



Board of Trustees Newsletter

Term 4 2020

My last newsletter to the St Heliers School Community was written soon after we entered Lockdown in March. It was a strange time of learning to navigate a path in a direction that was only apparent to us on a day-by-day basis. A number of you found it difficult to support your children and their learning needs while also needing to work from home. This was particularly challenging for those with children in multiple year groups whose learning spanned a number of portals and platforms.

Having said that, many of you would have enjoyed the discovery that the educational curriculum is all around us, in everything that we do. You discovered learning opportunities in the garden, the kitchen, in a board game, on a neighbourhood walk and in the conversations we found we had a little more time for.

We have already taken a number of opportunities to thank our wonderful staff for the work they have done this year to ensure educational continuity for our children. They absolutely reinvented, recreated and zoomed their way to a completely new definition of success. They utterly embraced the statement 'We are not our circumstances. We are our possibilities'. They provided calm consistency through the turbulence of two lockdowns, and then the grounded security that was needed as we negotiated the return to school.

I also want to acknowledge you, the parents and whanau as without your efforts and your commitment to your family's partnership with the school, the learning successes that we have seen this year simply could not have been possible.

Although the term 'bubble' is almost the opposite of 'community', you continued to support your children to experience the benefits of connectivity in a time of isolation. You remained positive, open to communication from the Senior Leadership Team and you maintained a calm trust in St Heliers School. This was demonstrated by the outstanding attendance rates we had as soon as school re-opened on both occasions. This was not the experience for many schools, and we do not take this for granted.

We also greatly appreciate the high level of participation in the survey sent out following the second lockdown. Communication is not just about broadcasting messages. It is consulting, listening, assessing, collaborating and strengthening alliances rather than testing them. Your thoughts were heard and changes were made to serve the interests of all.

Can I also extend a message of thanks to the PTA for keeping the faith in 2020. Almost everything they had planned could not take place, but they continued to meet (by zoom if necessary), remaining excited and optimistic and poised for action. Please support their Christmas Market on Wednesday 2 December if you can. It will be a lovely evening.

To the more standard day to day Board activities:

In terms of **Property**, this year has seen the completion of an upgraded Learning Hub. This is now a wonderful space for the children, Learning Assistants and our Learning Support Coordinator Mrs Buer. The complete refurbishment of Rooms 9 and 10 and toilets began in late August and will be complete in early December. This will be followed by improvements to Rooms 11-13 which includes interior work and an upgrade of the toilets facilities.

The summer break will see work take place on the Senior Playground. This will include new equipment, repair of some of the equipment that will remain and complete replacement of the matting.

Financially, the effects of Covid are being felt in a number of ways. Predominantly a lack of international students at the school, but also a reduction in venue hire income from our school hall, and a drop in school donations have been apparent. We appreciate some additional funding from the Ministry toward some areas of shortfall.

Our **Kahui Ako** or Community of Learning with Glendowie College, Glendowie School and Churchill Park School has continued to work toward the achievement goals of 2020 with a focus on Well-Being and Student Agency. The Lead Principal role will change to Anne-Marie Biggs of Glendowie School at the end of the year after a very successful year and a half of leadership from Liz Gunn at Churchill Park. We have a Combined Board Meeting with all schools this week and we look forward to a progress update.

The amount of **Professional Development** available to the Board has been very limited this year, but we have managed to attend a Student Behaviour Management workshop, a Teacher Aide Pay Equity webinar, and a Well-Being presentation from Pio Terei. In the near future, we will be investing time in to understanding the new Education and Training Act 2020 and the various implications it has for our Board and the school as a whole.

My role as Chair of the **Auckland Regional Executive Board** of the School Trustees Association has been a steep learning curve this year, but it has also presented many opportunities. Each term I travel to Wellington for a two day meeting with the eleven other Regional Chairs and we receive presentations from the likes of The Secretary of Education, The President of the NZ Principals Federation, The Office of the Children's Commission, The Teaching Council, The NZ Qualifications Authority and more. The presentations are very interesting and I love being surrounded by professionals who are so passionate about the educational experience of NZ's children. This role has also led me to accept a position on the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) National Advisory Group so there is certainly a lot of learning going on for me.

In closing, I very much hope we are able to enjoy the remaining scheduled events and formalities at school over the coming month. The year has required a large amount of resilience and bounce from us all. It was like being sprung with a test that we had done no study for, but my wish is that we do not have the opportunity to become experts at Lockdown.

May your holidays be filled with freedom and fun relaxing family times.

Kathy Harding

Board Chair

St Heliers School



The St Heliers School Board (from left)

Craig McCarthy - Principal, Kathy Harding - Chair and Human Resources, Chris Browne - Property, Amanda Atkin - Health and Safety, Janine Wiles - Policy, Luis Cass - Health and Safety, Lizanne Franklin - Staff Representative.