

Business expertise crucial for School Board of Trustees.

CHILD MATTERS IS NEW ZEALAND'S SPECIALIST CHILD PROTECTION EDUCATION ORGANISATION.

CHILD MATTERS - speaking up for children

Child Matters, New Zealand's specialist child abuse prevention organisation

By **BEVAN BAYNE**

Congratulations to everyone who put their names forward for election as a school trustee.

The future of this country will rely on our children receiving the best education possible, and being part of making that happen is an extremely important role.

There will be dozens of significant and competing issues for trustees to deal with, so it is not a role to be taken lightly. Schools need the business community to contribute not only as parents but also to bring the

critical skills of governance supported by prudent financial and strategic decision making. One responsibility new trustees may not be aware of, and a major one (as required under the National Education Guidelines), is providing an optimal environment where children can learn.

Abused children do not learn optimally, and certainly not to their true potential.

Trustees have an obligation to ensure not only that the school environment is safe, but also that children who are suffering from any kind of abuse are given the help they need.

A safe school will have comprehensively screened and vetted

all staff, will have clear guidelines and policies to ensure safe practices are followed at school, and will have a plan for training staff so that they are confident in responding to and supporting children who may be being abused.

Getting the best education requires that children are well placed to learn.

All parents are indebted to trustees who donate their time and expertise which in turn can have such a huge influence in ensuring children are free of trauma and ready to learn.

Any trustees wishing to find out more about how they can ensure their school is adopting

best practice in child protection can visit the Child Matters website or contact Child Matters directly.

About Child Matters

Every child deserves to flourish in an environment safe from all abuse. Child Matters is determined to ensure that this happens.

Child Matters is a national charitable trust based in Hamilton that is dedicated to:

- Raising understanding and awareness of the issue
- Educating and inspiring those working with children
- Influencing change in society's attitudes and behaviours
- www.childmatters.org.nz.