

CONTACT INFORMATION



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PTS Representative:

Allan Short

Staff Representative:

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Dear Parents and Caregivers,

A lot has been happening at the school since our last Board of Trustees newsletter in March, not the least of which being that our new Principal Allan Short has started at VAS. Allan has settled in well, is already making his mark and the Board have really enjoyed working with him.

ERO Report on Special Review

In our last newsletter, the Board of Trustees advised that we had commissioned a special review of the school by the Education Review Office (ERO) as a result of the criticism (and subsequent negative media attention) of the way the Board of Trustees and Management dealt with two bullying complaints in 2008.

The main terms of reference were:

- The extent to which the school provides students with a safe emotional and physical environment;
- The health and safety policies of the school;
- The Board's policies and procedures for handling complaints.

ERO conducted a thorough investigation in April 2009, including meetings with the Board, management, staff, parents, students (formally met with 10% of students), the school's previous principal, the independent investigator and the complainant parents, as well as observing students in the playground and classrooms.

The full report is now complete and is available on ERO's website www.ero.govt.nz

The findings of the report are very positive and encouraging, and below are the key messages from that report :-

- "This review identified no major concerns regarding the Board's management of complaints during 2008."
- "Almost all children spoken to as part of this review reported that they experience VAS as a safe and enjoyable learning environment. ERO finds that children are settled, relationships between teachers and children are positive, and that children play together and interact in good natured and respectful ways."

- "The Board has a comprehensive range of policies, procedures, systems and strategies in place to promote student's well being and safety."
- "The Board and senior management have, during 2008 and 2009, received criticism from a small number of parents about the school's complaints processes. This criticism, together with the outcomes of an independent investigation and recent consultation with the school community, has led to a review of the school's complaints policy and procedures. Although a sound policy framework was in place the Board acknowledges that policy and practice could be improved."
- "Over the past two terms, the Board and staff have conducted a rigorous review of the school's behaviour management policy and plan, and its code of conduct for children. This internal review is ongoing and has involved reflection on and learning from past experiences, extensive community consultation and professional development for both staff and trustees."

Website Update

Allan Short and a team of parents and teachers have been reviewing the VAS website with a view to improve and enhance the site. The new website looks fantastic, and is planned for release in early term three. It is a work in progress and new modules will be added over the forthcoming terms.

Policy Review Update

Thank you to those people who took time to provide their feedback to the Boards revised Complaints and Behaviour Management Policy back in May 2009.

The Board has now ratified a revised Complaints policy and procedure, the most important elements being that: 1) complaints will now be managed through a clearer three stage process, and 2) the third and final stage in the process (if required) will be managed by a Complaints panel of three (including one independent non-school representative) rather than being managed by the full Board.

The feedback from the parent community to the Behaviour Management policy and procedure was extensive and very helpful, and because of this, the feedback and changes are still being worked through by Allan Short and the senior management team.

School Donations

The Board relies heavily on the School Donations from parents to make the school finances balance. The Government funding, because we are a decile 10 school, is insufficient to fund the school on its own. We only receive 52% of our operating budget from the government (excluding salaries), the balance to run the school we have to raise as a school community.

Year to date to June, we have received the full donation from less than half of the school families. In addition to those that have paid in full, some families have chosen to pay in instalments throughout the year. Our sincere appreciation goes to all of these families that have paid. However, at present, 130 families (approx. one-third of all our families) have paid no donation.

Without any further donations, the school will almost certainly have a significant financial deficit for 2009. This is something that the school will have to take into account when considering the financial budget for 2010 and may require the school to look at how to reduce operating costs.

We do understand that with the current economic climate that some families in our community may struggle to pay the full donation. However, we emphasise that your support through the school donations is critical to the school's ongoing ability to function as it currently does. To all those that haven't yet made any payment arrangement with the school, we would be very grateful for any donation received.

Please contact the school if you have any queries.

Board of Trustees Elections 2010

The Board of Trustees is made up of five parent elected representatives, a staff representative and the Principal.

The parent elected representatives are elected by the school's parent community every three years, and the next election will be around March 2010 (the exact date for the election has yet to be set by the Minister of Education).

At this stage, three of the existing parent elected representatives intend re-standing for election. Now is a good time for our parent community to think whether they would like to put their names forward for election next year. A wide range of skills and experience is required on any Board and there is much satisfaction to be gained from serving the community (and your children) in this way.

If you feel that you may be interested in standing for election and would like to discuss the role of the Board and the responsibilities of the Trustees I, or another Board member, would be happy to discuss matters further with you. You can contact me by email vlad.kozak@verdegroun.co.nz or by telephone 021 473 368.

Swine Flu

The Principal and the Board are continuing to monitor the situation with Swine Flu. We receive

regular communication from the Ministry of Education and will act according to their advice, as, when and if required.

Vision and Strategic Plan

The Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team is meeting in early August to start the process of setting the vision, direction and strategic plan for the school for the next three to five years. This process will also involve the staff, and the community, at various stages. We will bring you up-to-date with progress on this important initiative in our next newsletter.

Student Achievement results in Maths and Literacy at end of Term 2

At our June Board Meeting, Allan Short presented the results of mathematical achievement assessments comparing results from term one with term two. These results are very pleasing with all cohorts showing an improvement over time. In relation to national expectations our students' performance is equally encouraging.

Allan also presented the literary analysis, which shows similar pleasing results. VAS has a broad range of abilities, as is to be expected, but all students show improvement over time due to the wide range of strategies being used by our experienced and committed staff.

Annual Report

The school's 2008 audited annual report and EEO report are now available at the school office for your information.

Uniform

Allan Short and a team of parents and teachers are currently reviewing the VAS uniform. A parent survey has been conducted and approx 100 responses received. Thank you to all those that have provided feedback; we really rely on your thoughts. We intend to communicate back to the school community our plans over the next few weeks.

5 Year Property Plan

The Board has now filed the school's five year property plan which is a comprehensive document that covers maintenance, major capital cyclical replacement, building compliance issues and planned capital projects that are to be funded by the Ministry. This document is the basis for property management for the next five years.

New Teaching Spaces

The Board has been reviewing options for two additional teaching spaces that the school needs due to roll growth and for which have some Government funding available. However, it is likely that for part of 2010 we will have to utilise temporary additional teaching space while our architects put together a "master plan" for our site that, among other things, will define where the additional teaching space will reside permanently.

Vlad Kozak
Chairperson
VICTORIA AVENUE SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES