

Newtown School Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

Thursday 19 Oct 2023, 6.45pm
Library and Zoom

Board members: Nicki Read, Yadana Saw, Joe Winkels (co-chair), Nick Booth (co-chair), Naomi Taylor, Shannyn Edmonds, Jess Gorman, Lisa Morunga, Trey Tanuvasa.

Also present: Steve Kerr (minutes), Leanne Whitfield (kaiako/teacher)

Apologies: Fatima Amin Sheikh.

1. Karakia timatanga

Nick welcomed everyone and confirmed there were no conflicts of interest.

2. Te Tiriti

Shannyn said that at her work for the first time there had been an induction module for new kaimahi on Te Tiriti. She said that some of the new staff didn't know anything about it and it was cool to see them learn.

3. Tumuaki report

Nicki said it was a time of year when there is lots to talk about and decisions to be made.

Change in finishing date - Nicki said the last day of school for 2024 should be 18 December (not 19 December), and that the staff only days for 2024 should be 29 and 30 January, 28 March, and 4 June.

- **MOTION TO APPROVE DATES- seconded and passed**

Leave requests - Nicki said that Venise and Kath had requested leave. Kath has good friends visiting from the UK who are only here for only a few days, and Venise's waka ama team is going over to Rarotonga. She said she recommended approving these requests as they are important wellbeing things. She said school keeps an eye on patterns of leave.

- **MOTION TO APPROVE LEAVE REQUESTS - seconded and passed**

Resignations - Nicki said that the board needs to formally accept resignations. She said it had been a privilege working with Leanne, who is so clever, so caring, and so good with relationships. She said the school has benefited from her wisdom and experience. Nicki said that Hilary Lintott is moving on to a deputy principal role at Crofton Downs. She said that the school has known for a bit that she was going, and it's a really positive sign of her growth.

- **MOTION TO ACCEPT RESIGNATIONS - seconded and passed**

Mosaic installation - Nicki said there are two options for the installation. We could wait till the summer holidays and use volunteers, led by Ropata who has done it before, or pay someone to do it in November. She said she had received a quote of \$8000 which seems reasonable given the amount of work involved. Nicki said the school had recently received money for the bike track which means it did have to fund it itself. She said the classroom where the pou are stored can't be used until the classroom they are up.

Joe and Yards asked, is it the same work and same quality of installation, for each option? Nicki said she thought so, both options have experience but it's not their day job. Kio

Yards said to have them installed in November would be a nice way to end the year and to see off tamariki who had contributed to the pou. Joe said if we pay someone, we would have more come back if something went wrong. Nicki said thank you, okay lets do it.

Shannyn asked if there'll be a dawn service? Nicki said yes, and that there had been a lot of kōrero about where best to place them.

Structured literacy - Nicki said she had asked for Helen Walls to present to the meeting but she was unable to make the new meeting date. Nicki said that Helen has prepared a written report instead which is in the board folder.

Leanne said a focus for the school now is to make sure new teachers coming on board are skilled in structured literacy, or can access professional development if it's needed. Nicki said that from now on the support for structured literacy will now happen internally. She said it's a good thing for the board to keep asking about.

Nick said do we need to set money aside for this in future? Leanne said no it'll be a focus for our professional development investment.

Naomi asked if there are patterns in who it's working for and who it's not? Nicki said it's a bit too early to tell. She said it's definitely working well for students coming into school without much English, to get the basic building blocks.

Trey asked what sort of homework is set for a year 6 class for reading? Nicki said generally we don't do homework. We say read for enjoyment, be with your family, and so on. Younger students do a bit of spelling now for homework. She said that's not really part of our approach, for our school community.

Lisa said a lot of reading happens on tablets, and lots of tamariki don't do much writing. She said it's not how English is taught. She said she was used to students doing homework and was surprised when her kids didn't have homework.

Trey asked if students don't do homework, then how do we encourage more complex vocab? How do we challenge our community to advance our students to a level that is as good as any other kura? Nicki said that literacy is taught by decoding spelling, comprehension, responding to text, oral language, writing. There's lots to it. She encouraged board members to look at the Literacy Essence statement.

Learning support - Nicki wanted to acknowledge what a great job Sarah is doing, she's so productive and doing amazing work

- **ACTION - Nicki to invite Sarah Diversto future meeting for 'staff spotlight'**

Staff - Nicki said the new deputy principal was Danielle Te Waiti. She's moving down from Dargaville. Nicki said that the school leadership was busy planning teaching staff and whānau for next year. She said that staff movements - departures and new staff coming in - will be announced in week 6. The position for the new kaiako for Ngāti Kotahitanga had been re-advertised. She said that Lauren and Alice both received scholarships to study te reo.

Property - Nicki said that bike track opening was awesome. She said that lots of families have come and spoken to her to say how great it is, it's turning the grass area into a community hub. She said swimming is off to a great start. She said the school has had a few conversations with some families to get all the students to do swimming. It's a safety thing and it's part of the curriculum.

Bees - Yadana said she'd produced a report on bees in the board folder. She'd had a go at applying the new Whakamana strategy by herself. A few questions had come up, and she had added those as actions for the bee subcommittee. She said there are a few actions that need to happen, then we'll start to inform the community. She said we need to know all the protocols and rules before we inform the community, so we can answer peoples' questions.

Teacher and team models - Nicki said work is under way for the model for next year. She said she was trying to keep the ratios low, as that makes for better relationships and options. She said that to achieve that, the school may need the board to fund a position.

Nick asked if there are any physical things we need to consider, for the different use of spaces planned for next year? Nicki said no, not really, but there will be some changes. Shannyn suggested we could rename all the rooms to give them some new energy, and ask the kids for suggestions.

Finance - Jess said there isn't a finance report this month, as it came in over the school holidays when Melissa was on leave, so finances are still being coded.

Nicki said there is a lot of budget preparation going on at the moment.

Nicki recommends that the Two Basket Trust money is reserved and will be spent over five years, a total of \$26,500.

- **MOTION TO SET ASIDE FUNDS TO BE SPENT OVER FIVE YEARS- seconded and passed unanimously**

Nicki said she needs to spend the principal wellbeing support funding before the end of the year. She presented a list of options for the board to consider and sought general agreement in principle from the board. They said that Nicki works really hard and is serving the community and she should never feel guilty about spending the money on herself.

- **MOTION TO AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE OPTIONS - seconded and passed unanimously**

Nicki also sought agreement that the \$6000 coaching and leadership money for 2023 be carried forward to next year.

- **MOTION TO CARRY FORWARD FUNDS - seconded and passed unanimously**

4. Strategic plan process

Nick asked Nicki for an update on the strategic plan. Nicki said her and Leanne had updated the grid since last month's board hui. She said they'd like the board to approve the set of questions they've got for parents, then those questions will be used in the gathering and meeting with groups of parents. She ran through the questions with the board.

Yadana said they're great questions. Jess and Lisa said they looked great. Nicki said they're designed to be simple questions that the students could answer themselves.

The meeting agreed that the questions were good to go out.

Naomi asked what survey uptake was like? Nick said in his experience getting uptake of more than one third is good. Leanne said we might have an afternoon tea too.

5. Diversity and inclusion

Nicki presented a slide deck on diversity and inclusion she said it's a huge topic and this is just a start. She said the reason we're doing this now is that we've noticed an increase in racist language among some students and we want to do something about it, we don't want to ignore it. She said it's words intended to hurt, but not physical.

Leanne and Nicki presented some statements and asked the board to consider them, e.g. 'There's no such thing as 'not racist'', 'Learning to be anti-racist is easier for children than adults'. Nicki said we have a collective responsibility to respond to this. She asked the board to consider what their responsibility is.

Lisa said a lot of problems come from people not knowing about other groups.

Nicki said she knows that our families experience racism on our streets, they tell her about it.

Yadana said our kura is trying to craft a certain message, but that's different from what they hear some of our political leaders say.

Shannyn agreed that it is harder for adults to unlearn racism, they've had 30 years of being surrounded by it.

Nick said it is healthy to name it and talk about it, even if it's uncomfortable. So kids know that racism is a thing that is out there in our society, so there's no shame if you've experience it.

Yadana asked whether the restorative conversation approach had helped? Nicki said that it hadn't prevented it but it may have helped keep the racist action as words and not physical fighting. She said the school had done a lot of work on students not hurting each other.

Nicki outlined all the positive processes that the school uses already, such as: gaining a deep knowledge of each student, increasing visibility of cultures and celebrations in our kura; restorative conversations; involving whānau if the issue can't be resolved; and so on.

Naomi asked who facilitates the whānau to whānau hui when they are required. Nicki said usually it's her with someone helping, like Sarah Forester, our restorative conversation support expert. She said sometimes she would bring in other cultural or translation support.

Trey asked whether the school gets in people from outside to support the process, e.g. for Pasifika families. Nicki said yes she definitely would.

Nicki shared a list of some of the resources available for school on racism, but she said there are not a lot of resources specifically designed for NZ, a lot are from the USA or Australia.

Lisa said it starts with whānau, when you step through the gate you are part of a whānau. That should be part of our whakaaro for next year. You should respect your whānau.

Jess asked whether teachers look at structural racism, not just interpersonal. She asked whether that was something for the board to look at, how might our decisions as governors embed racism?

Joe said there's a responsibility at home too, most kids just do what is role modelled at home. Nicki said yes it's a mix, some kids repeat what they hear at home, and some what they hear in the playground.

Trey suggested that next year for new students who are Pasifika, whether one or two of the parents could come in and meet with the other Pasifika parents. Then they would know there is a group and a sense of belonging, like a buddy. So it would be a direct action to make sure that new whānau know there's somewhere to go.

Lisa agreed and said, the school could do the same thing for other communities too, as well as Pasifika. Trey said yes, and maybe we could bring together different communities, Pasifika and non-Pasifika, to let them know that it's a diverse community.

Nick thanked Nicki for raising this, it's really important to name it and own it. And not pretend it's not a thing.

- **ACTION - board members to consider board responsibility to address racism for strategic plan (structural racism, engagement with wider communities e.g. meet with imam)**
- **ACTION - Nicki to explore how we might connect families to families to promote inclusion**

Trey asked again about the school's response to prayer at celebration of language week. How can the school improve its approach to understanding cultural differences? She said she did not feel like it had been properly addressed at the last meeting. She said some Samoan parents are asking her about it, are there any policies around what parent groups can do, what their role is?

Nick thanked Trey for raising her concern again. He said from memory at the time Nicki said that the prayer shouldn't have been stopped that way, and that we'd discuss it further in this agenda item on diversity and inclusion.

Nicki said we also need to look at our induction of new teachers, and how we upskill our teachers to get it right. Trey said she felt for the kaiako in that situation, they were trying to do the right thing. She said we need to protect our kaiako and make sure they're culturally aware.

Yadana asked whether we need a policy or checklist for cultural events, so that we avoid those situations in future?

Naomi said, in terms of the role of parents' groups, perhaps there are no boundaries, but there's a partnership? Nick asked whether there are particular things the parents group wants to do but can't? Trey said, she said she's not sure that there are. She said she will just keep talking to Nicki.

6. Newsletter

Nick suggested that the board could arrange newsletter content by discussion on WhatsApp.

- **ACTION - Joe and Nick to prepare a newsletter item on co-governance**
- **ACTION - All board members to provide updated photo and blurb for website**

7. Portfolio reports

Policies - Nick said that the reports are all in the shared drive. He said there are three for the board to review and he would email them out soon. He said he would like to put together a subgroup to review feedback on policies.

- **ACTION - Let Nick know if you want to join a subgroup to review feedback on policies.**

8. Previous minutes

Approved as true and correct.

#	Action	Assigned to	Update
158	Inform mana whenua that we've moved to co-chair and to seek advice on tikanga of blessing the beginning of the co-chair model	Nicki	Close
157	Consider taking on a board portfolio	Lisa, Shannyn	Close ACTION - Joe to prepare summary of each board portfolio and add to induction document
156	Meet to talk about reviewing the Maori education success policy	Nicki, Joe, and Naomi	Close
155	Write content for October newsletter on the Whakamana/Placemaking strategy	Yadana	Close
154	Write content for the next newsletter on the co-chair issue	Naomi	Close
153	Invite Helen Walls to appear at upcoming meeting to talk about the school's progress with structured literacy	Nicki	Close
151	Provide feedback on the Tiriti strategy	All	Close
150	Develop and document the process for co-chairing, including how this works together with the Ngāti Kotahitanga co-option model	Naomi, Jess	Carry forward
148	Develop the bee proposal	Nicki, Joe, Yadana	Carry forward
141	Consider fundraising options for cyclone at future meeting	Nick	Carry forward

9. Closing karakia

Meeting closed at 9.48pm.

Future meetings

- Monday 20 November 2023
- Monday 11 December 2023