

January-February 2026 — Issue #11



Membership

# onboard.

Kaitiaki Kura Makahīni

2026

## Regional Executive elections

Nominations for our Regional Executives opened on 5 February and close on 12 March.

## The school uniform debate

For many New Zealand families, the cost of sending a child to school is not confined to stationery lists and the occasional school camp.

## System Reform Bill – our opposition explained

The Bill proposes a set of changes that materially alter how New Zealand's school system is governed.

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Conference 2026



## From the President's desk

Welcome to our first *Onboard* edition for 2026. I hope the year has started well for you and your school community. It's already shaping up to be a big year for governance, with several important milestones ahead and plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Right now, nominations are open for our Regional Executive positions. These roles are critical in ensuring learning and networking events happen in your region. I encourage you to consider standing or to tap someone you know who would bring valuable insight. Nominations close on 12 March, so there's still time to put your name forward.

We're also preparing for our 2026 AGM on 23 May. This year marks a significant change. Our AGM will be held online for the first time and separately from the Annual Conference. We've made this shift to ensure the AGM is more accessible for all member boards, particularly when it comes to attending and voting. I'm looking forward to seeing how this new format supports greater participation and engagement.

Following the AGM, we move into another important cycle: National Board and President elections in June and July. If you are interested in growing your governance experience into the not-for-profit business space, please keep an eye out for updates and timelines as we get closer.

And of course, one of the highlights of our year – the 2026 Annual Conference in July. Planning is well under way, and we're excited about the programme we're building for you, including keynotes from ex-All Black management, a rescue helicopter medic and a Tui-winning recording artist! More details will be on the way soon.

Thank you for the work you do and the commitment you bring to your schools and communities. I'm looking forward to working alongside you and for you throughout 2026.

Ngā mihi mahana

Meredith



## Upcoming workshops and webinars – Term 1

### Board Meetings

A workshop that covers the basics of why boards meet, legislation, meeting process, keeping record and working as a team.

3 March	Timaru, Blenheim, Levin
4 March	Gisborne, Glenfield
5 March	Tokoroa
9 March	Taupō
10 March	Kaikohe, Oamaru
11 March	Whakatāne, Christchurch, Taradale, Hutt Valley, Royal Oak
12 March	Waipukurau, Dunedin, Thames, Botany
16 March	Pukekohe, Papamoa
17 March	Invercargill, Wellington
18 March	Whangārei, Winton, Christchurch, New Plymouth, Hamilton
19 March	Whanganui, Palmerston North
20 March	Daytime on Zoom
23 March	Central West Zoom
24 March	Kaitaia, Gore, Carterton
25 March	Hastings, Northern Zoom, South Island Zoom
26 March	Wellington/Wairarapa Zoom
30 March	Central Zoom
31 March	Online Zoom

To find out more details about each event, go to our [Resource Centre](#).

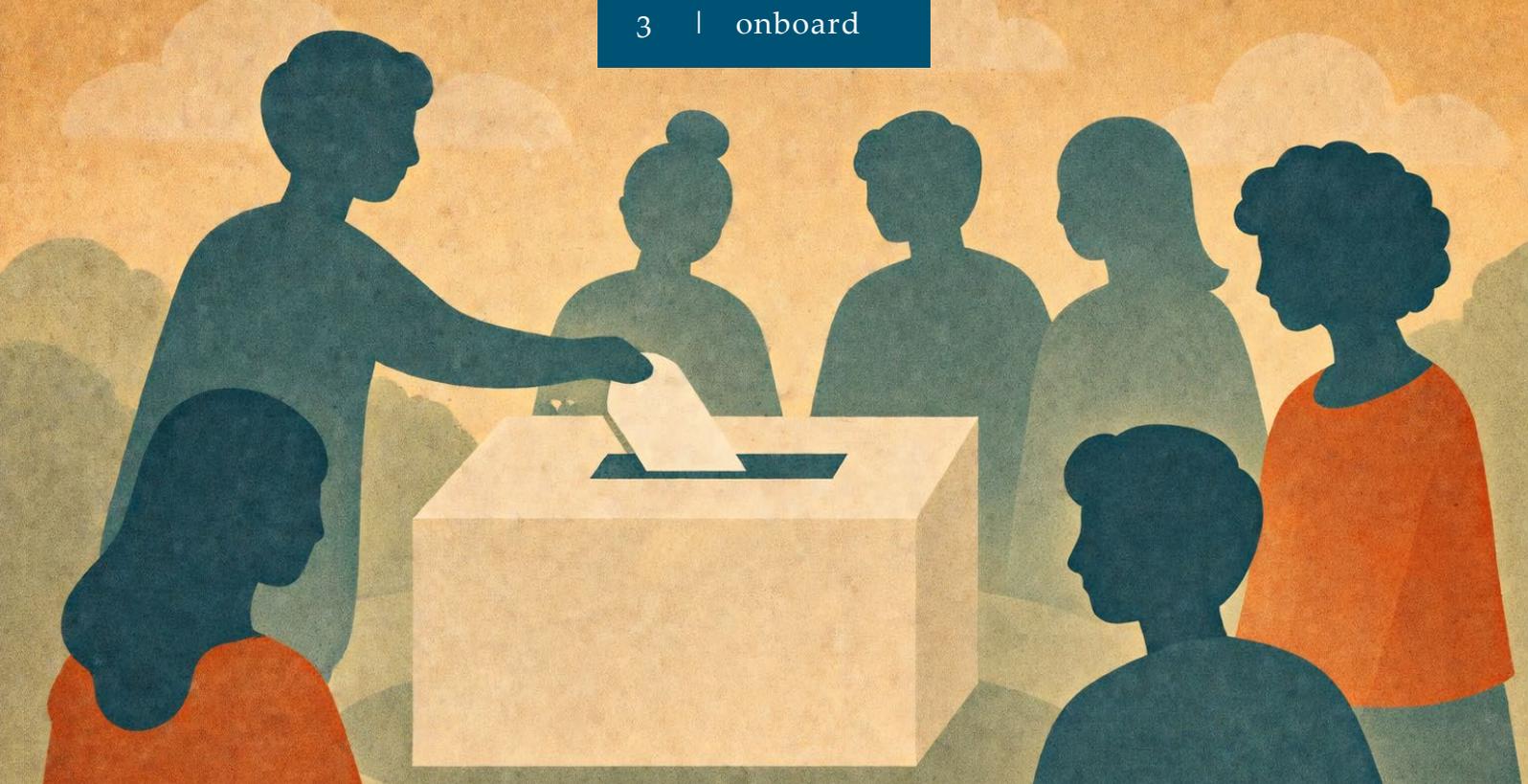
### Student Suspension Meetings

Is your board ready to run a student suspension meeting? This workshop will prepare you with what you need to know.

10 March	Online Zoom
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To register, go to our [Resource Centre](#).

Need something tailored to you? Please get in touch with the GovHub team.



## Regional Executive elections

Every 3 years, within 9 months of the national triennial school board elections, NZSBA holds elections for its Regional Executive positions. With the 2026 cycle now under way, nominations for Regional Executives opened on 5 February and close on 12 March.

The returning officer for all 2026 NZSBA elections is Schooled Election Pilot. Links to the nomination forms have been sent to the principal of every current financial member board, with principals invited to share that information with their board. The link is also available [here](#). Member boards are then able to nominate people for Regional Executive positions and, where required, vote for their preferred candidate or candidates.

These elections form an important part of the association's governance cycle. A few months after Regional Executive elections are completed, NZSBA will hold its National Board and President elections, ensuring leadership at both regional and national levels reflects the newly elected school boards across the country.

Regional Executives are made up of between three and eight members, depending on the region. Their purpose is to offer events and networking opportunities for member boards within their local areas, helping to strengthen governance capability across the sector. While the role is not primarily governance focused, it centres on creating and promoting opportunities for members to learn, share experiences and connect with others facing similar challenges.

Regional Executives also play a valuable role in identifying local issues that may need to be escalated to a level. They act as an important conduit of information for the NZSBA President and are often the first point of contact when a cross-section of opinion is needed national on emerging topics affecting school boards.

- Serving on a Regional Executive provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of school governance by being close to member experiences and insights. It offers a broader view of the issues facing boards and the practical realities of governance across different school communities.
- Each region has a budget to fund membership events and activities as well as to cover reasonable expenses. Regional Executives typically meet between three and eight times a year to plan events and coordinate their work. From within each Executive, members elect a Regional Executive Chair. Chairs are invited to attend two to three meetings per year with the other Regional Executive Chairs from around the country.
- Regional Executive members serve a 3-year term. Boards and individual board members who are interested in standing for their Regional Executive are encouraged to put themselves forward. Full information about the nomination process and the role is available in the elections handbook [here](#).

The nomination form is available [here](#).

## ERO surveys

ERO's national insights centre is looking at the support and interventions that are currently available for schools, especially those that need it most. These short surveys for board members ask about how things are going at your school, anything that's particularly challenging and any supports the school may have received. ERO will use this information to recommend improvements, so it's worth taking 10 minutes to click through: [Board member survey](#).

An illustration of three children in school uniforms. The child on the left is a boy with dark curly hair, wearing an orange V-neck sweater over a white collared shirt and a dark tie, with a dark backpack. The child in the middle is a girl with a dark ponytail, wearing an orange V-neck sweater over a white collared shirt and a dark tie, with a dark pleated skirt and dark tights. The child on the right is a boy with dark curly hair, wearing an orange V-neck sweater over a white collared shirt and a dark tie, with dark trousers. The background is a textured, warm-toned surface with stylized clouds and hills.

# The school uniform debate

For many New Zealand families, the cost of sending a child to school is not confined to stationery lists and the occasional school camp.

For many New Zealand families, the cost of sending a child to school is not confined to stationery lists and the occasional school camp. Uniforms, activity fees, donations and subject charges together form a quiet but persistent pressure on household budgets. As the cost of living rises, these expenses have come under sharper scrutiny, with parents asking not only why uniforms are so expensive but who is responsible for setting those costs and whether the system itself is fair.

Under the Education and Training Act, school boards are required to decide on uniform requirements, including whether a uniform is required at all, what items make it up, where those items are sold and, by extension, how much families must pay. This is not an optional extra in governance. It sits alongside responsibilities for property, employment, finances, health and safety, and community engagement. For some boards, particularly those in smaller or lower-decile communities, this can feel like one more complex and contentious issue to manage in a role that is already demanding.

Uniform decisions inevitably attract strong views because the government does not fund the purchase of school uniforms. Every dollar spent comes directly from families. Boards therefore find themselves in the uncomfortable position of making decisions that affect household finances while having limited ability to subsidise those costs from their operational funding. In practice, most boards approach the issue cautiously. While they decide what items are compulsory and who supplies them, they are rarely trying to maximise revenue. The reality is that most schools do not profit from uniform sales at all, and many actively work to keep prices as low as they reasonably can.

In that sense, it is accurate to say that boards do influence the cost of uniforms but only within fairly narrow constraints. They must balance affordability with durability, safety, cultural appropriateness and the school's identity. A polo shirt that is cheap but wears out after a term is not necessarily a saving for families. Nor is a uniform that ignores climate, activity levels or tikanga. Boards also have to consider the second-hand market. Frequent changes to design or supplier may promise lower prices in the short term but can wipe out the resale value of existing uniforms, shifting costs back onto parents who rely on hand-me-downs or school-run uniform shops.

One of the reasons many schools persist with uniforms at all is equity. Uniforms are widely seen as a way to reduce visible socio-economic differences and remove pressure on students to keep up with fashion trends as well as to promote cost savings in the long run for parents (a well-made set of uniforms can last several years). That intention, however, only holds if uniforms themselves are accessible. Many schools also hold spare uniform items or operate hardship schemes so students are not excluded because of cost. These measures do not eliminate financial stress, but they are attempts to blunt its sharpest edges. And it is here where community-led initiatives have begun to play an increasingly important role.

A prominent example can be seen at Westlake Boys High School, where parents developed a comprehensive second-hand uniform system to reduce costs for families. The system allows parents to buy and sell used uniform items at fair prices, making high-quality uniforms more affordable while ensuring sellers also receive reasonable returns. The model has since been adopted by Westlake Girls High School, Rangitoto College and St Andrew's College, demonstrating that such approaches can work across different school contexts.

This system, known as Hand Me Round, was founded by parents with long experience volunteering in traditional school second-hand uniform shops.

At the schools using it, the system has become the primary fundraising mechanism for parent–teacher associations, creating a circular benefit: families save on uniform costs, sellers are compensated fairly and school communities gain a reliable source of fundraising income.

Examples like this highlight an important point in the uniform debate. While boards set the framework, communities often find innovative ways to work within it. Second-hand systems, whether volunteer-run or professionally managed, can significantly lower the effective cost of uniforms over time. They also reduce waste and normalise reuse, which aligns with broader social and environmental goals.

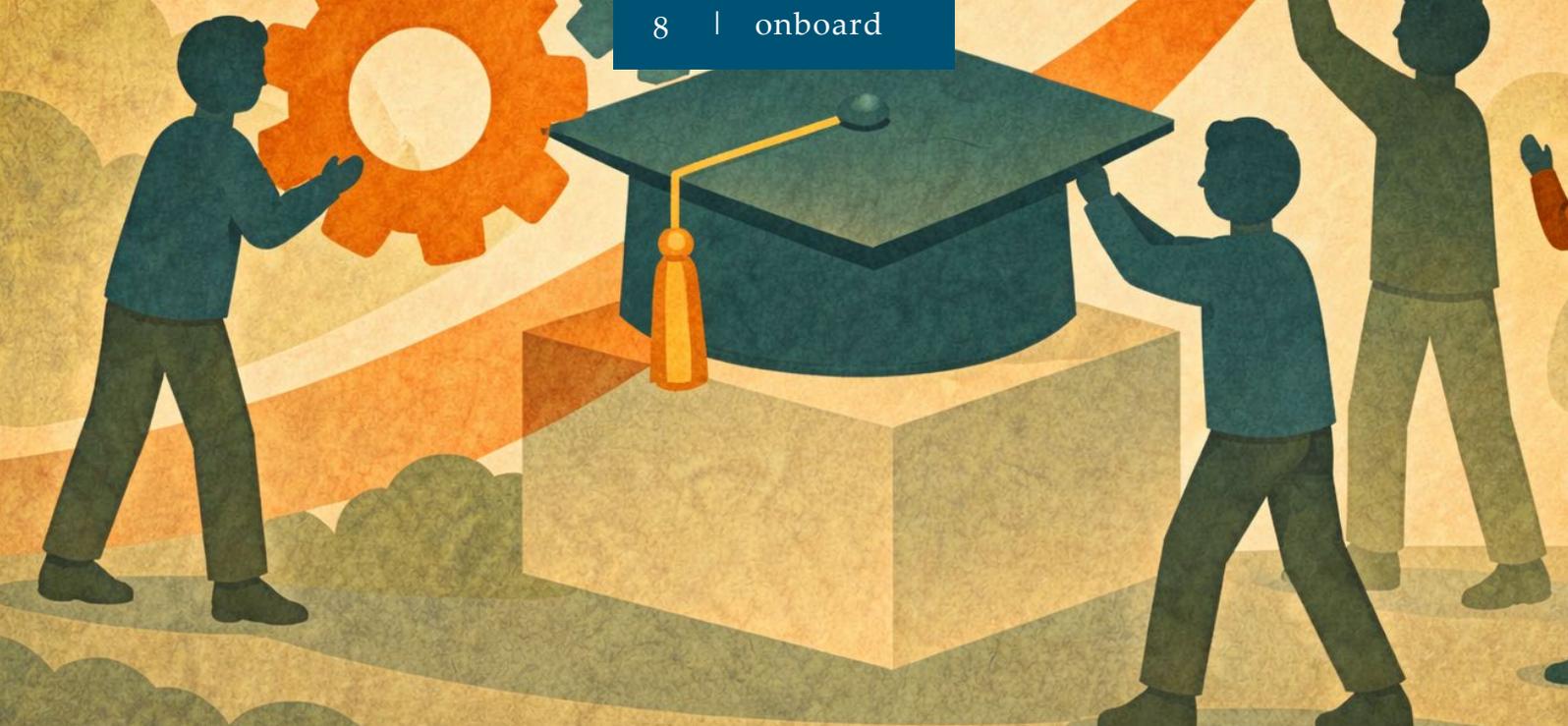
Consultation is a key part of the process. When boards introduce or change uniform bylaws, they are expected to consult with their communities. This can take many forms – from surveys and newsletters to open meetings and parent forums. The Ministry of Education is clear that parents’ voices should be heard and that schools should not make significant profits from uniform sales. In theory, this gives communities a real say. In practice, engagement levels vary, and boards must weigh sometimes conflicting feedback from parents who prioritise affordability, tradition, practicality or pride in the school’s image.

The choice of supplier is another flashpoint. Many parents question why schools often rely on a single specialist uniform retailer rather than allowing families to shop around. There is no single answer. Some schools deliberately choose unbranded, off-the-shelf items available from major retailers, particularly at primary level. Others opt for custom-designed uniforms supplied by specialist companies, especially where branding or consistency is considered important. Boards must also navigate procurement rules. Schools are subject to government procurement guidance and, for larger contracts, formal tendering requirements. The Commerce Commission encourages schools to use their bargaining power to negotiate competitive deals, and many do seek multiple quotes or renegotiate contracts to secure better pricing.

For large schools, where uniform contracts can exceed \$100,000, the process becomes even more formal, requiring open tenders through the Government Electronic Tender Service. Uniform policy does not exist in isolation. It sits within an ever-expanding web of legislation, regulation and guidance that boards are expected to follow as far as reasonably practicable. Each additional requirement, however well intentioned, adds to the cognitive and administrative load.

Against this backdrop, it is tempting to look offshore. In the United Kingdom and in Victoria, governments have recently legislated to curb uniform costs by limiting exclusive supply arrangements and requiring schools to prioritise affordability. Some New Zealand parents and advocates argue for similar intervention here. Boards are independent Crown entities, elected by their communities, and many see uniform decisions as a matter best handled locally. Board members are often parents themselves, acutely aware of the financial pressures families face, and there is little evidence that widespread profiteering or indifference is driving high costs.

The wider issue, of course, extends beyond uniforms. School fees, whether considered donations, subject charges or activity costs, compound the burden. While New Zealand’s state education system is nominally free, the lived experience for many families feels quite different. Uniforms become a symbol of a broader tension between the ideal of free public education and the practical reality of underfunded schools relying on parental contributions to fill gaps.



## System Reform Bill – our opposition explained

The Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill proposes a set of changes that materially alter how New Zealand’s school system is governed. Taken together, its provisions shift authority away from community-led school boards and professional discretion and towards greater central and ministerial control. For school boards, whose role is to govern schools on behalf of their communities under the Tomorrow’s Schools model, these changes raise significant concerns about accountability, local responsiveness and long-term system stability.

NZSBA, representing more than 85% of state and state-integrated school boards, made a submission to Parliament opposing key aspects of the Bill. That submission draws on extensive engagement through a survey completed by 1,128 board members, the largest response NZSBA has ever received. The feedback was consistent and clear: the Bill expands ministerial powers and reduces local discretion in ways that directly affect boards’ ability to govern effectively and represent their communities.

A central issue is the proposed expansion of ministerial authority over curriculum. Amendments to section 90 of the Education and Training Act, along with the introduction of a new section 90B, enable the Minister of Education to move beyond setting high-level curriculum direction and into detailed curriculum setting. While curriculum content has traditionally been developed through expert-led, consultative processes, the Bill places statutory authority squarely with the Minister. There is no requirement in the legislation for independent oversight, sector agreement or arm’s length decision making. Advisory processes may occur in practice, but they are not mandated.

Although curriculum design is not a day-to-day governance function of boards, boards are legally required to give effect to national and foundational curriculum statements. Any change in how curriculum is set therefore has direct consequences for board accountability, strategic planning, resourcing and oversight. Board members expressed strong opposition to the idea that a single officeholder, regardless of who that may be, should have the power to determine what and how curriculum is taught – 82% of survey respondents rejected this approach, citing risks of

politicisation, instability across electoral cycles and disruption to teaching and learning.

Boards consistently emphasised that education benefits from long-term consistency and professional expertise. Curriculum changes carry significant workload, cost and training implications for schools. When those changes can be made centrally and at pace, boards face increased difficulty planning over multi-year cycles while remaining responsible for outcomes.

The Bill also removes the statutory requirement for school boards to consult with their communities on the delivery of the health curriculum, replacing it with a requirement to inform. Two-thirds of boards currently consult their communities in this area, and many do so because health education touches on sensitive issues where community understanding and trust are essential. Consultation has allowed boards to manage cultural and religious diversity, address concerns early and prevent disengagement or large-scale opt-outs.

By reducing consultation to an information obligation, the Bill removes a formal mechanism through which boards represent community voice. While consultation can be imperfect and time-consuming, boards identified it as a key part of their governance role. The change does not remove boards' accountability to their communities, but it does reduce their ability to actively shape and respond to community expectations in an area that often requires careful, locally informed decision making.

Another significant impact of the Bill is the reduction of local discretion in relation to attendance. The proposed changes remove or substantially constrain principals' ability to exercise judgement when granting attendance exemptions or responding flexibly to complex situations. Despite strong support for improving attendance overall, 84% of board members opposed the removal of principal discretion.

Boards and principals described a wide range of circumstances where discretion is necessary, including health and wellbeing issues, neurodiversity, family crisis, cultural obligations and safety considerations. Centrally prescribed rules cannot easily accommodate this complexity. Boards remain accountable for attendance outcomes, but tighter, uniform rules reduce the tools available to achieve those outcomes in ways that maintain engagement and trust with whānau.

These individual changes interact to produce a broader governance shift. Under the Tomorrow's Schools model, boards are intended to act as locally accountable stewards, setting direction, holding leadership to account and ensuring schools reflect and respond to their communities. The Bill shifts key decisions – curriculum content, consultation requirements and discretionary judgement – away from boards and principals while leaving statutory responsibility with them.

This creates a growing imbalance between responsibility and authority. Boards are expected to deliver outcomes, manage risk and plan strategically but with reduced influence over the decisions that shape how those outcomes are achieved. For volunteer boards operating with limited capacity, this imbalance increases governance risk and weakens the effectiveness of community-led decision making.

NZSBA's opposition to the Bill is not an argument against national standards, accountability or reform. Boards recognise the importance of coherence across the system and the role of government in setting direction. The concern is that the Bill concentrates power in ways that undermine professional expertise, reduce local responsiveness and erode the governance role boards were designed to perform.

The Tomorrow's Schools model is founded on the principle that schools are strongest when they are accountable both to the Crown and to their communities. The Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill moves the system away from that balance. In doing so, it reshapes not only who makes decisions but how education governance functions in practice.



## School board remuneration

Remuneration for school board members is an issue that our members have raised consistently over many years. It is a topic that surfaces in meetings, surveys and conversations across the country, reflecting a shared concern that the expectations placed on boards have grown significantly while the settings that support those roles have not kept pace.

In the decades since the establishment of school boards, the role of boards has changed substantially. Today's board members are responsible for governance in a far more complex environment – one that includes increased regulatory requirements, employment responsibilities, financial oversight and heightened public and community scrutiny.

As President of Te Whakarōpūtanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa | New Zealand School Boards Association, I have heard clearly from boards that this long-standing stagnation is no longer sustainable. It affects who is able to stand for boards, the diversity of perspectives around the table and whether board service can realistically be balanced alongside work, family and other commitments.

In response to this long-standing concern and building on our previous advocacy on behalf of boards, I wrote the following letter to the Minister and Associate Minister of Education as well as education spokespeople across Parliament. The letter outlines why the current approach to board member remuneration is problematic, addresses common misconceptions and proposes a practical, principled way forward that better recognises the role of school board members while remaining firmly grounded in service to students and communities.

*Tēnā koutou katoa.*

*For those I have not met, I am Meredith Kennett, the President of the NZ School Boards Association | Te Whakarōpūtanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa.*

*I write to you all, on behalf of a request from our members that has been raised many times but, to my knowledge, has never had a formal response.*

*School boards have never had their remuneration level formally set, even though it is a requirement of the Minister responsible for each crown entity to do so (Crown Entities Act 2004, Section 27 Responsible Minister's role (1) (b) to determine the remuneration of some members under this Part). There is a commonly held myth that school board's rates are already set. That the fee is an honorarium of \$55 per meeting for a board member and \$75 per meeting for a presiding member but, this is simply the allowed withholding tax exemption amount. And this exemption rate has been in place for well over 20 years.*

*Many other Crown entities follow the guidance in the Cabinet Fees Framework, but School Boards have been specifically excluded (Section A: Coverage of the framework, paragraph 18, The Framework is not used for bodies where the fees are set by the Remuneration Authority, for School Boards of Trustees, or for local authorities, where the fees are set using a separate mechanism). Instead, school boards come under Education (School Boards) Regulations 2020, where in Part 3: Procedure of Boards, section 19 (1) states: The Minister may, by notice in the Gazette, fix a scale of maximum fees and payments to be made to board members.*

*Having our Minister set a fee scale supports good practice and recognises the conflict of interest that happens for boards in setting their own fees. On one hand, school board members recognise the hours of work, often on top of a job, away from family, under the scrutiny of the community. On the other hand, school board members know that this money comes out of the operational funds given by the MoE to run the school. To the people who really are giving up a lot to serve their school, this equates to taking money from the children. But, if the Minister were to set a fee, then it is out of school board members hands. No school board member wants to take away from the children they are serving, but every school board member deserves the recognition of the professionalism, skill and commitment required to run a school.*

*One suggestion would be to set a fee range to align with operational funding allocation.*

*Looking at the current fees framework, even at the lowest rate of crown entity board remuneration, many school board members would find that excessive, and just too much money to take from the education bucket. I do think there is a fair, happy medium that most school board members would feel both a mix of recognition of the role, and still a sense of service.*

*For boards using the \$55/\$75 rate, the approximate cost for a school board of five parent representatives, a staff representative, and a student representative (plus the principal but they are on salary and don't draw a fee), having 10 meetings per year, currently costs \$4050 of the operational funds.*

*Even (just picking a figure out of the air) if the rate per meeting was set to \$100 per meeting for a board member and \$150 for the Presiding member, then it is only an increase to \$7500 of the operational funds (and still less than 60% of a single crown entity board member on the lowest rate).*

*Alternatively, rates could be aligned to roll numbers (as the operational fund is), adjustments could be made to schools with a higher roll number (reflecting the larger workload of monitoring more people).*

*In the scheme of things, this would be a small change, that would make a big difference to school board members.*

*Please feel free to contact me with any further questions or comments.*

*Your consideration and response on the matter would be much appreciated.*

This is a modest change in policy terms but one that would make a meaningful difference for boards across the country. NZSBA will continue to advocate for settings that support strong, diverse and effective school governance, and we look forward to constructive engagement in response to the letter above.



## Copyright and licensing – read more, hear more, see more

Schools use a wide mix of content every day – from printed resources to music and audio visual material – and all of this sits within New Zealand’s copyright framework. Copyright gives creators the right to agree to how their work is used and shared, and anyone who wants to copy and share copyright material (even for educational purposes) needs permission from the people who made it.

The [Get Licensed](#) website brings together three complementary school copyright licences (covering print, music and audio visual material) to help schools make informed decisions depending on how content is being used in teaching and school life.

### **Why it matters (and why boards should care)**

Copyright compliance is part of good governance, like other legal obligations schools must meet. Without the right licence, teachers, the principal and board members can be held liable for copyright infringement, and being licensed helps reduce the risk of non compliance.

### **One message, three licences matched to real classroom use**

Because lessons often use multiple media types, many schools need two, if not all three licences to remain compliant. The Get Licensed website presents the three licence options:

- Read more for print resources through Copyright Licensing New Zealand.
- Hear more for music use through OneMusic New Zealand.
- See more for audio visual content through Screenrights.

The licences directly address the need for access to educational resources for the evolving curriculum. Make sure your school has the right coverage to ensure that your educators and students benefit from the same resources available in other schools, legally.

### **Practical next steps for schools**

#### 1. Check coverage and plan renewals

Licences are renewable annually and costs are based on roll numbers.

#### 2. Activate online

- a. Go to [www.getlicensed.co.nz/get-licensed](http://www.getlicensed.co.nz/get-licensed).
- b. Click SCHOOL LOGIN.
- c. Log in to the NZSBA Copyright School Portal and activate your licences.

On the same page, you can also quickly calculate your school's licence costs. As an NZSBA member, you get an exclusive 5% discount.

For more details on each licence, visit [www.getlicensed.co.nz](http://www.getlicensed.co.nz).

Prefer to talk to someone? Call 0800 663 486 or email [copyright@tewhakaroputanga.org.nz](mailto:copyright@tewhakaroputanga.org.nz) with any questions.



# Cyber security is a board governance issue – not just an IT problem

Author: Stuart Dillon-Roberts, Founder of [Hail](#) and [Careerwise](#).

Cyber security is no longer a technical issue delegated solely to IT teams or external providers. For schools, it is a core governance risk that sits alongside health and safety, financial stewardship and student wellbeing.

School boards are not expected to manage firewalls or monitor systems day to day. However, they are responsible for governance oversight, ensuring that cyber risks are understood, prioritised and appropriately managed.

### **Why cyber security matters for boards**

Schools hold large volumes of sensitive information – student and whānau data, staff records, payroll information, wellbeing notes and community communications. At the same time, schools are increasingly reliant on digital platforms to operate and engage their communities.

Internationally, education is one of the most targeted sectors for cyber incidents. The reasons are simple: valuable personal data, limited resources and complex ecosystems of third-party suppliers.

Compounding this risk is the reality that some education technology providers operate outdated systems and demonstrate poor data governance practices, creating exposure for schools well beyond their direct control.

From a governance perspective, cyber incidents can result in disruption to learning and school operations, privacy breaches involving students and staff, reputational damage within the community, regulatory and reporting obligations and loss of trust in systems and providers. These impacts sit squarely within a board's risk oversight mandate.

### **What board responsibility really means**

It is important to be clear. Boards are not responsible for implementing cyber controls. That responsibility sits with management and technology providers.

Boards are responsible for:

- ensuring cyber security is recognised as a material organisational risk and that appropriate mitigation strategies are in place (for example, using independently assessed providers)
- setting expectations through policy and resourcing
- seeking assurance that controls are in place and effective
- understanding how incidents would be managed if they occur.

This approach aligns with guidance from organisations such as the Institute of Directors and the Ministry of Education, which consistently position cyber security as a governance issue rather than a purely technical one.

### **Questions boards should be asking**

Boards do not need technical reports. They need clear answers to practical questions. The following six questions provide a basic framework for boards to assess the cyber security at the school:

- What are our most likely cyber risk scenarios and what would the impact be?
- Do staff and administrators use strong authentication such as multi-factor authentication?
- Are backups in place, tested and recoverable within an acceptable timeframe?
- Do we have a clear incident response plan for the first 24–48 hours?
- How do we assess and select digital vendors that handle school data?
- What independent assurance do we rely on when evaluating suppliers?

If these questions cannot be answered confidently, that is a signal for further work – not a failure.

### **Hang on, we use SchoolDocs – isn't this covered?**

Many New Zealand schools already have a formal cyber security policy in place, commonly through SchoolDocs, which provides boards with a solid policy framework. However, having a policy is only the starting point. Boards also need assurance that the policy is being implemented effectively and that cyber risks are being actively managed in practice. The six board questions above are designed to complement existing policies by translating policy requirements into practical oversight – helping boards move from policy compliance to evidence-based assurance.

### **Turning governance into action – we want to help**

We aim to provide a practical way to understand key risks, test preparedness and strengthen confidence in how cyber security is being managed across the school. The School Cyber Security Board Question Sheet lists the six questions above and provides examples of the responses to assess the security posture of the school.

How to use this:

- Ask the school to complete the questions with reference to the information provided.
- Assess responses and any gaps or remedial actions that can be taken.
- Add to risk register.
- Repeat annually.

### **Why independent assurance matters**

One of the challenges for boards is knowing who to trust.

Schools rely on a wide range of digital service providers, many of whom handle sensitive student and staff data. Independent assurance frameworks help boards move beyond vendor self-attestation and provide confidence that suppliers meet sector-appropriate expectations.

The Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) initiative is used across Australia and New Zealand to evaluate digital products used in schools. ST4S focuses on areas boards care about, including data protection and privacy practices, cyber security controls, online safety considerations and transparency.

Alongside this, the Aotearoa EdTech Data Privacy Pledge provides a sector-led commitment by education technology providers to strong privacy, responsible data use and alignment with education-specific expectations. For many providers, the Privacy Pledge acts as a gateway or stepping stone toward ST4S assessment. More information [here](#).

For boards, the presence of ST4S assessment and/or the EdTech Data Privacy Pledge provides a practical and credible assurance signal when evaluating third-party providers, particularly during procurement, contract renewal and risk review discussions.

### Final thought

Cyber security is no longer optional, and it is no longer “just an IT issue”. For schools, it is a governance responsibility that requires informed oversight, trusted partners and clear assurance.

### Resources

These resources reflect current best practice in school cyber security governance and are intended to support boards in understanding their oversight role and third-party risk responsibilities.

Organisation	Resource / Description	Link
Ministry of Education	Cyber security and digital safety guidance for schools	<a href="https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/digital-technology">https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/digital-technology</a>
Office of the Privacy Commissioner	Privacy breaches, incident response, and notification obligations	<a href="https://www.privacy.org.nz/">https://www.privacy.org.nz/</a>
EdTechNZ	Aotearoa EdTech Data Privacy Pledge – sector commitment aligned with strong privacy, data protection, and ST4S principles	<a href="https://edtechnz.org.nz/the-aotearoa-edtech-data-privacy-pledge-your-gateway-to-st4s/">https://edtechnz.org.nz/the-aotearoa-edtech-data-privacy-pledge-your-gateway-to-st4s/</a>
Institute of Directors (IoD NZ)	Cyber risk governance and board-level responsibility	<a href="https://www.iod.org.nz/#/">https://www.iod.org.nz/#/</a>
UK Department for Science Innovation and Technology	Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2025 – Education sector findings	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2025">https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cyber-security-breaches-survey-2025</a>
Center for Internet Security	K–12 education cyber incident reporting and trends	<a href="https://www.cisecurity.org/">https://www.cisecurity.org/</a>

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ANNUAL MEMBERS  
CONFERENCE

Grow  
Connect  
Thrive

AOTEA CENTRE  
AUCKLAND

17-19 July

We are excited to announce our Master of Ceremonies, Eteroa Lagaele.

Eteroa is widely recognised for her leadership and impact, including being named a Young NZder of the Year, Hi-Tech NZ Young Achiever, Forbes 30 Under 30 for Social Impact, and recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for STEM.

**ALL GOES LIVE MARCH**

CONFERENCE WEBSITE  
REGISTRATION  
ACCOMMODATION

[WWW.NZSBA.ORG.NZ](http://WWW.NZSBA.ORG.NZ)

EventMergers  
Conference Managers  
C | Sera Boyd  
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Membership

