

Board of Trustees Report to the St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Community 30th November 2010, from John Williams (Board Chair)

Who's on the Board?

After Board of Trustees elections in early 2010, the School Board comprises:

- Parent representatives: Tarati Blair-Hunt, Duncan McKenzie, Paul O'Leary, Sharon Sweeney-Lauder, John Williams
- Bishop's representatives: Father Tony Dunn, Leon Benade, David Homan, Kate O'Connor.
- School: Kathryn Hira (Principal); Sue Bennett (Staff representative).

Your Board has met 6 times since the election, with 92% attendance rate (61/66).

Thanks and acknowledgements are extended to Angela Blackhall, Anne Castle and Colin Nola, who each served the School as Board members for many years, and Kate O'Connor, who stepped down as Chair after leading the Board through some particularly challenging times during her tenure.

What is the Board's role?

The responsibilities of the Board can be summarised as follows:

- The Board has complete discretion to control the management of the school as it thinks fit (provided the Board acts in accordance with legislation)
- The Board governs the School within the NZ National Education Guidelines, which incorporates:
 - The National Education Goals – the NEG's – 10 high level statements of desirable achievements and policy objectives for the school system
 - The National Curriculum – including the learning areas, levels and competencies for students in the NZ education system
 - The National Standards – which set the expectations for student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in their first 8 years at school
 - The National Administration Guidelines – the NAG's – which provide Boards with guidance on the administrative areas they need to focus on (curriculum; national standards; employment; finance and property; health and safety; policy, documentation and review.

Within this framework, our primary focus is on student achievement, with an overarching responsibility to ensure the Catholic Special Character of the School is maintained and enhanced.

The Board governs whilst the Principal manages. The Board designs the future for the School; the Principal determines how to achieve that future. The Board sets the outcomes desired for the School; the Principal determines the strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Board develops policies describing the Board expectations; the Principal develops procedures which define how to meet those expectations. The Board and the Principal therefore work very closely together to achieve the best for the School.

What has the Board's focus been in 2010?

It has been a particularly busy year for the Board; significant items of focus have included:

1. The appointment of Kathryn Hira as Principal.
2. A significant induction and training programme, covering major elements of school governance.
3. Student Achievement – to ensure children are progressing and achieving, and that the learning needs of all students, regardless of their performance, are being considered and addressed.
4. National Standards – to ensure the School is prepared for their introduction, and navigating a course to implementation which is sensible, practical, and consistent with the School's ethos.
5. Financial management – to ensure a stable financial footing for the School.
6. Property management – to ensure priority maintenance is performed, but more importantly to work with the Catholic Schools Office on property development (e.g. in 2011 the plan includes: toilet block replacement, computer cabling to all classrooms, and fire and security system upgrade and integration). This includes potential for further classrooms, a much-needed renovation and extension of the administration facilities, and the vexed issue of traffic flow and parking.
7. Policy review – to ensure School policies are complete and appropriate for St Joseph's.

8. Charter review – to ensure the School Charter (the document which sets out our 3-5 year strategic direction and annual priorities) is reviewed and refreshed for changes in the school and emerging challenges and issues, including undertaking community consultation. From this work, the School Values and Vision have been developed; these will inform and influence our strategic directions.

What will be 2011 priorities?

We envisage 2011 will see further progress on all of the above items, in particular: the completion of the Charter; further roll-out of National Standards; continued focus on ensuring and stretching our children's progress and achievement; planning for and accommodating growth; property planning and investment. Once again, it promises to be a busy, challenging but very exciting year for the School and the Board.

Key issue for 2011: How big should our school be?

Our current roll cap, as agreed with the Ministry of Education, is 125 students, although for most of the past decade actual enrolments have normally fluctuated between 75-90. However, the past 2 years have seen significant growth, so we finish 2010 with over 115 students, only 14 of whom are graduating this Christmas. This exciting growth speaks to the developing reputation of the school, but it does present its challenges. We have commenced a waiting list for most year levels, our non-preference roll is closed, and we have revitalised our thinking about expansion of building facilities.

Thus a vital question for the Board is: how big should our school be? Close neighbours Mt Carmel increased its roll in 2009 (235 to 315) and St Ignatius is seeking to increase theirs from 215 to 250. There are arguments for and against growth, but the increased energy that has accompanied our recent growth is telling, and the Board will seek to explore whether some growth could be accommodated, thus providing greater resources and flexibility, whilst ensuring we retain the distinctive feeling of our close community.

Staffing:

During Term 1 we were blessed to have Catherine Ryan, the former Principal of St Ignatius, assisting us with school leadership. From Term 2 we were pleased to welcome Kathryn Hira as our new Principal, and the Board has been delighted with the energy and professionalism Kathryn has demonstrated. Rebecca McGarry joined us in Term 3 as our New Entrants teacher. All our staff – teachers, teacher aides and support staff – have contributed a great deal to St Joseph's this year, and the Board thanks you all for your hard work. All staff have taken on responsibilities outside their core classroom teaching, and have demonstrated leadership professionally, spiritually and in extra-curricular activities. St Joseph's punches above its weight on the sporting fields, academically and culturally, and much of this is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of our staff. Thank you Kathryn, Sue, Nisha, Hanna, Victoria, Rebecca, Justine, Jan, Seti, Bethmary, Diane, Janine, Nicky and Rhonda. The Board is delighted that all teaching staff are returning to their roles, and we look forward with confidence to 2011 and beyond.

Community:

The Board welcomes and appreciates the close interest and passion of our community. We invariably have strong attendance at St Joseph's events, and great support for our children as they represent the school in competitions and events. The day to day involvement of parents is remarkable – from school lunches, walking school bus, support in classrooms, assistance with maintenance – the list goes on. The Friends of St Joseph's, who this year donated \$13,000 to the school, are absolutely brilliant. An informed and passionate community asks good questions, which in turn demands the best from the school's leaders. Your Board welcomes this, and will continue to strive to provide the quality of leadership that you expect and deserve.

In closing:

The Board wishes our graduating class every success as they go their different ways into Year 7, confident that the foundations provided at St Joseph's will ensure they thrive at higher levels of education, and in life. I thank my fellow Board members for their work this year, and look forward to an exciting 2011. And to all the children and parents in our St Joseph's community – may God bless you all, and best wishes for a safe and relaxing Christmas, and a well deserved break.