



# A parents' guide

to the role of the **board of trustees**

# What is a School Board of Trustees?

**School boards are responsible for the school or kura's performance and ensuring that all legal requirements are met.**

Every state and state-integrated school and kura in New Zealand has a board of trustees. The board of trustees is a crown entity – that is an organisation that is part of the New Zealand public sector. They are responsible for the school or kura's performance and ensuring that all legal requirements are met.

# The board

- is accountable for student achievement
- sets the vision for the school or kura
- ensures the school or kura complies with legal and policy requirements



**First and foremost a board is accountable for student progress and achievement to its parents, community and the Crown.**

## What do trustees do?

First and foremost a board is accountable for student progress and achievement to its parents, community and the Crown. The board has the overall responsibility and accountability for the school or kura. The legal responsibilities of boards of trustees are determined by the Education Act of 1989. Section 75 of the Act outlines the functions and powers of boards:

1. A school's board must perform its functions and exercise its powers in such a way as to ensure that every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standard in educational achievement
2. Except to the extent that any enactment or the general law of New Zealand provides otherwise, a school's board has complete discretion to control the management of the school as it thinks fit.

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### Here are some of the specific things boards do:

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Set the strategic direction and long-term plans for the school or kura in consultation with the school or kura's community.

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Monitor the board's progress against the charter goals and targets.

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Monitor and evaluate student progress and achievement.

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Oversee the management of staff, property, finances, curriculum and administration.

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Ensure that government priorities are met.

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Fulfil the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi by valuing and reflecting New Zealand's dual cultural heritage.

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Appoint and support the principal and assess their performance.

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Act as good employers to all staff at the school or kura.

## What skills do trustees need?

Trustees are active leaders in their school or kura and need to work well in a team, ask challenging questions and have good communication skills. Boards need a balance of skills and experiences to ensure effective processes for planning, monitoring, reporting and reviewing the school or kura's performance are in place.

## Who can become a trustee?

Parents, caregivers and people from the wider community can be nominated for election to a school board or kura. Your school or kura will be happy to help you find out more about standing for election or nominating someone else.

## How do I become a trustee?

Contact your school or kura if you are interested in becoming a school trustee. There are a variety of ways this can be achieved outside of the trustee elections. If you want to find out about standing for election, nominating someone else and voting in the election - they will be happy to help. For more information visit:

<http://www.trustee-election.co.nz/becoming-a-trustee>

## Who is on a board of trustees?

The Education Act 1989 specifies the makeup of the board but provides some discretion for the board in determining its total size. This flexibility helps the board ensure its membership reflects the diversity of the community and the skills required for effective governance. There are a number of ways diversity can be reflected.

A board of trustees is made up of:

3-7 elected parent representatives

the principal

a staff representative

a student representative (only in schools with students above year 9)

proprietor's appointees (only in integrated schools)

co-opted trustees (boards must have more elected/selected parents than co-opted representatives)

appointed trustees (that is, the body corporate).

All trustees have:

equal voice

equal vote

equal accountability

equal standing.



**Parents, caregivers and people from the wider community can be nominated for election to a school or kura board.**



**Boards of trustees provide strategic leadership and direction to their school or kura.**



# **Trustees represent the community and benefit from the input of parents.**

## **How is a board elected?**

The school or kura staff and parents elect boards of trustees every three years. The trustee elections are the biggest democratic event in New Zealand. Schools and kura around the country seek approximately 12,000 parent representatives. All parents of students enrolled full-time in a state or state-integrated school or kura can and should vote in the elections for parent representatives.

## **What help do school trustees get?**

New Zealand School Trustees Association provides free advice and support through their governance and employment advisory services and professional development workshops. Visit the NZSTA website for more information:

<http://www.nzsta.org.nz/about>

## **How does the board of trustees work?**

Boards of trustees provide strategic leadership and direction to their school or kura. The board works in partnership with the community, principal, teachers, support staff, and the government to ensure the best possible outcomes for all students.

The importance of the partnership between a school or kura and its community cannot be stressed enough. Trustees should encourage parental involvement in the school system whenever and wherever possible. Trustees represent the community and benefit from the input of parents.

For more details about how the board works view the online information at:

<http://resources.nzsta.org.nz//WelcomeaBoard/story.html>

## **The school charter**

The school or kura's charter outlines strategic direction and includes the vision, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the board, and should be the basis for all school or kura decision making. The charter is a binding agreement between the board of trustees and the Minister of Education. School communities should be encouraged to participate in the development and review of the school or kura charter. For more details about the charter view the online information at:

[http://resources.nzsta.org.nz/charter\\_review/story.html](http://resources.nzsta.org.nz/charter_review/story.html)

## **What does the work of the board look like?**

The board of trustees' key areas of contribution are representation, leadership, accountability, and the employer role.

For more details about what the work of the board looks like view the online information at

<http://resources.nzsta.org.nz/WelcomeaBoard/story.html>



# What are the roles within the board?

## Parent representatives

represent the needs and aspirations of their community

ensure the best possible outcomes for **all** students at the school or kura

do not necessarily need to be a parent, but they must be nominated by a current parent of the school or kura

## Board chair

cannot be the principal, staff or student representative

leads the board

chairs the meetings

works closely with the principal to ensure seamless communication between governance and management

## Principal

is a full member of the board

is the educational professional leader of the school or kura

is the CEO and the board's chief adviser

## Staff representative

is elected by the staff (teaching and nonteaching)

is not a staff advocate (they must make decisions in the best interests of all students at the school or kura)

## Student representative

is first and foremost a trustee – making decisions in the best interests of all students at the school or kura, using all the information available

## Co-opted trustees

provide the board with specific expertise – eg. finance, strategy, gender or ethnic balance



**The board of trustees are the governors of the school or kura. The principal is responsible for the management of the school or kura.**

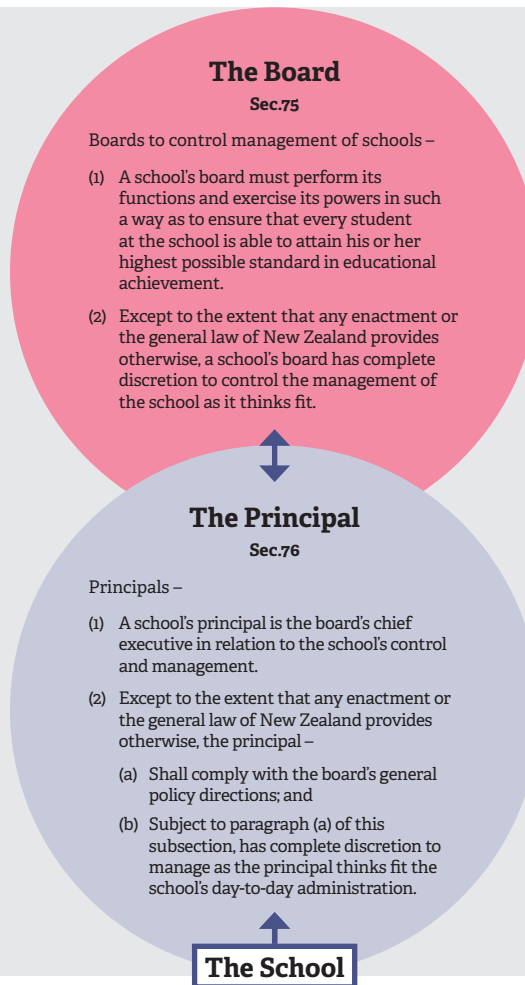
## How do the principal and board work together?

The board of trustees are the governors of the school or kura. The principal is responsible for the management of the school or kura. The principal is a member of the board and acts as the board's educational leader and chief adviser.

Governance and management work in partnership.

### **Governance determines:**

the what – designing the future  
the ends – the outcomes to be achieved  
policies – statements of what is expected



The board of trustees sets the direction for the school or kura through its charter and policies.

Entrusting to its principal/tumuaki the implementation on a day-to-day basis.

Through an effective internal evaluation programme the board then measures the performance of the school or kura and the principal against the plans set.

### **Management determines:**

the how – designing how to get there  
the means – strategies to achieve the ends  
procedures – steps to meet expectations

# What can parents expect from the board of trustees?

## Responsibility

The role of the board is to design the future of the school or kura and ensure that plans and targets are developed, monitored, and reviewed. The board develops policy – to set expectations for what it wants to see.

The board receives regular reports from the principal about student learning and achievement and progress towards the school or kura's charter aims and targets. The board uses this information to prioritise resourcing to meet the needs of students.

The Education Act s76 delegates responsibility for the day to day running of the school or kura to the principal – the school or kura management determines how policy/board expectations will be best met.

## Respect and integrity

Each board of trustee member is expected to make decisions in the best interests of all students at the school or kura and to ensure culturally appropriate processes are in place.

Board members are entrusted to govern the school or kura, on behalf of the community, to ensure the provision of a high quality learning environment for all.

## Consultation

The board's role is to design the future for the school or kura. Board of trustee members are elected to represent the school or kura community.

Community consultation is a critical part of the process for developing and monitoring the board's key document – the school or kura charter.

Consultation processes provide information to guide future development and give feedback on current progress towards the goals defined in the charter.

The school or kura should have a process outlining the handling of concerns and complaints that is made available to the school or kura community.

Board of trustee members are not the immediate point of contact for parent concerns as these should first be dealt with by the school or kura, unless of a serious nature.

## Communication

The board should provide the school or kura community with regular updates on how the school or kura is performing in relation to the charter goals and targets.

## Professional learning

Board members are expected to have a clear understanding of:

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their role as trustees

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governance policy and process

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student learning and achievement data.

NZSTA run a comprehensive programme to support board of trustee members in their role.

# Frequently Asked Questions

# The board's primary focus is to ensure ongoing improvement in student achievement outcomes for all students.

## What information does the board have about my child?

The board's primary focus is to ensure ongoing improvement in student achievement outcomes for all students, therefore the board needs to examine student learning and achievement data in order to set targets and priorities. Individual student names should not be revealed in the public part of a board meeting. In its governance role the board will from time to time have access to information regarding students, for example concerns and complaints or student discipline.

## What is the board's role in student discipline?

Serious issues of misconduct involve the board. If a student is suspended from school or kura, the board is required to hold a suspension meeting to decide the outcome. The student cannot return to school or kura until the board decides the outcome. The exception is if the student is excluded or expelled.

For more information visit:

<http://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/your-child-at-school/standdowns-suspensions-exclusions-expulsions/>





### How do we know if our school or kura board is effective?

The charter is the board's key policy document. It clearly outlines the strategic intent of the board. The board will undertake a process of community consultation as part of the development and review of the charter. The school or kura will have copies of the charter available for you, usually on their website.

The Education Review Office (ERO) undertakes regular reviews of every school or kura in New Zealand. The board is ultimately responsible for the performance of their school or kura, so ERO spends considerable time reviewing the school or kura and reporting on its performance. Individual school or kura reviews can be found at [ero.govt.nz](http://ero.govt.nz).

### What happens if our board is ineffective?

If ERO have concerns regarding the school or kura board, they will recommend additional board support and training or Ministry of Education intervention.

### What support do board members have?

Each board is responsible for ensuring that their members have the knowledge and understanding necessary for the board to be able to function effectively. NZSTA offers a comprehensive professional development programme to ensure that board members are informed and confident in their roles.

### Are board members paid?

Board members are paid a nominal fee for attending board meetings. This fee is set by each board.

The IRD treats part of any honoraria paid to school trustees for attending board meetings as reimbursement of expenditure and therefore it is not subject to withholding tax as follows:

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for the chairperson, the first \$75 per board meeting (up to a maximum of \$825 a year)

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for any other board member, the first \$55 per board meeting (up to a maximum of \$605 a year).

### Who looks after the finances of the school?

The board is responsible for the finances of the school or kura. The board approves a budget that allocates government and local funding appropriately to develop a learning environment that meets the needs of all students. The budget aligns to charter goals and aims. The board monitors the school or kura budget at each board meeting.

The board must ensure that annual accounts are prepared which meet audit office requirements, and are then made available to the school or kura's auditor. These accounts form part of the school or kura's annual report.

### What knowledge and skills do I need to become a trustee?

Board members need to be committed to the school or kura with a vested interest in designing the future of the school or kura to ensure the success of **all** students. They need to clearly recognise the role of governance and be disciplined in carrying it out.

For more information visit:

<http://www.trustee-election.co.nz/media/191646/nzsta-dl6pp-fa.pdf>

### How much time do board members spend on board business?

The time commitment varies from board to board. Boards have regular meetings (usually at least 2 per term) that usually last for approximately 2 – 2.5 hours. Board members are sent all documentation prior to the meeting and are expected to have read this thoroughly prior to the meeting.

### Can the public attend board meetings?

Board meetings are meetings held in public, but they are not public meetings. Speaking rights can be granted to non board members at the discretion of the board.

### What does “in committee” mean and why does the board have the right to use this?

When dealing with confidential issues, the board may go “into committee”. Members of the public, including media, are not able to attend this part of the meeting unless they have been invited for a specific purpose – eg. their expert advisory skills in the employment area.

### How can parents raise a concern with the board?

Each school or kura should have a policy/procedure outlining the process for handling concerns and complaints. Copies of this policy/procedure should be available from the school or kura.

### How do I become a trustee?

You can become a trustee by standing at the next board election, by standing when a casual vacancy arises, or by being appointed or co-opted. You need to be nominated by a parent of the school or kura community in the case of board elections. You can also contact your local school or kura and inquire about any co-opted positions or proprietor appointee positions (for integrated schools) that may be available. For further information, go to <http://www.trusteeelection.co.nz/>

### What are communities of learning?

Communities of learning is an initiative from the Government to group schools or kura into clusters. It will provide greater opportunity for schools or kura to share and communicate, but each school or kura will still retain their own board.

For more information visit:

<http://www.nzsta.org.nz/leadership/investing-in-educational-success-ies>

# NZSTA Contact

Te Whakaroputanga Kaitiaki Kura O Aotearoa

Level 8,  
142 Lambton Quay,  
Wellington  
PO Box 5123  
Wellington  
New Zealand

Phone: +64 4 473 4955

0800 782 435

Fax: +64 4 473 4706

[www.nzsta.org.nz](http://www.nzsta.org.nz)

