Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Monday 18th February 2026 from 7.12 pm to 9.22 pm

Present: Allie Ganapathy, Hayley Luan (left @ 9pm), Lucy Bayliss (staff representative), Tara Israelson, Ava Szabo (Principal), Stacey Newlands (Deputy Presiding Member), Byron Lynds (Presiding Member), Sadie Taylor (Student Representative), Maryann Robertson, Rhiannon Jarvis, Rod Webster (Online), Jenny Jellicoe (Online), Jo Dyer (minutes)

Apologies: Juliette George (Staff Representative)

Hui commenced with a karakia.

Elections - Presiding Member and Deputy Presiding Member

Byron noted that he will be stepping down as a member of the BoT at the end of Term 1, so will not be accepting any nominations. Other members thanked Byron and acknowledged his mahi whilst taking on the role of Presiding Member.
Hayley is on maternity leave for 2026 and Jo Dyer will be taking on the role of Board Secretary in her absence.
Nominations for Presiding Member - Stacey Newlands nominated by Ava Szabo and seconded by Rod Webster. No other nominations therefore Stacey Newlands elected as Presiding Member.
Nominations for Deputy Presiding Member - Rhiannon Jarvis nominated by Byron Lynds and seconded by Tara Israelson. Rod Webster nominated by Maryann Robertson and seconded by Ava Szabo. There were no other nominations. Rhiannon noted she would like to decline the nomination due to work commitments. Rod accepted the nomination, therefore Rod Webster elected as Deputy Presiding Member.

Declaration of Interests

Byron is a member of the Trust.

Acceptance of Previous Minutes

There were no questions or comments.

Motion: The minutes of the last Board of Trustees' meeting held on Monday 17th November 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Moved by Ava/ Seconded by Lucy/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

Presiding Member Updates

Byron will meet with Stacey in due course to pass on any information to Stacey as the new Presiding Member, however at present there are no updates to discuss.
Acknowledgement to the huge amount of mahi done by Ava and staff in preparation for ERO coming onsite. Ava noted she will share the Board Assurance Statement with members for comments as this is due to be sent to ERO on Friday. The questions are for the Area School and relate to achievement, policies, governance etc.

Tumuaki/Principal's Report – Maramarua (February) 2026

Ava presented the Principal's report which aligns with the Strategic Goals. Ava has had conversations with Byron and Stacey regarding the reports as they are not usually presented at this meeting, however with ERO coming early in the term, a lot of work was required to be done before school started. The focus of the Principal report is on staffing and the impact this will have on the Primary sector.

Goal 1: To support each child/ākonga's progress and achievement against the NZ Curriculum and Te Whāriki

Refer to Analysis of Variance 2025, Annual Plan 2026 and Attendance Management Plan 2026 reports.

Goal 2: To ensure we build, develop and practice an authentic Montessori programme and approach throughout the school aligned with MJ2EX and the Wā Ora Montessori essential elements.

Refer to Analysis of Variance 2025, Annual Plan 2026.

The focus will be on staffing - especially the impact in the Primary sector as both Venice (Assistant Kaiako Rātā) and Karen (Assistant Kaiako Kauri) will be completing their teacher training and will be spending a lot of time out of the classroom. Tania was going to assist in relieving, however will now be teaching full time in Pūriri to cover Carol's refreshment leave. Robyn (Rātā Kaiako) is also continuing her Montessori training. Ava has researched the data over the previous 10 years of staff leavers, however on average it has been the same each year. There is a growing trend of people moving overseas.

Goal 3: To establish, maintain and improve equitable learning outcomes as Tiriti partners, recognising the importance of partnership with Māori in education.

Refer to Analysis of Variance 2025, Annual Plan 2026.

Roll

The roll will reach 270 - 280 by the end of 2026.

Health and Safety

The trees damaged from the recent storm have been taken down safely. There were also fences damaged at the orchard area behind Tawhai/Tōtara which adjoin with the neighbours - this will be an insurance claim. The drains have also been cleared to prevent any future blockages. The High School stormwater drain has been reported to Hutt City Council as this flooded during the weather event.

Questions

Ava noted that the Preschool roll is being watched closely as it is lower than it was previously, but is looking healthy with new enrolments coming through. There is a strong interest in Playgroup and Observation Mornings. The goal would be 100, but is not a concern at present. There is an Open Day scheduled for Saturday 7th March.

Motion: The Principal's Report be accepted.

Moved by Stacey/ Seconded by Tara/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

MoE Documents Approval

Analysis of Variance 2025

This is an enormous piece of mahi where the focus is on the variance of data (results) and where to next. Writing for boys dropped, however kaiako are working on prescriptive tasks in classrooms i.e. shared strategies whereby all classrooms are doing the same thing. Spelling has been a focus whereby kaiako use post it notes rather than red pen for corrections. Priority learners (writing) - there are more girls than boys, however the focus has been on boys who are lower as girls tend to jump up and boys show more reluctance. The positive is for the High School as ākonga learn throughout the lower classes and the results show in this sector with only 1 student not passing the co-requisite. Our equity index is higher than the national average. There is an amazing array of literacy support which is benefiting younger tamariki. Maths results are very pleasing and a testament to how we teach Maths using Montessori materials. This will be noted with the upcoming ERO visit as we are not currently using the required textbooks as this style of teaching doesn't align with Montessori Philosophy, however we are covering every aspect of the Maths curriculum, just in a way that works for our special character.
Year 9 and 10 have been separated in this report. Boys are progressing in reading, however as it is a small cohort, the results can differ with only a very small number of ākonga being below. There was a strong cohort for writing last year and they are continuing to perform, with support in place for those who are not progressing.
Data progresses through to NCEA and there are great results due to co-requisites being able to be done 2 times per year, so there can be an additional push if ākonga don't pass the first round which really makes a difference. Co-requisites will be the only way to achieve results from 2027.
UE fluctuates depending on who wants to go to university so this information is not of real value.
The information has been taken from the Annual Plan to report on the Montessori Authenticity and Ti Tiriti strategic goals.
Attendance has also been reported on. Any medical (sickness), holidays etc are counted as absences. Any learning events are considered as being present i.e. camps, health school, offsite learning etc. Ava noted that many ākonga have been away on holidays during term time. We follow the STAR response and the Attendance Management Plan with lots of mahi being done in this area at present. The STAR response includes the following thresholds, with particular interventions required at each stage:
- 0-5 days absent per term = green
- 5-10 days absent per term = yellow
- 10-15 days absent per term = orange
- 15+ days absent per term = red

Notifications are received from the Student Management System (SMS) so that staff are able to respond accordingly. We have also begun reporting on lateness and this will subsequently be followed up with whānau.

Questions

Allie queried the UE qualification - Ava noted that gaining a UE qualification is dependent on what subjects ākonga choose to gain the necessary credits to gain university entrance.

Motion: The Analysis of Variance Report be accepted.

Moved by Rhiannon/ Seconded by Maryanne/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

Annual Plan 2026

The focus for this year is curriculum and student achievement. This aligns with the Strategic Plan as there are no changes this year (they will come into effect for 2027). The Plan reports on the focus and how we achieve this with updates and results added each term. These results are then presented to the BoT at the next meeting following the end of each term.
Attendance goal is 80% by the end of the year (Term 4 2025 was 73%).

Questions

Stacey noted that the Plan is very comprehensive and there is lots of change underway. It is good how it shows how engagement with parents will happen. She questioned if parents have raised concerns about the changes? Ava noted not in the High School yet, however the Primary parents are being informed by the media so there is a requirement to manage the changes with good communication and that any changes will not affect our Montessori special character and Philosophy. Staff are also concerned so there will need to be reassurance in this area also.

Motion: The Annual Plan be accepted.

Moved by Lucy/ Seconded by Maryann/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

Attendance Management Plan 2026

Ava noted that the plan will be uploaded onto the school website as per MoE requirements. MoE provided a template for Secondary and one for Primary, so these have been combined and adapted to suit Wā Ora. It explains our responsibilities, our response i.e. what we do and what the expected outcomes are.

Questions

None

Motion: The Attendance Management Plan be accepted.

Moved by Tara/ Seconded by Rhiannon/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

School Camps Approval

Odyssey 2026

At the last meeting, the high level forms were presented. Staff completed a PD session regarding the changes to EOTC at a recent teacher only day including any event involving water of any kind, irrespective of what water activity is a high risk event. Unable to present the provider SASS forms as they have not been received yet. Ava noted she will distribute the forms once we have received them.

Questions

Allie asked for clarification on Odyssey. Ava noted that it is a 2 week camp for Kawakawa (Yr8-10 ākonga) that happens every year. Rhiannon noted concerns regarding the providers taking longer to submit their SASS forms. Ava noted that they are robust providers that we have used before. Conversations have also been had with whānau regarding those ākonga who may need to return home. Ava noted that Tanya will be attending for a few days and will return home with those ākonga who need to come home. Stacey questioned if the ākonga are fully prepared for the physically demanding activities? Ava noted that during the kayaking there are double kayaks and the instructors are there to provide assistance and ensure ākonga don't exceed their capabilities. Odyssey is designed so that there are opportunities for ākonga to step outside of comfort zones a little bit, however everyone will be looked after. Tara questioned what happens if the water seems unsafe? Ava noted that we will rely on the instructors and we will also communicate with them if we have concerns. Back up plans are also in place in the event the water activities are unable to proceed. Jenny queried the accommodation. Ava noted that some areas are cabins and tents. The majority of the time camping will be offered, however cabins will be available if required. Due to all ākonga participating in hiking and kayaking during the Odyssey, the Year 10 overnight component will not be offered and it will be difficult to do separately in this area.

Motion: The SASS forms for Odyssey 2026 be accepted upon the condition that the external provider SASS forms are distributed to members before the next meeting.

Moved by Sadie/ Seconded by Lucy/ Carried unanimously with no abstentions or nays.

Tēnei te kaupapa ka ea, tēnei te wānanga ka ea
Te mauri o te kaupapa ka whakamoea, Te mauri o te wānanga ka whakamoea
koa ki runga, koa ki raro
Haumi e, Hui e, Tāiki e

It is completed, it is done, we have achieved our purpose, completed our forum, let the purpose of our gathering rest for now, let the vitality of our discussions replenish, we depart with fulfilled hearts & minds, bonded in our common goal & unity
Written by Scotty Morrison

Signed Presiding Member, Wā Ora Montessori School

Date 18/3/26

Action	Personnel	Due
Ava to share the Board Assurance with members for any comments	Ava	By Friday 20th February
Ava to distribute the Odyssey provider SASS forms once received	Ava	Before the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March
Ava to bring the results from her PGC to the next meeting to show members.	Ava	At the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March
Jo to update the Self Review Plan 2026-2028 with the relevant changes and distribute to BoT members	Jo	Before the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March
Ava to sort something for the March meeting as Jo will be unavailable to attend and take minutes	Ava	Before the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March
Stacey and Byron to complete the newsletter article and send to Ashleigh	Stacey/Byron	Before Monday 16th March
Ava to approach some people in the school community to see if they would like to become a Board member as Byron is stepping down	Ava	Before the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March
Jo to check process on NZSTA website for filling a casual vacancy on the Board	Jo	Before the next meeting, Wednesday 18th March

2026 Council/BOT Meetings

7.00pm at Wā Ora Montessori School – Tāwari Classroom

January – No meeting

Wednesday 18 February 2026 (Week 3, Term 1)

Wednesday 18 March 2026 (Week 7, Term 1)

April – No meeting

Wednesday 20 May 2026 (Week 5, Term 2)

Wednesday 17 June 2026 (Week 9, Term 2)

July-No meeting

Wednesday 19 August 2026 (Week 5, Term 3)

Wednesday 16 September 2026 (Week 9, Term 3)

Wednesday 21 October 2026 (Week 2, Term 4)

Wednesday 18 November 2026 (Week 6, Term 4)