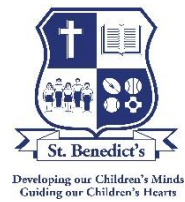


# Board of Trustees Newsletter



**October 2020**

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## **Tēnā koutou katoa; Welcome!**

Hello everyone and welcome to the 2020 Annual Board of Trustees newsletter. Hasn't this been an extraordinary year; perhaps one to remember, or maybe one to forget!

In my final year as Board Chairperson, I'm pleased to be stepping down after nine years on the BoT, knowing the school is in very good financial, physical, educational and leadership shape.

I've been privileged to see just how hard so many stakeholders work for our school. We've always been blessed at St Benedict's School with a hugely supportive parent body, many of whom I've had the pleasure of working with on the BoT.

Inside the buildings, each of our 13 classrooms continue to hum along; the school's weekly newsletter and well-populated calendar proving testament to an action-packed curriculum at each syndicate level.

The school's grounds are looking more attractive with each new term, and I know this is being very well received by the staff, students and parents alike.

Highlights since the last Board Newsletter would have to be the significant office, roof and foyer alterations along with new toilets for the students and staff along the middle and top floors of the buildings. A new Reading Recovery Room along with a revamped waiting area and many new storage cabinets have added value at each

turn. I've been lucky myself to work with a Principal who is so driven; action means action, and hard work means hard work with Mr Hinds!

Our ambitious goal setting for student achievement remains on course, with explicit targets being set for our students to achieve at, or above, their expected New Zealand Curriculum level in reading, writing and mathematics. As a school, we continue to celebrate students achieving highly at a national level in academics, music and drama, and sport, with two Year 9 scholarships to St Patrick's College for the second year running, along with external nationwide successes being examples of the school's fine achievements recently.

Despite this unusual year, our school's Charter (Strategic Plan) and Annual Goals continue to demonstrate growth and progress – quite remarkable considering all that has been thrown in our path. One area of considerable note was the employment of a Te Reo teacher and Kapa Haka instructor as we move positively towards our goals with our Maturanga Māori Kaupapa document.

Despite COVID-19 ruling out a whole-school production this year, I was one of many parents with a child(ren) in the Intermediate School who was delighted to see a reduced scale Elective Drama Performance.

Credit to all students involved and of course Mrs Kelly (Director) and Ms Bolger (everything else)!

Of note is our school's roll, this year we are at an all-time high again and have surpassed 300 students for the first time in the school's history. More students mean more Ministry of Education staffing and greater funding and of course, enables us to offer more for our students.

I couldn't possibly forget to mention and thank the outgoing Board member Shayne Nahu who has equally served the school loyally. I thank Shayne on behalf of our school's community.

2020 has been another busy year; it's been a pleasure and honour to serve as your Board Chairperson along with a group of hard-working, committed professionals who have all of our children's best interests at heart.

Kind regards, Richard Uerata-Jennings  
Board of Trustees Chairperson.

### **Board Members**

Richard Uerata-Jennings (Chair)  
Shayne Nahu  
Amanda Gardner  
Ruth Burns  
Dr Tim Hanlon  
Anna McDougall  
Chris Cakebread  
Daniel Marks  
John Lawson  
Anne Minto (Teacher Rep)  
Michael Hinds (Principal)

## Finance Update

The overall school's financial position remains strong even though COVID-19 has resulted in revenue reducing and certain expenses being higher due to these unforeseen circumstances.

Monthly reports to the Board of Trustees from our finance committee serve as reassurance to the BoT and community that we continue to target spending in clearly-identified areas of the school, such as student learning and resources, staff professional development and whole-school initiatives, the school's grounds and maintenance/upkeep.

### Highlights of the 2020 year include:

- The BoT being able to employ an extra teacher during 2020 to ensure we can maintain smaller class sizes.
- Continued (and extremely appreciated) support from HoK to pay for reading recovery room, sink in Room 2 and anti-slip surfacing outside Rooms 6 and 10.
- Employing a new Te Reo Māori instructor and Kapa Haka teacher for our staff and students.
- IT devices purchased to enhance teaching and learning for the 21st century including three large screen Apple TVs with Chromecast to share adult and student works.
- Furniture, resources and iPads to modernise and update our library.
- New cubbies, tables and chairs for a number of classrooms.
- Continuing to re-work long-standing contracts to free up funds for other initiatives that our students benefit from.
- A clean external audit on 2019 Financial Statements

## Property and Environment Update

One of the school's major strategic ventures this year (and great success stories) included the completion of a four-month construction project to address water-tightness issues in the foyer and office areas, as well as the reconfiguring and refurbishing of the middle and top floor toilets, and back library room.

Parents in our school community who were here prior to the build's commencement will have noticed many significant improvements from ease of access, to modernisation and greater use of space. It's been a very positive transformation.

In the classrooms and along the corridors, there continues to be investment in many forms - from carpet to lino, storage to shelving and even a new Reading Recovery Room. The school's buildings and grounds are looking welcoming, attractive and worthy of their place in leafy Khandallah!

## Personnel Update

The **outgoing staff members** to date this year have been Aidan Hallett and Maribelle Alejandro - both in the After-School Care programme. We thank both for their contribution to our school, and wish them every success for their continued onwards journeys in study and in health. Mary Ann Mulqueen also stepped back from After School Care Duties to focus on her daily Teacher Aide role in our school and being mum of two wonderful children.

### Incoming staff members

The following appointments joined the school's staff in 2020:

- Mrs Gillian Grice, as a permanent teacher.
- Ms Emma Milne, as a fixed-term teacher for 2020.
- Mr Patrick Wallis, part-time Teacher Aide, and member of the After-School Care staff.
- Whaea Adrienne, as our school's Te Reo Māori teacher (from Term 3 this year).
- Matua Hemi, as our school's Kapa Haka instructor (from Term 4 this year).
- Ms Lily Redgrave, as our school's After-School Care Supervisor (from Term 3 this year).
- Mrs Maribelle Alejandro, as our school's After-School Care staff (position currently being filled).

The Personnel Committee, on behalf of the BoT would like to take the opportunity to thank all staff for their ongoing dedication and commitment towards our school and its students. We are very fortunate to have such an engaged and hard-working staff and a caring, loyal community who work together seamlessly to accomplish all we set out to achieve for our students.

## Communications Committee Update

The Communications Committee has continued to support the school staff to identify opportunities to promote the school to the external community.

The school's parent group is consulted and engaged with regularly. Of most significance this year was the survey requesting feedback on the school's Pandemic Plan and its roll out, as well as the Communication and Distance Learning process and strategy during the national lockdown. The feedback given has been reviewed and will be applied if we return to higher COVID-19 alert level(s).



## HOK Thanks

The Board would like to thank the HOK committee and helpers for their ongoing fundraising efforts for the school and our students.

This fundraising is essential to the resources we provide for our students and helps bridge our funding requirements making it vital to the well-being of the school.

The Board acknowledges that fundraising this year has been a real challenge for HOK, which has seen the cancellation of the school fair.

Recent successful fundraising activities included, sausage sizzles and a school raffle. We also have the School family picnic coming up and look forward to seeing many of you next Sunday.

These events contribute greatly to the sense of community we have at St Benedict's School. Please do help with your support of HOK.



## Board of Trustee Meeting Updates

The following is a brief list of some of key matters the board has been considering this year: (*Full meeting minutes available on the website*).

### 12<sup>th</sup> February

- Consideration of the Physical Restraint Policy and the Cultural Diversity Policy amongst others.
- Discussion on the direction of the School's Catholic Character with the changes in the Parish of St Francis of Assisi Ohariu with the appointment of the LFT in place of a parish priest.

### 25<sup>th</sup> March

- A first look at the Pandemic Plan.
- The 2019 Academic Results were presented by the Principal.
- An update on both the Wellington Catholic Schools Kāhui Ako and the In-School Community of Learning.
- Consideration of the Living Wage for Staff issue.

### 6<sup>th</sup> May (the first meeting held by Zoom)

- Covid-19 discussion.

### 17<sup>th</sup> June

- Consideration of the Annual Audit Report.
- Covid-19 discussion, including review of parent feedback on Pandemic Plan and Stage 4 Recovery.

### 29<sup>th</sup> July

- Consideration of staff feedback from the Pandemic Plan.
- Received HoK feedback and views on funding key projects.
- Received a letter from the MoE confirming that we had been successful in gaining centrally-funded PLD.

### 9<sup>th</sup> September

- Consideration of parent feedback on the Learning Support Policy.
- Confirmation of Charter and 2020 Annual Goals.
- Considered Student Well-being Survey 2020 data (class indicators and agreed set targets as well as strengths and areas for development).

## Catholic Character

The arrival of Covid-19 brought huge disruption to many aspects of our daily lives – including the ways in which we usually practice our faith. The lockdown brought severe restrictions on gathering but opened up other avenues for us to pray and reflect on our lives. God comes to us in our lives as we live them moment to moment. If only unwittingly in some cases, many found Him during lockdown in a new and fresh appreciation of our families and friends and the things that are important.

Although the Sacramental Programme was disrupted, a bit of flexibility and perseverance from Mike and Clare (the Programme organizers) and the children saw them making their first Holy Communion at St Ben's in a joyful occasion on 20 September. Next big step for these children will be their Confirmation on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.

The school has been developing a relationship with St Vincent de Paul. Through initiatives such as 'bring a can if you can' and visiting the food bank our children learn the value of giving a helping hand to those most in need, irrespective of race, colour or creed. SVdP provides tangible ways for the children at our school to live the Gospel values.

The Proprietors Representatives have been looking at how it might be possible to nourish the faith experience of not just our children but also our parents and caregivers. Let's face it – many of us have not received any substantive guidance or direction in our faith since we left school! We are looking at ways in which this lack of teaching and learning might be addressed in a relaxed and pleasurable way. We would welcome feedback and suggestions in response to this idea.