



CAMPBELLS BAY SCHOOL

Not self, but service.
Ko te ratonga te tuatahi, ko koe te tuarua
Est. 1925

To the Campbells Bay School Community

- The government-appointed Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce released a report in December 2018 making 32 recommendations including compulsorily removing governance powers from all parent-elected school boards and transferring these powers to centralised education hubs.
- If enacted as described, the CBS board of trustees believes this proposed governance change will have damaging consequences for both our school and the whole public education system in New Zealand.
- We encourage you to read the following letter and submit feedback through the online survey that can be found [here](#).

We feel compelled to write to you about the recommendations made by the government-appointed Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce. If enacted as described, these recommendations will have immense and we believe damaging consequences for both our school and the whole public education system in New Zealand. The Taskforce report and recommendations can be found at: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz>

We strongly agree with the Taskforce position that socioeconomically disadvantaged children being failed by underperforming schools is not acceptable. However, we fundamentally disagree with the Taskforce belief that this can be remedied by a compulsory change in the governance model for all of New Zealand's public schools. Throughout the world, wherever large socioeconomic disparities exist, achieving equity of educational outcome is notoriously elusive. The Taskforce has presented no evidence that their proposed system will achieve this any better than our current system. Potential gains are hypothetical and unproven, but huge costs and significant losses are certain.

The current school governance system, with power in the hands of parent-elected school boards, works well for the majority. Education Review Office data cited by the Taskforce suggests that 87% of schools performed at or above expectation in 2016/2017. In the current model, schools are community-responsive with parents having direct and tangible input into the education that their children receive. The Taskforce system would remove almost all genuine powers currently held by parent-elected school boards and transfer these powers to new "education hubs" that would each govern an average of 125 schools. The newly created education hubs would take control of all government school funding, be responsible for school performance and school property as well as manage student suspensions. Education hubs would be governed by a Ministerially-appointed group of directors. The proposed system would therefore be significantly more centralised and result in school governance with very little knowledge of specific community-based issues relating to students' education.

The aim of the Taskforce recommendations is to help the small percentage of schools that struggle to find appropriate expertise for their boards. We strongly support this aim. However, we profoundly disagree with the Taskforce position that a compulsory change to the governance of all schools is required to achieve it. The existing system already has built in mechanisms to help underperforming schools. In such cases, the Ministry of Education has for many years had statutory intervention powers such as appointing a limited statutory manager, or replacing a board with a commissioner. From 2017, the Ministry has also had a more graduated range of intervention powers such as requiring schools to engage specialist help or accept a Minister-appointed additional trustee to a board. However, as the Taskforce notes, the Ministry demonstrates “reluctance” to intervene in underperforming schools because of limited “capacity” and a “lack of funding to bring in the additional expertise needed to support schools”. In other words, the problem is not the system, but rather appropriate resourcing of the system to work as designed. There is no reason to expect that necessary funding, capacity and expertise for effective centralised control of schools will become suddenly available under the Taskforce system. In fact, it is likely that the vast sums of public money that will be needed to enact the system change will further deplete and divert education funding and resources away from schools and students that need them.

Rather than addressing the teacher supply crisis, we also believe that the Taskforce recommendations are highly likely to actually worsen it. Under the Taskforce system, education hubs would be the legal employer of principals and teachers and have the ability to move them around schools or second them into the hubs or other central agencies. We believe that this reduction in autonomy is likely to discourage quality people from entering and remaining in the teaching profession. The fact that the Taskforce propose staffing the hubs with teachers and other education professionals would also reduce the teaching pool even further than current crisis levels.

We appreciate that the Taskforce is aiming to create a more equitable system where, no matter what their background, all children are empowered to succeed. We also want to see such a system. However, as internationally acknowledged this is notoriously difficult to achieve. In the absence of robust evidence that their new model would better enhance equity and preserve the excellence in our current system, we believe the sensible approach would be to use funds that would go into the proposed system change to directly support disadvantaged students and struggling schools. Such funds should also be used to resource the Ministry of Education to operate in the manner it is designed to, and to pay teachers better so that quality people are further attracted to and retained by the teaching profession.

We strongly encourage members of the Campbells Bay School Community to make their thoughts known to the Taskforce by filling in an online survey by 31 March.

Alternatively, you can email your views to tomorrows.schools@education.govt.nz before 7 April.

The Campbells Bay School Board of Trustees.