



HOW STATE INTEGRATED SCHOOL BOARDS WORKS

The work of state integrated school boards extends beyond typical state school governance, encompassing unique responsibilities around special character preservation and proprietor relationships. Board members must navigate a complex landscape of legislative requirements, contractual obligations, and student achievement and attendance.

Effective governance requires comprehensive understanding of key documentation, clear delineation of roles, and strong collaborative relationships between the board and proprietor while avoiding over reach into each others role. This foundation ensures both educational outcomes and the preservation of the school's special character.

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY



Role of the Board

Board Composition

Governance models

Governance Framework

Board Toolkit

- Integration Agreement
- Strategic/annual plan
- MOU
- Governance Manual
- Governance Manual Templates
- Code of Conduct
- Proprietor Appointee role description
- Concerns and Complaints
- Where to get support



Understanding the governance puzzle

Legislation

Proprietor, Board, Crown Relationship

Integration Agreement

Roles and Responsibilities

4 Key Aspects - Employment, enrolment, property, teaching of RE

Property

Know your community



Role of the Proprietor

Safeguard Special Character

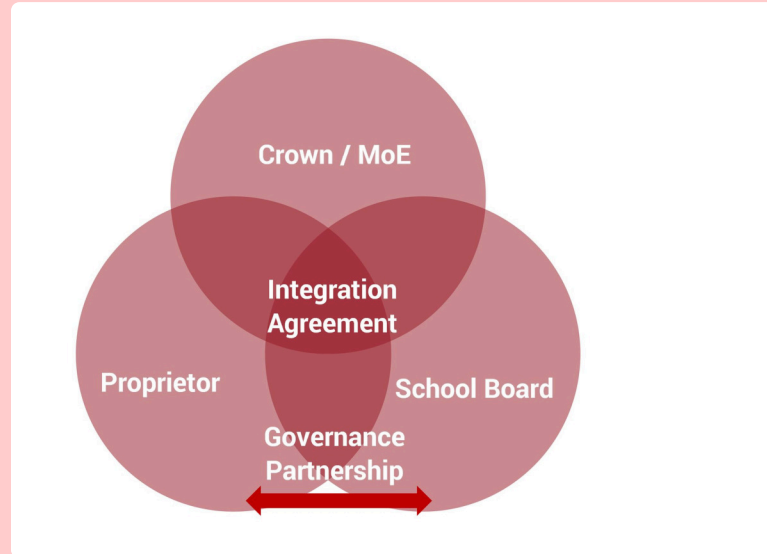
Special Character Guideline

Rights of the Proprietor

Toolkit for effective relationships

- Proprietor Handbook
- MOU
- Proprietor appointee role and purpose
- Special character evaluation
- Communication for effective governance
- Special character compliances
- Concerns and Complaints
- Constitution or Trust Deed for Proprietor Board
 - Proprietor Trust Board appointments and succession planning

Key Partnership - Crown, Proprietor, Board



The Foundation

The success of state integrated schools depends on strong, collaborative relationships between these key parties: the proprietor, the Crown (Ministry of Education), and the school board. Each party has distinct responsibilities, yet all must work in harmony to ensure the school thrives.

The Agreement

The Integration Agreement is the cornerstone document that defines your school's special character and establishes the framework for all three relationships. Regular review and open communication ensure these partnerships remain strong and effective.

Proprietor ↔ Crown Partnership

The proprietor enters into a formal partnership with the Crown through the Integration Agreement, committing to maintain and preserve the school's special character. The Crown provides operational funding while the proprietor retains ownership of property and defines core purpose.

Proprietor ↔ Board Collaboration

The proprietor sets the core purpose and direction through the Integration Agreement, while the board manages day-to-day operations. Proprietor representatives serve on the board to ensure agreements are honored and special character is actively maintained.

Board ↔ Crown Accountability

The school board operates as the governing body, accountable to the Crown for meeting national education standards, managing resources effectively, and ensuring student achievement while preserving special character.

Role of the Proprietor

In a state-integrated school, the Proprietor is the kaitiaki of the vision and special character. They are the steward of the founding purpose that sits behind the school's existence, such as:

- why the school was established
- what it aims to achieve for the students and the wider community,
- and how that purpose should endure over time.

In practice, the Proprietor's role is to keep the school anchored to its integrating agreement and founding intent, so the school's direction does not drift into being "just like any other school," but remains authentic to the distinctive character that justified integration in the first place.

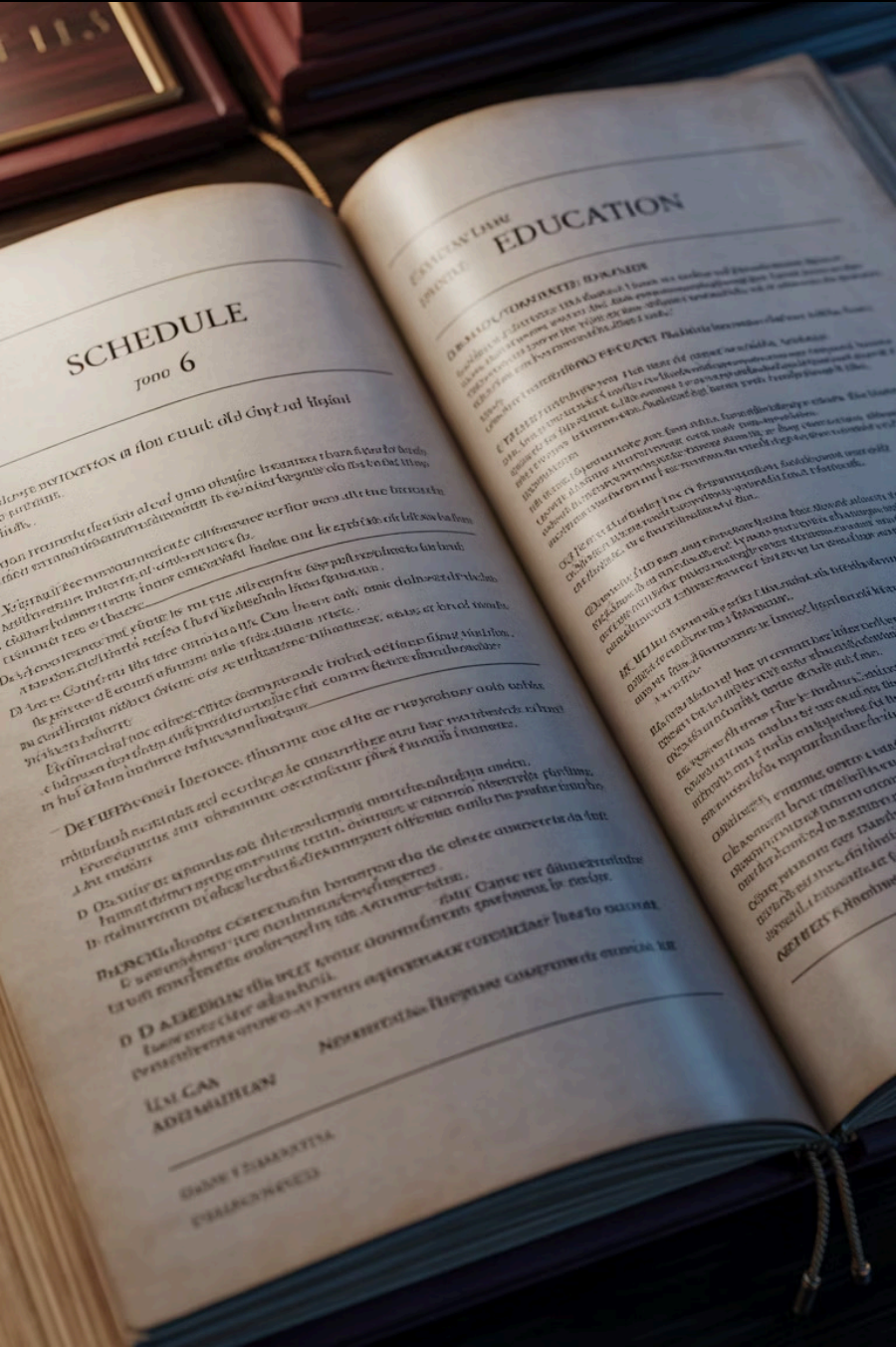
The Proprietor also **"owns" the special character** and is responsible for its guardianship. That means clearly articulating the special character in ways that are understandable and usable: a simple and compelling statement of purpose; the values and beliefs that shape the school's culture; and the non-negotiables that make the school unique.

It also means helping the school community understand what sets the school apart: the worldview it teaches from, the formation or education philosophy commitments it prioritises, the traditions and practices that give it identity, and the outcomes it seeks for students. When the Proprietor does this well, the special character becomes a living "why" that forms the basis of all decision-making.

Alongside this vision and character stewardship, the Proprietor has **rights and responsibilities** in the integrated setting, including interests in the school's property, enrolment, employment and teaching of special character.

Those rights sit alongside governance and operational roles held by the school board under the state system, making it especially important that the Proprietor's "special character custodian" function is explicit, well-communicated, and collaborative.





Safeguard Special Character

Definition of Special Character

Special character is fundamental to integration and is defined in Section 10 of the [Education and Training Act 2020](#) and the School's Integration Agreement as: '*education within the framework of a particular of general religious or philosophical belief and associated with observances or traditions to that belief*'.

The special character framework must be safeguarded and strengthened. Under the terms of Schedule 6 of the Education and Training Act 2020, the proprietors of integrated schools have a particular responsibility for determining, maintaining and enhancing the special character of integrated schools. Schedule 6: Clause 1, Education and Training Act 2020 protects the school's special character by ensuring that:

- the school shall continue to have the right to reflect the special character of its education through its teaching and the conduct of its staff
- integration shall not jeopardise the special character of an integrated school

the Proprietor shall continue to have:

- the responsibility to supervise the education with a special character
- the right to determine what is necessary to preserve and safeguard the special character
- if in the Proprietor's opinion the school's special character is threatened, the Proprietor may invoke its powers under Schedule 6: Education and Training Act 2020.

However, the whole school community are kaitiaki stewards of this taonga for future generations. The taonga is kept alive, vibrant, and aligned with the goals of integrated school education through:

- effective governance and management,
- engagement of the school board in special character professional learning and formation,
- effective and ongoing special character evaluation
- sound employment policy and processes,
- sound enrolment policies and procedures,
- compliance with the school's integration agreement.

Special Character Guidelines

APIS recommends Proprietors provide Special Character Guidelines to school boards (per Schedule 6, Section 39 of the Education and Training Act 2020) to ensure the school's special character is expressed, preserved, and enhanced in all aspects of governance, leadership, and daily operation.



Defining Special Character

What it means for the board



Proprietor's Expectations

Statement of their expectations



Board's Responsibility

Core role in special character



Governance "Lens"

For core practice framework



Role-Specific Expectations

Guidance for various roles



Review & Evaluation

Processes for ongoing assessment

Example & Template: Find adaptable template for Proprietors and boards [here](#).

Proprietor Rights Under the Education & Training Act

The Education and Training Act 2020, particularly through **Schedule 6**, establishes a unique partnership between proprietors, the Crown, and school boards. This framework preserves the special character of integrated schools while ensuring they meet national education standards and provide access to quality education. Schedule 6 specifically defines these relationships, outlining the implications for all parties.

Integration Agreement

The foundational document, strengthened by Schedule 6, that defines your school's special character and establishes the terms of partnership with the Crown

Statutory Rights

Legal protections for employment, property, enrolment preferences, and special character preservation, as detailed in Schedule 6

Governance Partnership

Clear delineation of responsibilities between proprietors and school boards, as outlined within Schedule 6

Key Provisions from Schedule 6

Schedule 6 of the Education and Training Act 2020 details critical provisions that guide the operation of integrated schools:



Clause 1: Preservation of Special Character

Ensures the religious or philosophical beliefs on which the school was established are maintained and protected, underpinning its unique identity.



Clause 26: Preference of Enrolment

Grants integrated schools the ability to give preference in enrolment to students who identify with the school's special character, within set limits.



Clause 39: Powers and Responsibilities of Proprietors

Defines the specific rights and duties of proprietors, including managing property, appointing staff for special character roles, and ensuring the special character is upheld.



Clause 47: Religious Instruction Appointments

Empowers proprietors to appoint or approve staff members who will provide religious instruction or uphold the school's special character, ensuring alignment with foundational beliefs.

Important Note: While the school board is the governing body of the school (E&TA Schedule 6, section 24), proprietors retain specific rights and responsibilities that cannot be delegated. Understanding these boundaries is critical for effective governance.

Proprietor Rights - Examples

The Education and Training Act provides state integrated schools with specific legal rights that protect their special character and ensure proprietors maintain appropriate oversight of key school functions.

Tagged Position Consultation

The proprietor must be appropriately consulted by the school board on the establishment of, and appointments to, tagged positions requiring staff who are "willing and able" to provide religious instruction or uphold special character.

Legal Reference: E&TA Schedule 6, sections 46 & 52

Enrolment Preference Criteria

Proprietors determine the criteria for preference of enrolment, which must be reflected in the school's enrolment procedures. This ensures families aligned with the special character receive priority access.

Legal Reference: E&TA Schedule 6, sections 26 & 27

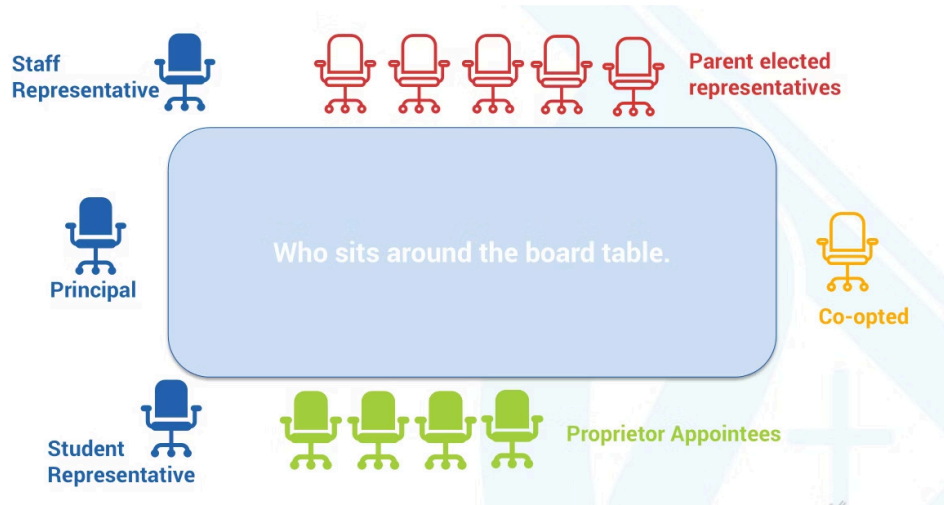
Attendance Dues Authority

With ministerial approval, proprietors may require attendance dues, the payment of which can be a condition of enrolment.

Legal Reference: E&TA Schedule 6, section 30(1)

All boards must operate within the framework of [Schedule 6, Section 5 \(Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities\)](#), [Section 127 \(Paramount Objective of Boards in Governing Schools\)](#), and [Section 130 \(Principal as Chief Executive of Board\)](#).

Board Composition



It is important to know who sits around the board table as the make up of the board in a state integrated school is different from a state school.

A board is a crown entity and body corporate.

A key point to note is that there must be **fewer appointed** and **co-opted** board members than parent elected board members.

The presiding member (board chair) can be either an elected or appointed board member.

School Based Members

Principal The principal is the board's chief advisor and the professional leader of the school. The day to day management of the school is delegated to the principal within a clear policy.

Staff representative -elected by the staff every 3 years.

Student representative -elected by the students every year. Schools with students enrolled full-time above year 9.

Elected and Appointed Board Members

The board also consists of between three and seven parent elected representatives and up to four Proprietor Appointees. Boards can also co-opt members.

Proprietor's Appointees are full members of the board with all the same rights and obligations of other board members. These appointees assist in preserving the special character and property of the school and are required to report to the Proprietor. Please watch the proprietor appointee webinar for an indepth overview of this role.

The Governance Continuum: Finding Your Model

Governance isn't one-size-fits-all. Organisations operate along a continuum from highly centralized, hands-off boards to decentralized, hands-on committees. Understanding where your proprietor board sits—and where it *should* sit—is essential for effective governance.



Hands-Off Boards

Examples: Corporate boards of public companies, government-appointed boards

Characteristics: Board defines strategy and monitors performance with no involvement in daily operations. Strong governance frameworks and clear delegation. Structured committees for specific projects only. Rare site visits. No staff interaction except with CEO. Performance-focused meetings with strong role clarity and unified board voice.



Strategic Boards

Examples: National sporting organizations, mid-sized charity boards

Characteristics: Clear delegation to CEO or executive team. Board focuses on strategy, oversight, and compliance. Committees support governance (audit, risk, nominations). Use of performance metrics and regular evaluations. Balances strategic leadership with community engagement whilst maintaining boundaries.



Hybrid Boards

Examples: Regional not-for-profit organisations, small arts organisations

Characteristics: Board sets direction but also assists with execution and some staff tasks. Committees handle both governance and operational matters. Role clarity varies depending on organizational maturity. Members engage in fundraising, advocacy, and strategic planning activities.



Hands-On Boards

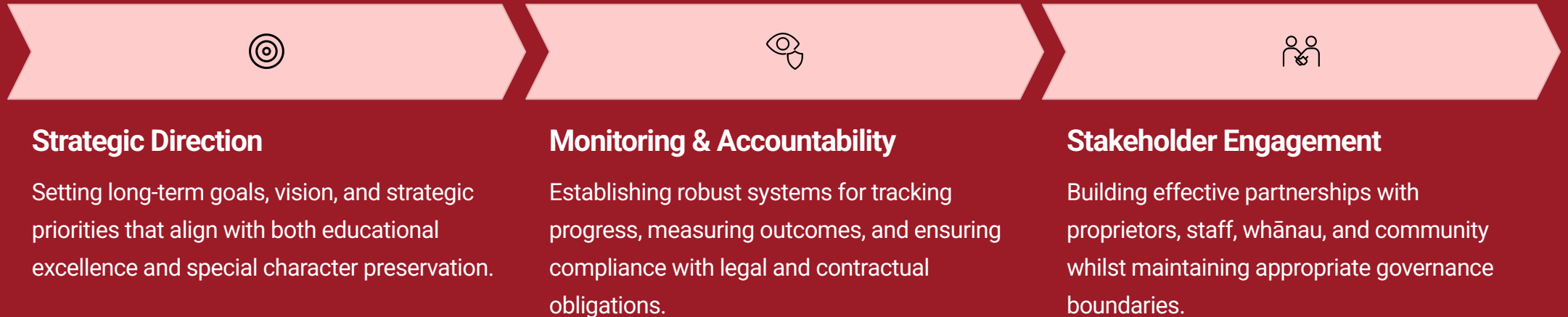
Examples: Parent associations, local sports club committees

Characteristics: Board members actively involved in operations. Meetings include detailed procedures, planning, and logistics. Little separation between governance and management. Often involved in day-to-day decisions. Decisions made collectively, often informally. Members frequently on-site "helping" management, which can create role confusion.

❏ **For School Boards:** Most effective boards operate in the "Strategic Board" zone—maintaining clear governance boundaries while staying connected to special character preservation. This allows school boards and principals to manage operations while proprietors focus on their unique statutory responsibilities.

Governance Framework Structure

The board's role is one of strategic oversight, leadership, direction, and policy setting. The board develops a governance policy framework and processes for decision making, ensures compliance with legal requirements, and puts in place structures for the principal to effectively manage day-to-day operations.



The governance framework provides the architectural blueprint for effective board operations. It delineates the relationship between governance and management, clarifies decision-making authority, and establishes accountability mechanisms. This framework ensures boards operate within legislative requirements whilst maintaining flexibility to respond to local community needs and circumstances. Understanding this framework is essential for new board members and provides ongoing reference for experienced governors navigating complex decisions. You will find a governance policy framework example under Resources on the APIS website.

Board Toolkit

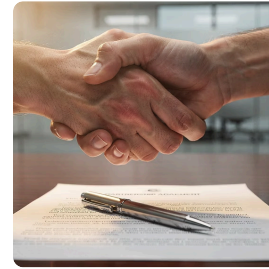
This Board Toolkit provides a comprehensive collection of resources and templates for effective governance. These tools offer clear guidance, standardised procedures, and essential information to navigate responsibilities, ensure compliance, and make informed decisions that benefit the organisation and its key stakeholders.



Integration Agreement



Strategic/annual plan



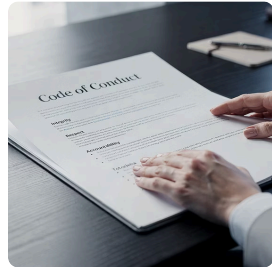
Memorandum Of Understanding



Governance Manual



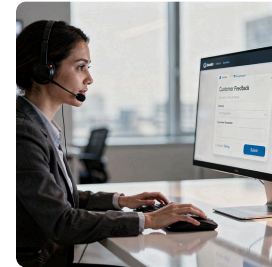
Governance Manual Templates



Code of Conduct



**Proprietor Appointee role
description**



Concerns and Complaints



Integration Agreement

The Integration Agreement is the foundational legal document that formalises the school's relationship with the Crown. It specifies the terms under which the school operates within the state system whilst preserving its special character.

This binding agreement outlines property ownership arrangements, financial obligations, special character definition, and the respective rights and responsibilities of all parties. Boards must thoroughly understand these provisions as they fundamentally shape governance decisions and strategic planning.

[Click here to find your integration agreement](#)





Strategic/annual plan

Under the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act), a new planning and reporting framework came into effect on 1 January 2023. Te Mahau/Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga (Ministry of Education) framework for school planning and reporting, called Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together for Ākonga Success: Our School, Our Community is now in place.

[See Factsheet for more information](#)



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Memorandum Of Understanding

The MOU between proprietor and board establishes the practical working relationship and collaborative framework. It clarifies expectations, communication protocols, and decision-making processes for matters requiring joint consideration.

This document provides flexibility beyond the formal Integration Agreement, allowing parties to adapt to changing circumstances whilst maintaining the integrity of the special character. Regular review ensures the MOU remains relevant and effective in supporting constructive partnership.

Key Elements

- Communication protocols
- Decision-making processes
- Joint consideration matters
- Regular review schedule

The MOU is in a "draft" format so that Boards and Proprietors can amend it together and sign off on the final version.

[Click here for a copy of the MOU](#)



Governance Manual

The cornerstone document providing comprehensive guidance on board operations, decision-making processes, and governance best practices specific to state integrated schools. Find a copy here.



Governance Manual Templates

Standardised templates ensuring consistency in documentation, reporting, and administrative processes across all governance functions and board activities. Find a copy here.



Proprietor Appointee role description

The primary responsibility of the proprietor appointee is to represent the interests and values of the school's proprietor on the school board. The appointee ensures that the school's special character, as agreed upon in the school's integration agreement with the government, is maintained and preserved.

While the proprietor appointee represents the proprietor's interests, they are also part of a broader school board responsible for the overall governance of the school. Therefore, they must balance the interests of the proprietor with those of the parent and community representatives to ensure the best interests of the students and the school as a whole.

[Find more information and role description here](#)





Handling Concerns and Complaints in Relation to Special Character

School boards are responsible for managing concerns and complaints within their school community. Occasionally, these matters may involve issues relating to the school's special character. In state integrated schools, the Proprietor has the legal responsibility for preserving the special character or educational philosophy and works in partnership with the school board to uphold this.

Boards, particularly proprietor's appointees, must ensure governance decisions align with the special character as defined in the school's Integration Agreement. Special character is foundational to state integrated schools, shaping their values, beliefs, and practices. When concerns or complaints involve special character matters, boards should consult with the Proprietor to ensure these responsibilities are met collaboratively and in accordance with legal and governance obligations. More information and a flowchart can be found [here](#).

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct establishes the ethical framework and standards expected of all board members. It provides clear guidelines on conflicts of interest, confidentiality obligations, and appropriate behaviour in governance roles.

The code ensures accountability whilst protecting the reputation of both the board and the school community. Regular review and acknowledgement of these standards reinforces their importance in maintaining public trust.

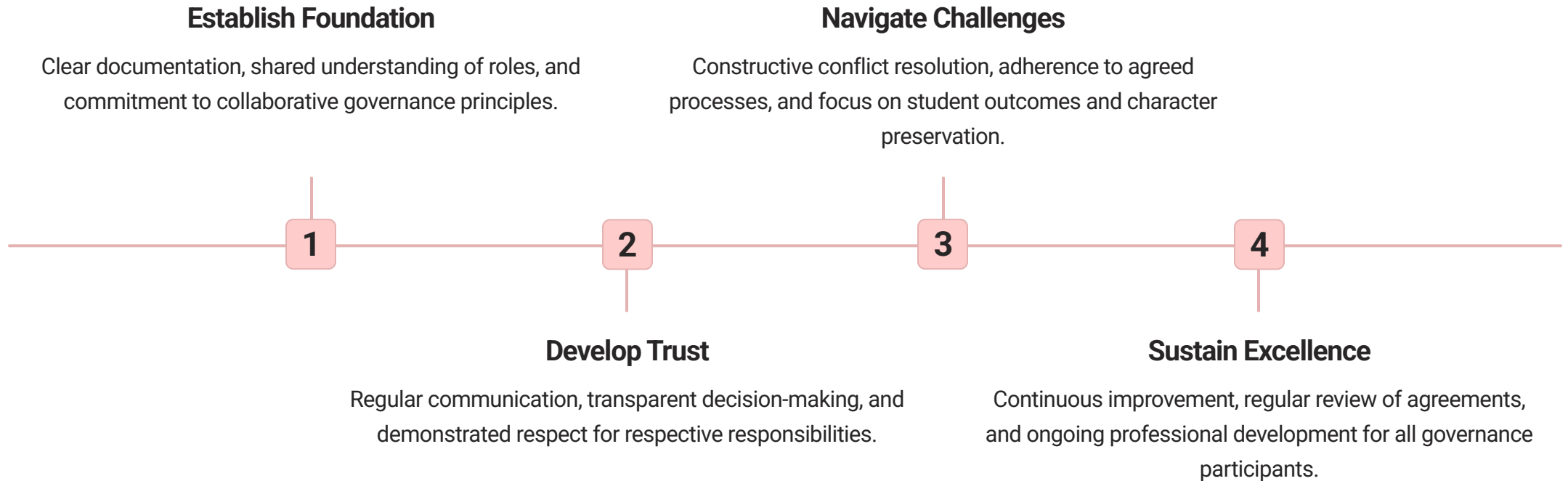
If a board member significantly or persistently breaches the Code, the board may recommend removal, and the Minister may remove the board member where satisfied there is "just cause".

 **Key Requirement:** All board members must sign the Code of Conduct annually, confirming their understanding and commitment to upholding these professional standards throughout their tenure.

The code of conduct issued by the Minister of Education under section 166 of the Education and Training Act 2020 has been expanded by APIS to apply to members of state integrated school boards and can be found [here](#).

[Access Code of Conduct here](#)

Building Effective Governance Partnerships



Successful state integrated school governance depends on robust partnerships between boards and proprietors. These relationships thrive when built on mutual respect, clear communication, and shared commitment to both educational excellence and special character preservation. By understanding respective roles, utilising available resources, and maintaining focus on student wellbeing and achievement, boards and proprietors create governance environments where integrated schools flourish. The journey requires ongoing attention, but the rewards—distinctive, values-based education within the state system—benefit generations of students and communities.

Key Documents for Review for the School Board and Proprietor

Effective governance depends on maintaining and regularly reviewing essential documents that define your role, authority, and obligations. These documents form the foundation of your governance framework.

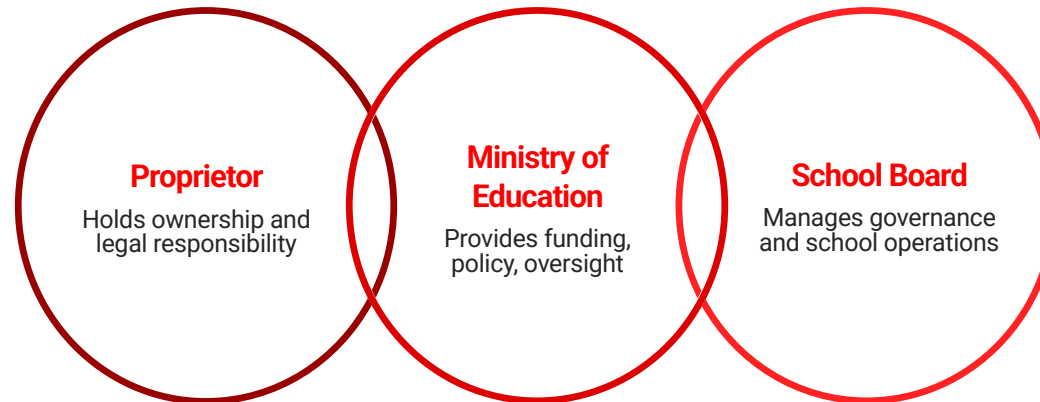
1	Integration Agreement Your foundational document defining special character, maximum roll, property details, attendance dues, and the partnership with the Crown. Review annually to ensure the school remains in compliance. Consider whether any variations are needed to reflect changed circumstances.
2	Trust Deed or Constitution The legal document establishing your proprietor entity, defining its purpose, governance structure, and operational rules. Review every 3-5 years to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects current best practice in governance.
3	Proprietor Board Strategic Plan and Policies Including delegations, conflict of interest management, meeting procedures, and communication protocols. These should clearly articulate how your board operates and makes decisions. Review annually and update as needed.
4	School Board Strategic Plan and Policies While these are the school board's documents, proprietors should review relevant policies—especially those relating to special character, tagged positions, and enrolment—to ensure alignment with the Integration Agreement.
5	10-Year Maintenance Plan The rolling property maintenance plan provided by the school board. Review annually to assess whether maintenance obligations are being met and whether capital investment is needed.
6	Annual Reports and Financial Statements Review the school's annual report and audited financial statements to understand performance trends, financial health, and how resources are being deployed to support special character.
7	Relevant Legislation and Guidelines Maintain current copies of the Education and Training Act 2020 (particularly Schedule 6), Ministry of Education guidelines for integrated schools, and any denominational guidelines for special character.

Document Review Schedule: Establish a regular calendar for document review—some annually, others every 3-5 years. Assign responsibility for each review and ensure findings are reported to the full proprietor board.



Partners and Support

Key Partnerships



State Integrated Schools are communities of partnership. The partners are the Proprietor of the school, the Ministry of Education, and the School Board. Each partner has a legal responsibility to maintain the school's special character.

Support Network

It is important to know who is there to support and guide you in your role as a school board member. Your primary contacts are:



[New Zealand School Boards Association](#)



[Ministry of Education](#)



[APIS](#) - For free advice and support, training, and workshops.