

2018 Westlake Boys Board of Trustees Annual Report

In my report for 2017 some of you may recall that I briefly outlined just what it is that the Board of Trustees does. In short, the Board is responsible for the governance of the school – the Board oversees the work that the Headmaster and the staff do to ensure that the School's strategic objectives are being achieved, and that the way in which the school is operated complies with the various statutory and regulatory requirements overseen by the Ministry of Education.

In this year's report I will discuss a few of the matters with which the Board is involved and how the Board's work in those areas flows through to the staff, the students, their parents and the wider community. So a few thoughts follow on school property, Board policies and subjects offered by the school.

One of the Board's more tangible responsibilities is to ensure that the school's buildings and property are maintained and are able to be used for the required purpose. This is not always an easy task, especially in light of the fact that the blocks around which the rest of the school is built are still the same "Nelson Blocks" as were built for the school when it opened in 1962. Maintaining 56-year-old buildings, let alone buildings built in the last ten years, and ensuring that they meet 21st century teaching and education needs is a complex business. As the school evolves some of these buildings need replacing and while it is with some sadness that we are about to bid farewell to the Old Gym (souvenir wall bars will soon be available to those who recall the days of legendary PE teacher Mr Butt and his favourite game "Groups and Bumps") in its place by the beginning of the 2020 school year will be a brand new double storey classroom block which will provide up to date facilities to replace those of the increasingly dilapidated F Block. The Board has worked hard to persuade the Ministry to approve this plan, and is delighted that it will get underway in December this year.

The Board is responsible for putting in place a number of policies which govern the way in which certain things are dealt with within the school. Up until a few years ago the Board had a bewildering number of policies but a very diligent review a few years ago consolidated those policies into the 19 policies that we operate under today. These policies are subject to a constant programme of review, with the Board generally reviewing one policy per monthly board meeting, so they remain fresh and relevant. Policies cover such diverse topics as curriculum delivery, timetable, community relationships, staff appraisal and professional development, finance, child protection, international students and privacy. Each policy is supported by a comprehensive procedure document which sets out the way in which the Board expects that the policy requirements will be met. It is through this good governance that the school is able to develop its strategies to meet, and we hope exceed, the education requirements of our students.

The Board receives reports from the school about what is going on within the school on a day to day basis, and as to what trends and changes the school is experiencing. For example, at a recent Board meeting we were provided with data showing the number of subjects offered in Year 12 for 2019, and how many students had enrolled in each subject. While we would expect at a Boys school that science and mathematics subjects would be very popular it was with some surprise that we saw that arts and humanities subjects were much less popular than we had anticipated, and less than they have been in the past. The Board is keen that the students at Westlake Boys gain a broad education across a number of disciplines – high school is after all one of the last chances many students will have to try such a wide range of subjects. So while we certainly do

not wish to discourage any students from their chosen courses we would encourage the students, and their parents, to think for a moment as to whether perhaps adding history, geography, Korean, accounting or photography (to name a few) might help to better develop a more broad, and curious, outlook on life. After all you spend an awful long time after school working – why not take the opportunity to have some fun, while still learning and gaining valuable skills, while you can?

These are just a few of the areas which the Board of Trustees is required to oversee. Westlake Boys is fortunate to have a talented, dedicated and hardworking Board. That Board comprises Melinda Bennett, Chris Simcock, Jimmy O'Brien, Phil Harkness and Andrew Nicoll as elected parent representatives, Darryl Roycroft as a co-opted Board member, Tracy Houzet as the staff representative, the Headmaster Mr Ferguson and for 2018 we have had the pleasure of having Jonathan Zou as the elected student representative. Each Board member brings a set of skills and points of view which are invaluable in ensuring that the School is able to meet the expectations of the students, staff and wider community. There are elections in May 2019 for three parent representatives, so we may well be saying thanks and good bye to some existing trustees and welcoming aboard new trustees. The Board looks forward to this process of continued community involvement, and a chance for a refresh. We encourage all parents to take the time to consider those who will stand for those three positions, and to cast your votes.

Finally a few thank yous as 2018 begins to wind down (or up for students with the imminent prospect of external exams). To the Board of Trustees, and to our secretary Sandra White, thank you for your dedication to our school – your time is given generously, and your hard work helps to keep Westlake Boys as the great school that it is. To the Headmaster Mr Ferguson and your Senior Leadership Team thank you for steering the ship and giving our students the opportunities to succeed. To the teaching staff your hard work and care and generosity is greatly appreciated – not only for your help and care in the classroom but for being at cycling training at 5:30 in the morning, or leading the musicians through just one more run over that last piece, or for being there in the freezing rain at yet another training session – our students wouldn't be able to have a Westlake Boys education without you.

The staff are all ably supported by a large team who support them. So thank you too to the "back room" – all of you who help with front of house, enrolment, finance, laboratory work, keeping the grounds looking great, keeping the Wi-Fi going and so much more – you all do a marvellous job and we really do appreciate all your hard work.

The Board is also very grateful for the continuing support of the PTA and of Westlakers. These two organisations work tirelessly to support the school, raising money but also helping with the organisation of events, helping the staff to feel appreciated and working to make sure that the connections that Westlakers make in their years at school are able to be maintained and enhanced in the years that follow. Thank you to the PTA and Westlakers.

Congratulations to all our prize winners today – you should be proud of your achievements. To your classmates I hope you too will help celebrate your friends' successes and we wish you all the very best for your external exams and for whatever 2019 might bring to you.

Andrew Nicoll

BOT Chairman

