

Board of Trustees Newsletter

Term 1 2019

Dear St Heliers School Community

How wonderful was our school fair?! We were so incredibly lucky to have a clear day in the middle of a very wet forecast, and the many many hours of preparation came to fruition making a memorable and successful day.

The preliminary figure of funds raised is outstanding, but more importantly our school families and community experienced a day of fun and excitement. I have seen some written comments from children who simply could not decide which part of the fair was their favourite. I have also heard that there was a school principal from Australia at our fair, who had been to a lot of similar events, but never one that 'felt' like ours did. So many parents gave their time and energy to ensuring it was a magical day, and it was a real pleasure to meet the new parents who grabbed the opportunity to get involved. There were definitely friendships made along the way, and I know that the team in the sorting room are missing their daily get-together and are creating new PTA projects to justify a continued coffee group.

So, a very big thank you to everyone who gave a little or a lot of time to our fair. It really was a day to be proud of.

Principal Appraisal

Each year at this time we receive our Principal Appraisal report. This is handled externally for the Board, by education consultants EDSOL NZ. A very comprehensive process is followed to assess Craig in areas of Principal Professional Standards, Performance Objectives, and Compliance.

Once again, Craig is to be congratulated on his appraisal and the standard of his performance across all aspects of his role. Our appraiser made the comment to me that Craig is one the highest performing principals in their system.

As a Board we are very fortunate to be connected to the success that Craig's expertise and commitment bring to St Heliers School.

Combined COL Board meeting

On 21st March we hosted a meeting with the four Boards from our Community of Learning (COL); St Heliers, Churchill Park, Glendowie Primary and Glendowie College. It was a great opportunity to catch up with our neighbouring Board members, and to see a presentation of achievement data from our COL and the positive shifts made for students over the past year.

It was also very encouraging to hear how our with-in school and across school COL teachers are working together and supporting each other in reaching the established shared achievement challenges.

Tomorrow's Schools Review Report Proposals

You have probably heard about the Tomorrow's Schools Review and resulting Haque report, and you may have attended the meeting at Glendowie College on this subject on 27th March.

I have attended three of these meetings, one of which was hosted by Bali Haque himself, so I have gained a balanced understanding of the proposals and the motivation behind them.

There is agreement that one of the main problem with NZ's education system is around the central administration. There is a breakdown between schools and the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry does not currently have the flexibility to be able to serve individual schools in an effective and timely manner.

However, the Haque Report seems also to place a lot of blame on the existence of community led, school based governing boards for the failure of NZ's most disadvantaged students.

The report recommends that governance of schools is taken away from parent led Boards and given to 'local hubs' who will make decisions for up to 125 schools at a time.

Schools will be required to disempower the voice of their parents in the interests of placing governance decisions in the hands of the hubs. This would include decisions around employing principals, enrolment schemes, school property, finances, and health and safety. The report states 'It is very difficult for boards, as currently constituted, to represent their community', but it is a strange step in logic to believe that a disconnected 'hub' whose job it will be to represent up to 125 schools, might achieve a better result.

There are big questions around **how** the hubs will liaise with the schools and **who** will these hubs be made up of. How capable and qualified will these people be to make decisions on the needs of different schools within a hub? There is an enormous assumption from the taskforce that these hubs will be an efficient, powerfully effective resource for schools, but there is also a very real danger that these hubs will simply become another layer of disconnected bureaucracy.

The resolve to change the current education system to raise the achievement levels of a small number of underperforming schools could potentially be to the detriment of schools who are doing well, by causing enormous upheaval and disruption without any positive gain for their students.

Interesting times. Watch this space.

Board Elections

And finally, it is of course a Board Election year. Nominations will close for the election of 5 parent representatives on 24th May.

If you are interested in the achievement opportunities available for every child at St Heliers School, and would like to find out more about the role of a trustee, please do not hesitate to make contact with me, or you could view the following informational video. <https://vimeo.com/120984849>

Do not be misled by the myth that you must have a particular skill set to stand for the Board. The only things I would recommend you have are:

- **Availability**
The time to commit to Board meetings, committee meetings and the occasional professional development opportunity.
- **Flexibility**
An open enquiring mindset and good communication skills in a team setting.
- **Visibility**
It is important that the staff, students, and community know who is on their Board, so it is definitely an asset if you are visible around the school or at school events.

If this is not for you, please ensure that you take part in selecting our next Board with your vote. You can select between 1 and 5 candidates on your voting slip which you will receive by post.

Have a wonderful holiday break everyone. Enjoy the Easter weekend, be safe, and I look forward to being a part of what is sure to be an action-packed Term 2 at St Heliers School.

Kathy Harding
Chair
St Heliers School Board of Trustees.

Kathy@theolympic.co.nz
027 2818 007