

## **Newtown School Board of Trustees**

### **Meeting minutes**

Wednesday 24 May 2017, 6.15 pm, school staffroom

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Present: Mark Brown; Annette Gittos; Julie Bennett; Kelvin Harper; Daniel Petersen; Lucy Kebbell; Karen O'Leary; Sally Hunter; Nicki Read; Andrea Brown, Alan de Lima, Kim Nassi, Kini Mitipelo, Constanze Schwind, Jude Vaco (for items 1 - 6); Ben Gittos (for items 5 - 6); and Jo Gould (minutes).

Apologies: Victoria Esson.

#### **1. Introduction and Karakia**

Daniel conducted the karakia.

Board members and parents in attendance introduced themselves.

#### **2. Previous Minutes and Actions**

Minutes of the 25 January 2017 and 26 April 2017 Board meetings were approved and the action items were discussed and updated.

#### **3. Conflicts of interest**

None declared.

#### **4. Enrolment scheme update**

Relevant documents and material on the enrolment scheme consultation and outcome have been provided to the Ministry of Education (MoE). This material has been audited, and additional material requested so that the Ministry has everything on record. The school is in the process of scanning all the material that was provided to parents (and others) as part of the consultation process, plus all the submissions and feedback received on the proposed enrolment zone. MoE will then consider all the material, and may ask for further information.

As part of the MoE audit process, eight submitters have been identified that have not been notified about the outcome of the consultation process (the majority of these submitters are from the Mt Cook school community). MoE will need to see what the school provides to these submitters.

As part of the standard process for introducing an enrolment scheme, if the MoE approves the scheme there is a three month stand down period, so the Board can review the scheme (if required). This period can be shortened, and would need to if the scheme is to be implemented at the beginning of Term 3 - 24 July 2017.

The Board had received a letter from the Chair of the Mt Cook School Board of Trustees, indicating that they had written to the Ministry asking that Newtown School's proposed enrolment scheme not be approved. Mt Cook school objects on two grounds - the proposed zone overlaps an area that is in the Mt Cook School zone, and that the Newtown School Board had not addressed, nor made a considered response to, the issues raised by Mt Cook School.

Annette has been in contact with the MoE local manager (Ella Tavernor) to discuss this issue before the Newtown School Board came to a decision on the proposed enrolment zone. Ella has met with Mt Cook School to hear their views. Ella has informed Mt Cook School that Newtown School has followed the MoE guidelines on consultation and that overlaps in school zones are common (except in Auckland).

Ella has suggested that Annette and Mark meet again with Mt Cook School to talk about the issues, even if the result is to agree to disagree. Mt Cook School suggested involving a facilitator for this meeting - they suggested Grant Robertson, Wellington Central MP. Annette has some concerns about a politician being involved in what is essentially an operational issue - but she is happy if someone from the Ministry facilitated the discussion. The Board agreed with this position.

**ACTION:** Annette and Mark to meet again with Mt Cook School to discuss issues arising from the proposed Newtown School enrolment zone.

## 5. PB4L report

Several parents had written to the Board to express concerns about certain students' behaviour in Whanau Waitangi. Annette indicated to the parents present at the meeting that the Board members had read the correspondence, but care had to be taken when discussing the issues so that individual children's names were not mentioned (for privacy and confidentiality reasons).

Mark started the discussion, reiterating that everyone wants Newtown School, and the students, to be safe and positive learners, with a stimulating learning environment. Parents have the right to provide constructive input and feedback, and this is welcome. The school follows some tried and recommended strategies in New Zealand around behavioural management - PB4L - Positive Behaviour for Learning. Staff are trained in PB4L, and the programme has evolved and changed over the years as new staff come on board and the demographics of the school change.

Mark referred to the circle of care - the student is at the centre, surrounded by the core team of teachers and parents/whanau. Multiple supports can then be put in place for students and family where there are complex needs (not all of these children are displaying behavioural issues).

The RTLB service is also used (needs parental consent). RTLB, and special education psychologists, are at the school on a regular (around weekly) basis.

The school is proactive at addressing concerns, and focuses on a culture of well-being and self-improvement.

Sally Hunter gave a detailed overview of PB4L, reiterating that he aim is to give students four positive messages for every one negative. Rewards - cards of awesome - are given out to students who are demonstrating the school values (connected, curious, resilient). The PB4L expectations of behaviour - respect, responsible, positive, and a learner - are well known by students. These align with the school values.

PB4L has three tiers of support (refer to MoE publication): Tier 1 - covers 80% of school, and is the core PB4L programme, Tier 2 - covers around 15% of school and is a targeted programme for students at risk, and Tier 3 - covers around 5% of school, the high risk students who require individualised support tailored to their needs.

Sally pointed out that building relationships with students is a key strategy. The school has been moving away from punitive approach to a restorative one, where students take responsibility for their behaviour, are encouraged to reflect on who else has been impacted by their behaviour, and consider what they could do differently in future ("reflection time").

All behaviour that could result in reflection time is recorded by teaching staff on a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet includes information on the name of student, term of the week the incident occurred, date of the incident, date of reflection time, who was involved, what whanau the child comes from, what time the incident occurred, what the behaviour was and its purpose, location, whether the behaviour was minor or major, and what possibly motivated the behaviour. The whanau teachers and leadership teams regularly (at least weekly, usually more frequently) reflect on the data, to identify trends and track behaviour of students over time

The Board asked about the teacher's levels of comfort about having to deal with these issues, and whether they feel resourced to deal with these situations (and if not, how can they be assisted). Nicki responded that there are lots of systems in place, teachers support each other, and learn through trial and error. Having RTLB at the school on a regular basis helps. The Board has budgeted for supplemented support hours for students (so if RTLB gives 4 support hours per week for a student, for example, the school tops this up).

Some of the parents present at the meeting observed that they are hearing from their children about an increasing number of issues and incidents in the classroom and playgrounds. Parents also talk among themselves. Parents assume there are systems in place, but are not confident that they are working. As a result, some parents are losing trust in the school. Parents need open communication so they know what is happening and can support their kids. Some children are scared, withdrawn, or indifferent to the behaviour that they are witnessing in the school environment. Teachers need to talk openly with the children about the incidents after they occur. Parents want to help and provide support to the teachers in whatever way they can. Signalling that there is a problem is not admitting failure.

Mark commented that, in terms of notifying parents about incidents, he has checked with numerous agencies, and there are some concerns around privacy. The school is following the relevant guidelines, for example, around evacuation. The school has recently had an external review of the PB4L approach. The school is thinking about whether and how things that are put in place can be resourced properly. There is also a teacher-only day in early June on understanding and responding to behaviour.

Sally ran through data on the number and types of incidents (major and minor). There have been a higher number of incidents in 2017 - a number of factors are behind this, including better reporting, the challenges of the new school build and that a very small number of students are behind many of the incidents. Annette indicated that it is important that the Board unpacks this information, as the Board has a statutory obligation to make sure the school is a safe learning environment for students and teachers. This is the first time the Board has seen this data. More parent engagement is important, so parents can support the process and outcome.

Parents asked if there is a policy around notifying parents if a child is hurt or threatened by another child at school. Mark commented that guidelines came out in October 2016 (around de-escalation, checking in with children involved in incidents etc). He would expect that parents of any injured children are contacted, but he wants to see this happening consistently.

**ACTION:** Mark to table the relevant policy at the next Board meeting.

The Board and parents discussed the next steps, which focused on improving the communication and information flows.

**ACTIONS:** Mark to organise a meeting with the school community to discuss these issues. This could involve exploring how parents can support the children in the school community in a positive, tangible way. Information will be circulated to the school community about what the school is doing in the PB4L space. Mark will also draft responses to the parents' letters.

## **6. School values**

Ben Gittos gave a presentation on reinstating respect as a school value, alongside connected, curious and resilient. Ben observed that respect is throughout the school's charter, but has been reduced to a descriptor in the current school values. While respect is part of the PB4L expectations, these are not visible or used with students. Some recent incidents of student behaviour reflects the absence of respect in the school culture. In Ben's view, respect needs to be added as a fourth value.

Board members expressed support for Ben's proposal. Members observed that language is important and matters - school values are prioritised, used in discussion with children, but the concept of respect is not part of the common language. It is a really important value and a foundation for all behaviour. Respect starts at home and it should be part of the school's values. A Board member observed that respect is the value that most closely aligns with self-control (which is a key determinant for success in life).

Where to go from here? Nicki: the values have evolved from conversations - have had feedback from lots of different pockets in the school. Its early days to say whether or not the three values are the right ones. But the children and teachers do use the term respect in their conversations.

Given that there was broad support at the Board level for including respect as an additional school value, it was agreed that the issue would be taken back to staff, and discussed again at the next Board meeting.

**ACTION:** Staff to consider including respect as an additional school value, and report back to the Board.

## **7. ERO visit preparation**

No date has yet been finalised for ERO's visit, but it is likely to be late in Term 3, or some time in Term 4. ERO will give notice of between 4 - 6 weeks before visiting. Information about the process of the review is on ERO's website. ERO usually have a "pre-visit" (to find out what broad themes the school has been working on, etc). Last time ERO requested a presentation on what has happened in the school over the last 3 years. Mark observed that this will be an opportunity for the school to tell its story, its vision, what needs to improve etc. The focus is likely to also be on Maori students.

## **8. Principal's report**

Mark tabled his report. Items discussed by the Board included:

- Draft policy on restraint
- Seesaw - Kelvin provided an update. This will replace the learning journey. Seesaw is an online portfolio, available in real time. Students are learning how to use it and upload material. Parents and caregivers will be able to download an app on their phone, or receive material via email. Material can also be printed off.

## **9. Finance and Property**

The Board noted the expenditure for the month of March 2017 of \$36,472 . Year-to-date (YTD) income is at 23% of budget. YTD expenditure is 17% of budget.

The financial management reports prepared by Education Services for the month of April 2017 were tabled.

Internal auditors have already been on site and requesting information. Standard documents for the auditors will need to be signed off by Annette.

SKIDS have fallen behind in their payments. A repayment plan is now in place.

Furniture and fittings grant - this doesn't cover items like security cameras, switches for the wireless, AV equipment etc. It looks like the school will need to spend around \$150,000 on this.

Property update - Mark will meet with the Wellington City Council on 25 May 2017 to determine the costs of the project, and to understand whether the Council is still committed to the project given the cost increases (an extra \$300,000 is required). Ben from Aquazone will also be at the meeting.

Smokefree signs have been put up around the school, as well as play safe signs in the playground. The issues with the matting in the playground should be fixed under the 1 year maintenance guarantee.

Political banners have been put up on the outside of school fences during the Saturday market. MoE wanted to make sure that the Board was aware of MoE policies around no political billboards on school

property.

**ACTION:** Lucy to talk to the local Green Party about the billboards.

Recycle bins will be placed around the outside of the school after consultation with the Sustainable Trust.

The planting of fruit trees has been approved for around the hall.

## **10. New Build**

There have been delays due to the complexity of foundations and the soil integrity. Mark continues to advocate for the building to be handed over to the school in January 2018. The prefabs will need to be removed, and the only time this can be done is during the school holidays). But the prefabs can't be removed until the new building is ready to be occupied. MoE is engaging an independent project manager for advice about what parts of the project can be accelerated.

Julie stressed the importance of choosing low VOC (volatile organic compounds) products to minimise "off gassing" since children are likely to be in the new building prior to the best practice 6 week stand down period. Mark has confirmed with the architects that they have specified that the products used in the new build are low VOC.

38 concrete trucks will begin pouring in June, then the slab walls will begin to go up.

It may be necessary to retain the old room 11 - this was going to be demolished but may need to be kept due to budget restraints (costs of demolition) and a lack of space in the new school area (we are one classroom short - this is to do with the footprint of the building).

The colour scheme of the new build is being finalised. There will be neutral colours around the walls - wet areas will have more colour - Mark will talk to whanau in Ngati Kotahitanga about what they want.

## **11. Maori medium**

Daniel observed that:

- The hangi is coming up.
- The entry criteria for Ngati Kotahitanga has been finalised, to be circulated to pre-schools.
- The kapa haka committee will meet after Labour weekend - fundraising for uniforms will be on their agenda (there are around 55 children in the group).
- He is also compiling the history of the unit.

## **12. Other committees and working groups**

Health & Safety - Darrell Smith is working on the audit - it has been completed but is being written up.

Policy - numerous policies are being written and updated.

Restraint policy - is in the google docs folder - it is more of a process/procedure, than a policy. Provides guidelines for what New Zealand schools must follow.

Finance policies - the school has provided all these policies to the auditor. Need to reconfirm (at the next Board meeting) that the school meets all the requirements.

Sponsorship - Karen knows someone to go for for advice and guidance on the best avenues for grants. Karen needs to compile a document covering the pros and cons of applying for grants from the proceeds of gambling. Karen asked whether the school has a "wish list" for what we want to apply to grants funders for. FANS has a list, but currently doesn't have anyone who wants to apply for grants.

Dyslexia working group - needs to meet.

FANS - the shorts purchased for the school by FANS have arrived. Ngati Kotahitanga - Daniel is working on delegating a whanau member to be linked into FANS.

### **13. Any other business (including correspondence)**

The Board had received correspondence from Andrea Brown and Alan de Lima, Kim Nassi, Christian Hoerning and Constanze Schwind (all expressing concerns about student behaviour in Whanau Waitangi), and Ben Gittos (requesting that "respect" be added to the three school values of connected, curious and resilient).

There was a discussion about letters to the editor of the Cook Strait News about the proposed French bilingual unit, and whether the school should write in to inform readers of the decision not to proceed. The Board decided a letter wasn't necessary.

### **14. In-Committee**

Daniel and Nicki left the meeting before the Board moved into committee at 9:25 pm to discuss personnel and other matters. The Board and moved out of committee at 9:51 pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday 28 June 2017 at 6.15 pm (TBC)

 28 June 17

