BRIEFING NOTE: Visit to Waitaha School, on Thursday 4 July 2019

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 2 July 2019

Priority: High

Security Level: In Confidence

METIS No: 1197917

Drafter: Sue Barr

DDI: 9(2)(a)

Key Contact: Corianne Child

DDI: No

Messaging seen by Communications team (for s/notices & press releases only): No

Round Robin: No

Purpose

1. Your office has requested briefing notes for your visit to Waitaha School on Thursday 4 July 2019.

2. Please find attached the briefing notes as requested.

3. Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree Disagree

Jann Marshall
Acting Associate Deputy Secretary
Operational Delivery
Sector Enablement and Support

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

2/7/19  4/7/19
The Principal, Maureen Allan, was appointed during 2018 and began in her new role at the beginning of the 2019 school year. Prior to this she was the RTLB cluster manager covering the central and eastern areas of Christchurch City. She is an experienced educator and manager. After the Christchurch earthquakes she worked with the University of Canterbury to research strategies to support children exhibiting dysregulated behaviour.

Issues

1. The school has come through a period of significant change in terms of roll growth, property development and staff change, but is in a good position to support learners with complex needs enrolled at the school.

2. Since 2012 the school has grown from 32 learners (located in a small base school in Templeton) to a school of almost 100 learners located across three satellites and a relocated base school in Rolleston. Roll growth is in response to the renewal and realignment of the special education network across Greater Christchurch. (See notes below).

3. Rapid growth of the school has presented staffing challenges, particularly in regard to recruiting staff with expertise in supporting learners with high and complex needs.

4. In the last year the proportion of High to Very High ORS learners has been increasing. In 2018 approximately 20% of learners enrolled at the school were verified with Very High ORS. This ratio has increased to 33% as at July 2019.

5. Some learners have significant behavioural challenges with multiple learning, physical and social needs. This presents a challenge for the Board in terms of managing and maintaining staff safety.
Learners enrol at the school via a Section 9 agreement with the Ministry of Education. Many students will not live within the local neighbourhood of the school, but within the wider school catchment area. For this reason most learners are transported to school via taxi and this is funded by the Special Education School Transport Assistance scheme (SESTA). Section 9(2)(a)

The school operates a Specialist Teacher Outreach service to schools across its catchment. This service involves the provision of specialist teachers or therapists to support ORS learners enrolled in cluster schools. This service is not working particularly efficiently and the principal is investigating how this can be better co-ordinated. This concern might be raised with you in discussion. The local office is working with the school to identify their concerns and support conversations with the enrolling schools.

Day Special Schools are primarily staffed via ORS resourcing and this causes challenges for the school when there are student movements in and out of the special school. This may be raised with you in discussion as consideration to staff the schools with a Notional roll (as per the residential special schools) would (in the first instance) be an easier way for the special school to manage and maintain staff.

There are no significant financial issues at the school. Currently working capital is $211,558 declining from $328,063, after four years of deficits. This decline is primarily because the Board has utilised reserves to resource the new school environments with additional equipment including playground equipment. Equity remains good at 73% but, whilst adequate, the school now needs a longer term sustainable view.

Ministry Comment

- The Ministry is in regular contact with the school and is working with the principal and Board to address issues as they arise in relation to property, finance and staffing.
- The principal is making changes to the way staff support young people with behavioural challenges and is providing professional learning and development to address teacher capability.
- The Ministry has provided additional staffing to support changes in teaching practice and to support professional learning and development.
- Some of the new buildings (base school and Halswell satellite) are still in the defects period and issues are being remediated as required.

Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako (Communities of Learning)

Waitaha Special School is part of Ngā Peka o Tauwharekākaho Kāhui Ako. This Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako includes schools, early learning services and tertiary education providers, and covers the Rolleston area in the Selwyn District.

Ngā Peka o Tauwharekākaho Kāhui Ako consists of 11 schools, and 20 early learning services. These are:
Schools
- Burnham School - Te Kura o Tiori
- Clearview Primary School
- Kingslea School
- Lemonwood Grove School
- Rolleston Christian School
- Rolleston College
- Rolleston School
- Waitaha School
- Weetons School
- West Melton School
- West Rolleston Primary School

Early Childhood Services
- Active Explorers Rolleston
- Ako - Rolleston
- Annabel's Educare - West Melton
- BestStart Faringdon
- BestStart Faringdon East
- BestStart Rolleston
- Blossoms Educare Rolleston Limited
- Bright Beginnings Montessori
- Burnham Country Montessori
- Kidsfirst Kindergartens Burnham
- Kidsfirst Kindergarten West Rolleston
- Lollipops Rolleston
- Paradise For Little Angels
- Selwyn Kids
- Selwyn Kids Limited
- The Cats Pyjamas Preschool
- The Cat's Pyjamas Preschool and Nursery West Melton
- Three Trees Learning Centre
- West Melton Kindergarten
- West Melton Playcentre

Based on 1 July 2018 rolls a total of 3,693 students attend these schools: 535 (14%) identify as Māori and 103 (2.7%) as Pacific students.
13. The community is currently has finalised its achievement challenges and high level plan. These were endorsed by you on March 2019 and can be found at [http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Investing-in-Educational-Success/Communities-of-Schools/AC/99206-ACHCHA.pdf](http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Investing-in-Educational-Success/Communities-of-Schools/AC/99206-ACHCHA.pdf)

14. The community has identified four high level achievement challenges, which focus on:

- Hauora and Wellbeing
- Relationship Management and Learner Engagement
- Transitions | Whakawhiti
- Communication | Reo a-whā.

15. A copy of the high level plan showing the development of the achievement challenges and how Ngā Peka o Tauwharekākaho Kāhui Ako intends to tackle these is attached as Annex 1.

**School Background**

**Profile Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Type</td>
<td>Day Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Gender</td>
<td>Co-Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Medium</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decile</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electorate</td>
<td>Selwyn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. The July 2018 breakdown of roll information is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 2018 Roll</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(13.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasifika</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European/ Pākehā</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>(73.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. The Education Review Office visited the school in November 2018 and released their report at the beginning of 2019. The report was generally positive, recommending a three year return period. Next steps for the school are to analyse data more effectively and consolidate systems to support effective teaching.
The principal has appointed a number of experienced staff to leadership positions since the beginning of the school year. The senior management team members are working closely together to implement the Board's strategic vision and Charter goals to build on learner strengths and raise student achievement. The Manager Learning Support meets regularly with the leadership team to review and support the interface between services delivered by the Special School and Ministry.

The day Special Schools in Christchurch work in partnership with the Ministry of Education to give effect to the Section 9 enrolment process. The Waitaha School senior management team has a close and positive working relationship with the ministry local office education adviser and learning support service manager. All Section 9 decisions are made collaboratively and ensure that learners with complex needs have equitable access to the special school.

Most learners enrolling at the school live within the Waitaha geographic catchment. The catchment acts like an informal enrolment zone and is used to ensure students enrol at the special school closest to where they live.

The 2019 school Charter is well developed and has clear goals for addressing student achievement and making better use of assessment data to inform education programmes.

The principal has been featured in recent media articles about her research with the University of Canterbury to address behavioural issues following the earthquakes.

The school is working very successfully across the partner schools (satellites and co-located base school) to support inclusive practice and inclusion for learners with complex needs. The principal has a strong leadership voice for shifting practice to a more collaborative model where special schools and mainstream schools work together to support all students and grow teacher capability.

Learning Support Network

Since 2010 The Ministry has been working closely with the three Christchurch Day Special Schools and their communities to rebuild and renew the network of specialist provision across greater Christchurch. Each school has an identified geographic catchment based on an equal population proportion.

Prior to the renewal programme the special school network was unevenly distributed across greater Christchurch and often resulted in learners travelling significant distances to a special school and passing one special school to attend another.

As part of the renewal programme, Waitaha School has been provided with more capacity to support growth in its geographic catchment, and provide specialist schooling for an area that covers the southwest and west of Christchurch, and also the areas to the south and west of the city. The Selwyn District, covered by the school, has seen significant population growth.
The school renewal programme has seen the completion of a new purpose-built base school and three integrated satellites within local mainstream schools. In 2016 a primary school satellite was built at West Rolleston Primary School, followed by a secondary satellite at Rolleston College which opened in 2017. Each satellite has capacity for 16 learners. The new base school was opened in 2018 and has a capacity for 50 learners aged from 5 to 21 years. The latest satellite opened at Knights Stream (primary) School (Halswell) at the beginning of 2019.

Property

Waitaha School has a current roll of 98 (including at three satellite sites). The school is close to capacity, although this is in part a result of a high number of out-of-zone enrolments. The Board has raised concern about growth in the area.

Construction of the school’s main facility adjacent to Lemonwood Grove School was completed in 2018.

The property is in excellent condition. The school receives around $29k annually to maintain this.

The school raised concern about a number of minor defects following construction, and we engaged a project manager to address these issues.

A number of these defects have already been resolved. We have met with the school to review progress and continue to work through the remaining issues.

General

The school recently worked closely with the co-located school at Lemonwood Grove to celebrate Matangi. This day was highly successful and the Minister might like to enquire about activities that were organised for learners across the both schools.

Annexes

Annex 1: Ngā Peka o Tauwharekākaho Kāhui Ako