Our Voice

Foxton Beach School Student and Whānau Consultation Findings

May 2024

Contents

This document has been prepared by the Foxton Beach School Board of Trustees to gather the voice of our students and whānau. The views presented are indicative of our school community's sentiment at this point in time. It should be considered a first step in building connection and shared understanding.

Introduction

In 2024 Foxton Beach School developed a new Strategic Plan to guide our activities and investments for child learning and development for the next three to five years. Our school community voice is important in matching plans to the hopes and aspirations of our children, their parents and caregivers, our staff, and the context of our broader community.

The Board of Trustees (the Board) talked with and surveyed students and their whānau in May 2024, asking three key questions:

- What do you like about our school, or think we do well?
- What don't you like, or think needs improving?
- What are the highest priorities?

This report outlines the findings and consideration of these conversations.

Process

Afternoon tea with the Board

Parents and whānau were invited to talk with Board members and provide ideas and suggestions with consideration for the 4 school locales within the Te Kura Tapa Wha model of wellbeing: inside our classrooms, on our grounds, with our families and amongst our broader community. Around 20 people took the opportunity to share ideas and concerns.

Take the Board for a walk

Students from each class (8 in total) and Board members walked together around our school, discussing their perceptions of classrooms, play spaces and facilities.

Student Survey

Teachers led an in-class discussion with students in all classes around the three key questions and the locales of our school and community. Students were also asked about their values for learning and our school.

Parent Homework Survey

A questionnaire was sent home with students for parents/ caregivers to complete covering a range of topics and inviting additional comments. Responses were received from 80% of our school whānau.
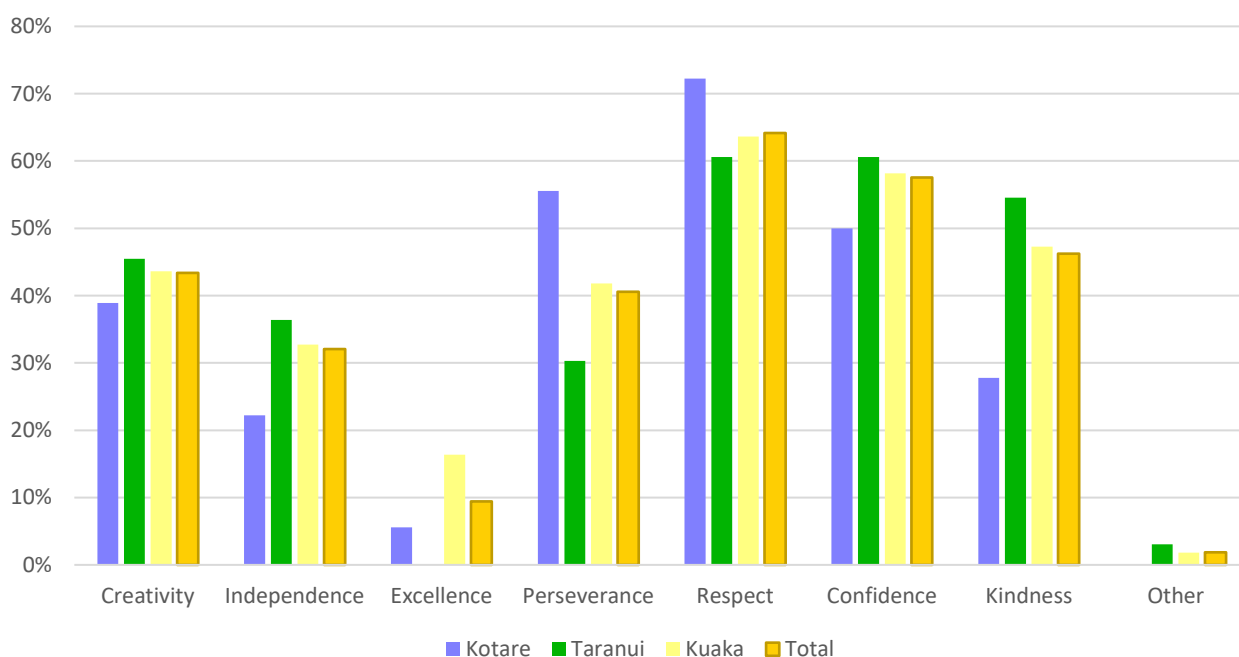
School values and culture

Our values

Students were asked to consider values that are important to them for their learning and for their school. This list of values was shared with parents and caregivers in the homework survey to identify priorities.

Values for children's learning and our school

Respect and confidence align with the top priorities of children. Other values important for parents included:

- Compassion
- Uniqueness
- Learning
- Patience
- Resilience.

School culture

Parent feedback provides insight into the culture of the school:

- 22% of all comments related to positive interactions with teachers and the supportive environment
- The office/ admin space needs to be a happy, welcoming space for people to enter, including:
  - Staff interaction with visitors and students
  - Appearance of the space (e.g. up-to-date student art).

"There seems to be a lack of bullying at Foxton Beach School, which is great"

"I love how the principal is quick to help with any concerns"

"The support [my child] receives from his teacher and the aids really helps. He is thriving at Foxton Beach School"

"Teachers get on with each other, positive atmosphere"

"Love that we are greeted each morning by the teacher"

"Would be good to see the principal out & about chatting with families/ kids a bit more"

Parent/ caregiver voice

Seven percent (7%) of comments acknowledged that the school is doing well at managing behaviour, supervision and providing support for children.

However, 19% of parent comments relate to needing improvements in these areas. For example, concerns include:

- Behavioural needs taking teacher/ learner time
- Language, swearing, derogatory words
- Lack of care/ respect for facilities and equipment
- Need for more praise and positive reinforcement, e.g. catching kindness awards, student of the week
- Bias/ lack of equitable treatment, and lack of understanding of why consequences may differ

Implications:

*Behaviour management will continue to be a high priority*

Our school values, mission statement and slogan can be updated to better reflect student and parent voice

We can increase awareness of how the school presents a professional image

Satisfaction with places and spaces around our school

Parent voice

We asked students and parents/ caregivers what they thought of the spaces and places around our school. The graph below shows parents are mostly satisfied with option available to their children, but there is room for improving the garden (-20% dissatisfaction), trees/shade (-19% dissatisfaction), and art/ murals (-16% dissatisfaction).

Parents/ caregivers satisfaction with places, spaces, and facilities

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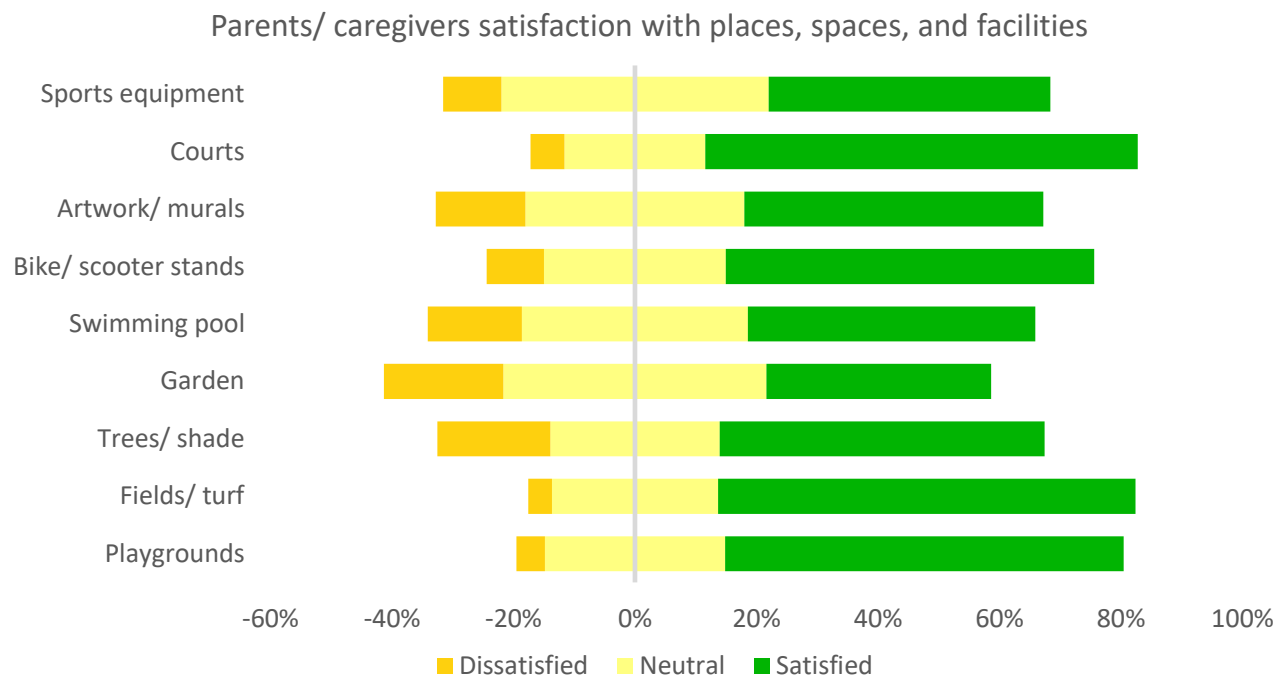
"The kids love that they can get out and play in an awesome environment"
Parent voice

Other comments:

"Can we please have some trees back?"

"Bike track on bottom field for use before and after school"

While parents were largely satisfied with playgrounds, fields/ turf, bike and scooter facilities and courts, the children had different perceptions…

Student perceptions

Students had strong views about the spaces, places and facilities at Foxton Beach School. This is what they told us:

Things children like outside on our school grounds	Things children dislike, or want to see improved on the grounds
Variety of spaces: hill for rolling down, playground, monkey bars, sandpit, big fort, swimming pool, swinging ropes, picnic tables, the turf/ courts **Games and activities:** children enjoy games with friends, such as soccer, rugby, touch, NFL, running around, big games of tag, stuck in the mud and having PE gear to play with **Natural elements:** students talked about sitting in trees, observing caterpillars in the garden and ample space on the field	**Inappropriate/ disrespectful behaviour:** students dislike swearing, litter, sand throwing and bad behaviour, with a number mentioning older students unfairly dominating certain areas/ equipment **Tired sports/ play equipment:** Students perceived a degrading standard/ quantity of gear and lack of access e.g. flat balls, worn out gear, tatty sports uniforms, hockey sticks put away, no tennis balls. They would like more variety and access to PE equipment and toys **Safe space to ride scooters/ bikes:** Children identified the safety risk of scooters going around the turf, conflicting with other users, and would like to see a separate scooter/ bike track/ area. Scooter and bike stands need improving **Upgrade play spaces:** Students miss the tyre swing and would like a playhouse, bigger junior sandpit, proper swings, slides, flying fox, more tables, a tramp and goal post for sports (rugby, soccer) **Enhanced environment:** better grass, less dust, more trees for climbing and shade, place for building huts/ forts, nicer gardens **More games:** Students enjoy organised morning tea and lunch time games

"When the grass goes away and it is dusty, it hurts my eyes"
Student voice

Other feedback from parents and/or students about our grounds and facilities include:

Area	We like	Dislike/ needs improvement
Swimming pool	▪ Community asset, available to families ▪ Great fun, more pool parties	▪ Cold ▪ Changing rooms "horrific" ▪ Consider closing and using year-round heated pool in Foxton
Art/ murals		▪ Students have no attachment to the picket fence mural by the garden ▪ Office/ admin needs to be inviting space, with art frequently updated to celebrate our children
Age-group specific play		▪ Children dislike seniors taking over turf/ playground and being disrespectful to younger students ▪ Some parents were disappointed siblings cannot play together, reducing whanaungatanga (sense of family connection)
Outside play	▪ Seeing children learning/ playing outside, doing PE ▪ Good activities, facilities, well maintained and tidy appearance	Improve existing play: including variety, creative play, veggie gardens, basketball hoops Provide additional facilities: swings, rugby/ soccer/hockey posts, gazebo for event shade, scooter/ bike track

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"Rugby posts would be utilised by other children in the community"
Parent voice

Implications:
There are a range of facilities and equipment that could be upgraded, refreshed, or improved to enhance play, learning and development for children.

Additional funding sources and specialist design skills could be sought to undertake major playground upgrades

Comments from parents and students provide a comprehensive list of improvement ideas:
- *Small to moderate improvements can be prioritised and added to annual plans where appropriate*
- *Larger projects may require new funding sources, specialist project/ design skills and additional considerations, and should be included in strategic plans where appropriate.*

# Classroom learning tools and environment

Student voice

Students provided feedback on their classroom activities and learning environments as part of the in-class survey and 'Take the Board for a Walk' events. They provided the following feedback:

Things children like in their classrooms	Things children dislike, or want to see improved in their classrooms
Playing: Children enjoy various types of play, including imaginative play with toys like a play kitchen, dolls house, dinosaurs, cars, magnets, and dress-ups. **Curiosity and Learning:** They like the opportunity to learn new things, even if it's challenging **Interacting with Friends:** Social interaction is important to them, as they mention playing with friends, hanging out with friends, and working in groups. **Using Technology:** to make learning easier **Art and Creativity:** Many children express enjoyment in artistic activities like drawing, crafting and art/writing. **Positive Learning Environment:** Children value their teachers, good lunches, classroom decorations, feeling safe, having their doors open, and having circle time for discussions. **Personal Development and Well-being:** They enjoy activities that promote well-being, such as mindful colouring, calming activities and thought the reflection mat was a nice space to be.	**Noise/ distractions:** Students frequently mentioned noise and distractions within classrooms, including talking, loud rain, lack of quiet areas to focus and concentrate, visual distraction of other classes through glass doors. Older students want better use of breakout rooms and quiet spaces to work **Disrespectful behaviour:** Students across all classes mentioned a dislike of poor behaviours including swearing, arguing, yelling, bossy classmates, not listening to the teacher **More engaging activities/games/ books:** This includes upgrades to learning and play equipment in junior classes, more games, variety of books, taking more trips, and better resourcing of breakout rooms in senior classes **Improved facilities and equipment:** Students identified access to equipment and resources including: more books, Chromebooks/ headphones for everyone, library, space for everyone to sit together, personal desks, matching chairs, better use of breakout spaces (senior classes) Some students mentioned workload and having enough time to complete tasks.

Parent voice

We also asked parents/ caregivers about their perception of learning tools and classroom environments. The graph below shows parents are mostly satisfied with classrooms, however the changed use of the library space and perceived shortage of books are issues. Some parents commented on lack of books for reading at home. Students also noted missing the library.

Parents/ caregivers satistaction with learning tools and classroom environments
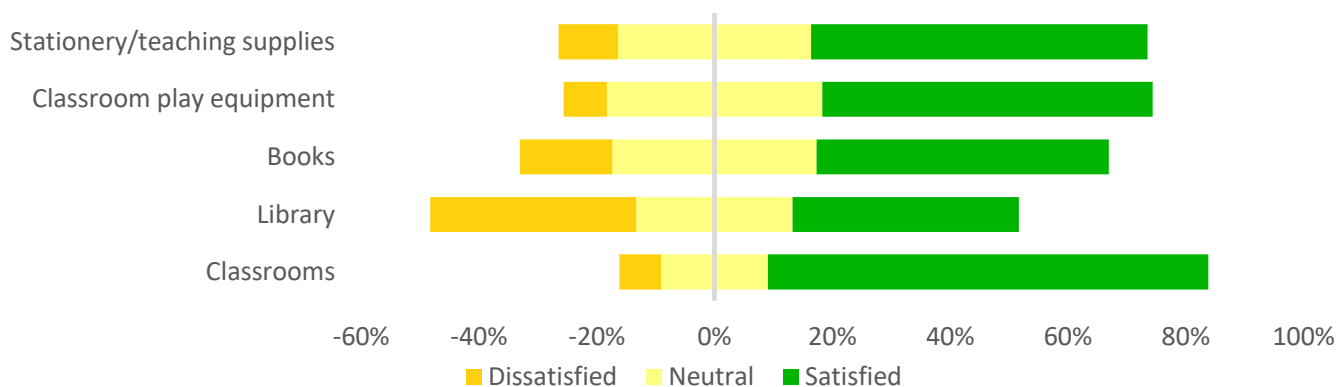
Key themes for other feedback by students and parents/ caregivers include:

We like	Dislike/ needs improvement
▪ Play based learning ▪ Amazing Teacher Aids ▪ Updates on Seesaw (junior hub) ▪ Positive interactions with teachers and support staff ▪ School lunches and breakfast club are amazing (17%)	▪ Not having individual desks ▪ More information on classwork, learning and progress. More invitations to see learning in class ▪ Too many year levels in classes and/or changes in teachers

Uniforms and dress standards

Feedback was received from both parents and students about the school uniform and standards, as follows:

| Theme	Feedback
Weather appropriate clothing	▪ Students want to be able to wear long pants in Terms 1/ 4 on cold days ▪ Jumpers, socks and/or slippers should be allowed to be worn inside, especially in winter
Hypocrisy	Teachers not removing jacket, shoes and socks in class, or wearing long pants in Terms 1 &4
Appearance	The uniform is tidy
Equity	Every child should have access to the Kids Can jackets (stigma)
Cost	▪ Uniform can be expensive, need options to pay ▪ Need a second-hand uniform system
Quality	▪ Sport uniforms had mixes of styles with some being old and itchy. Students want to wear their sports uniforms proudly

Learning subjects and inquiries

We asked parents to indicate what other areas of learning the school should prioritise, beyond the math, reading and writing that form the core of learning at Foxton Beach School. Two key areas to increase opportunities for student learning are:

- Community visits (connecting with community outside the school)
- Practical skills (woodwork, cooking, sewing, gardening)

Priorities differed across age groups/ hubs, with some elements being identified as higher priority by parents/ caregivers of older children. These included:

- Community visits
- Practical skills
- Health and nutrition.

Parent perception of learning priorities
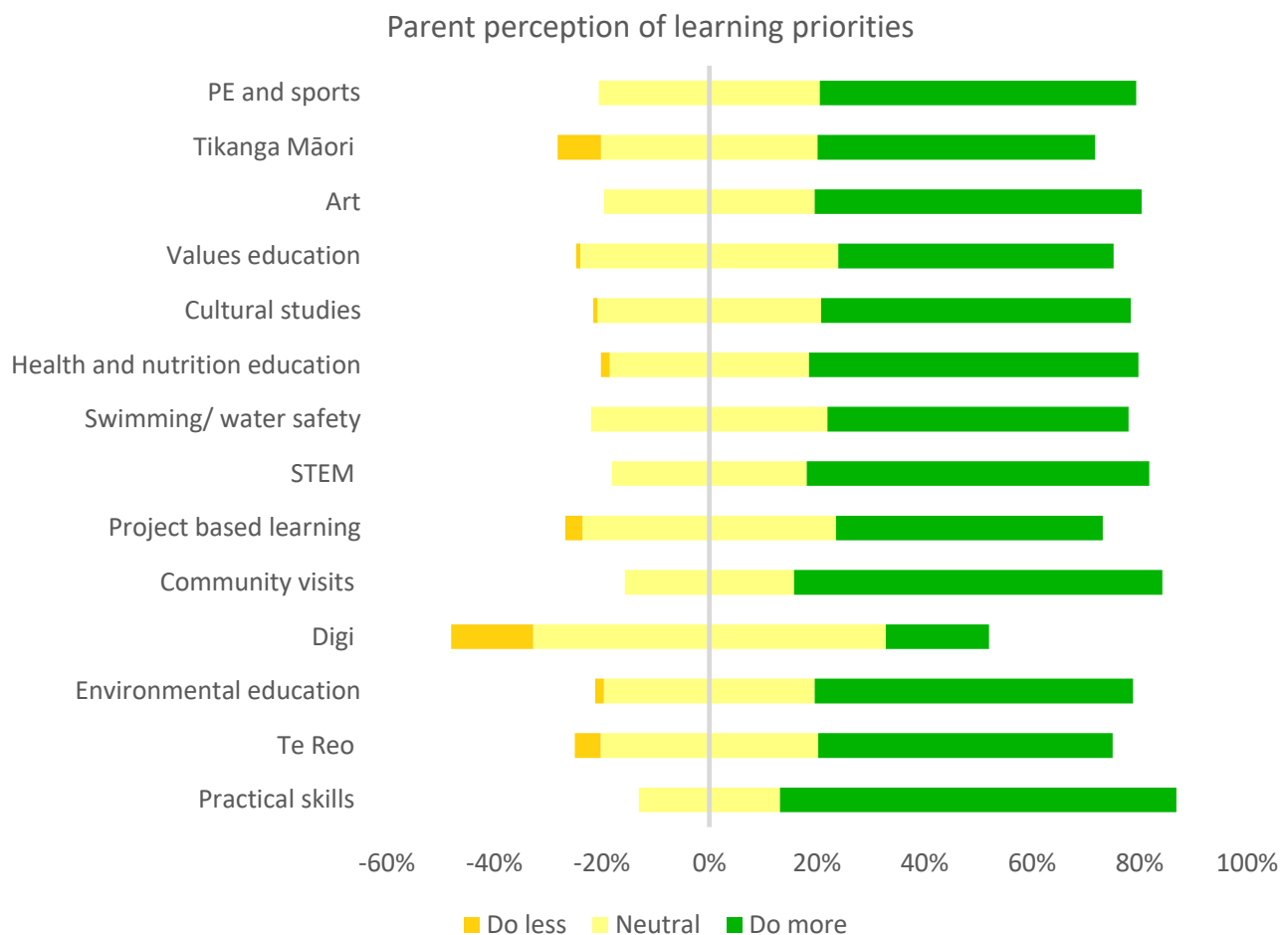
Comments received from parents at the Afternoon Tea with the Board event and through the homework survey were grouped into key themes and sub-themes. They provide detail on the things parents think the school does well and areas for improvement, as follows:

| Things parents perceive we do well	Things parents perceive we need to improve
▪ Broad coverage of subjects, style of lessons and learning (8% of comments) including reading program, structured literacy, PE, art ▪ Play-based learning	▪ Homework is needed regularly (6% of comments) ▪ Could be more variety in subjects (e.g. life skills, budgeting, sex education for 10-11 yrs, cultures, science/ experiments, natural world) ▪ More fieldtrips, connecting with community groups/ businesses to enhance learning/ deliver projects
"[My child] thinks you guys teach her well" *"Lots of creativity & play-based learning. Awesome for young ones"*	*"Not having homework coming home is a big concern"* *Include important cultural celebrations, Chinese New Year, language weeks, Matariki*

Use of iPads and Chromebooks

We sought feedback on the use of iPads and Chromebooks as learning tools in the classroom, including the length of time parents thought children should be using devices each day, and if they had any concerns.

- High level of support (nearly 70%) for some learning on devices – up to 2 hours each day
- Parents of older students supported more device-based learning than those of younger parents, which reflects the reality within our classrooms

How long should children be on devices for learning each day?

Legend: Kotare, Taranui, Kuaka, Total
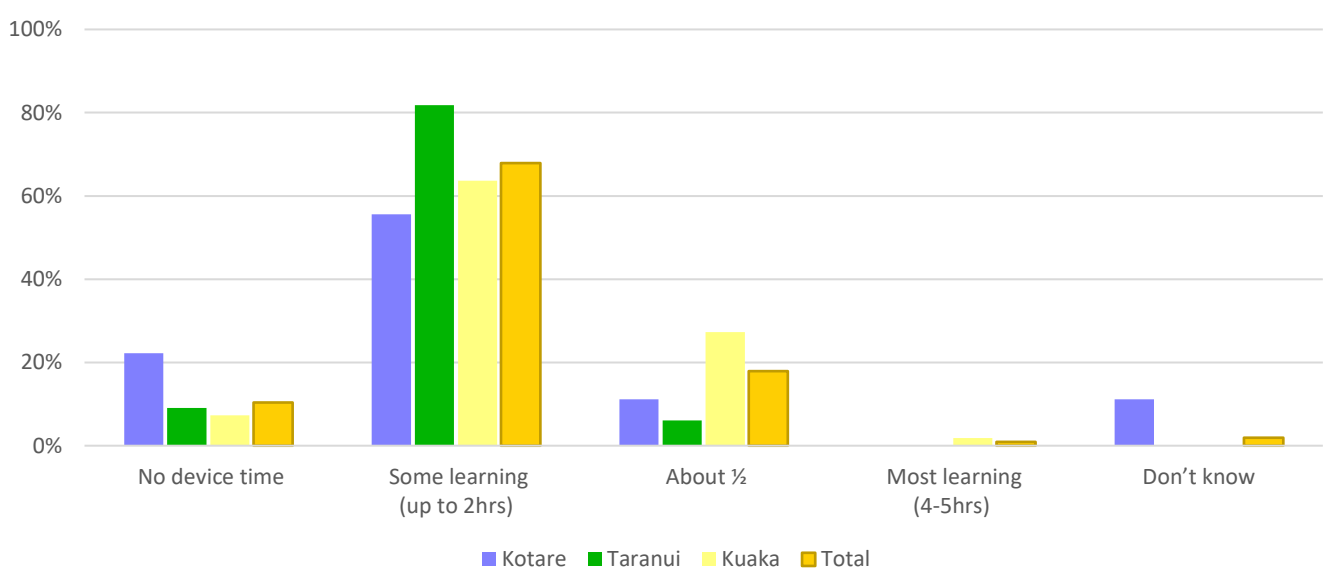
Parents were also asked about any concerns they have with device use in class. Concerns generally increased with the age of children (and increased use), as younger students do not use technology as much.

Concerns using digital devices for learning
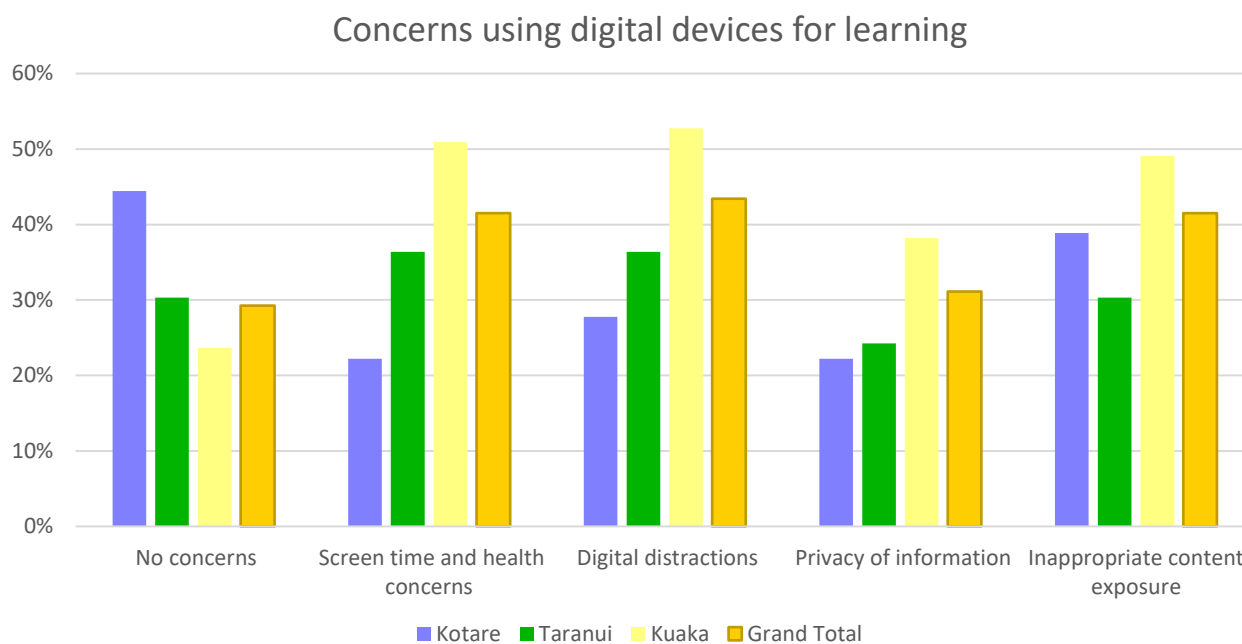
Other concerns parents raised included:

- Need to also learn to write, develop physical/ motor skills
- Like to see what is being learned and how it is completed
- Need for supervision
- Use as a teaching tool and not as a teacher replacement.

"I'm happy for my child to use a device as much as they NEED to use it for their learning, and not for a babysitter while the teacher is busy"
Parent voice

Implications:

The senior leadership team and teaching staff should consider parents' voice in designing classroom and EOTC activities and explore opportunities to respond to feedback.

The Board of Trustees and the senior leadership team may need to review the uniform policy and implementation to ensure it is meeting our school family needs.

While building work will commence soon to improve noise control in one hub, there are opportunities to improve aspects of classroom environments (e.g. noise, distraction, use of breakout spaces). These should be included in strategic planning activities.

Information sharing and communication

How we communicate about children's learning, progress and activities

We asked parents to indicate their level of agreement with six statements about how we communicate learning, progress and activities for their child. Parents/ caregivers were most satisfied with:

- Availability of teaching staff (71% satisfied and 24% neutral)
- Generally happy with the experience their child has at school (60% satisfied and 30% neutral)

Areas for improvement include:

- Effectiveness of communication about activities
- Awareness of how parents can be involved
- Details in school reports.

Communication on learning, progress and activities
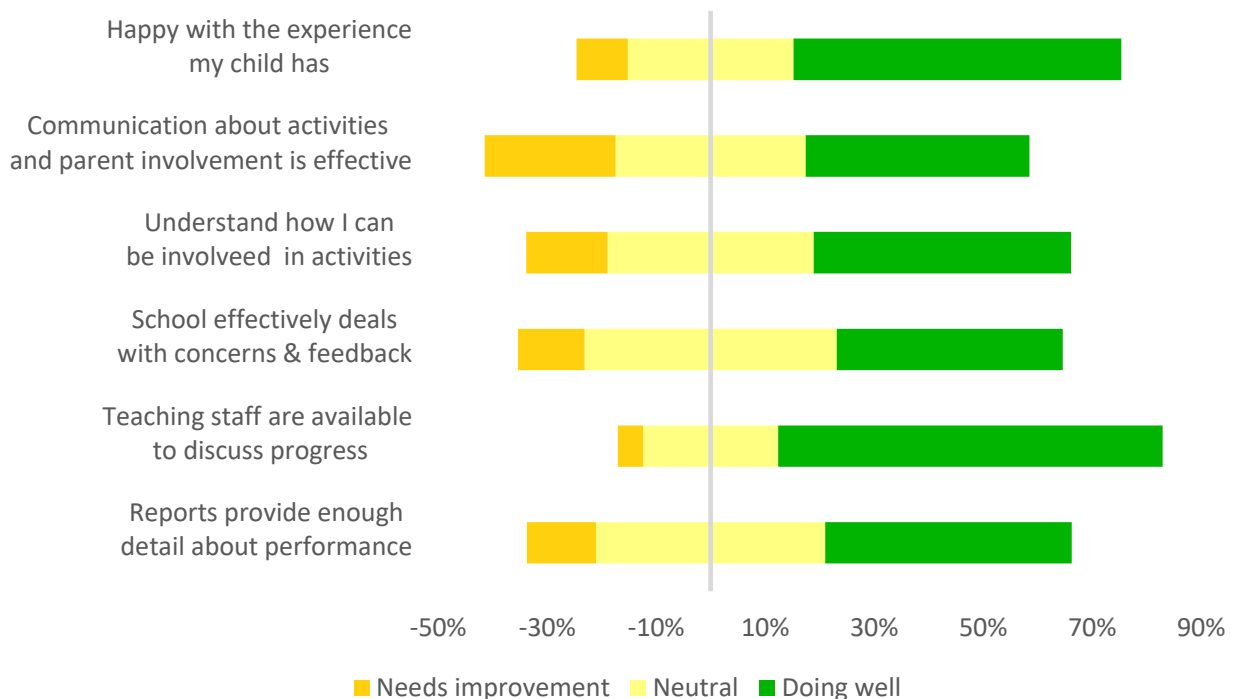
There was strong comment about ways the school can improve communication about student achievement and provided further detail around communication needs including:

Things we do well	Things that need improvement
■ Communicate when needed due to behaviour or concerns (7%) ■ Use of Seesaw app (4%)	■ Timely information, frequency of communication and regular updates (17% of all comments) ■ Information on classwork, learning and progress, invitations to see learning in class (5% say we do this well, 11% say it needs improving) ■ Using Seesaw consistently for all hubs (8%)

"Seeing [on Seesaw] what my child gets up to helps encourage discussion at home"

"Communication channels and open-door policy are amazing"

"Teachers take note of each child – make the most of them that day"

"Teachers don't read [Seesaw] for days and don't communicate back"
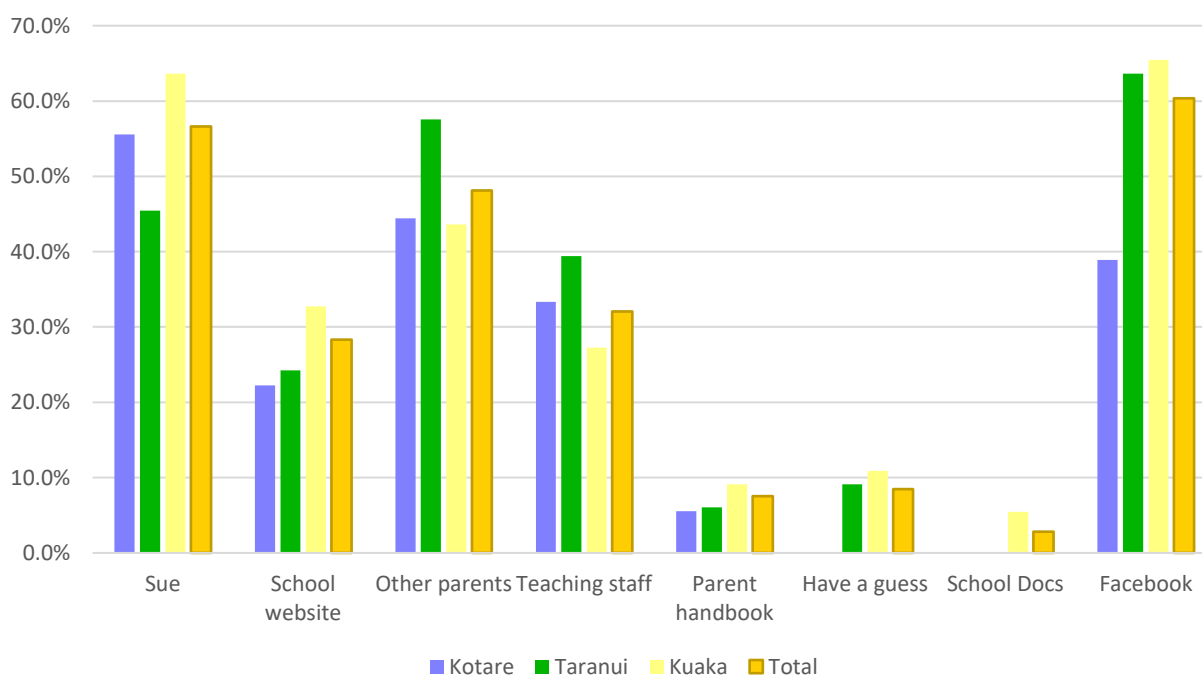
"I have absolutely no idea where my child is at"

"We appreciate homework as a way of knowing where our child's learning is at"

Parent voices

Communication channels

One of the parent homework survey questions was about where parents go for information about our school. This is what whānau told us:

Where we go for information about our school

This tells us:

- Parents of our youngest students (Team Kotare) are more likely to have asked Sue in the office or other parents for information than using our school's information resources
- Facebook is the main source of information for parents, more so with older age groups
- There are more people having a guess (8.5%) than there are using our parent handbook (7.5%)
- Some parents mentioned also getting information from Seesaw, their kids and emails.

Methods for engagement and communication

Parent were asked which methods would be most useful for the school to engage with and communicate through.

- Emails were the preferred method of communication across all hubs
- Parent of younger children preferred parent-teacher meetings; conversely parents of older children preferred updates on social media.

"Reduce email attachments; put information in the email"
"Keep the website updated, e.g. term dates"
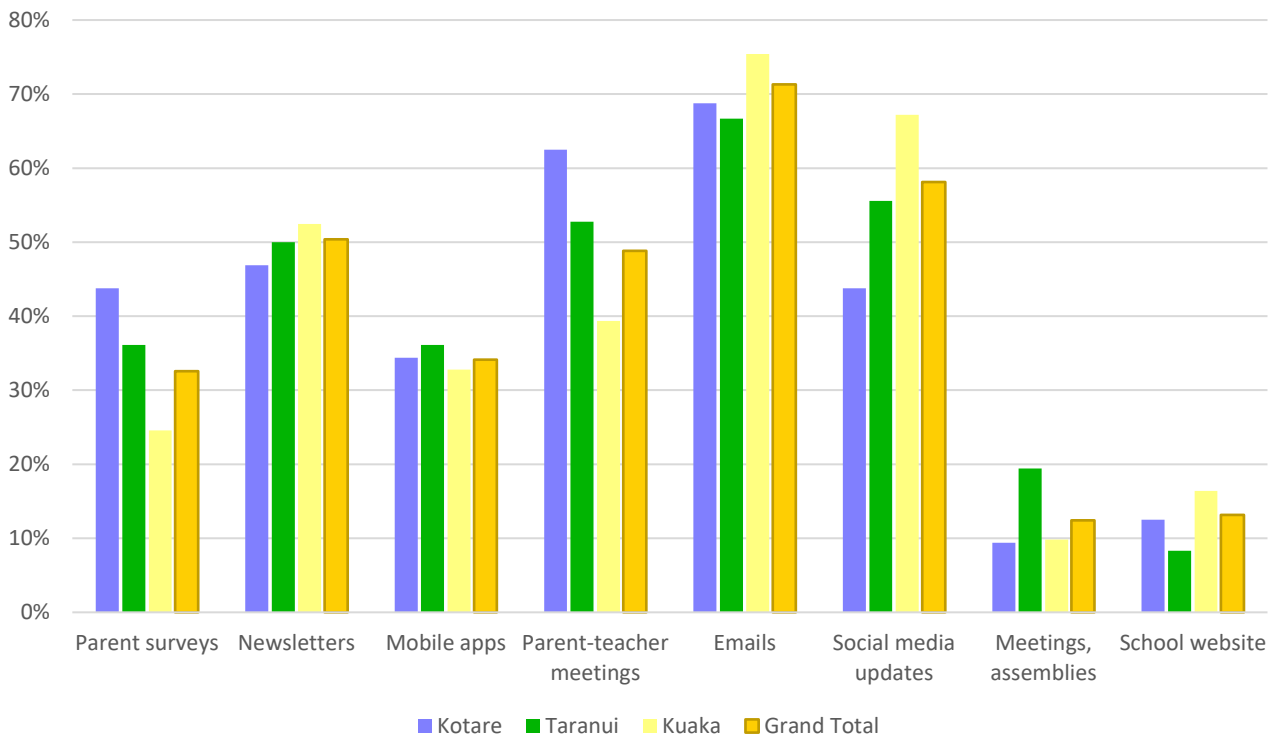*"Facebook is not dependable due to being full of advertising"*
"Newsletters felt like part of the family, now not at all"

Parent/ caregiver voice

Engagement & communication preferences

Legend: ■ Kotare ■ Taranui ■ Kuaka ■ Grand Total

Implications

- *Multiple channels are required to meet needs of families*
- *Facebook is valuable for certain types of regular messages when parents know to look there, e.g. weekly sport times. It is not otherwise reliable for reaching followers with new information*
- *We need to increase relevance and awareness of communication tools (website, handbook, School Docs)*
- *High demands on Sue's time for information that may be provided elsewhere (e.g. website, FAQ)*
- *Very few people look at our school policies.*

Foxton Beach School needs a communication strategy which determines the most appropriate communication channel for the information families need. This will also help maintain professional communications.

Connecting with whānau and community

Communication and connection was a major theme in the feedback received from parents/ caregivers with 65% of survey respondents commenting about communication. Comments from the Afternoon Tea with the Board and the Homework Survey were collated into key themes, highlighting concerns and areas for improvement.

Things parents/ caregivers perceive we can improve
▪ **Community connections:** more field trips, engage with community groups, iwi and local businesses for project-based learning, build cultural connections and strengthen transition relationships with ECE
▪ **Visibility, attendance**: of teachers, senior leaders/ principal at school and in community/ sports
▪ **Whānau involvement and inclusion:** timely information on activities, sports, events, assemblies and other ways families can be involved, including working/ single parent families (outside school hours); use of appropriate channels
▪ **More events and activities:** (see below)

Activities and sport

Twenty two percent (22%) of respondents to the homework survey provided additional comment about the school's involvement in community sport and activities. Comments covered a range of subjects, as follows:

Things parents/ caregivers perceive we can improve
▪ **School-based teams:** increase participation, more variety and coaching, more enthusiasm and support (12%)
▪ **More events and activities** to engage families in fun, e.g. fundraisers, galas, disco's, important cultural events (e.g. Chinese New Year, language weeks (8%)
▪ **Interschool events** such as challenges, games
▪ Kapa haka, singing, dancing, creative groups

"House/ senior leaders running sports, more interest in kids practicing"

"Love the events the school hosts"

"Take up offers of parent help"

"Staff need to step up and get themselves and students motivated and involved"

"A lot of 'playing sport for FBS' with little school development or encouragement (bar a few great parents/ aids)"

Parent voice

What is next?

- Identify strategies and priorities
- Identify resources, funding and timing
- Update the Strategic Plan and annual implementation plan as living documents

The information gathered through the May 2024 consultation will support updates to our 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan and annual implementation plans, while balancing demands on resources, skills and funding.

Survey responses can be used as a performance benchmark. Repeating elements of the surveys will allow the school to measure improvement and success of strategies.