

Dear Editor

I am the Limited Statutory Manager (Finance & Personnel) at Horowhenua College. Over a lifetime in education I have seen many prizegivings. In December 2013 I attended the Horowhenua College prizegiving. What I saw and experienced that evening was remarkable. I was amazed by the accomplishments of the students, many securing large scholarships, to say nothing of the Dux whose personal achievement was world class.

I was impressed by leadership of the senior students and by the pride with which those senior students wore their uniforms. When the parents of the Dux came onto the stage to stand by their son, and the students, parents and staff rose to acclaim that small family and to celebrate their Dux and their school, I was moved. I found myself thinking that the good people of Levin had every reason to be proud of what their College is able to achieve for their children, the students.

On Thursday 14th August the Manawatu Standard reported on the 'school's troubles. The article detailed events and allegations from 2011. I thought the story was unnecessarily mean spirited and could easily have chosen to talk about the achievements of the students, the progress the Board has made and the excitement around a new principal.

As reported there were relationship issues between the Board and principal in 2011. As well there were issues around the confidence the Board could have in the timeliness and reliability of the financial reporting. To its credit the Board sought and received support and assistance. Because the Board was judged to be otherwise effective and able to execute most of its powers, a Limited Statutory Manager (LSM) was appointed to take on only the powers of the Board for finance and personnel. I stress that my powers were limited because the Board was and is performing its other powers and duties effectively. In exercising my powers I do not 'control' the Board as you say, I work alongside the Board in the manner of a trusted advisor, mentor and guide.

To its further credit, when it advertised for a new principal earlier in the year the Board did not make an appointment. This was a rare and courageous decision that I supported. I don't think people, more widely, will appreciate how difficult the decision to not make an appointment was. The Board has now made an appointment and, in my view, can look forward to ensuring that the high standards of student conduct, the broad and innovative pathways for learning, and the sound management of the school bring educational, social and cultural successes for its students that the community will value.

Your story suggested 'book keeping blunders' were at the heart of the school's troubles. I believe a more accurate observation would be that too many cooks spoiled the broth and added conflicting advice and confusion to the systems. I wish to be clear that at no time have I had reason to doubt the integrity, probity, loyalty or thoroughness of the school's 'bookkeeper.' I have found that person to be thorough, prudent and extremely diligent in the face of some unwelcome tittle

tattle that your paper has, in part, contributed to.

My role is likely to draw to an end by the end of term 4. If it does, it will be because the Board will have completed its plans for a great 2015, the new principal will be settled in and the systems required to support managers and governors will be well bedded in.

Many communities in New Zealand have the great fortune to have effective schools available for their children. Levin is one such community. My working here has been a privilege for me and I thank the students, staff and trustees for working with me to fix a few things.

Ken Wilson
Limited Statutory Manager (Finance & Personnel)
Horowhenua College