



VICTORIA AVENUE SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Victoria Avenue School Board of Trustees Newsletter September 2011

Welcome to the fifth newsletter for 2011 from your Board of Trustees.

The Board met again on 29 August and considered a broad range of matters including progress on student achievement, the upcoming ERO visit, our financial position at mid-year and the use of wifi in our school.

Term 3 has kicked off with lots of activities within the school (e.g. speech competitions, cross country races, the Arts Extravaganza and the Ripa Rugby competition). It has been great to see how much effort from our children goes into these events, and the pleasure they obviously get from them. Our fantastic teachers have certainly been busy in making all these extra activities so successful. It is also wonderful to see lots of parents getting involved in these activities and helping to make our school the best it can be.

Board Member Resignation

Garry Scarborough announced his resignation from the Board in August after six years of wonderful service to our school. Garry made a strong contribution to the Board in many areas, and we have been very fortunate to have had the benefit of his services and expertise. In particular, Garry has made an immense contribution to all the property developments during over the past six years through his leadership of the Property Sub-Committee. We extend our sincere thanks to Garry for his contribution, and wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Casual Vacancy for Parent-Elected Trustee

As a result of Garry's resignation, the Board has a casual vacancy for a parent-elected trustee that it needs to fill. The Board has determined to fill this vacancy by selection, rather than hold another election. Accordingly, we are keen to hear from any parents or other candidates that may have an interest in joining the Board. If you have an interest in this role please contact Rob Hamilton on 021 955 944 or rob.hamilton@fnzc.co.nz.

Alternatively, if 10% or more of eligible voters on the school roll ask the Board to hold a by-election to fill the vacancy, then a by-election will be held. Any eligible voter who wishes to ask the Board to hold a by-election should email Rob Hamilton on rob.hamilton@fnzc.co.nz by Friday 30 September.

Student Achievement

The Board received an excellent update from the senior management team on overall mid-year student achievement in relation to National Standards. This information was based on the formal and informal assessment data gathered by staff over the first two terms and summarised for parents in their children's individual student reports sent home at the end of Term 2.

Key conclusions from the student achievement update were as follows:

- Reading – 93% of all students are already achieving at or above expectation for National Standards
- Writing – 91% of all students are achieving at or above expectation for National Standards;
- Maths – 94% of all students are achieving at or above expectation for National Standards;

- All students who are below the National Standards are being closely monitored and provided with tailored additional support;
- Overall, both Maori and Pacifica students are performing at a level consistent with all other students at school; and
- Overall, girls are performing slightly better than boys in reading and writing, while the opposite is observed in maths (this is consistent with both national and international trends).

ERO Visit

As previously indicated, the Education Review Office (ERO) will be visiting our school in the second half of September. For schools being reviewed in Term 3, ERO will be focusing on the following “national evaluation topics”:

- Use of student assessment information to promote student progress and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics;
- Success for Maori and Pacifica students;
- Support for students with special education needs; and
- The quality of education for international students.

The Board and the senior management team are well prepared for the ERO visit. Since our last meeting, the Board has completed the Self-Audit Checklist and Board Assurance Statement. These cover the full range of legal responsibilities that the Board has for governing the school and reporting to the Ministry of Education. Both the Self-Audit Checklist and Board Assurance Statement were approved at our meeting and have now been submitted to ERO along with documentation prepared by the senior management team.

Financial Update

The Board received an update on the School’s financial performance for the first half of 2011. This update indicated that the School was slightly behind our budgeted surplus for the half-year but still on target to achieve the budget for the full year. Our cash and investments balance remained slightly under \$300,000 following ongoing capital investment by the Board. This level of cash and investments is also consistent with the Board’s minimum target level of reserves for financial risk management purposes.

We still have almost \$20,000 of overdue expenses outstanding from parents, mainly relating to stationery, school camps, after-school care, and other trips and activities. The Board has written to all parents with overdue expenses seeking immediate payment and indicating that their children will not be able to participate in school trips and activities until the outstanding expenses are paid in full.

School Contributions

On the positive side, school contributions received by 30 June were higher than at the same time in both 2009 and 2010. So a big “thank you” to all those parents that have paid their school contributions for 2011, especially those parents that have generously made an “extra” contribution to support our school. Early payment really does make a big difference to the financial management of our school.

Contributions for approximately 30% of the children at school have not yet been paid in full, and no contributions have been paid for approximately 15% of the children at school. We encourage all parents to pay the school contribution if you are able to do so. The Board has already followed up on outstanding school contributions earlier in Term 3.

PTS Contribution

In August the PTS gave the school a cheque for \$110,000 representing the money raised from the School Gala and numerous other PTS fundraising events (e.g. sausage sizzles, school directory, spellathon).

This amazing achievement reflects a huge amount of hard work and commitment by the whole PTS team. They make a tremendous contribution to our school community and spirit, through their “fundraising and friend-raising” activities, and we are extremely fortunate to have such a dedicated and passionate team.

The next PTS “friend-raising” event is the annual quiz night on 17 September. We hope to see you there.

Property Update

Allan Short updated the Board on current property initiatives. The main development is that we have received final quotes for the new shade canopy outside Rooms 11-14 and selected a preferred contractor. As a result, we are working hard to have everything in place to enable us to undertake this project during the October holidays, so that the new shade cloth will be ready for use going into summer.

Wifi in Our School

The Board recently received a letter from a parent concerned about the possible health risks associated with the use of wifi in the school. Our school currently uses wifi in all classrooms, the office area and staff room, and the Board considers the use of wifi to be both practical and safe.

However, the Board has a legal responsibility to provide a safe physical environment for students and to comply with any legislation currently in force to ensure the safety of students and employees. Hence we take seriously any concerns about possible health risks to our students and employees.

Our initial review of the latest independent international research on the matter suggests that, while selected studies have suggested possible concerns, there is no consistent evidence of health issues arising from the use of wifi. This is a view endorsed by the World Health Organisation. However, this is clearly a very technical area and no Board member is an expert in the science behind wifi and whether there are possible health risks.

Following a lengthy discussion on this matter, the Board resolved to write to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health to seek their guidance. The Board also noted that this matter is universal and not specific to our school.

We are now well into Term 3 and the Rugby World Cup is about to kick-off. I hope everyone gets the opportunity to experience part of this amazing event for New Zealand. Go the All Blacks!

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday 3 October during the last week of Term 3.

Rob Hamilton
Chairperson