

Board of Trustees 2016 Annual Report

Yet again, this year has proven to be a very successful one at RSS! The many learning and teaching achievements, projects, sporting and performing arts opportunities, contribute to a very positive and supportive learning community, which is a highlight of Russell Street School. This is only possible within an environment that values and inspires agency, creativity and excellence, not only at school but outside of school as well.

All of the staff at RSS are committed to ensuring that all children receive a quality education and this has also been matched by our community enthusiasm and willingness to contribute in many, many ways to ensure the school is the best it can be for our children.

Thank you all for your contributions. The school is looking great and our children and staff are engaged in lots and lots of meaningful, authentic, high quality learning experiences.

Board of Trustees

There was lots of interest in the Board elections and the new board was quickly into working on new projects. The team has formed a very solid, forward thinking group and has welcomed all of the new learning that has been part of the board induction process.

There has been significant professional development take place since the new board was elected and this has involved attending weekend conferences, evening workshops as well as many meetings outside of the regular monthly Board meetings. Thanks to all of the Board of Trustees and Leadership team - Kirsty Giles (outgoing member), Leanne Fa'aea, Andy Christensen, Darryn Joseph, Elly Warnock and David for your professionalism, commitment, and tireless work. Strong Governance is a feature of a good school and Russell Street School has shown it is a fantastic school through another successful year.

There have been some significant new initiatives that have been introduced over the past 18 months and these have been the topic of many meetings this year.

The revision of the Vulnerable Children's Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act has involved revisiting our policies and procedures and as a group, we have had to be fully aware of all of the detail and how they are enacted. This involves ensuring that we are up to date with all our policies and procedures and also adding these to our regular revision plan, which for these two acts in particular will be annually. We also reviewed several other policies and procedures as part of our normal review cycle.

The Community of Learning (CoLs), was introduced as part of the Ministry of Education's (MoE), "Investing in Educational Success" initiative last year. We are part of the Palmerston North East Community of Learning of 10 schools that was officially launched in September this year. These include: Freyberg High School, Ross Intermediate School, Milson School, Roslyn School, Terrace End School, Whakarongo School, Ashhurst School, Hokowhitu School, Parkland School and RSS. The Community involves 320 teachers and a student population of about 4500.



We are lucky to have some of our teachers recognised for their skills and teaching experience by taking on the roles of Across School Leaders. We are very proud of Troy (Mathematics) and Joy (Science) who have been appointed in these roles. This is significant as our teachers were successful in their applications for these positions, and were in amongst other applications from other schools. We also congratulate Kerri (Writing and Science) and Nic (Writing and Maths), who have been appointed as Within School Leaders at RSS. This shows the high calibre of our staff and also the continual professional learning opportunities that our teachers are regularly involved in. These roles will involve working with teachers in our own school and other schools to develop a community of professional learning development and sharing. This will not only benefit the other schools but also our school and our children as they progress onto the next stages of their compulsory education.

The remainder of the year has us involved in connecting with our community and developing our new charter for next year. The charter is a document which establishes the values, goals and directions for the future and we value your input into shaping these aspects. We are also incorporating the Government requirements and these include the Community of Learning network. It is important that we are clear about what our priorities are and how we can strategically plan to achieve them.

Reports to Board

The role of a Board of Trustees involves governance and part of that is ensuring that we do everything possible to create an environment where our children can achieve at their best.

The school has a culture of recognising achievements and celebrating progress. These opportunities come in many forms and the board welcomes every opportunity to hear about progress, achievements and new ideas.

Over the course of the year we have had progress reports on the key competencies, agency, reading, writing and maths, reading recovery monitoring, literacy at age six, and achievement in Poutokomanawa.

We have also had reports, presentations and workshops on robotics/coding, annual plans, analysis of variance, school culture, audit/annual returns, sportstart and our charter review.

Achievement

When looking at achievement, using a range of opportunities to check our teaching and learning is an integral part of the process. We know from our data that there is a very high proportion of our children achieving at, or above national standard in reading, writing and maths. This is further endorsed by our children's consistently high results in the International Competition in Schools (ICAS) Assessments.

We know that children who enjoy school and have quality learning opportunities, generally have good attendance. This was reflected in the term two MoE report which showed attendance was much higher at RSS compared to similar schools in NZ.

Our children have also ranked 2nd for the Year 5 group at Mathex, had many successes at the Northern Cluster swimming competitions, and have been successful in team and individual sports throughout the year.

Personnel

As a board we are always impressed at the professional learning that takes place at RSS and the culture of learning and sharing amongst the children, is also mirrored amongst the staff. This is the heart of a successful learning community.





The focus for professional learning and development has been lifting achievement and further shifting and challenging the pedagogy (the way we teach), in mathematics. It has been very evident that this work is paying off and the teachers have thrived on this opportunity.

The staff have also visited schools in the Hawkes Bay and relished the opportunity to see what was happening in other schools.

Other professional learning opportunities have included teachers attending: phonological awareness workshops, ready to read series, swimming, teaching low vision children, play-based learning, first aid training, Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP) training/sensory workshop and restorative practices in schools.

Kerri has really enjoyed the Reading Recovery training she has undertaken this year and in her report to the board praised the programme and the incredible learning she has gained.

The leadership team has been involved in Leadership coaching sessions with consultant Carol Lynch including 1-1 mentoring sessions.

We have continued our relationship with Massey University's Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Master of Teaching and Programmes through hosting graduate children at school and also through hosting visits. We also hosted four interns from the USA for eight weeks.

We welcomed Mel Hagan in the role of Associate Principal and Brenda Stephenson in a teaching role. We also welcomed Tracey Davidson and Kate Cliff in learning support roles.

Brenda was also recognised with an Advanced Classroom Expert Teacher (ACET) award.

And in what has become the norm, we have hosted a large number of visitors into RSS, including educators, and several staff have presented at national, regional and local conferences and/or arranged events (EduCamp, chapter chats), for the benefit of not only our area but extending out to other learning communities.

Tikanga Māori

We have enjoyed having a strong Kapa Haka this year and have grown our leadership through a group of senior children leading a junior Kapa Haka at lunchtimes. Our Kapa Haka has represented our school in many occasions and shown the strength, depth and emphasis we place on Tikanga Māori.

The strength of our relationship with our community is highlighted in the attendance at our wonderful celebrations over the year such as the Matariki celebration concert and Hangi.

Our in-school leader of Māori has been released part-time, to support the learning and teaching of children with and through Māori, and to connect with Māori children and their families.

Whaea Meta has composed songs for Poutokomanawa, including Poutokomanawa and this year Whakawhanaungatanga teaching the children about school values such as panekiretanga, excellence. This waiata was sung when our school pepeha mural was unveiled that honours Rangitāne as mana whenua and is a great visual reminder of our local cultural heritage: Kurahaupō

canoe, Tararua, Ruahine ranges, Rangitāne people. The school appropriately invited Rangitāne to open the scooter park and we thank Shane Ruwhiu for fulfilling that role and reciting the karakia.

Learning and Teaching

There have been some changes in the resourcing of support for special needs of children from the MoE. As part of these changes the term "special needs" has been replaced with "Learning Support" or those in need of learning support. As a result of these changes we have looked into and introduced some new programmes. These have included the new programmes "Toe to Toe" (phonological programme), and the Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP). The Junior school children have thoroughly enjoyed and benefitted from the programmes. The Teachers have also enjoyed taking part and developing their own knowledge in the programme.

We continue to enjoy our strong buddy class culture (Tuakana-Teina), where teachers and children work collaboratively. The buddy class day, organised by a year 6 leadership group, was a huge success.

The seniors have enjoyed another successful camp at El Rancho in Waikanae and hosted a sports exchange with Douglas Park School from Masterton.

Good learning and teaching involves a reciprocal approach and where student voice (and parent voice), is valued. The children have a right to have their say and they look forward to their contributions. We routinely carry out confidential surveys to capture the degree to which they are enjoying their school experience, and quite importantly, to identify whether bullying is present. This feedback loop is important in supporting the full framework of making sure children develop healthy relationships and that the culture at school is a positive one.

We have been involved in a very successful collaboration with Ashhurst School funded through a Ministry of Education Innovation Fund. Based around student agency, our researcher from Massey University Dr Maggie Hartnett has been gathering and interpreting data alongside our teachers. It is clear that this has shifted our children's agency significantly and also the learning for the teachers at both schools has been invaluable.

The learning for our children takes place in many ways and many situations. We have seen our students involved in coding, robotics, band, orchestra, enviro crew, Japanese, the radio station, creating our latest art mural, book fair, DanceNZmade, School Olympics day, RICOH sports tournament, Northern Cluster Arts Festival, and the PREP programme resulting in a very entrepreneurial and busy market day.

Property

The school is looking great at the moment and that is important to the staff, students and our community. Recently our 10 year property plan was approved by the MoE which includes capital works in the school. This is focussed around new toilets for the senior school, roofing, drainage, heating upgrades, and a remodel of rooms 6 & 7.

A lot of planning and coordination work has been undertaken for the new fence and also the remodelling of the entrance to the school.

We have recently added shade sails (obtained through grants), to the playground and on the field side of Poutama.

We are in the process of tendering for the repaint of the school to commence in summer 2017.

Parking at peak times of the day has been an issue we have been in long standing conversations with the PNCC about solutions. Most important is the safety of our children and access for our community to school.



Community

We are proud of our school environment and several maintenance tasks that were on our “to do” lists were attended to at our beautification day. The incredible offer of help by our community was put to good use and we are always grateful for the support.

We are very lucky to have constant support throughout the year for help with sports teams, resource making, in-class support including the CLICK programme in Rooms 4 & 5, distribution of community newsletters, gardening, camp, seed to table, coding club...the list is enormous!!

As we do with student voice, we have sought parent voice on many occasions around important aspects such as home learning, reporting to parents and recently with charter chats and looking at our school and it's effectiveness in a number of dimensions. The opportunities for parents to feedback this year have included the CRE policy and discussing and voting on school uniforms.

There have been a very high number of parents attend our student led conferences and “meet the teacher’ evenings. Following on from these, there continues to be a very open relationship with parents taking up the opportunity to meet with parents more regularly and informally with teachers.

The parent information evenings have been very well attended and in particular the maths, junior reading and new parents to school sessions.

We had a lovely opening for our scooter park with a blessing by Shane Ruwhiu on behalf of Rangitāne. The scooter park is a perfect example of student led development with a community backing and support. The Supporters’ Club have been a huge contributor to the development of the initial plan and building of the scooter park.

We have had a lot of feedback from parents around the use of See-Saw as a means to communicate our children’s learning. We have had large numbers of parents visiting the blog and also posting comments.

In November and at the time of her birthday, we recognised Jean Wilkinson’s very long-standing career with RSS, with the official naming of our library hub as the ‘Jean Wilkinson’s Library Hub’.



For the Future.

We have been in discussions with staff, students and Te Itirearea about the possibility of renaming our buildings and using Māori names.

We look forward to the discussions through our charter chats and will be looking to collating all the feedback, working through this information and how it could be developed further for our charter, our goals and annual plans.

General comment

The school is humming along nicely. We are fortunate to have such dedicated staff and a supportive community who value student achievement, providing a quality learning environment and opportunities for experiential authentic and meaningful learning.

David has worked hard this year and has maintained a consistently high standard of communication, accessibility and thorough attention to detail in working with all stakeholders. As a Board we have enjoyed David's guidance and his readiness to utilise the strengths of each member of the board, staff and children at RSS.

2017 is going to be another big year with property developments and the beginning of the Community of Learning. It will be a most rewarding year full of challenges but most of all, full of learning and celebrating successes.

Have a safe and relaxing holiday!

Andrew Jamieson and Cindy Irvine

Co-Chairpersons

Russell Street School

Board of Trustees.

