

Board of Trustees Report to the St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Community 12th December 2011, from John Williams (Board Chair)

Who's on the Board?

The School Board has been unchanged over the year, and 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 8 times this year, with 89% attendance rate (78/88).

What is the Board's role?

As a reminder, 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 NEGs – 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 NAGs – 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 2011?

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

1. As signalled in last year's report, the school has been growing strongly, and we expect to finish 2011 with nearly 120 students. Those of you who sent your older children to the school 6-8 years ago will recall that the roll was generally in the 70s then – so the change has been substantial. The Board welcomes the growth in the roll as a signal that the reputation of the school is strengthening, bringing greater revenue, increased resilience and enhanced resources for children.
2. This growth brought about the question of how large the Board wanted the school to be. We have agreed that the school should aspire for a maximum roll of 175, taking a 10 year view, including 7 classrooms and a range of supporting rooms and facilities. With Catholic Schools Office support, an application to the Ministry was made and we hope for a favourable decision on this in 2012.
3. This in turn led us to how to grow the school facilities to meet the roll growth. Architects and engineers have been engaged to identify possible solutions to our space requirements. Encouragingly, some interesting and attractive options have been identified, and modernisation of our existing spaces (and enhancing parking and traffic flow!) is very much part of the equation. There is much work to do, but we are hopeful of being able to present concepts around Term 2 next year. Financing and building, of course, will take considerably longer!
4. National Standards have again taken a lot of column width in the news. As parents, you will already be noticing some of the NS changes in reports (plain language reporting, assessments of achievements against the Standards, next steps and what you can do at home).

The final newsletter for the term included school wide data on student achievement against the Standards and next year we will report to the community on our target groups for particular attention.

5. Student Achievement is of course the primary purpose of a school, and the Board focuses specific attention on this by review of achievement reports in key subject areas several times a year. The time invested by all staff, but particularly Kathryn, Sue (Literacy lead) and Victoria (Numeracy lead), has certainly improved the quality and consistency of the information, providing the Board with confidence in the work and innovations being undertaken by the teachers in these important areas. As Kathryn has mentioned in the final school newsletter, our children are performing well in relation to Standards and the Board fully supports the work done, and the further focus to be applied in 2012 to enhance already very sound results.
6. The Board has of course continued to monitor “business as usual”, and it is pleasing to report that the school’s finances continue to be in good shape, and several important property enhancements have been completed this year. All classrooms have Mimio interactive technology now, thanks to a grant from the Four Winds Trust, with our application written by Katrina Walter. Our toilet block received a much needed upgrade with funding from the Catholic Schools Office. Rooms 4 and 5 were repainted this year (thanks to Darren Newland and Leanne Takurua-Newland for the donation of the paint), and also received enhanced insulation in the roof and underfloor to make the rooms more comfortable in colder conditions. Finally, structures to support shade sails over the junior playground are currently being installed. A very significant year for property at St Joseph’s!

What will be 2012 priorities?

We envisage 2012 will see a continuation of our focus and upwards trajectory on all of the above items, in particular: property plans, roll growth, National Standards, community reporting. We will also receive two external reviews in 2012 – the Catholic Schools Office will review our Catholic Special Character in Term 2, and a visit from the Education Review Office is expected in Term 3. The Board is excited about these reviews as opportunities for external review and validation of our advancement as a school, especially given the positive profile Catholic education has been receiving in the media.

Staffing:

The Board continues to consider ourselves blessed with our staff, all of whom have contributed a great deal to St Joseph’s this year. Staff willingly take on responsibilities outside their core classroom teaching, and are the foundation behind our success in recent years. Thank you Kathryn, Sue, Nisha, Hanna, Victoria, Rebecca, Justine, Jan, Seti, Beth-Mary, Diane, Janine and Rhonda. Nisha leaves us at the end of this year to pursue other opportunities, and Rhonda will also leave us as she moves with Mercy to Baradene. The Board thanks both of you for your contribution to the school, and extends our best wishes for every success for your future and careers.

Community:

The St Joseph’s community is remarkable and is a key reason why we continue to punch above our weight. Friends, parent help, lunches, walking school bus, special activities, sports coaching – the list is extensive and there is no doubt the school could not achieve as well without your whole-hearted engagement. As I noted last year, 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 2012. 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.