

How Decisions Are Made at the School

GOVERNANCE DISPATCH #3

*As our school moves through the **Renewal process**, many important questions are emerging around **leadership, accountability, participation, authority, and decision-making**.*

These are healthy questions for a living community to ask.

In a community school, not all decisions sit in the same place. Different structures hold responsibility for different kinds of decisions, with accountability attached to those responsibilities. This can sometimes feel complex, particularly in a school environment where many people care deeply and want to contribute meaningfully. However, clarity around decision-making is essential for both healthy participation and effective functioning.

One of the most important aspects of governance is understanding how decisions are made and by whom.

A useful way to understand this is to recognise that there are different categories of decisions within the school. This distinction is important because accountability must accompany authority. Individuals or groups who carry responsibility for outcomes must also have the ability to make decisions within their mandate.

Governance Decisions...

relate to the long-term stewardship and sustainability of the school, and typically include:

- strategic direction,
- financial oversight,
- major organisational changes,
- policy frameworks,
- risk and compliance,
- and ensuring alignment with the school's purpose and values.

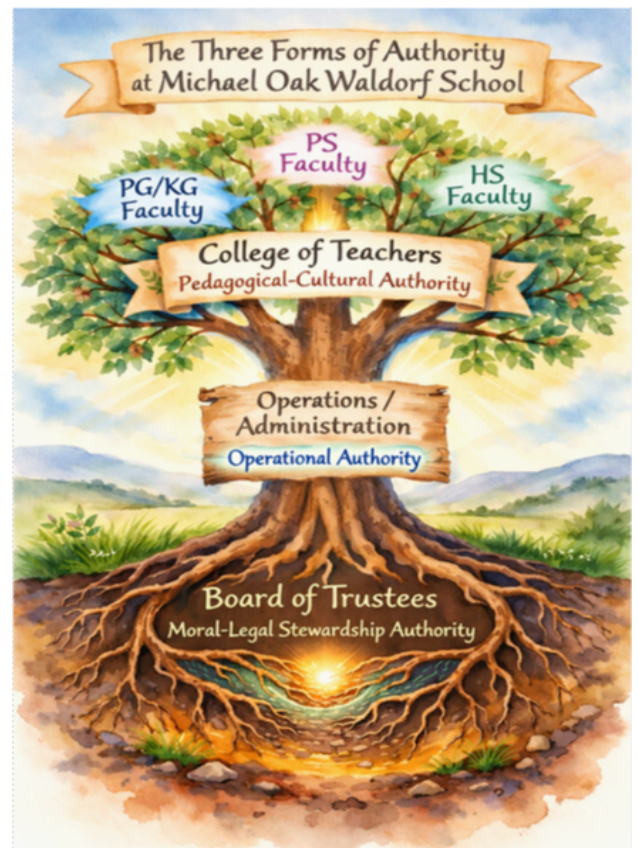
These responsibilities sit primarily with the Trustees, who carry legal accountability for the institution.

Pedagogical Decisions...

relate to the educational philosophy & learning approach of the school – including areas such as:

- educational principles,
- curriculum approach,
- pedagogical coherence across phases,
- and safeguarding the integrity of the Waldorf educational journey.

These responsibilities sit primarily within the College of Teachers and accompanying educational leadership structures.



Operational Decisions...

relate to the day-to-day functioning of the school, and includes:

- staffing implementation,
- operational processes,
- communication,
- administration,
- financial management,
- risk and compliance management,
- facilities,
- and the practical running of the school.

Strong governance does not mean centralising every decision. In many cases, effective governance depends on clear delegation, trust, and ensuring that decisions are made as close as possible to the relevant area of responsibility.

These responsibilities typically sit with leadership, management, and delegated operational structures.

Community Input and Consultation ...

remains an important part of school life. Consultation allows leadership and governance structures to hear perspectives, identify concerns, and benefit from the experience and wisdom within the community. At the same time, consultation is not the same as decision-making authority. Healthy organisations rely on a balance between:

- listening broadly,
- consulting appropriately,
- and ensuring that accountable structures ultimately make decisions within their areas of responsibility.

As the school evolves through the Renewal process, conversations are continuing about how responsibilities are delegated and how decisions are best made at different levels of the organisation. In particular, there are important discussions around balancing whole-school coherence with appropriate autonomy and operational effectiveness within faculties and leadership structures.

At the same time, delegation does not remove accountability. Structures remain connected and accountable to the broader purpose and wellbeing of the school as a whole.

Ultimately, healthy decision-making depends not only on structures, but also on culture - a culture of trust, clarity, communication, and shared commitment to the educational mission of the school.

In the next article, we will explore how community participation and engagement work within the life of the school, including the various forums and channels through which community voice contributes constructively.