

Tomorrow's School Review

The Tomorrow's Schools Review is part of the Government's Education Work Programme, led by an Independent Taskforce to set recommendations on the future of schooling. These recommendations are contained in the Tomorrow's Schools Review report, Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together | Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini that is open to public consultation until 7 April 2019.

The implications of these recommendations are significant, with the Report stating, "we need a cultural and structural transformation" and as the deadline for submission gets closer, we have seen more discussion in the news and increased feedback from the schools on the potential impact of the changes. The focus of the review and recommendations has been wide ranging and includes current governance, management and administration of primary, intermediate and secondary schools, including state integrated schools like St Michael's Catholic School.

A copy of both the full report and a summary can be found here.

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/tomorrows-schools-review/>

Key issues to be aware of

Several local secondary schools, including among others, St Pauls, Baradene and St Peters, have expressed significant concerns about the recommendations made in the report. Whilst some their concerns are specific to secondary schools there are five key points below that the BOT of St Michael's Catholic School (SMCS) want to highlight for your attention.

1. **Special Catholic Character.** The special legal status of SMCS is legislated by the State Integration Agreement. This is not referred to at all in the Tomorrow's School Review Report.

SMCS BOT Comment: It is important that the special catholic character of our integrated schools, as legislated by the State Integration Act is maintained in the future. This will safeguard key aspects of our special catholic character including the number of catholic teachers in our schools. Whilst we do not expect catholic schools to be treated the same as state schools, we need to ensure that our voice is heard.

2. **Board of Trustees have less responsibility.** The Report recommends the creation of 20 "Hubs" throughout NZ to assume much of the responsibilities of current Board of Trustees.

SMCS BOT Comment: BOT members have a unifying purpose to ensure and improve student achievement. Whilst BOT members are volunteers, their desire to improve learning outcomes for their children is a strong and meaningful driver. The BOT are elected by their community and have the important role of setting the culture and direction of the school that represents that community. There needs to be careful consideration of the makeup of the hubs so that they continue to recognise the unique characteristics of each of the communities they represent.

Not all schools are as fortunate as SMCS to have a willing and talented BOT who can commit time and energy to governing the local school. It is these schools that will benefit from the creation of Hubs.

Hubs will need to be well resourced, connected and managed to make a meaningful difference. If the Hubs are a re-allocation of existing funding then other parts of an already strained school system will further falter.

3. **Resourcing of schools.** There are several recommendations focused on the allocation of resources, Principals and teaching staff to schools. On the face of it, Hubs will be required to manage resources, including Principals, for the greater good of say a Hub rather than a single school.

SMCS BOT Comment: This may be divisive if Hubs are required to make win/loss type decisions and trade-offs between different schools within their region. There is clear accountability and a single-minded purpose for school BOTs (to do the best they can for their students) that may be lost with the creation of the Hubs.

4. **Cap on voluntary donations.** SMCS is a decile 10 school and receives a lot less funding than schools with lower decile rating. Our school donations are used to plug the funding gap so that our children receive additional resources and support such as teacher aides/learning assistants.

SMCS BOT comment: Whilst the cap on voluntary donations has not been quantified it has the potential to create a funding shortfall for our current level of resources and support for students. As a decile 10 school we get lower funding than schools with a lower decile and therefore we need the voluntary to balance our books.

5. **School structure.** There is a proposal to create three tiered schools – Primary (Years 1-6), Middle (Years 7-10) and Senior (Years 11 -13).

SMCS BOT Comment: Whilst this does not directly impact SMCS, as our students are Year 1 – 6, it will impact the catholic Secondary Schools such as Baradene, Sacred Heart and St Peters. You may want to give some thought to the potential impact of this change to those schools.

Submissions

Please take the time to read the review and provide feedback via a submission. It is important that you have the opportunity to express your views on the proposals.

The easiest way of making a submission is to simply email your views to tomorrows.schools@education.govt.nz.

There is also an online survey, which addresses each of the taskforce's 32 recommendations which is open until 31 March 2019 and can be found here <https://consultation.education.govt.nz/tsr/survey2019/>.

Please feel free to contact either of us to discuss. This is potentially the most significant education reform in the past 30 years and so it is important to engage, understand and have your say.

Nga mihi,

Ann McKeown

Principal

Mat Croad

Chairman, on behalf of SMCS Board of Trustees