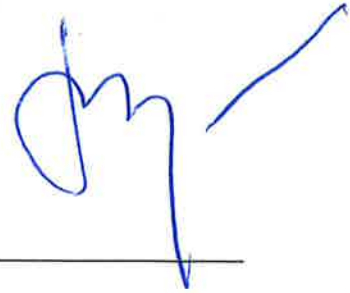


Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 17 June 2020, 6.30 pm



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

1. Karakia

2. Previous minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 and 21 April 2020 and 14 May 2020 were approved. Action items were discussed and updated where required.

3. Conflicts of interest

None declared

4. Principal's report

Mark tabled his report. Items discussed included:

- Students are settling back into school after the COVID-19 lockdown period. Attendance levels have returned to normal for this time of the year. Staff and whānau wellbeing continues to be front of mind. Mark acknowledged the efforts of both staff and whānau during the “learning from home” period, noting that staff worked through their holidays to ensure everything was in place for the start of term. There has been mostly positive feedback from families about the school's response during the various alert levels.
- Maraea has done a great job connecting with Ngati Kotahitanga whānau during this period, with “Zohui” being used to engage across whānau. Three new families have recently joined Ngati Kotahitanga. There might be a whānau representative for the Board - to be confirmed.

- An afternoon or evening session for parents is being planned for the second week in Term 3 to discuss the different ways the school assesses and communicates information about a child's achievement and progress. PACT will be part of this discussion.

ACTION: add the parent evening as an agenda item for the July Board meeting.

- A facilitator from Waikato University is working with the school on cultural responsiveness, with a particular focus on Māori. Class "walk-throughs" are planned, which will involve the facilitator and other teachers spending time observing and talking to teachers and children in classroom settings.
- Another facilitator will lead discussions with the teaching staff on child agency and student voice - in particular, how to encourage self-directed learning in students.
- Mark and Jess, as school principal and board chair, have been invited to have a conversation with ERO about what the school did during the lockdown period (including learning outcomes for children during this period, lesson learned, etc). The school was due to have an ERO review before the end of the year, but this will likely roll over into 2021 as ERO hasn't been conducting formal reviews since lockdown.
- The school has engaged Ellen Coup to come up with a proposal for a new mural for the foyer entrance. Board members provided feedback on the design, which reflects that the school is made up of many different cultural roots, which knit together as one.

ACTION: Mark to circulate the various versions of the mural design and seek Board feedback/input.

ACTION: Amelia and Yadana to develop an overall strategy/vision for art work in the school, including the conservation, preservation, and restoration of existing art works. Victoria to provide the original brief on the art project that resulted in the recent murals being commissioned for the school.

- A new staff member has been appointed to the office, following Trish's resignation. Alice Cooke returns from parental leave in Term 3, where she will job share with another new teacher who is joining Whānau Harakeke. Debbie will move to Whānau Tui to cater for roll growth.

5. Newtown School Wellbeing Survey

Louise presented on the findings of the wellbeing survey that was undertaken last year with staff and Year 4 - 6 students. This is the third time the survey has been conducted. The survey explores the wellbeing of staff and students, how they feel about being at Newtown school, their sense of safety, etc. The results highlight a number of things that are going well – it's a caring school, there is a respect for culture, support for students who need it, and caring teachers. The results point to a range of things contributing to this, including teachers modelling positive and inclusive practices etc.

In terms of next steps following the survey, there are a number of areas of focus, including: strengthening values and consistent expectations around learning and behaviour; strengthening children's voice and agency around wellbeing, behavioural decisions etc; building capabilities around cultural responsiveness; developing a common understanding of what bullying is (it's different from being mean); and increasing consistency around how certain behaviours are responded to. These steps will be guided by who our students are, what they bring, and what they need.

6. Staff representation report

Louise provided a brief report as the staff representative on the Board. She echoed earlier comments from Mark that it's been a busy time for staff and many are feeling tired. Louise acknowledged the support provided by Mark, Nicki and the wider leadership team. She also noted the increased engagement from TAs, and ownership over the work they do in the classrooms, which has been great.

The Board agreed to shout morning tea for the staff at the end of term, as a sign of the Board's appreciation for all their efforts over the last couple of challenging months.

7. Property

Swimming pool – Yadana reported that the Wellington City Council has confirmed funding for stage 1 of the pool renovation, which will go out for tender shortly, with construction planned to start in early October 2020. Stage 1 of the project is expected to take around 16 weeks, after which the pool will be fully functional. The school can send an invoice to the Council to cover the professional project

management (etc) fees already incurred. The next step is to develop a fundraising plan to cover the remaining two stages of the renovation.

Ten year property plan – on behalf of the Board, Jess will sign off around \$815,000 + GST worth of capital works that have been identified as part of the school’s property plan (including fixing drainage, upgrading drinking fountains, repairing fencing, replacing the roof on the admin block, renovation of old Tui, etc).

Yadana and Mark have been exploring options to protect the paint finish on the new school block, which is suffering from significant wear and tear. A quote has been obtained for applying two-part epoxy, with a quote also being sought from vinyl specialists (which is likely to last longer, but cost more as it will be a complex job involving removal of railing, electrical plugs, etc).

The school will engage a builder to complete smaller projects around the school, including a new sandpit and a storage shed.

8. Finance

Victoria has prepared three finance reports, with the June report summarising the May 2020 financial results (which represents 42% of the calendar year gone). The school is tracking conservatively across expenditure. Income is down in some areas (Saturday market, SKIDS and pool hire) and up in others (increased roll growth resulting in an increased operating grant). Overall the school is in a good financial position, with a positive variance (budgeted income against budgeted expenditure) of around \$120,000.

The school’s budget has been revised to reflect the changes in income and expenditure brought about by the lockdown and other events. The school’s working capital (which is essentially an emergency fund) is within the range recommended by the school’s advisers. The school is budgeting for a surplus of around \$40,000 at the end of the financial year.

ACTION: the school’s financial policies and procedures to be checked and (if necessary) updated to reflect the recommended guidelines around the level of working capital (as a percentage of the school’s operational grant).

9. Health and safety

Haidee provided a summary of the issues discussed at the June meeting of the Health and Safety sub-committee. One issue that came up during lockdown was internet safety and, in particular, whether the school's policies need to be updated to cover situations where school devices are taken home. The level of supervision at home may differ from what is available at school. There can also be an issue of other household members using the device to sign up to various apps or websites using the child's google account. Parents may need some information around cyber safety and what to keep an eye out for when their children are using the internet.

10. Policy

Amelia took the Board through a tour of the new SchoolDocs website, covering the school's policies and procedures. Nicki and Mark (and others) reviewed the policies to make sure they were current and relevant to Newtown School. Staff and interested parents/caregivers will be able to link through to the SchoolDocs site from the school's website. A password is needed to access the site, which will be publicly shared. The site shows policies that are scheduled for a review. Any legislative changes that impact on policies will result in automated updates. Otherwise Mark will need to approve any policy changes.

Amelia also discussed a proposed new healthy food policy. The policy was reviewed as the previous policy was overly prescriptive, and there was a tension between the policy and the PB4L practice of providing food rewards for children (for example, when they reached 50 or 100 "cards of awesome"). The proposed new policy is based on a template developed by the Heart Foundation. It focuses on values/intentions that can be used by staff to develop practices and procedures.

The Board was supportive of the new healthy food policy, and suggested a couple of changes. The next steps are to check that the existing policy on food safety covers off children with food allergies, and to run the draft policy past Bronwyn (a parent who works in public health).

11. Community Engagement

Nick reported that a survey was being finalised to test the findings of the workshop run in late 2019 on school communications. The survey will reflect recent experiences of staff and parents during lockdown (where platforms like Seesaw were used more extensively) and the return to school (where the “green line” for dropping off and collecting children presented an opportunity for more face to face engagement between teachers and parents). Nick mentioned that the school also plans to run surveys around cultural responsiveness and reporting on student achievement and progress, so some thought will need to be given to the timing of these. Creating a survey through a Māori and Pacific lens, and perhaps also a Somali lens, is being discussed. There is also an opportunity to have a conversation about these issues at the parent evening being held next term.

Nick provided an update on progress to establish an ex officio position on the Board for a Ngati Kotahitanga representative. Mark and Nick have met with NZSTA and MOE to discuss this. It appears that while provisions in the Education Act allow organisations with a particular status to have positions on the board (for example, a Montessori representative), there is no clear way to establish a similar position for a representative of a Māori immersion unit outside of co-opting or setting up an alternative constitution. The MoE rep was going to have a look at governance models for schools that have immersion units and report back.

12. Grants

Mark and Jess are working on improving the process for grant accountability (essentially ensuring invoices and the like are available to Lucy who reports back to funders on how their grants have been spent by the school). Jess indicated that Lucy will shortly be handing over the grant funding role. The Board expressed their appreciation for the amazing work Lucy has done in this role.

ACTION: Jess to include something in the newsletter about Lucy moving on from the grant funding role.

Next meeting: 22 July 2020 (TBC)