

BoT - MEMO TO STAFF AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MEMO TO STAFF AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

On Friday 1 March those members of the Board of Trustees, who were able, met to consider a number of reports and consider a number of strategic issues currently facing the school.

Present were myself as Chair, Vicki Buck, Paul Bradley (representing the Discovery 1 Board), Nicola Malloch, David Gordon, (David offered to continue in his role as a Board Member just prior to the earthquake and at a previous special meeting of the BOT on Sunday 27 February was co-opted back), Jane Ellis and John Mather – Director. The reports received and issues discussed included:

- forward planning for the immediate, short-term and long-term;
- concern expressed by students and parents about getting back to "normal " as soon as possible
- Health and Safety concerns from the staff;
- support for staff and students;
- transport;
- the plans for re-opening the school on Tuesday 15 March;
- implications re funding for our school associated with our new site at Halswell Residential School; and,
- the potential impact on student numbers as a consequence of the earthquake and our new site and the possible impact of this on funding and staffing;

The following is a summary of the outcomes from the meeting:

Follow-up on the implications of our leases for our city centre sites would be undertaken

The project team for ongoing discussions with the Ministry re short and long term sites was confirmed as myself, Vicki Buck and the Director.

On Property the BoT discussed the options for term 2 and the timetable for a new build. The BoT's intention is to keep working closely with the Ministry to rebuild a new school in central Christchurch. It does not think the current buildings would be available for many months and the take-down of the grand Chancellor will compromise that site for a very long time. The school is aiming to build a low rise eco-school with a theme of sustainability in central Christchurch and its preference would be to have "satellite" centres, as it expected travel costs (petrol) to rise dramatically in the next two years and e-learning solutions to improve also.

Possible developers for our long-term future were also canvassed – this matter to be referred to the next BOT meeting

The process for developing spoke sites e.g North Canterbury from our existing hub in Halswell was discussed. This was raised with the Ministry at the last meeting and it was noted the Ministry hadn't shut the door on this option but would require a proposal and process similar to our recent roll increase application and would be within a context of a very 'fluid' network of schools/provision analysis. This means it is unlikely to be a quick process given the potential of significant populations shifts post the earthquake. An application will, however, be progressed ASAP.

It was agreed to convey to staff and parents that the Halswell School was provided to us with all the required property, sewage, water, liquefaction, interiors of classrooms and on site food preparation requirements met. The school has been operating for its own staff, staff from Van Asch College and housing government officials from outside of Christchurch to provide additional earthquake support for some time post February 22 and required all the Ministry approvals prior to this. This has been verified in writing by the Ministry of Education to me, along with verification that the existing health and safety practices and procedures for the Halswell Residential School and used by Halswell Primary School following the September 4 earthquake are available to our school.

It was noted that there were processes being developed to support staff and that the school had a 'specialist' Ministry of Education team available for staff support. The Board noted the thoughtful processes and plans that had been started to ensure students will be supported back into learning.

It was reported that transport via Ministry of Education provided buses would be available for our existing students to access our new site. A proposal has been submitted but not yet approved, so may not operate until the second week. The initial response outlined the policy position from the Ministry that students should get to the nearest central point to our old school and then be picked up for transfer to our new site. A counter claim that this may not work for our school and could impact on the already disrupted and heavily congested road network hasn't yet received a response.

A plan for commencing the school year as developed by the staff team was considered. This involved closing the school on Wednesday and Thursday to allow staff to plan. The BOT were keen to give staff maximum time and all possible support that they may need. They will ask all staff if this is needed from the Ministry's specialist team that has been offered. The BoT was also very mindful that its first duty is to the students of the school, that the special character of the school places students firmly at the centre of learning and that the plan submitted had a few hours only in this week did not meet the needs of students who have communicated a very strong desire to return to "normal" as soon as possible. So in order to give the staff as much time as they think they need, but meet those student needs, it was decided that students could continue to access the school site following our opening on Tuesday 15th with a learning programme for students on Wednesday and Thursday to be run with support from parents, board members, those staff available and relievers. This means that for students there will be a programme of learning for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of this coming week. Friday is a holiday. The incredible support from parents, Board members and past students has been amazing, and the BoT recognised that this was an element that we need to better incorporate into the learning programme. So the outcome is that staff have as much time as they need, a programme of learning is available for all students this week and next week will return to "business as usual".

The implication for our budget, as a result of moving off our current 'cash for property' arrangement, was discussed. This 'cash for property' arrangement has provided us with considerable capacity to be flexible about how we use our resources. While we are at Halswell Residential school we will get the same operational funding as all other schools and this is not as generous or flexible. This cold hard reality plus the likely negative impact on our roll as a consequence of the earthquake as well as different supervision and duty requirements on our new site with lots of space and 'play' equipment available for students to use has required the Board to consider all budget issues in depth. A full review of Budget meeting will be held soon.

A number of students and parents have expressed to the BoT their concern about catch up

time especially around NCEA courses that have been disrupted. The Board agreed that the emphasis for the remainder of the year will be to provide maximum support and teaching time for that to happen to meet the students' learning needs. The Board made a governance decision based on the loss of time this year and the constraints and lack of flexibility on budget to ensure learning options will be as broad as possible. This will impact slightly on the actual teaching hours for the remainder of this year. Currently at all schools teachers are expected to have 20 hours "teaching" time. This has been less at unlimited, but will rise to 16 hours per week (still substantially less than the usual) for the remainder of this year to ensure there is enough time to recover from what will effectively be a one month break, which is a relatively large part of the school year. This will still allow for a 15 minute 1 on 1 each week for each learning advisor with each and every student.

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