idea was providing insights into the school's integrated inquiry work could be the answer, and this tends to cover a number of the curriculum areas.

ACTION: Board members were invited to look more closely at the report's findings, and bring to the November Board meeting any questions they would like addressed in the end-of-year student achievement report.

8. Questions and decisions arising from written reports

Health and safety

Haidee's health and safety report raised a number of questions for the Board around access to a social worker in school.

The school doesn't qualify for a Ministry funded social worker in school (this is only available to decile 3 or lower schools).

The school is at the early stage of forming connections with organisations in the community that provide these services. This is an ongoing piece of work, but does raise some questions at this stage, for instance, what does our school community need in terms of access to social services? The Board discussed options, including counselling services at school or someone who can facilitate access to social services available in the community. The Board favoured a systemic approach, where the focus is not just on the individual child but the wider systems surrounding the child which could result in more meaningful change.

Board members also discussed accessing services through faith-based organisations. Haidee clarified that these organisations say that sharing of faith isn't what they are offering as part of their social services, but some Board members had different experiences. There are not many other options available, as many non-government organisations operating in this space have links to some form of faith.

The Board discussed the ongoing issues arising from the new building. Many of these issues come down to the fact that some of the materials and fittings used are not fit for purpose in a school environment. Decisions to use these materials would have been made for cost reasons, but the costs now fall on the Board and school to address the issues.

ACTION: Haidee to draft a letter from the Board to the Ministry of Education (Paul Reeves) outlining the ongoing concerns with the new building and inviting a representative to attend a meeting to discuss the issues.

Community engagement

Nick's report included some draft questions developed by Abi and Haidee to review how effective the spaces in the new building are for teachers and students. The questions will initially be for teaching staff, who could reflect the student voice. Nicki, Mark, Haidee and Nick will continue to work on this.

Policy

Amelia's report summarised the feedback received from parents on the review of the learning support policy. While the policy was seen as positive and aspirational, there were some concerns expressed that:

- the policy is generic and light on detail.

Mark and Nicki noted that the school has detailed procedural guidelines for learning support which is currently being revised. It may be too detailed to refer to in the policy, which could result in some unrealistic expectations. The procedural guidelines are also currently under review as practice has changed in some areas.

ACTION: Mark to share the learning support procedural guidelines to the Board, once the revision work is complete, before a decision is made about whether a link to them should be included in the learning support policy.

- there are some perceived weaknesses in some aspects of implementation

The Board discussed what processes are in place to check in with parents and caregivers who have concerns about how the policy is being implemented for their child. Mark indicated that he is always available to discuss any concerns, as is Justine.

ACTION: Amelia to invite the parent who provided feedback on the IEP to talk to Mark.

ACTION: invite Justine to present to the Board about learning support at Newtown School.

- the policy should make a greater commitment to professional development

The Board noted that the policy currently states that teachers and support staff that are responsible for students needing learning support *may* receive relevant professional development. The Board agreed to change *may* to *will*, noting that the policy refers to “relevant” PD which was a useful qualifier.

Finance

Victoria noted that in the September 2020 financial results the salaries budget is tracking quite high (91% of budget spent with 75% of the year gone). Mark noted that the school has recovered some funds (around \$58,000) for this budget line that are sitting elsewhere in the finances. The pressure on this budget line was the result of pay increases received by TAs as part of their collective employment agreement.

Victoria noted that work is underway on next year’s budget, with options for developing a budget with a small deficit (which usually ends up balancing at the end of the year) or aiming for a zero budget. Board members agreed that it was best to have these discussions with a draft budget to refer to as a reference point. Victoria, Nick and Mark will aim to bring a draft budget to the November meeting.

Property

Yadana reported that she and Mark are meeting with a Council rep and the project manager on 22 October to select one of two tenders that were received for the school pool refurbishment project.

ACTION: Board approval for the preferred tender for the school pool refurbishment to be sought via email.

The Board discussed sponsorship as one option for raising funds for the other phases of the school refurbishment project. Contributors could be acknowledged through sponsorship placards being placed on the school fences.

ACTION: Yadana to check what the rules are for displaying sponsors’ details on school property.

Next meeting: 18 November 2020

ACTION: Jess to email Board members with some possible dates for the December Board meeting (noting that the school finishes on 15 December).