

# ST IGNATIUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## BOARDTALK

December 2020

### Introduction

Another year gone, and what a year it was. In a way it feels like it went in the blink of an eye, delivered in small chunks between lockdowns, yet in another way it felt endlessly long, and I am sure most of us are looking forward to a well deserved break. I felt blessed and thankful yesterday, as I was enjoying our students' outstanding performances at Celebrate, that we were able to hold our annual celebration of learning and hope that those of you who were able to attend enjoyed the evening.

One of the Board's key focuses in 2020 was updating our strategic charter. The charter sets school's objectives and is underpinned by an annual plan. The Board would like to thank everyone who responded to the survey, especially those who also attended our focus group, for your feedback. This was valuable for our planning session. The Board would also like to thank our teachers and support staff for embracing the updated charter, and all the changes that 2020 has thrown at us, so extremely well. All your hard work is noticed and much appreciated.

One of my personal highlights was attending a staff planning workshop to deepen our understanding about New Zealand's bicultural heritage and how we can better incorporate the right modules into our curriculum. This is an area that the school and the Board are fully committed to and we are looking at ways to incorporate that heritage in various aspects of our school.

In 2020, we fondly farewell a number of our St Ignatius families: the Aquilina, Bishop, Buxton, Chant, Clement, Culpan, Curlett, Ensor, Goddard, Hemmingsen-Jensen, Hickey, Hoy, Johnson, Keeley, Lawrence, McLullich, Niederhaus Pires, Pinches, Schwabe, Thomas-Plume, Tukuitonga and Williams families. We thank them for their generosity to our school, as many of them served on our PTA, Board of Trustees and as volunteers at our many school events over their years at St Ignatius.

We also farewell some staff members: Mrs Robyn Lee, Miss Grace Baker, Mrs Zelita Mahoney and Miss Liv Waldron. We thank them for their time at St Ignatius and wish them all the best in their next endeavours.

A final thank you to our parent community for your continually generous donations, countless hours of support from the PTA, Year representatives and other volunteers, and for working collaboratively with the school to support the children's learning.

As we wrap up 2020, the Board is busy reviewing our budget and planning for the next year, which you can read more about in our financial update below.

We wish you a peaceful and blessed Christmas, a very happy New Year and we are looking forward to welcoming you back in 2021.

Nga Mihi,

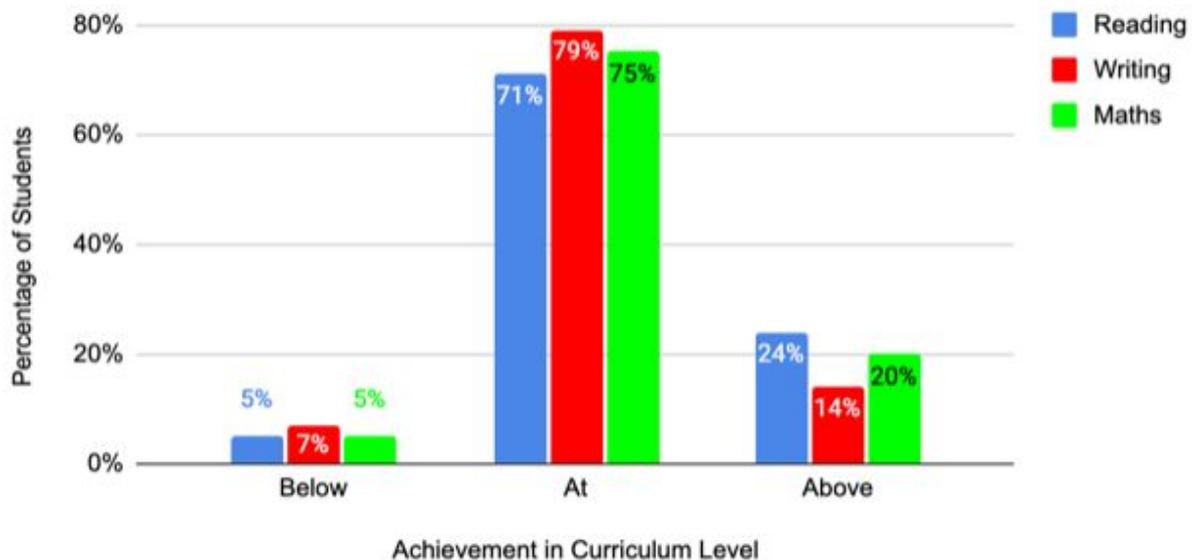
Sylvia Langridge, Board Chairperson.

## Student Achievement

End of year assessments for all Year levels show that the majority of our students are tracking within or above the expected curriculum level. The school offers multiple initiatives including professional learning and development in maths for teachers, STEPS literacy programs, reading programs, accelerated programs in maths and targeted support for year levels where it is most needed.

### St Ignatius Catholic School

End of Year Curriculum Level OTJ's 2020



Learners achieving at or above

	Mid-Year results	End of Year
Maths	88.8%	95%
Writing	87.1%	93%
Reading	91.1%	95%

The school will also continue to provide extension learning opportunities for all students, especially those who have been identified as having particular strengths in different learning areas.

The Board would like to congratulate the principal, teachers, support staff, students and our whanau on these achievements.

## School Policies

A key Board responsibility is "setting the policies by which the school is to be controlled and managed".

The Board usually reviews two policies per meeting with community consultation as required. We encourage our school community to view our policies on the school website.

Instructions on how to view our school policies can be found on <https://www.stignatius.school.nz/our-place/policies/>.

## School Charter

Between Covid-19 lockdowns the Board held a workshop to review and update the school's strategic charter. The charter outlines the school's strategic direction and highlights focus areas for the following 3 years. The charter is underpinned by the annual plan, which is reviewed at every board meeting. As part of the review process the Board consulted parents, staff and, to a degree, the children.

The responses provided indicated the following key areas needed more focus:

- The highest percentage (24%) wish to see an improvement in collaboration with the school community to support children's learning pathways, followed by an increased effort to promote continuous improvement and excellence in learning (16%) and future focused learning (12%).
- Approximately 10% of the responses indicated that the school should celebrate the bicultural heritage of New Zealand, our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the diverse cultures of our children.
- Approximately 10% of the respondents would like to see an increased focus on supporting the children in taking ownership of their own learning.

Prior to the workshop we held a discussion evening for interested parents. This very useful session, attended by representatives from 5 families, allowed us to further understand the feedback from the surveys.

The draft charter was then published on our school website with additional opportunity to provide feedback.

The Board is pleased to see how well the new charter has already been adopted by the teaching staff and really appreciates all the hard work that goes into regularly sharing the learning plans for each of the learning communities. We are confident this provides parents greater insight into what the children are learning and is appreciated by the school community. We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful and dedicated staff. Thanks to each and every one of you for caring for and shaping our children's learning journey.

Whilst the opportunity for feedback is now closed, and the final charter is available on the school's website, we encourage you to share your thoughts on any strategic charter matters with us by emailing the board, or speaking directly to your child's teacher and/or the principal.

## School Grounds Development

You may have already noticed, the area adjacent to our junior playground could benefit from refurbishment. Our younger children make good use of the space, especially the sandpit, but we are forced to close it over the winter months when it becomes wet and muddy.

We have been working with Luijten Landscaping Limited over the last 2 - 3 months developing a concept for a play space that will encourage children to explore and encounter nature. Specifically, we want to develop the area into a garden that incorporates a series of pathways with points of interruption offering opportunities for play and discovery along the way. For example: small tree and plant species that encourage native birds; some sculptural elements that create unique play experiences; wooden totems that have holes and hollows for birds/ insects; and, a new sandpit.

In 2019 the school was gifted a legacy of \$20,000 from a past pupil. After consultation with students, this money has been tagged to go towards a new "shed", to be incorporated into the garden. Children will use the shed for tinkering, art, technology, woodwork etc, and will also serve a dual purpose of a quiet space for learning.

The concept plan will be on display in the school foyer for you to view from the beginning of Term 1 next year.

Work will start to clear the area in the week before Christmas, and construction will resume from 11 January, with as much completed as possible before school starts again. We hope to have the shed installed and project finished by the end of February.

## Update on School Finances and Contributions for 2021

This is the time of the year where the Board reviews the school finances for 2020 and then sets a draft budget for 2021. We look at what income we need to ensure we continue to provide the education our students require and our parents expect.

We receive funding from the Ministry of Education to cover teacher's salaries up to a certain teacher to student ratio and to cover property and administration costs. We have received an initial funding notice but this will change if our roll varies from the assumptions in the funding notice. It does however enable us to set a draft budget for 2021 and that was approved at our last Board meeting.

2020 has of course been an exceptional year that we all hope will not be repeated. Financially, the school has weathered the year well. A big thank you for your generosity as parents in continuing to make your contributions. Understandably, the PTA has not been able to run anywhere near a normal fundraising programme. The cancellation of the Auction night significantly impacted the funding normally provided to the school. The Board decided to see whether we could survive 2020 with no donations from the PTA and that has been achieved. We therefore have good funding available from the PTA to support 2021.

The final financial outcome for the school is still to be determined but the expectation is that we will finish the year with a small deficit. This is not of concern as surpluses from earlier years mean we are in a position to absorb that deficit.

We have deliberately been using those surpluses to build our reserves to a level that enables us to weather the variabilities that can occur in some years - such as in 2020.

We do not, however, keep reserves just for that reason. We also build them up to enable us to fund, from time to time, significant developments and meet maintenance costs for the school. For example, we have a specific fund for the regular painting of the school buildings which occurs approximately every ten years.

Those reserves, plus the legacy of \$20,000 we received in 2019, have enabled us to plan the redevelopment work outlined above. The overall cost of this project will be in excess of \$100,000 and will provide a refreshed and very usable space that our students can enjoy playing and learning in.

As part of the end of year financial review, the Board considers the level of parent contribution we need. This is a voluntary donation and is tax deductible. It is, however, vital if we are to provide the quality of education that is expected for our children. Along with the support we receive from the PTA, this funding enables the Board to:

- Employ staff in addition to the Ministry allocation;
- Provide learning assistants who directly contribute to higher quality learning and pay these staff, at a minimum, the living wage;
- Provide staff with continuing professional learning and development to ensure they are kept up to date with the latest changes in teaching methodology and technology; and
- Provide educational resources and opportunities required for learning today e.g. digital technology.

The Attendance Dues, charged by the Catholic Diocese of Auckland, are being increased by \$1 per term to \$113 per child per term.

In setting the level of Parent Contribution required for 2020, the Board has noted the financial challenges that many may be facing as a result of Covid-19. We have therefore decided to offset the increase in attendance dues by reducing the requested Parent Contribution by \$1 to \$259 per child per term.

With the various other charges all unchanged this will mean the total requested for 2021 will remain unchanged at \$507 per child per term.

**“Do all you can with the means at your disposal and calmly leave the rest to God”**  
*Saint Mary MacKillop (1891)*