Board Pānui

February 2026

Kia ora te whānau

As your elected school board, we want whānau to feel informed, welcome, and connected to what is happening at our kura/school. Clear, open communication matters to us, so we are starting the year by sharing a bit about the board and our mahi/work.

What is a school board?
All state schools in Aotearoa have a school board. It is the Crown entity responsible for governance. The board:

- supports every student to achieve their highest possible standard
- is the employer of all school staff
- sets the strategic direction with parents, whānau, staff, students, and the wider community
- oversees personnel, curriculum, property, finance, and administration

The board delegates the responsibility to manage these aspects to the Tumuaki/Principal. The Tumuaki acts like the CEO of the school and is a member of, and responsible to the school board.

On Tuesday 10th February we held our first hui/meeting of the year. At the first hui each year, unless it is an election year, the board first elects a Presiding Member, a role many people know as the Chairperson. The terminology changed under the Education and Training Act 2020, which established School Boards and removed the term ‘Trustee’.

The Presiding Member chairs hui, acts as a signing authority, speaks on behalf of the board, and usually manages the relationship with the Tumuaki. This role can not be filled by someone employed by the school. That partnership plays an important role in supporting school leadership.

This board began its three year term in term 4 last year and quickly moved into Principal recruitment, which took much of our focus. We are really pleased with how Gwyneth has settled into Rotorua Lakes and the positive relationships she is building across our school community. As this is her first Principal role, providing strong governance support is important to us.

For this reason, Annamarie Jensen has been appointed Presiding Member. She previously served as Presiding Member at Lynmore School. We acknowledge Ben Alton for his calm leadership in the role last term, his leadership through a busy term was much appreciated. He will continue as Deputy Presiding Member.

Our board reflects a mix of experience and continuity:

- Bruce Davidson, currently Presiding Member at Mokoia Intermediate, second term RLHS board member
- Tony Waites, second term RLHS board member and the new chair of the Property and Finance sub committee
- Vernon Wainohu, previously on the Mokoia Intermediate School board
- Tāmati Coffey, Ngati Te Roro o Te Rangi representative and cultural advisor with extensive governance experience, currently also board member, Rotorua Primary
- Divjot Bairagi, student representative in his second RLHS term
- Te Ao Tahana-Pragnell, staff representative
- Gwyneth Cooper, Tumuaki

Heading into 2026, we feel confident about the collective experience guiding our kura.

Strategic plan review
This term we are refreshing our strategic vision. While full consultation is not required until 2027, we want to ensure the current plan remains fit for purpose with a new Tumuaki. You can read the strategic plan on our website under the “About” tab. We will keep you updated as this work progresses.

Uniform policy
A sub committee has been formed to review the uniform policy and recent challenges. We recognise this has been frustrating for some whānau and ākonga/students. Thank you to everyone who shared feedback. We appreciate your patience and apologise to those who had a difficult experience.

School policies
Policies are reviewed monthly via School Docs. Whānau can access and review them anytime through the “About” tab. Your input is always valued.

Board hui
Whānau are welcome to attend board hui as observers. Please RSVP at least 24 hours in advance of our hui to Linda Hutchison, our amazing board secretary if you would like to attend via board@rotorualakes.school.nz.

Next hui: Wednesday 11th March, 5.15pm.

Hui dates and meeting minutes are available on the website under “Board”.

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch, please email us at board@rotorualakes.school.nz.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Annamarie, Ben, Bruce, Divjot, Gwyneth, Tāmati, Te Ao, Tony & Vernon