

# Wadestown School

## Board of Trustees

Sally Barrett  
Sarah Feltham  
Julie Gerrard  
Amy Maddock  
Anna O'Meeghan  
Neil Paviour-Smith  
Guy Pottinger

## News from the Board – December 2017

This newsletter from the Board of Trustees is solely focused on the Ministry of Education's new classroom project.

A second BoT News will be sent out next week referring to a range of other matters following the meeting of trustees next Monday evening.

It has been a source of complete frustration to the Board that the classroom development project has been poorly handled by the Ministry of Education.

The Board has been very concerned in recent months about the impact this had on (amongst other things):

- the school environment (extensive areas out of action etc);
- the unnecessary stress placed on teachers (extra duties and workload etc);
- the Principal (unnecessarily dragged into having to deal with issues on a daily basis and unfairly considered by some as being responsible for the project);
- office staff (burden of chasing up and managing compliance issues etc);
- our children (their school affected by all of these issues).

The Board was assured over a year ago by the Ministry of Education that this project would be completed by Ministry contractors in time for the start of term 2 this year. We communicated as such with the school community.

The Ministry were told in plain terms by the Board and Principal that deadlines were absolutely crucial because managing the operations of a full school around a project such as this was going to be challenging, although those could be managed if the project was essentially completed on time.

Over the year the Board has been told on 5 occasions that the timeline for completion was shifting out. While some degree of latitude was reasonable given some of the challenges that arose, it is totally unacceptable that this project has been so poorly handled and will result in completion approximately 10 months after the originally advised completion date.

In particular the Board has told the Ministry about our concerns regarding:

- Purakau Avenue - access issues, the impact on neighbours, delays in constructing a new retaining wall on the path up to the school, a lack of planning and foresight regarding the need for a widened access way, and ongoing poor condition of footpaths and sealed surfaces affected by heavy transport.
- damage and unavailability of the field.
- lengthy periods in which there was no work occurring on site, poor project management, lack of work in weekends and holidays when access is simplest, etc.
- burden on the school of daily attendance to issues with contractors, breaches of health and safety obligations, the need for extra duties and vigilance from staff during break times to ensure the safety of children and having to remind contractors not to work during school break times as agreed, etc.
- students have been without the use of large portions of the playground for the year, and the school had to negotiate new spaces outside the Wadestown area to ensure netball, hockey and tennis could continue.
- lack of coordination between contractors involved in this project requiring a significant and daily impact on the Principal's workload, well beyond what might have been considered reasonable, and unduly exposing our Principal to unjustified criticism because of a perception that she was managing the project and not the Ministry of Education.
- the impact changing timelines have imposed on the Board, staff and students. Not only in the delay of other proposed property developments the Board intended to undertake but also in terms of school organisation during the entire year which has required significant attention from the Principal.

- a seemingly heroic idealism by the Ministry that modular classrooms could be delivered on our school site, despite recommendations that an on-site build should be considered. The flow-on effect of arranging modular classroom delivery and installation has been substantial and ongoing.

Over the year the Board and Principal have frequently expressed our concerns to the Ministry about the effect this project has been having on our school.

Recently we escalated our concerns to senior levels at the Ministry. This followed an utterly unacceptable position being indicated that the classrooms may not even be ready for the start of the school next year.

In response, the Ministry have now committed in writing to the school that:

- the classrooms will be ready for use at the start of the school year next year.
- in this regard the classrooms will have been certified as suitable for public use, and decking and paving surrounding the new classrooms will be completed by this same timeframe including immediately adjacent landscaping.
- all necessary internal classroom items will have been completed including the new toilets and relocation of furnishings.
- there will be a new walkway / steps constructed from the path near the top of the new retaining wall down to the asphalt court area. The location will be subject to engineering and design advice. This will provide a second connection to and from this lower level of the school to the upper levels. The work is to occur as soon as possible with timelines yet to be assessed given the design considerations to be finalised.
- the work the Ministry need to undertake on the admin block will occur in and be completed in term one next year. This will require relocation of the office and given the nature of the work needs to be undertaken before winter.
- until all of these school works are complete, demolition of the two classrooms (rooms 7 and 8) is to be postponed until the school is ready as there may be a short term need for the space to be used for admin or teaching purposes.

In response to the Board's recent communication with the Ministry, the Ministry of Education has written to the school community via the Board to apologise for the collective impact of this project on the school and their accountability for it.

The Board thanks everyone for their patience this year and we would like to particularly acknowledge our Principal, staff and children for enduring the impact of this project on a daily basis across the whole year.

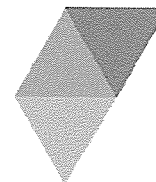
We look forward to completion of this project and we will be vigorously obtaining sufficient assurance about the other forthcoming Ministry-managed projects in our school.

**Please find attached the apology from the Ministry of Education to the Wadestown School community.**

Kind regards



Neil Paviour-Smith  
Board Chair



1 December 2017

Wadestown School Board of Trustees  
Rose Street  
Wadestown  
Wellington

Dear Board of Trustees, Wadestown School

I am writing to acknowledge the impact of the delays in the Ministry project to replace the leaky classrooms with new modular classrooms at your school. We apologise for the inconvenience these delays have caused the Board, Principal, staff, parents, and students.

The positioning of the school presented us with a number of unique challenges in terms of topography and access. Adding to this, the poor winter weather saw the delivery schedule further impacted.

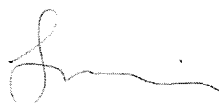
We especially regret the impact the delays have had on the timing of the other school led projects, in particular the playground redevelopment project for which we understand the school community has raised significant funds.

I'm pleased to say that the modular classrooms are now in position and can assure you these will be ready for the start of the school year, on 1 February 2018.

The Ministry would especially like to thank the Wadestown School Board and your Principal, Sally Barrett, for working tirelessly to assist us in overcoming these unforeseen challenges. It is regrettable that this level of oversight has taken such a toll on your time and taken focus away from other priorities. Please feel free to share this letter, and our appreciation, with your wider school community.

Finally, I can assure you that the Ministry will be working closely with the school next year to ensure the old classrooms are removed with minimal disruption.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Harding  
**Programme Manager - Capital Works Central/Southern**