



Wadestown School

Board of Trustees

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News from the Board – March 2019

This newsletter from the Board of Trustees updates the school community on a range of matters as well as a detailed update on the various property projects across the school.

Student Achievement

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the school. As well as being the employer of all staff, including the Principal, the Board sets the overall strategic direction for the school and establishes school policies.

While it may seem that more visible functions like property matters, finance, personnel and health & safety are the predominant focus of the Board, the most important responsibility is for student achievement. The Board is also legally responsible for the curriculum at the school.

Trustees are delighted that the school has in place for 2019, once again, an outstanding group of teachers. You will be aware of the shortage of teachers around the country and the strains this is placing around NZ on class sizes, school organisation, opportunities for children and most importantly, student achievement.

There are various reasons why our situation is different, which the Board is proud of and will strive to sustain including:

- we are fortunate to have an excellent reputation as a school (including a strong and growing roll with an out-of-zone waiting list);
- we have an outstanding Principal who is a genuine leader of teachers;
- the Board has prioritised for many years what scarce resources there are to include school-wide teacher professional development;
- we are a single-cell classroom school (rather than the open plan models seen in other schools);
- the school empowers our classroom teachers to be responsible for each child's learning in an inclusive class-based environment;
- our class sizes are very modest by general comparison with other urban schools and are at levels consistent with the amount of funding the school receives to employ teachers.

Prior to the commencement of the school year I attended a meeting of the school's staff, outlining the Board's focus for the year and how we intend to support our teachers maximise student achievement. It was again evident that the school has a dedicated, highly-talented and professional teaching staff, who also go beyond the basics to do what they can for our children – for example, arriving early at school to support voluntary reading groups as part of a drive to further enhance literacy, or ensuring our senior school children can attend camps (now abandoned by so many other schools).

The Board has always published overall **national standards achievement levels**. School-wide student achievement data is presented below. These demonstrate very good achievement levels in the school on an overall basis in 2018:

vs National Standards	Maths 2018	Reading 2018	Writing 2018
All Students			
At/Above	317	323	310
Below/Well Below	25	19	32
At/Above	93%	94%	90%
Below/Well Below	7%	6%	10%
Maori Students			
At/Above	87%	91%	83%
Below/Well Below	13%	9%	17%

The reading recovery program, commitment to library resourcing (and employing a part-time librarian) and teacher professional development are examples of how trustees are endeavouring to support and improve achievement in core curriculum areas.

The school also has individual programs aimed at helping to lift achievement for students whose results are below national standard.

The Board also considers national standards achievement for Maori students in accordance with government objectives. We are pleased that overall Maori student achievement outcomes are broadly consistent with the wider student cohort.

With national standards now having been eradicated by the government, the Board is considering advice from the Principal as to how assessment within the school will be conducted overall, how student achievement can be measured, and how we can maintain transparency and accountability to parents.

It is also worth acknowledging the achievement of our children beyond academic areas. Performances, participation and results in cultural and sporting areas are all noteworthy, ranging from school productions/concerts, to science fair results, visual arts and music / dance performances, recognition of the kapa haka group, and various sporting achievements. These are actively supported alongside and within the school curriculum.

In summary, the Board is satisfied that the **high quality teaching and learning environment in the school continues to support excellent progress in student achievement as children progress through the school**. In addition the range of opportunities availed and encouraged to students delivers a great overall experience at our school.

We look forward to another great year ahead at Wadestown School.

School Budget & Donations 2019

Ministry of Education funding is principally on a per student basis. Therefore a strong school roll is essential to maximise operational grant funding.

This helps the school manage ongoing cost increases and not be forced into cutting discretionary spending.

In confirming the school's budget for 2019, the Board resolved to maintain requested voluntary donations at the same level as for 2018. The requested voluntary donation is \$310 per student.

Requested voluntary donation levels have been unchanged from the current \$310 level since 2006.

It is imperative the school remains efficient. Rather than requesting ever-increasing levels of voluntary donation each year, the Board and Principal have focused on spending smarter and ensuring the school has a full roll.

Here's why your donations are essential. **Voluntary donations represent approximately 20% of the school's total income** (excluding funding for staff salaries and property works). Without your ongoing generous support there would be significant cuts to what the school can commit to for the benefit of our teachers and children, and ultimately the achievement results able to be delivered.

Ministry funding covers the bare basics that cannot be avoided (eg cleaning, heating, class resources, relief teachers etc). Examples of what is enabled through receipt of voluntary donations - the school receives no discrete annual funding from the Ministry for these items - include teacher professional development, kapa haka and the part-time te reo teacher, library and the librarian role, performing arts, aspects of reading recovery and targeted intervention programs, etc. In recent years there has also been a significant increase in investment throughout the school in technology (network, laptops/tablets, software etc).

We respectfully request that all parents respond generously to the request for voluntary donations.

Wadestown School PTA

The Board acknowledges the wonderful contribution of those parents who volunteer in the school in many areas. Our children simply would not be able to enjoy the range of opportunities they have available without the continuing support from parent volunteers.

One way to become more actively involved in the school is via the PTA, even if in a small way. The PTA supports the school by helping arrange volunteers to perform many functions that would otherwise fall on teachers and school management to attend to, inhibiting what the school can deliver overall, and undertakes fundraising activities for the school. It is a great way that you can look to volunteer your assistance to the school. Please refer to the school's website for more details.

Property Issues

As many parents will know the school has endured over three years of frustration with the Ministry of Education over their handling of MOE funded and managed projects in the school, triggered by their decision to construct two new classrooms and demolish rooms 7 & 8.

Whilst the new classrooms and surrounding space (decking and canopies) are complete, the school has had to continue addressing a range of remedial issues with the construction. In addition there are issues with the new retaining bank and ongoing erosion.

Following the MOE's failure to gain Council consent for the new classrooms due to a lack of emergency vehicle access up Purakau Ave, the MOE spent most of 2018 rebuilding the Purakau Ave accessway (widening, re-levelling, retaining banks, new fencing etc) despite advising the school in 2017 this would be a "12 week project". Thankfully that project is now complete.

Unfortunately given where and how the MOE decided to construct this new accessway, it resulted in the loss of some of the playing surface of the single fenced tennis court such that it cannot be used for tennis. The Board continues to submit to the MOE that this unenvisaged outcome is unacceptable and that we seek their rectification of this by shifting the tennis court slightly to the north so as to have a full playing surface once again. The school has a long partnership with the Wadestown Tennis Club and we acknowledge the impact on the club.

New Walkway

A condition of the school agreeing to the location of new classrooms at the bottom level of the school was a commitment by the MOE to construct a new walkway down to this level in the north east corner of the school grounds.

A reminder that this walkway will go from the current pathway that runs up behind the old PE shed down the sloping ridge (currently beyond the wooden fence and which is the exposed bank at the top of the new retaining wall) to the corner behind the new classrooms.

This is also an MOE project which we have been urging them to address as a high priority. Concept plans were considered by the Board last June and a preferred option was selected to inform the design and engineering work to commence.

The MOE then tried to walk away from their commitment by claiming it does not have funding in place, but it has now acknowledged that nonsense is completely unacceptable to the school. We require dual access to the lower part of the school and remediation of the exposed sections of bank created by the retaining wall.

We do not have a timeframe for when construction of a walkway will commence but it will not be in the near-term despite our pressure.

Admin Block Remediation Work

This involves relocation of the office, sickrooms, staff room etc to elsewhere (likely room 9) while 'leaky building' remediation work is completed.

Last year the Board was told by the MOE that this "8-12 week project" would end up taking closer to 27 weeks. The work was supposed to be undertaken in the start of 2018. We were then assured the work would commence over the summer break that has just finished and across the first two terms of this year. (The only viable time for this work to occur is in the first half of the year when room 9 is empty and children have not relocated across from Weld Street into this class room).

Despite our urging that the MOE organise itself and its contractors such that work could commence immediately at the end of the school year in December, they were unable to meet their commitment to us.

We are unsure when work may be able to commence but in the Board's view it will not be until at least the end of this school year, unless they stage the works.

Main Block Rose Street

A consequence of the MOE taking three years to decide on and then build the new classrooms is that the school is now over three years behind on its 'normal' (Board managed) capital works program.

The usual 5 year capital funding has been fully earmarked for the Rose St main block of the school and this will be a Board / school (not MOE) managed project.

Uncertainty over the admin block meant we could not commit to redevelopment of the main block as the space may have been needed.

Having been let down by the MOE on the admin block once again, the Board has resolved to proceed with redevelopment of this block. Work would not commence until the end of the current school year.

Demolition of Rooms 7 and 8

Until all of these school works are complete, demolition of these classrooms is postponed until the school is ready. There will be a short term need for these rooms to be used for administration or teaching purposes while other works are completed.

It is intended that the foundations and 'platforms' on which the classrooms sit be retained and be utilised as additional flat / playground space.

Grounds and Playgrounds

The MOE's delays and various works stalled plans to progress with a major upgrade of grounds and playgrounds using funds raised by the school community.

The Board remains mindful of the risk that heavy machinery, vehicles and building works may impact improvements undertaken on the school's grounds in some areas. For example, the area adjacent to Rooms 7 and 8 is likely to be a suitable area for developed playground ideas but this is likely to be needed for demolition works and related access (and demolition is contingent on the other projects being completed).

Nevertheless, last year the school engaged Mark Newdick of the Local Landscape Architecture Collective for the design of the school grounds / playgrounds redevelopment. Mark has extensive experience and has produced plans for many schools.

Parents, teachers and children were invited to submit views on the grounds and playgrounds through a school-wide consultation exercise over recent months. Thanks to all who participated.

Mark's brief is to **develop an overall master concept plan, broken down into a variety of mini-projects** which can then be prioritised and worked on.

Mark has completed this work.

The Board ratified the master concept plan at our recent BoT meeting.

The plan is being printed onto very large sheets and will be displayed in the school next week.

The Board has discussed what mini-projects can be progressed in the school now - and irrespective of the ongoing property works ahead.

We expect Mark to project manage these over the coming months.

In recent years the school has received considerable sums donated as a result of past fundraising activities and in particular prior House & Garden Walks. Those funds remain available to invest into the projects the Board intends to progress as an immediate priority.

The Board has also decided that all funds raised from this year's House & Garden Walk on November 10th will be applied to grounds / playgrounds re-development.

We are looking forward to getting work underway as soon as possible.

We hope the year has commenced well for you all and that your children have a great year at school.

Kind regards



Neil Paviour-Smith
Board Chair