

19 September 2018

Dear Parents and Caregivers

I would like to update you on some of the work that I have been undertaking as Limited Statutory Manager (LSM) at Carmel College.

Firstly, I would like to note that I am very impressed with the school and the articulate, purposeful and enthusiastic young women that make up the student body. I have a long standing interest in girls' education and it is great to be working at Carmel College among the students and the capable and experienced staff.

As someone new to the school community, I have also been impressed with the large number of opportunities that are offered students at Carmel College and the large number of high performers that the school nurtures and challenges across the many academic, cultural, sporting and musical fields on offer. At the end of the day, while the governance of the school is extremely important, the key indicator for any school is how well it is serving its students. I think students and parents can feel justly proud about being part of the Carmel College community.

As you may recall from my previous communication, I hold the governance responsibilities for policies and procedures, employment and communications. Since my appointment I have been reviewing all aspects of these areas and developing an action plan to strengthen any parts that need additional work.

It is pleasing to note that there are no great gaps in the school's governance framework but there are some areas that can be strengthened in line with best practice. While these do not impact on teaching and learning programmes and student achievement, they are important for a highly functioning school. In order to give you an overview of the scope of my work, and confirmation that this is at the governance level and so not impacting on the day-to-day lives of students, I thought it would be valuable to share with you the following feedback.

- As a state integrated school Carmel College has a relatively complex governance structure, with Proprietor appointees as well as the usual parent, staff and student trustees. Alongside this sit the key responsibilities to the Crown and the Proprietor. The school would benefit from clarification around the relationships and roles of all those involved in the governance structure so there are strong relationships and clear duties and responsibilities for all people and organisations. As part of this, there is also a need for greater clarity around management and governance boundaries.
- For a variety of reasons there has been recent turnover of the chairperson role. The current board chair is providing strong leadership to the Board with structured meetings and comprehensive reporting, which will be enhanced by the further development of a strong relationship between the chair and principal. There is a need to look at succession planning and transition planning for the 2019 Board of Trustee elections and beyond.
- A review of the school's documentation around human resource management procedures and practices shows that the school has good processes and record keeping, and appraisal processes are comprehensive and meet the standards required by the Education Council. It would be useful to have clarity around the role of the Proprietor's appointees in the staff appointment process and for delegations to the principal and the appraisal process for 2018/19 to be confirmed.

- There are several Board standing committees. These are hardworking and providing regular reports to the full Board. Further clarity around the terms of reference for each one, along with their delegations and accountability would be beneficial.
- While some policies have been reviewed by the Board over recent times, a more substantive review using New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) resources will ensure that these policies are clear and work well for the parent community, staff, management and Board. The complaints policy is comprehensive but the procedures need to be reviewed to provide further clarity around roles and responsibilities during the process.

As you will see these have little direct impact on teaching and learning programmes but it is important to have high quality governance structures, particularly in a large secondary school like Carmel College, as these make a difference to the effective and efficient running of any school, which can then flow-on to the day-to-day running of the school. During Term 4 I look forward to working with the school to further develop and strengthen the areas mentioned above.

While I am aware of some speculation in the community about different aspects of the school, I think you should feel reassured that the school is in great heart, has a healthy financial position, has a highly engaged Board of Trustees and Chair (Liz de Kort), a dedicated staff who are ably led by Principal Chris Allen and her leadership team and – above all - provides an excellent education to its young women.

I look forward to updating you later next term. In the meantime, do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss any aspect of my governance role (policies and procedures, employment and communications). I can be contacted through the school office or by email - lsm.carmel@gmail.com.

This is a very important time of year for all Carmel College students as they consolidate their learning and demonstrate their knowledge through their assessments and examinations. I wish all of the students and their families a good term break at the end of the month.

Yours sincerely

Sally L Dalzell
LSM, Carmel College