

Mt Pleasant School

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Board of Trustees
Mt Pleasant School
82 Major Hornbrook Road
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25 June 2015

Dear Coralanne,

The Mt Pleasant School Board do not agree with, and strongly object to, the Minister of Education's proposal to close Redcliffs School. We believe the benefits of retaining Redcliffs School far outweigh the negatives of closing Redcliffs School, even if another event disrupts their school. We believe this comes under two distinct categories:

- 1. Redcliffs right to have their own community school, and***
- 2. Should the closure happen the impact on Mt Pleasant School.***

Redcliffs Site is Safe...

All the data and research confirms that Redcliffs site is safe, and that the Minister's issue is one of potential disruption. When addressing the disruption issue, many other schools in Christchurch, including Mt Pleasant School, potentially face the same threat of disruption be it from tsunami, flooding or earthquake.

Disruption has been a constant for the last four and a half years for Redcliffs School as their students travel by bus to their temporary site in Sumner, working in small classrooms and areas modified to cope. This disruption was tolerated as it was always viewed as a temporary measure. Should the decision be made to close Redcliffs School, there will be permanent disruption to every community in the Bays Cluster - Mt Pleasant, Sumner and Redcliffs' communities will be irrevocably changed.

Redcliffs Role in its Community...

Redcliffs is a significant suburb of Christchurch, geographically located between Sumner and Mt Pleasant. Geographically it is very much a separate suburb as recognised by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2012 when the Bays Cluster group of schools was briefed regarding property issues. The school has always had strong links with its local community. With most of its housing being repaired or rebuilt, there is every indication that Redcliffs population will grow past pre-quake levels.

Sumner, Redcliffs, Mt Pleasant and Heathcote communities were all significantly affected by the earthquakes. As a result many of the older generation have now

moved on, with their homes purchased by young families thereby increasing the potential role of these local schools.

The Right to get to School in New Zealand Urban Areas...

Like Sumner, Mt Pleasant and Heathcote Schools, Redcliffs is a full primary where local children spend eight years engaged in learning. This has a significant impact in their daily life and their sense of turangawaewae and mana whenua. Children in higher density areas of New Zealand should be able to walk to school and enjoy the freedom that walking, scooting and cycling allows for, in and around their neighbourhood. As a Board and as parents of Mt Pleasant School, we have always supported Redcliffs return to their site where the choice of walking to school is a valid option. Under the current proposal walking to school is not a realistic option. Since the move to the Van Asch site, Redcliffs students have travelled to school by bus and car, fragmenting the engagement of the school with its community, undermining the learning opportunities that only happen with connection.

Redcliffs School in the Bays Cluster since 2008...

The Bays Cluster of schools has existed and enhanced learning within our group of schools since 2008. Utilising the wider pool of staff and students, Redcliffs School has played its role in contributing to the synergies of the Cluster as a whole by contributing to professional development, sporting and cultural events and activities, and continues to be a full participant in the success of the learning community.

When the MoE proposed the idea of learning communities or clusters post earthquakes, there was great interest in our Cluster as an example of one that functioned well. While the five schools all exist within similar demographic areas, the MoE were very clear that they were geographically separated and that attempts to share facilities would be challenging! Removing Redcliffs School from the centre of our Cluster will further exacerbate this separation.

Redcliffs School As a Contributor...

Redcliffs School contributes in a significant way to all the events and activities in our cluster: a critical factor to enhancing outcomes. The challenge and competition factor each school brings, along with their unique cultural diversity, is a key contributor to the scale and effectiveness of Cluster wide activities.

Redcliffs School as a Leader...

Our Cluster is successful because we take the lead in different areas, based on personnel strengths and also on the culture of each school. While demographics are similar, the richness brought to our group from the individual communities has been great.

Redcliffs have initiated the Bays Cluster Cultural Festival and continue to inspire us and lead us as we too develop our own cultural identity and competence.

Should the Minister continue with her Proposal to close Redcliffs School, the following points must be addressed...

Mt Pleasant School Access...

Mt Pleasant School is 3 km (even further for some students with the new proposed enrolment zone) from Redcliffs School, with an 85m uphill climb. Walking would involve crossing roads at least twice, including a very busy, three lane road followed by a long uphill climb to Mt Pleasant School. None of these roads have controlled crossing points and their designation by the CCC means they would not be able to have any controlled crossing points installed. We believe that the clear majority of students will be driven to school.

At Mt Pleasant School we already face significant issues with vehicles, with all roads leading to it being narrow and winding. Most roads have a footpath on only one side and necessitate multiple road crossings for walkers, many on bends and curves in the road. Adding another potential 50-80 cars at early morning and afternoon "rush hour" is a dangerous proposition. Mt Pleasant School have spent the last two years working on a travel plan just to manage our existing traffic and encourage walking to school safely. Additional traffic of these levels will increase risk and could cause potentially fatal accidents. This is a very real Health and Safety concern. In addition to this concern, we have very limited parking on site and on the narrow roads around the school. With cars parked on both sides of our roads traffic is limited to one-way. There is no direct public transport route from Redcliffs to Mt Pleasant.

Mt Pleasant School Site and Location...

Mt Pleasant School is located in a fixed block bound by streets, a reserve and existing housing. The playground area is already crowded and we do not want to see this compromised with additional students. Classrooms could be added but the playground and other facilities will not manage the increase in numbers.

In 2013 additional sloping land was purchased by the MoE. We consider this land to be for the rebuild of our hall and the growing role from within our zone. Our capped role was at 400 (9 April 2015) based on the MoE formula. This purchase of land (of 960m²) increased our capacity to 559 on 14 April 2015. The perception could be, and is, that this increase is directly related to the proposed closure of Redcliffs School. This land does not lend itself to increased play area or placement of facilities due to its geographical distance from the rest of the buildings and its topographical challenges.

Mt Pleasant School Curriculum and Culture...

Mt Pleasant School delivers the New Zealand Curriculum via the the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) framework. Our school has worked hard over the past two years to adopt this Programme with our students now proficient in the language and ideology of the PYP. This is also embedded in the culture of our school. We have also worked with our community over the past two years to develop the Programme of Inquiry that underpins the transdisciplinary nature of this Programme. The Board and senior managers of the school would need to start much of this process again as the Redcliffs students and new staff would want to have 'a voice' in their curriculum and learning pathways.

The schools within our cluster have all forged their own cultures and written their own curriculums as outlined by the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum document. At its core the New Zealand curriculum asks us to support young people “who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners”. It will be very hard for a large group of children joining a school part way through the year to feel connected and actively involved, and therefore to become confident lifelong learners.

Forcing the closure of a school and rezoning these pupils to join with two other existing schools will have a significant impact on all the students and schools involved: the challenges for the students to integrate and assimilate into a new (to them) learning community will be significant. This is even more problematic given the proposed closure option of mid-2016.

The experience of our children and their families who have had to move schools over the past 4.5 years, is that it takes at least six months for the child to feel a sense of belonging at their new school and then the child can re-commence their academic learning. The range of emotions Redcliffs children are likely to present with (anger, grief, resentment and detachment), due to the forced closure of their school, will amplify the challenges and make the integration process even more difficult. Adding 80-150 students is a large percentage to join at once. If the closure of Redcliffs School does go ahead, we request the start date being January 2017 with additional funding to develop and promote unity within the school commencing September 2016.

Mt Pleasant School Buildings and Facilities...

Should the Minister continue with her proposal to close Redcliffs School, we ask that Mt Pleasant School immediately be placed on the current Master Plan development list. Mt Pleasant is currently scheduled to have its hall rebuilt but this is not being done inside the Master Planning process. If Mt Pleasant School is to take a large number of new students we will require additional classrooms and auxiliary facilities - it would be short-sighted (but leave the school with a lengthy legacy) if this is done outside the Master Plan process.

In support of our point in the previous paragraph we know that to get Mt Pleasant School in-shape for over 80 new students can not be done in the timeframe proposed by the Minister, due to the extension of the consultation period given by the Minister.

Although our site is relatively flat for a hill, it does still have a 'fair slope' to it: it requires buildings engineered for a high-wind zone and with snow-loading. As a suburb left with tremendous damage to the built landscape following the earthquakes, we know that building on the hills is expensive and much slower than building on the flat. Any interruptions to a building programme would likely be costly and involve additional time to remedy, e.g. local rebuilds have had issues to do with the new foundation requirements and unforeseen bedrock issues.

Mt Pleasant School Zoning...

Additionally, we seek the continued inclusion of Brookhaven in the Mt Pleasant School Enrollment Zone (and not re-zoned into the Bamford School area). Brookhaven is an integral part of our school culture and contributes to richness and

diversity of our community. About 9 years ago, when Mt Pleasant was putting in place its enrollment zone, Brookhaven families made submissions to the school and the MoE arguing to be a part of the Mt Pleasant School zone due to the extremely difficult and unsafe physical access from Brookhaven to Bamford. This was agreed to by the Ministry. Nothing has changed: public transport bus access from Brookhaven to Mt Pleasant School continues, and the severe difficulties travelling from Brookhaven to Bamford safely by foot, bike, scooter, buggy etc. have increased (with increasing traffic). Under the CCC Long Term Plan we understand this will not change. More than ever Brookhaven is a part of the Mt Pleasant community and the coastal suburbs.

In conclusion, the Mt Pleasant Board of Trustees would like to restate their support for the return of Redcliffs School to the heart of their community. Their unique geographical location, school culture and increasing roll make this a viable and valid option. The threat of interruption is only perceived and is a negligible risk. We strongly believe that the closure of Redcliffs School will have many negative and long-lasting impacts on learning outcomes for the students at both schools.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MA', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marty Anderson

Chairperson, Mt Pleasant School Board of Trustees