

## **St Mark's Church School: Report of the Board Chair for 2023**

This is my first report as Chair of the Board of St Mark's, having held that role since April 2023. It covers the period May 2023 to April 2024.

### *2023 in a nutshell*

In 2023 St Mark's continued to be the vibrant, aspirational and inclusive community that parents, students and alumni recognise and love. Its special character and values of Manaakitanga, Aspiration, Respect and Kindness continue to underpin everything the school, its staff and students endeavour to do.

It was an exceptionally busy year for the school and its students, not least because of the ongoing disruption caused by waves of COVID-19. As well as academic and sporting achievements throughout the year, the performing arts have continued to flourish under the expert direction of Anya Nazaruk (music) and Courtney Abbott (drama), with highlights including an extraordinary school production of *The School of Rock* and members of the senior choir Schola Cantorum performing with acclaim at the Michael Fowler Centre.

In addition to St Mark's maintaining its high level of energy and activities for its students, 2023 was also a year of consolidation and preparation: After two challenging years through COVID-19 and the very sad death of Kent Favel's wife Emma in 2022, 2023 was a time for reflection and planning, with three new Board members and the development of a new strategic plan for the school for the next 5 years, presented to the school community at the start of 2024.

2023 also saw a successful and remarkably affirming Education Review Office (ERO) inspection for the school, its first since 2017 due to delays caused by COVID and other factors.

The Board has continued to build the partnership between the school and the Diocese, with ongoing discussions aimed at strengthening the foundation of the school and improving administrative efficiency. The first obvious manifestation of those discussions has been the removal of the obsolete vicarage, which will create significantly more usable space.

I would like to thank the Board, principal, Senior Leadership Team, staff, students, parents and parents' association SMILE for all your hard work, support, energy, enthusiasm and kindness through the year.

### *The 2024-2028 strategic plan*

The development of the school's strategic plan has been the biggest project for the Board over the year. It builds on work the Board did in 2020-2021 to renew and clarify the vision, mission and values of the school. It has been the product of consultation with the school community, through what will now be a two-yearly parent survey; staff through what will now be an annual staff survey; focus groups with parents, staff and students; and facilitated workshops. We believe the strategic plan is a solid foundation to move the school into the next chapter of its story.

Alongside the strategic plan, the boards of the school and the Diocese have set up a working group to discuss how the foundation and efficiency of the school can be strengthened. The Diocese and Parish Property Trust own the land and buildings occupied by the school. The school's constitutional system moved from being administered, in effect, by the St Mark's parish, until 2015, to the current system, whereby the school pays for the Diocese's management of the buildings and their maintenance. It is time for the foundation of the school

to be taken to its next chapter. A refreshed foundation will provide administrative benefit to both the Diocese and the school and greater strategic autonomy. This will continue the partnership between the Diocese and the school to ensure that St Mark's is both an outstanding and inclusive centre for learning and growth of all its students and an important part of the mission of the Diocese.

#### *Key new education and behavioural processes*

During 2023 the school adopted a new system for teaching literacy, *Structured Literacy*, and continued to develop its highly successful adoption of the *Positive Behaviour for Learning* ('PB4L') system for helping channel students to the most constructive behaviours at school.

As well as Spanish, the school is now providing after-school Mandarin lessons, and continuing its journey to incorporate Te Ao Māori into the life of the school. The school is also working on implementing History in Aotearoa into its curriculum.

#### *Senior Leadership*

Our principal Kent Favel has continued to demonstrate his optimism, warmth and love of St Mark's, with a view to taking it towards the next chapter of its story.

Also during 2023, after an outstanding contribution to the school as Deputy Principal, Erica Harvison moved roles to the newly established role of Dean of Wellbeing. We have welcomed Jane Harris as our new Deputy Principal.

In her new role, Mrs Harvison is overseeing, among other things, the Arrowsmith Programme, which is one of the school's important tools for ensuring that it can provide for the needs of students which cannot necessarily be met in the public school system.

During 2023 David Mitchell was appointed to the role of Business Manager following the resignation of our previous Business Manager Nev Gajadhar.

The Senior Leadership Team and Board have a positive working relationship, working together in the Board subcommittees.

#### *Your Board*

The St Mark's Board serves in a voluntary role. It is both demanding and fulfilling.

During 2023 the school Board has worked to refine the structure, transparency and accountability of the governance systems of St Mark's. We believe this will help the school to evolve and strengthen in the years to come, and to continue to ensure that it provides students and their whānau with a forward-looking and fit-for-purpose education in our rapidly changing world. To take just one example: under the management of Kent Favel and Erica Harvison, the school has adopted an online platform for its policies, which will ensure that the school's policies are available, fit for purpose and regularly reviewed; and the Board has committed to continue to listen to parents and staff through regular surveys to inform its ongoing development of the strategic plan.

It is a privilege for me to be the chair of the Board of St Mark's. I would like to thank my fellow Board members Mike Brunel, Gabrielle O'Connor, Chad Morgan, Iain Rennie, and long-standing Bishop's representative Roger Wigglesworth, for the skill, enthusiasm and dedication with which they have fulfilled their voluntary role as Board members. St Mark's is fortunate to have a Board with such a range and level of skills. I would also like to welcome Charlotte von

Dadelszen back onto the Board as a co-opted Board member, and to thank those who, although not (or no longer) Board members or staff, serve on Board subcommittees: Treena Martin, David Spaziani, Chetana Dahya and, from April 2024, Matt Gray. During 2024 we will continue to strengthen the Board with two additional members, to broaden skills and diversity and ensure we are well-provisioned to deliver on our strategic plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Gee', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Toby Gee

30 April 2024