



Redcliffs School

Main Road Redcliffs Christchurch 8081 Phone: 03 384 3853
Email: admin@redcliffs.school.nz www.redcliffs.school.nz

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Redcliffs school relocation decision

Today the Minister of Education announced her decision to move our school to Redcliffs Park in Redcliffs. This will involve building an entirely new school facility with the opportunity of potentially encompassing other community facilities on the site.

After discussions with the Minister today, the Board of Trustees are feeling positive that this represents a great opportunity for our school community to move forward with certainty and plan a new school for the future.

While the possible relocation of the school was a well-known possible outcome of today's decision, the finality of that the decision and the final location of the school site may come as a shock to some in our community.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to explain the process that has resulted in this decision and the part that the Board have played in that process. We'd also like to let you know what part you can play in the process ahead.

The process leading to the decision

The Minister announced in July that she had set aside the proposal to close Redcliffs School. As part of that decision she asked the Ministry of Education for two further pieces of work to be done. They were:

- An investigation into the potential psychosocial implications for children attending school at the Main Road site with the proposed mitigation measures in place; and
- A feasibility analysis on whether relocation within a reasonable timeframe to another site within the Redcliffs community is likely to be a realistic option.

The Ministry then carried out this work and authorised an Education Report with recommendations for the Minister. The Board was allowed limited input into parts of the process and we were asked to comment on the report that the Ministry prepared, however the Board was not allowed to view, or comment on the final recommendations that the Ministry made to the Minister.

The Ministry also insisted that the expert reports on which they based their recommendations be kept confidential until after the Minister had made her decision. The Board was only allowed to view these reports on the basis of this confidentiality.

During the process, the Board also stated that we didn't believe there had been sufficient consultation in regards to relocation and stated our expectation that there should be further community consultation.

Although our involvement in this process has felt limiting, we made a decision that it was in the best interest of the long term future of the school for the Board to be able to have as much input as we were allowed into the process rather than be excluded entirely.

We also relied on the Minister's previous statements that the process was about information gathering and that consultation with the wider community would still occur. We have made strong representations to the Minister that wider consultation is still necessary.

The Board's written response in the Education Report

The Main Road site

The Board's response expressed the view that the Main Road site was suitable as the future location of Redcliffs School and there were no reasons to justify abandoning the site.

The Board started from a view that the Minister had already accepted that the Main Road site was safe and suitable for use as a school (as evidenced by her July decision). The only remaining issue was whether there might be psychosocial issues relating to returning to the site.

The outcome of the psychosocial reports comprehensively concluded that psychosocial issues relating to the site are minor and could be managed by the Board, school management team and staff, and the school community. The Board supports that view. The outcome of the reports was summarised as follows by Dr Harith Swadi:

For the current residents of Redcliffs, and with the mitigation in place, it is highly likely that there will not be a significant amount of psychological stress and/or distress as a result of a return to the old school site. That will be influenced by how confident, engaged and empowered the community feels about the mitigation measures. How this is communicated to the community is the key. Given the level of engagement and trust the School and the School Board has with the community, I believe it is possible for that to be achieved.

The Board also pointed out to the Ministry that the school could return to the Main Road site more quickly and at a lower cost than building a new school on another site.

Alternative sites

The Board's position on an alternative site was that the Minister needed to provide the community with a reason to abandon the original site before she could consider an alternative. As you will have seen in her letter to you, the Minister has listed a number of advantages that she sees in relocating to the Redcliffs Park site.

In our response, the Board also set out a number of important requirements regarding the support and certainty we required if we were to support a move to another site.

Our requirements, and the Ministry's response, are listed here:

- To have certainty that a replacement school at an acceptable alternative site will be achieved. The community would need to be provided with as much information as possible to give certainty that a school at an alternative site will be achieved. We also requested the Minister indicate whether the Government intends to expedite the process using any legislative options which may be available
 - Ministry's response:
 - *Detailed analysis indicates that there are multiple suitable sites on Redcliffs Park for relocation of the school, and that the feasibility study has concluded that relocation is likely to be feasible.*
- To have certainty by way of a clear undertaking from the Ministry that the Main Road site will not be disposed of before an acceptable alternative site is definitively acquired so that the option of returning to the Main Road site is preserved in the meantime
 - *The Ministry agreed.*
- To have a clear and reasonable time-frame within which the school will be established on an alternative site
 - *The Ministry agrees this is important. A detailed indicative timeframe is included in the Education Report (released on the Shaping Education website?)*
- To be provided with necessary undertakings/confirmation from the Ministry as to the specific financial support which Redcliffs School will be provided with to enable it to remain a vibrant and thriving school at van Asch in the meantime.
 - *The Ministry intends to provide additional resourcing for 2017 up to the 2016 staffing level, and will work with the Board to consider an appropriate level of resourcing after that.*

Your part in the process ahead

We're working hard to review all of the information we received today. Please come along to our community meeting on Thursday night at 7pm in the van Asch hall. Ministry representatives will be there and this is your opportunity to ask questions of them and of your Board.

As the planning process continues next year, the whole community will have the chance to feed into the planning for the new school.

If you feel that you will be directly affected by the relocation decision, the Board would like to hear from you and we would like to set some time aside at the end of the meeting on Thursday night to further understand your concerns and to pass these on to the Ministry.

Kind regards
 Kent France
 Chairperson, Board of Trustees