

Appendix 1.1



HALSWELL RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE AND
WESTBRIDGE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
COMBINED BOARD



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Proposal that Halswell Residential College (HRC) become co-educational

The Board thanks Hon. Hekia Parata for her invitation (14 June 2016) to forward additional information in support of its application regarding Halswell Residential College (HRC) becoming co-educational.

Reaffirmation of original application

Firstly, the Board reaffirms its application for HRC to become co-educational. This was a unanimous decision at a meeting of the Board on 24 June 2016.

The College has been enrolling up to five girls (or a maximum of 40 percent of the male roll) since January 2014. There have been no known significant recorded incidents during this time and the Board has confidence in the stringent monitoring processes in place at the College. The College continues to demonstrate successful management of all its students, both male and female.

Since HRC is only able to enrol a small number of girls, the College has been forced to deny enrolments for three girls who with their families requested a place at HRC. While HRC remains a single-sex school for boys, students are being disadvantaged simply because they are female.

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Survey of our Community and Stakeholders

The College recently surveyed students, parents/whanau/caregivers, staff, Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS) psychologists who have referred students to HRC, contracted specialists (psychologist, speech language therapist, and nurse), ex-students and their parents, as well as other professionals associated with the school.

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In total, 98 people completed the survey

Of those interviewed:

- 100% thought HRC had successfully managed the safety of the girls since they started at the College.
- 100% thought HRC could successfully manage the safety of girls if the number was higher or even equal to that of boys.
- 98% supported HRC's application to become co-educational. The one person who did not support the application stated "Only because I prefer single-sex schools, not because HRC wouldn't do a good job. I am a real fan of HRC."
- None of the parents/whanau/caregivers of daughters at HRC said their child had raised concerns about her safety around the boys at HRC.

When asked what the College does to provide a safe environment for all students and for girls in particular; the students' responses mirrored that of professionals, staff and parents/whanau/caregivers. The following student responses demonstrate their understanding of the stringent monitoring processes in place at the College:

- "Separate the boys and girls and that rule about no boyfriends."
- "Watch us every step of the way. We have a safe room if we are angry and we are not allowed in other people's bedrooms because we could hurt someone."
- "There are good staff and we have our own bed spaces."
- "Use the safe room and separate us when we get elevated. The staff watch us and tell us about only being allowed to be friends."
- "They look after us, we are not allowed in other bed spaces and we talk about safety in health."
- "They don't let students be by themselves."
- "Tell us not to bully and the staff ask us if we are okay, and feel safe."
- "Staff are well trained. There are policies about watching students, especially if two students are together. There are also policies about where we can sit in the vehicles."
- "Treat us well and feed us, it is a good school."

The girls were asked "Have the boys at HRC ever made you feel unsafe in the past? If so, please tell me about it."

- Three students said "no" and one said "yes".
- The student who said "yes" explained; "They (boys) kept asking me out but (a staff member) told them that we are only allowed friends here and then he stopped."

Parents/whanau/caregivers and referrers identified the benefits they believed the students gained at HRC with both sexes on-site. They stated that the HRC environment:

- Reflects the diversity of society more accurately.
- Provides opportunities to develop social skills and interact with the opposite sex.
- Prepares students to operate in post-schooling situations with the opposite sex.
- Provides opportunities to break down misconceptions about the opposite sex.
- Provides opportunities to learn about the opposite sex.
- Potentially provides a foundation for the development of realistic, meaningful and lasting relationships later in life.
- Provides more options for finding a group to 'fit in with'.
- Provides opportunities to grow confidence in expressing their views in the presence of the opposite sex.

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An ex-female student added:

- "It helped me at my new school because there are boys there too. You need to know how silly boys are going to be because they are everywhere."

Staff continue to be enthusiastic about HRC becoming co-educational. The bilingual classroom teacher highlighted additional benefits from a Māori perspective:

- In Te Ao Māori, both men and women are seen as essential parts in the collective whole; both form part of the whakapapa that link Māori people back to the beginning of the world.
- Having a mixed gender classroom creates an environment in which students can learn about, and assume, traditional Māori roles.

IWS referrers, who rightly seek the best educational support for the students in their service, are overwhelmingly supportive of HRC becoming co-educational. Some of the comments they made included:

- "I have placed a number of girls at HRC and HRC have provided a safe environment for all of the students, and the girls have grown to develop appropriate self-regulation skills when engaging with others, both male and female students and staff."
- "Students at HRC are already safe due to high levels of understanding, training and skill of staff alongside rigorous systems, Health and Safety (and other) procedures. This will not differ whether the young people are male or female. The focus on students learning to make good choices and to manage themselves supports all students."
- "I have observed girls who have attended Halswell have the opportunity to develop friendships with other students, both girls and boys which has increased confidence in their academic, social and vocational learning. These opportunities are natural learning opportunities that cannot be provided within a single sex school."

HRC has welcomed the opportunity to enrol a small number of girls. Over a 30-month period, the College has demonstrated that it can and does keep girls safe. The Board encourages the Minister to approve the College's application which is overwhelmingly supported by its school community and stakeholders. The College does not want to turn another girl and her family away, simply because she is female.

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Yours sincerely

Lois Chick

Board Chair