



## **Board News Update – Term 2, 2018**

It has been a busy start to the year, and term 2 is upon us already.

The purpose of this update is to highlight some of the main developments that the Board has focused on during term 1, and provide an indication of some of the key issues on the horizon as we progress further through 2018.

But first we would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you that played a part in the success of the Gala in March. We are so lucky to have such a committed PTA and supportive community.

We would also like to say a special welcome to those parents and caregivers that are new to the school in 2018.

### **Tui Block teaching and learning**

After major building works dominating the school landscape almost continuously since 2009, it has been with a great sense of relief and achievement to see the Tui Block open for use in term 1. Our former Principal, Liz Millar, and former property trustee, Robert Stewart, returned to the school to formally open the Tui Block in February.

The completion of the Tui Block has enabled the Board to shift its focus for the practical issues around building work, to ensuring the school makes the most of utilising this wonderful new space to the full benefit of the children. This has dominated our agenda in term 1.

This process first started at the end of 2017, with professional development (PD) for our teachers with Mark Osborne, who is one of New Zealand's leading authorities on the topics of future-focused education, innovative learning spaces, and cutting-edge practice. With the Tui teaching teams in place in term 1, the Board approved additional funding for PD with Jan Robson to support the teachers to bed down these lessons and apply them in a Ngaio context.

At the end of term 1, there was an open evening for the Rata and Harakeke teaching teams to explain their teaching methods and for parents to ask questions. The feedback the Board has received on those interactions has been universally positive, with many parents commending the "passion", "commitment" and "openness" of our teachers.

We are very proud of the professionalism of our teachers at Ngaio School, and will continue to support them with PD to ensure their teaching methods are developing the children as life-long learners. We are also committed to ensuring there are ongoing opportunities for parents to engage and gain a deeper understanding of how these innovative spaces are being utilised. So, expect more tours and open evenings through the year.

While the Tui Block has been the focal point of this work, it has broader significance across the school. Lessons about cutting edge teaching practice are being applied in our other team-teaching classrooms in other Syndicates. We are also conscious that it is important for parents with children currently in the junior school to also have confidence in the experience their children will have as they eventually move through the senior school into the Tui Block.

## **IT resources**

The IT needs of our children and classrooms vary across the school, with iPads typically used in the junior school and Chromebooks in the senior school.

During term 1, the Board approved a proposal to purchase additional iPads and Chromebooks, to replace devices no longer working and to lift ratios of devices to children, as well as purchasing new storage facilities to increase security and lengthen the life of our IT devices.

Thank you to the PTA who have provided funding that has contributed towards IT resources.

After the success of the Tui Block open evening, we believe it would be beneficial to provide parents with more information about exactly how devices are being used in classrooms, not only for classroom systems and organisation but to deepen the learning of our children. We think this is important to build support in how IT devices are used at the school.

Over the course of the year, the school has received an increased number of enquiries from parents about children bringing their own devices for use in the classroom, and staff are exploring the associated practicalities of opening up this voluntary option.

With the school now restocked with IT devices, the Board has no immediate plans to encourage a full shift to BYOD (bring your own device). This would first require an in-depth analysis and full consultation process with parents. In the meantime, the Board has an ongoing agenda of keeping up to date with the best use of IT devices in classrooms, and to understanding the evolving BYOD policies of neighbouring schools.

## **Parent communications review**

At the beginning of the year, the Board commissioned a review of parent communications at the school, following feedback from many parents who felt overloaded by communication coming from many sources at the school, including various forms of newsletters and emails.

The review involves undertaking an audit of ways the school is currently communicating with parents, lessons from the approaches of other schools (and other organisations), and options for the more effective use of technology to develop a one-stop place for key school information and dates (such as redesigning the website, shared events calendars, or apps).

Jo Hughson is chairing a working group for the communications review comprising members drawn from the admin staff, teaching staff, the Board, PTA, and parents with expertise in communication. The proposals from the working group will come to the Board during term 2.

## **National Standards and reporting to parents.**

As a result of the new Labour-led government, a number of policy priorities of the Ministry of Education affecting the school have changed. The most significant of these is the removal of National Standards.

We expect to receive more guidance on the post National Standards world to come from the Ministry through the year. In the meantime, the school is continuing the vast majority of types of testing that already occurred. However, in some cases the timing or frequency of testing is being amended slightly to make it more practical for our children and the school's own timetable. It is also being used as an opportunity to help re-orientate the purpose of testing away from an administrative need to comply with the Ministry, and back towards the original purpose of better understanding the development of our children and tailoring to their individual learning needs. We understand that a very similar approach is also being taken at neighbouring schools.

At a high-level, the Board has a strong preference for the retention of some forms of quantitative testing and data on student achievement that continues to enable comparisons through time and across year groups. The Board's ultimate objective is for all our children to achieve their best. Quantitative information is an important way to assess this, alongside qualitative teacher judgements. We are also conscious that another role of student testing is enabling parents to be well informed on their child's progress.

### **Property update**

It has been rewarding to see the children using the new pool sheds in term 1, with the benefit of last year's Gala funds. While the pool sheds look little changed from the outside (as rebuilding with the same floor plan removed the costly need for council consents), for the first time in 40 years they have benefited from a new roof, new framing, new cladding, new drainage including a soak pit, excavation of surrounding areas including retaining walls to the banks behind to future proof from slips, and a fresh lick of paint. Also, the toilet block received new Clearlite, roofing, flashings, framing and fascia.

While there are currently no large Ministry-funded property changes at the school, the Board continues to have a number of property issues on the agenda. Some of these include:

- Upgrading school signage, given existing PTA funding.
- Resolving external bag storage for the Tui Block.
- Undertaking maintenance of McLeod, where NOSCAR is currently located.
- Exploring improved connectivity between McLeod and the Tui Block.
- Removing the prefabs from the top school fields, where the timing is completely dependent on when the Ministry finds them a new home.
- Assessing the modernisation of the Abbott Street entrance, once the prefabs are safely removed via this route and any damage to the entrance assessed.
- Exploring the potential for an enlarged shade sail on the current site of the prefabs.
- Re-sewing the grass on the school fields and implementing an ongoing maintenance plan, to address the health and safety issue of the field in its current state of disrepair.

The Board continues to work closely with the PTA to identify suitable projects to be funded with community involvement.

To all parents, caregivers, teachers and support staff: thank you for your contribution to the School in term 1, and all the very best for the rest of the year ahead.



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On behalf of Amanda Frater, Jo Hughson, Lucy Elwood, Mike Letts, Mark Palmer and Raewyn Watson.