

# Community member guide to the role of the board of trustees



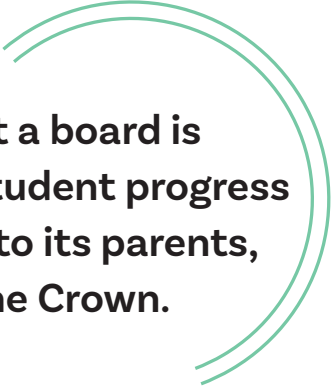
## What is a School Board of Trustees?

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

Every state and state-integrated school | 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.

### The board

- is accountable for student achievement
- sets the vision for the school | kura
- ensures the school | 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 | kura. The legal responsibilities of boards of trustees are determined by the Education Act of 1989. Schedule 6 of the Act outlines the functions and powers of boards:

- 4 (1) A board is the governing body of its school.  
(2) A board is responsible for the governance of the school, including setting the policies by which the school is to be controlled and managed.
- 5 (1) A board's primary objective in governing the school is to ensure that every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standard in educational achievement.  
2) To meet the primary objective, the board must—
  - (a) ensure that the school—
    - (i) is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff; and
    - (ii) is inclusive of and caters for students with differing needs.

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

- Set the strategic direction and long-term plans for the school | kura in consultation with the school | kura's community.
- Monitor the board's progress against its strategic goals and targets.

- Monitor and evaluate student progress and achievement.
- Oversee the management of staff, property, finances, curriculum and administration.
- Ensure that government priorities are met.
- Fulfil the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi by valuing and reflecting New Zealand's dual cultural heritage.
- Appoint and support the principal and assess their performance.
- Act as good employers to all staff at the school | kura

### What skills do trustees need?

Trustees are active leaders in their school | 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 consultation, planning, monitoring, reporting and reviewing the school | 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 | kura. Your school | 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 | kura if you are interested in becoming a school trustee. There are a variety of ways this can be achieved. 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.nzsta.org.nz>

### 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 state integrated schools)
- co-opted trustees (boards must have more parent representatives than co-opted trustees)
- appointed trustees.





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## How is a board elected?

The school | 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, legal guardians and immediate caregivers of students enrolled full-time in a state | state integrated school | 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>

## How does the board of trustees work?

Boards of trustees provide strategic leadership and direction to their school | 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 | kura and its community

cannot be stressed enough. Trustees represent their community and actively seek the input of parents, staff and students

For more details about how the board works view the online information at: <http://www.nzsta.org.nz>

## The board's strategic plan

The strategic plan outlines strategic direction and includes the vision, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the board, and should be the basis for all school | kura decision making. The strategic plan is a binding agreement between the board of trustees and the Minister of Education. School communities should be encouraged to participate in its development and review.

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

## What are the roles within the board?

### Parent representatives

- represent the parent community. They do not necessarily need to be parents of current students at the school | kura, but must be nominated by someone who is on the school | kura's electoral roll
- ensure the best possible outcomes for all students at the school | kura

### Board chair

- cannot be the principal, staff | 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 | kura
- is the CEO and the board's chief adviser

### Staff representative

- is elected by the staff (teaching and non-teaching)
- is not a staff advocate (they must make decisions in the best interests of all students at the school | kura using all the information available)

### Student representative

- is not a student advocate (they make decisions in the best interests of all students at the school | kura, using all the information available)

### Co-opted trustees

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

### Proprietor's appointees

- are appointed by the school's proprietors or by bodies corporate which have been approved by the board for this purpose

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

Boards 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://www.nzsta.org.nz>



### Accountability

Student progress and achievement, review, financial monitoring, resource management

### Leadership

Governance model, clear purpose, roles and responsibilities, effective meetings, relationships

### Employer role

Good employer, performance management system, effective relationships, health and safety, recruitment

### Representation

Community consultation and engagement, board consultation, trust and relationships

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

## How do the principal and board work together?

The board of trustees are the governors of the school | kura.

The principal is responsible for the management of the school | 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

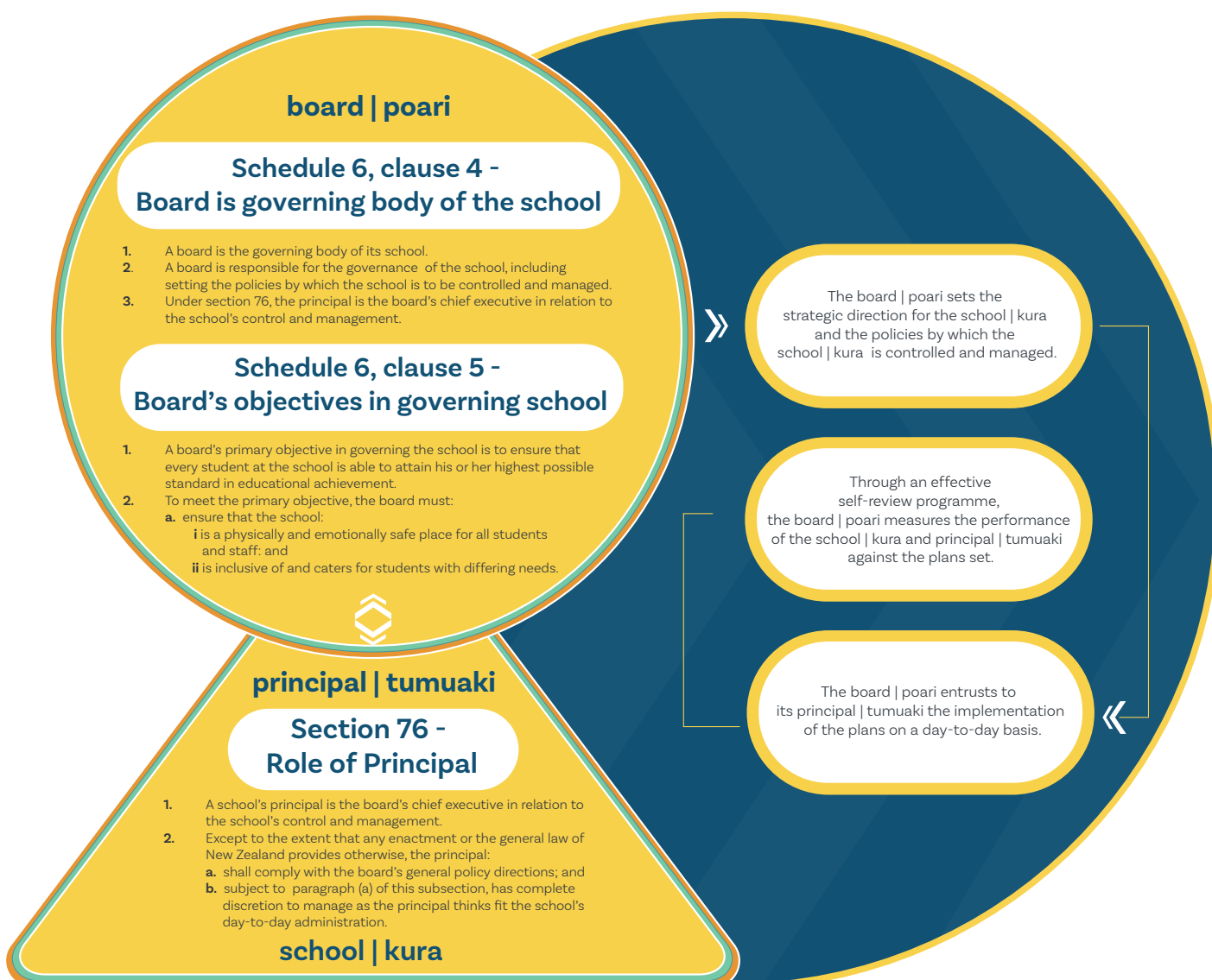
**policies** - statements of what is expected

### 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 | kura and ensure that plans and targets are developed, monitored, and reviewed. The board develops policy by which the school | kura is to be controlled and managed.

The board receives regular reports from the principal about student learning and achievement and progress towards the school | kura's strategic 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 | kura to the principal - the school | kura management determines how policy/board expectations will be best met.

### Respect and integrity

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

Board members are entrusted to govern the school | 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 | kura.

Board of trustees 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 strategic plan.

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

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

Board of trustees members are not the immediate point of contact for parent concerns as these should first be dealt with by the school | kura, according to the school's | kura's procedure.


### Communication

The board of trustees should provide the school | kura community with regular updates on how the school | kura is performing in relation to the strategic goals.

### Professional learning

Board members are expected to have a clear understanding of:

- their role as trustees
- governance policy
- student learning and achievement data.
- NZSTA runs a comprehensive programme to support trustees in their role.



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

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 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 students should not be identified in reports made to the board. However, the board will from time to time have access to information regarding individual students, for example concerns and complaints or for student behaviour management.

### What is the board's role in student behaviour management?

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

For more information visit:

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

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

The strategic plan 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 strategic plan. The school | kura will have copies of the strategic plan available for its community, usually on its website.

The Education Review Office (ERO) undertakes regular reviews of every school | kura in New Zealand. The board is ultimately responsible for the performance of their school | kura. Individual school | kura review reports can be found at [ero.govt.nz](http://ero.govt.nz).

### What happens if our board is ineffective?

If the ERO has concerns regarding the school | kura board, it will recommend additional board support and professional development or Ministry of Education intervention.

### **What support do board members have?**

Each board is responsible for ensuring that its 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 an honorarium for attending board meetings. The amount 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:

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

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 | kura?**

The board is responsible for the finances of the school | 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 school's | kura's annual priorities. The board monitors the school | 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 | kura's auditor. These accounts form part of the school | kura's annual report.

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

Board members need to be committed to the school | kura with a vested interest in designing the future of the school | 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/nzstadl6pp-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 open to the 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. This part of the meeting is called public excluded business.

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

Each school | 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 | 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. In the case of board elections, you need to be nominated by someone on the school | kura electoral roll.

You can also contact your local school | 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 | Kāhui Ako is an initiative from the Government to group schools | kura into clusters. It will provide greater opportunity for schools | kura to collaborate, but each school | kura will still retain their own board.

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





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