

# A school's experience of the attempted implementation of an assisted road crossing initiative: A case study

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## **ABSTRACT**

New Zealand schools can elect to implement school traffic safety programmes such as walking school buses (WSBs) and assisted road crossings as a means to enhance child safety on the home to school journey. These initiatives require initial collaboration between the school and associated agencies. Schools and parent volunteers are often left to assume responsibility for operating and maintaining the programme. Each school community is different and will have site-specific needs and varying access to personnel and financial resources. In addition, the policy requirements and broader goals of the government and agencies, as well as the neoliberal educational environment, may have an influence on the school's ability and willingness to introduce an initiative.

Few studies have investigated the experience of key individuals representing schools and agencies and their perceptions concerning the implementation of school traffic safety programmes. This research focused on a case study of a Dunedin primary school's attempt to install a road crossing initiative operated by parent volunteers. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of the school and the agencies involved in the process of installing the road crossing initiative, in order to determine the factors that affected the successful implementation of the crossing.

A qualitative research approach was used. The methods for data collection included open-ended interviews, document analysis, and the researcher's reflexive diary. Interviews were conducted with the school principal, board of trustees chairperson, and a parent volunteer. Representatives from agencies including the Dunedin City Council, New Zealand Police, Ministry of Education, and Sport Otago were approached for comment via email. Data were transcribed from the taped interview sessions, and an inductive process was used to identify categories and themes from the data.

In this case study the school was unable to install the adult-assisted road crossing. Findings revealed that a lack of parent volunteers was a significant factor affecting the initiative's success, thus schools should work to strengthen the school-parent partnership. The processes that schools are expected to follow when installing road safety initiatives clearly do not work for every school, and each one has unique factors that may impact on its ability to maintain road safety initiatives.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the research.....	2
Significance of the research.....	3
Reflexive summary.....	4
CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	5
Neoliberalism.....	5
The neoliberal education setting.....	6
The theoretical framework.....	8
Educational and civic policy.....	9
New Zealand Curriculum.....	10
Legal obligations.....	12
Civic policies.....	15
School self-management.....	15
Partnerships.....	18
Inter-organisational partnerships.....	18
Principal and board of trustees relationship.....	22
The school's relationship with parents.....	23
Individual responsibility.....	24
Overall responsibility for the adult-assisted road crossing.....	24
Daily operation of the adult-assisted road crossing.....	25

Site-specific concerns .....	27
The built environment.....	28
Factors affecting parent volunteerism.....	28
Socioeconomic status.....	30
The importance of the adult-assisted road crossing initiative.....	32
The process of installing the road crossing.....	33
Summary .....	34
CHAPTER THREE - CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY .....	35
Timeline of the process.....	35
Methodology .....	36
Qualitative approach .....	37
Data collection methods.....	38
Structure of the interviews .....	39
Document analysis .....	39
Role of the researcher .....	40
Ethical considerations .....	41
Data analysis .....	41
Rigour of the research.....	42
CHAPTER FOUR - EDUCATIONAL AND CIVIC POLICY.....	45
New Zealand Curriculum.....	45
Legal obligations.....	48
Civic policies .....	52
School self-management.....	54
Summary .....	57
CHAPTER FIVE - PARTNERSHIPS .....	58
Inter-organisational partnerships .....	58
Principal and board of trustees relationship.....	65

The school’s relationship with parents .....	66
Summary .....	69
CHAPTER SIX - INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY .....	70
Overall responsibility for the adult-assisted road crossing .....	70
Daily operation of the adult-assisted road crossing .....	72
Summary .....	75
CHAPTER SEVEN - SITE-SPECIFIC CONCERNS .....	76
The built environment.....	76
Factors affecting parent volunteerism.....	77
Socioeconomic status.....	80
The importance of the adult-assisted road crossing initiative.....	81
The process of installing the adult-assisted road crossing: impressions.....	84
Summary .....	86
CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION .....	87
Summary of key findings.....	87
Implications of the study.....	91
Features of the study .....	93
Contribution of the current study .....	93
Recommendations.....	93
Further research .....	93
Conclusion .....	94
REFERENCES .....	95
APPENDICES .....	111
APPENDIX A.....	111
Map showing the route from the proposed crossing site to Longview Primary .....	111
APPENDIX B .....	112
Legal requirements.....	112

APPENDIX C .....	113
List of potential questions for open-ended interviews.....	113

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation
AT	Active transport
BOT	Board of trustees
BOTCI	Board of trustees chairperson interview
DCC	Dunedin City Council
EOTC	Education Outside the Classroom
ERO	Education Review Office
HNZ	Housing New Zealand
HPE	Health and Physical Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZTA	New Zealand Transport Agency
PCI	Parent co-ordinator interview
PRI	Principal interview
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RSE	Road safety education
SCO	School community officer
SES	Socioeconomic status
TOD	Transportation Operations Division
WSB	Walking school bus

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Factors influencing the introduction of school traffic safety programmes.....	9
Figure 2 Current processes for installing school road safety initiatives in New Zealand.....	88

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A.....	111
Appendix B.....	112
Appendix C.....	113

## CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

*“If you put everything that a government does to the vagaries of a market, you leave it in the hands of a market. You actually run into some problems as far as the relationship between a citizen and a state, and the type of society you’re going to have” - Salmaan Keshavjee (Walker, 2014).*

For many children, crossing a road is a necessary part of their journey to and from school, yet this seemingly simple act may be dangerous and risky. Due to this inherent risk, crossing roads is governed and controlled by school policy, interventions, and programmes with the intention of making the act safer for children (Cross, Hall, & Howat, 2003; Zeedyk, Wallace, & Spry, 2002). Schools may decide to install active transport (AT) initiatives such as assisted road crossings and walking school buses (WSBs) in an attempt to make travel to and from school safer for children (Eyler et al., 2008b).

Collaboration between the school community and local agencies, groups, and individuals has proven to be a success factor in implementing AT initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008b; Heath et al., 2012; Kong et al., 2009; National Center for Safe Routes to School, n.d.; New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Schools are also subject to the influence of governmental and council regulations and policies, such as the requirement to meet legal responsibilities and the expectation that New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) values are adopted into the school curriculum. These influences and expectations place the New Zealand primary school within a neoliberal educational setting. Schools are expected to self-manage within national guidelines (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Bush & Gamage, 2001) and survive with the school-specific resources they possess (Smyth, 2011). In addition, schools are expected to be responsible for addressing difficulties and be willing to self-promote (Collins & Kearns, 2001).

Adult members of the school community have been identified as a reasonable and valid source to fill the role of volunteers to coordinate and staff initiatives (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2012b). The recruitment and management of parent volunteers as representatives of the school are important in the implementation process. Road safety initiatives highlight issues of child and volunteer safety and legal considerations, and the volunteers’ roles and responsibilities within that environment. The effect of these elements on a school’s willingness to introduce an initiative and a person’s inclination to volunteer may be significant.

## **Purpose of the research**

This project seeks to examine a school's experience of attempting to implement an adult-assisted road crossing programme, in particular the perceptions of the school, its community, and related agencies throughout this process. It is the experiences of the partnerships, policy requirements, individual responsibilities, and concerns specific to the school in a neoliberal educational setting that are the focus of this study, rather than the actual implementation of the crossing. How these elements influence the school's ability to introduce a road safety initiative will be examined.

I conducted a research project in 2013 with the participating school as part of University of Otago course requirements. Parent and staff feedback obtained during the project identified a road crossing as a potential safety measure for the school. It is therefore relevant and specific to this school community.

The following research questions are posed:

1. What are the school's perceptions of the experience of implementing an adult-assisted road crossing initiative?
2. What are the perceived influences on the school's ability and willingness to implement the road crossing initiative?
3. What are the perceptions of the related agencies and groups associated with the implementation of the road crossing initiative?

Findings from this study will inform the participating school and its community of the positive elements and challenges of installing the road crossing. Similarly, the findings may provide information for reflection by various agencies in partnership with schools for future installation projects.

To ensure an understanding of the topic, a working definition of a school community is needed. This can be difficult due to the multiple characteristics and features of individual schools. According to Redding (1991), "a school community is an assemblage of the people intimately attached to a school – its teachers, administrators, students, and the students' families" (p. 7). In addition, the school system is dynamic and not a simple hierarchy, with "multiple points of negotiated understanding between various key actors", including local agencies and citizens (Baker, Curtis, & Benenson, 1991, p. 14). The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA)

includes “parents, students, whanau, school staff, police, and territorial authorities” in its definition of a school community (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2012b, para.1).

To provide a suitable description of the school community for the current project, the ‘school’ will include the principal, board of trustees (BOT) chairperson, school staff, children, parents, and caregivers. The focus of the project is at the policy level at which children are not involved. Therefore, children will not be interviewed or observed during this research and the participants in the research will focus on adult members of the school community. Reference to the school or the school community in this project will use ‘the school’, ‘school’, ‘school community’, or the pseudonym assigned to the school, ‘Longview Primary’.

The focus of this case study is a co-educational, decile<sup>1</sup> 4, state primary school (Education Counts, 2013). Longview Primary employs 14 administration/support/teaching assistants and 16 teachers (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014). There are 220 families and 290 students enrolled at the school (Principal, personal communication, June 5, 2014). The principal has been in the role at Longview since October 2008, and the BOT chairperson has been in that role since June 2013 and been involved with the school as a parent for seven years.

The site of the proposed road crossing is approximately 800 metres from Longview Primary and about a nine minute walk (Googlemaps, 2014). A map of the area is included in Appendix A. The area that would primarily be serviced by the Longview adult-assisted road crossing is referred to as Eastville throughout this project. In 2008, Housing New Zealand (HNZ) owned 72 per cent, or 58 of the 80 houses, in a well-known street in Eastville and was investigating the redevelopment of the state housing in the street (Munro, 2008). In the immediate area around this street, the predominant ethnic group is European (80%), 25% of residents have an annual income of \$20,000 or less, and the main occupation (17%) is labourer (Quotable Value, 2014).

### **Significance of the research**

There is significant research identifying the benefits of AT (Litman, 2003; Tudor-Locke, Ainsworth, & Popkin, 2001) and the recruitment of adult volunteers to operate school road safety initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008b; Heelan et al., 2008). As research has demonstrated, the implementation of school safe-travel initiatives has a strong focus on identifying issues that

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<sup>1</sup> “Decile 1 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the highest proportion of pupils drawn from low socioeconomic communities, while decile 10 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the fewest such pupils” (Collins & Kearns, 2005, p. 66). Rankings are determined by family income, parental occupations and qualifications, welfare assistance, and household overcrowding (Collins & Kearns, 2010). Communities with less qualifications, more overcrowding, and lower incomes are likely to receive a lower decile ranking.

might affect the successful implementation and maintenance of these initiatives (Fesperman, Evenson, Rodríguez, & Salvesen, 2008; Kahn et al., 2002; TenBrink, McMunn, & Panken, 2009).

Studies investigating the implementation of WSBs in schools (Heelan et al., 2008; Kearns & Collins, 2003; Kong et al., 2009) and the use of school travel plans (Buliung, Faulkner, Beesley, & Kennedy, 2011) tend to focus on the recruitment of volunteers, child injury and safety, and the benefits and effectiveness of the initiatives. In examining the wider literature, there is a gap in the understanding of the experiences and perceptions of those schools and agencies introducing safe AT initiatives. Of particular interest are the experiences concerning the partnerships, policy expectations, individual responsibilities, and site-specific concerns within the neoliberal educational setting. The current project adapted and utilised a theoretical framework developed from Parusel and McLaren (2010). The framework will be used to guide the research and examine and inform the findings. The present study aims to contribute to this framework and expand the knowledge and understanding in this area.

### **Reflexive summary**

The project I conducted in 2013 with Longview Primary as part of course requirements focussed on the impact of a discontinued bus service on the school community and the AT of students. The research identified an absence of supervised road crossings which could make travel to school safer for children, with one particular road and crossing site being pinpointed by staff and parents. It was subsequently decided that Longview Primary would attempt to install an adult-assisted road crossing on this road in conjunction with the Dunedin City Council (DCC) and New Zealand Police. When approached about the prospect of the school being the focus of this research in 2014, the principal approved. Therefore, this project is significant and unique to the Longview Primary community.

Early on in this project, it was clear that there were insufficient volunteers to operate the road crossing daily before and after school. Only two parent volunteers came forward. Therefore the original project concept of examining the influences on a functioning school road crossing could not continue. The project therefore changed to one investigating the reasons why Longview Primary's road crossing did not eventuate.

## CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To provide a framework for the current study, findings from Parusel and McLaren (2010) have been adopted. These authors presented factors that affected the installation of safe travel programmes in Canadian primary schools, in particular educational and civic policy, partnerships, individual responsibility, and site-specific concerns. For the purpose of this study, an awareness of the widespread influence that neoliberalism has over the New Zealand education sector is helpful. While the Parusel and McLaren (2010) research is useful, their framework is conceptually limited by a lack of recognition of the social, economic, and political context within which school crossings are situated. To address this, the Parusel and McLaren (2010) framework will be adapted to consider and critique the New Zealand neoliberal educational environment.

The topic of neoliberalism is broad and therefore requires qualifying in order to provide a definition and additional context for the current project. The following interpretations illustrate the various descriptions of the neoliberal philosophy.

### **Neoliberalism**

The 1980s saw neoliberal reforms occur in a number of Western countries, namely the US, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand (Nairn, Higgins, & Sligo, 2012). Following the introduction of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 (Codd, 2005), a period of “radical neoliberal reform” (Fitzsimons, 2000, p. 2) began to influence and transform New Zealand’s economic, social, and education policy (Berg & Roche, 1997; Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008; Nairn et al., 2012).

Clarke (2004) describes neoliberalism as a force and Peck and Tickell (2002) remark that the ideology appears to be everywhere. Neoliberalism has been referred to as the prevailing “explanatory term for contemporary forms of economic restructuring” (Larner, 2003, p. 509) and has been presented as the only alternative and a universal cure to failing economic conditions (Codd, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Katz, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002).

Another approach is to view neoliberalism as a process that has limits and instabilities (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008). Clarke (2004) draws further attention to these limits, stating that it is affected by tensions, contestations, resistance, and refusal. Neoliberalism is “variegated” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 387) and there exists “multiple and contradictory aspects of neoliberal spaces, techniques, and subjects” (Larner, 2003, p. 509). To further

emphasise this idea, Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) suggest considering neoliberalism “as something that needs to be explained in particular places and with reference to particular peoples, territories, states and cultural formations” (p. 123-124). A number of authors have pointed to the presence of neoliberalism in various countries with different political, national, and cultural identities (Clarke, 2004; Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008), so neoliberalism therefore means different things to different populations. For the current project, I have adopted the social and political approach and the focus will be on the neoliberal educational setting in New Zealand. The ability of Longview Primary to operate within this environment, along with the possibility of challenging or confronting the neoliberal ideologies, will be investigated.

### *The neoliberal education setting*

The New Zealand education system prior to 1989 was perceived as costly and inefficient by the government, as it was “centralized and bureaucratic” (Nairn & Higgins, 2007, p. 263).

Neoliberal reforms subsequently influenced the education system and policy (Berg & Roche, 1997; Nairn et al., 2012). It is claimed that the ideology emerged without much resistance or analysis in a piecemeal fashion “which works to make the discourse itself invisible” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 257). In further support of this notion, “critical to the success of the reforms was the need to embed them in education reforms, which served as the vehicle for psychological, social, and structural change” (Culpan & O'Neill, 2004, p. 225).

Schools are expected to be independent and to self-manage and remain competitive in an environment influenced by government policy, while satisfying performance criteria and meeting market and parent expectations (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Bush & Gamage, 2001; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Lee, O'Neill, & McKenzie, 2004; New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.; O'Neill, Clark, & Openshaw, 2004; Robertson & Dale, 2002; Smyth, 2011). Schools, as autonomous subjects, are also expected to be “self-reliant, responsible and able to personally negotiate risk and the marketplace without relying on state support” (Raby, 2014, p. 80; Robertson & Dale, 2002). The state maintains its power to govern at a distance by passing its power to the community and individuals (Robertson & Dale, 2002; Smyth, 2011; Witten, Kearns, Lewis, Coster, & McCreanor, 2003).

Neoliberal reforms created a market economy where education is converted into a product or commodity which can be traded to maintain economic viability, rather than being dependent on governmental support (Davies & Bansel, 2007; New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.; O'Neill et al., 2004; Parker & O'Leary, 2006; Ross & Vinson, 2013; The

Treasury, 1987). Peters (1999) explains that “there is nothing distinctive or special about education or health; they are services and products like any other, to be traded in the marketplace” (p. 3). O'Neill (2011) substantiates this argument by claiming that “knowledge and learning are reduced to measurable outcomes, to be achieved through commercialised forms of educational services provision ... Public education thus becomes the buying and selling of services for money. This is commerce” (p. 27).

Market-like competition is likely to introduce division between school communities based on social class, leading to prosperous or popular schools choosing their students, and the subsequent accumulation of particular groups of students attending less popular schools (Nairn & Higgins, 2007; Robertson & Dale, 2002; Whitty & Power, 2000; Witten et al., 2003; Wylie, 2013). This suggests that there are market winners and losers (Gordon, 2003), which in an education setting includes families, students, “over-subscribed”, and “under-chosen” schools (Berg & Roche, 1997; Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 468; Wylie, 1999). Clearly inequality will occur between these groups and individuals (Apple, 2004). Importantly, Whitty and Power (2000) endorse the “need to ask how we can use the positive aspects of choice and autonomy to facilitate the development of new forms of community empowerment rather than exacerbating social differentiation” (p. 105).

In this commercial setting, schools are required to compete for resources and pupils (Codd, 2005), which subsequently encourages them to grow and increase student rolls (Collins & Kearns, 2001; Hill & Tisdall, 1997; Witten et al., 2003). Parents are granted increased powers of choice over their child’s education, are seen as “consumers of education”, take on governance roles on school BOTs (Bush & Gamage, 2001; Hill & Tisdall, 1997, p. 119; Smyth, 2011), and have input into teaching and the curriculum (Gellert, 2005).

Local partnerships are another feature of the neoliberal setting. In the late 1990s there was a shift towards enhancing social policy and inclusive governance by the state, rather than solely focussing on the market and economic management (Larner & Craig, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002). The aim was to build stronger links between the separate domains of government, communities, and local institutions and align these with the needs of local communities (Larner & Craig, 2005). These local partnerships are “multilevel collaborative arrangements that aspire to ‘join up’ central government agencies, local institutions (e.g., local authorities, schools, hospitals), and/or community and voluntary sector groups and iwi/Maori groups” (Larner & Butler, 2005, p. 80). While localised partnerships were historically informal, they have become

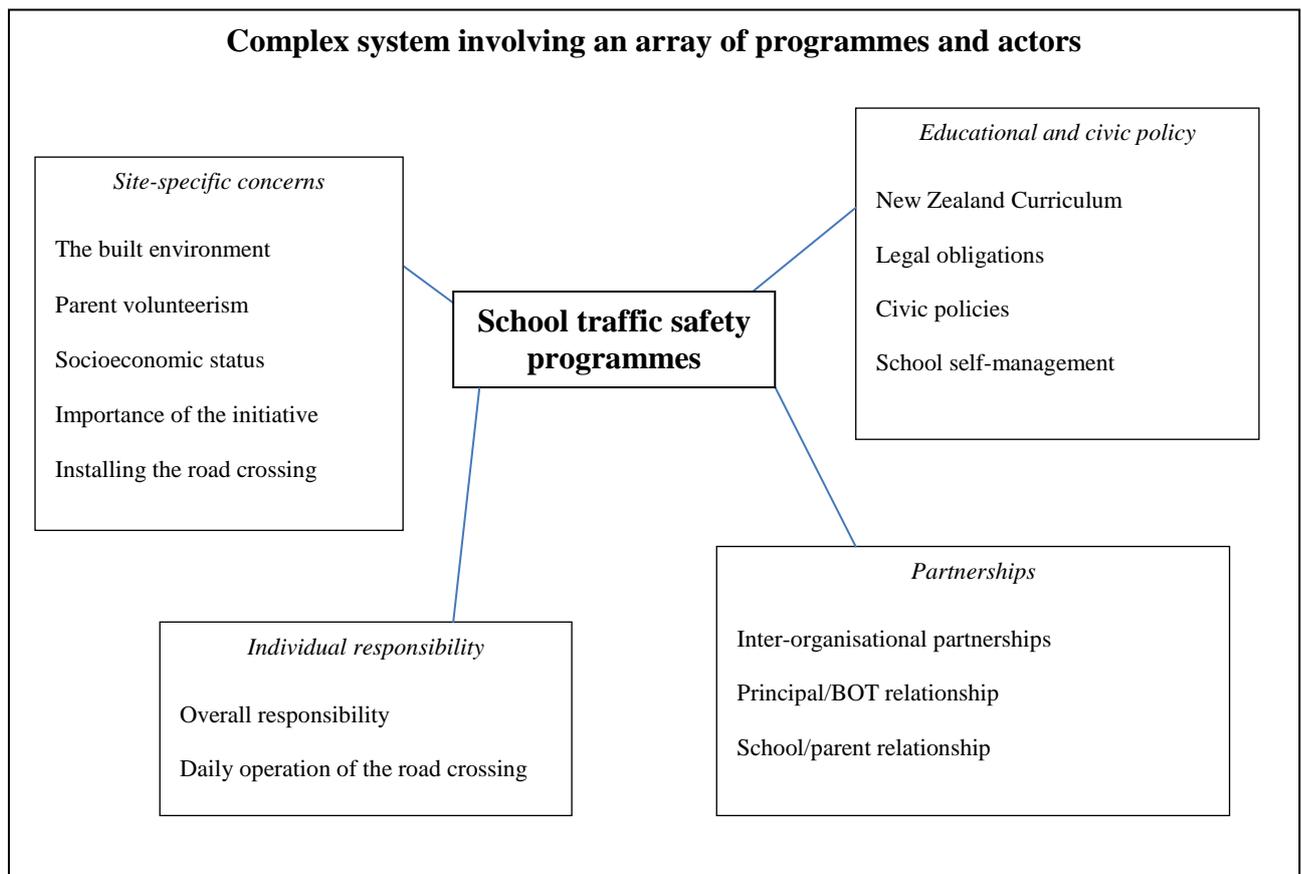
part of government policy-making, strategic service delivery, and even a “mandatory tool” regarding social matters (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 413). The presence of contractual obligations, competition, reporting frameworks, and the formalising and professionalising of roles are key features of these relationships (Davies & Hentschke, 2006; Larner & Craig, 2005). The partnerships may be viewed as a reaction to the disintegration of social connections and services linked to neoliberal reforms (Larner & Craig, 2005).

### **The theoretical framework**

Parusel and McLaren (2010) provided the four major themes of educational and civic policy, partnerships, individual responsibilities, and site-specific concerns. Figure 1 represents an adaptation of this. This framework is adapted on the basis that schools in New Zealand are required to operate within a neoliberal setting while managing the four major themes.

Each of the four broad themes has specific interrelated sub-headings that provide further insight. These subheadings were identified after a thorough review of the literature on each of the four themes. The subheadings were identified as being specific and/or relevant to the New Zealand educational setting and the current case study. For example, the sub-headings of the NZC, the self-managing school, the principal/BOT relationship, and the built environment each emerged from a reading of the literature. These were then added to the Parusel and McLaren (2010) model as additional influences on the installation of road safety initiatives in New Zealand.

**Figure 1: Factors influencing the introduction of school traffic safety programmes**



Source: Adapted from Parusel and McLaren (2010)

### **Educational and civic policy**

This section introduces the overarching educational and civic policies governing the education sector in New Zealand. Parusel and McLaren (2010) suggest that Canadian “educational and civic policy environments: provide only sporadic support to elementary school traffic safety programs ... construct school traffic safety as the primary responsibility of individuals, particularly children and parents; [and] narrowly define school traffic safety as a site-specific, rather than systemic, concern” (p.135). In addition, they suggest that school traffic safety is an intricate system filled with “an array of programs and actors, including school and city personnel” and programmes and initiatives “exist within a discursive and political context” (Parusel & McLaren, 2010, p. 132). Longview Primary is required to deal with the NZC, legal obligations, civic policies, and the realities of self-management, all of which are explained as follows.

### *New Zealand Curriculum*

Road safety education (RSE) is endorsed as having a place within the NZC and the school curriculum (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2012a; Soames Job & Sakashita, 2012). The NZC “is a statement of official policy relating to teaching and learning in English-medium New Zealand schools” (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 6) and a “mandatory levelled framework” (Wylie, 2011, p. 4). The purpose of the curriculum is to provide direction to schools and to guide student learning (Ministry of Education, 2007a). Schools are permitted the flexibility and licence to tailor the curriculum to the needs of their learners (Ministry of Education, 2007a; Parker & O’Leary, 2006; Petrie, Penney, & Fellows, 2014; Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011). This highlights the neoliberal philosophy of individual choice and autonomy as well as the state governing at a distance (O’Neill et al., 2004; Robertson & Dale, 2002).

The delivery of RSE works to fulfil the NZC requirement for sensible decision-making, enhancing the well-being of society, and the development of skills for children to become competent road users (Ministry of Education, 2007a, 2014d; New Zealand Transport Agency, 2012a; Soames Job & Sakashita, 2012). The NZTA encourages schools to foster an ethos that encourages and supports road safety (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2012c) and embeds RSE as part of the normal daily learning via the curriculum (Chamberlain & Hook, 2012). In practical terms, when children utilise road safety initiatives as a passenger on a WSB, they gain experience and knowledge of traffic safety (Collins & Kearns, 2005, 2010) which can “be an extension of the school in terms of its practical educational value” (Kearns, Collins, & Neuwelt, 2003, p. 287).

There are four strands in the Health and Physical Education (HPE) learning area that school road patrols may be viewed as supporting, including personal health and physical development, movement concepts and motor skills, relationships with other people, and healthy communities and environments (Christchurch City Council, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2007a; Ministry of Education, n.d.). In addition, “the ‘essence’ of health education as defined by the NZC has an emphasis on wellbeing – of students themselves, of other people and of society, through learning in health related contexts” (Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011, p. 57).

Within the neoliberal environment, principals and teaching staff are responsible for delivering the school curriculum and “they have to manage and negotiate what other ‘curriculum-related’ programmes it is appropriate to allow into their schools, and under what terms” (Ministry of Education, 2007b; Petrie et al., 2014, p. 35; Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011). This scenario

demonstrates the freedom of Longview Primary to decide how to deliver its curriculum, yet it is also required to abide by the framework and official principles of the NZC. Research conducted by Wylie and King (2004) found that BOTs “saw the principal as having the curriculum knowledge they did not have (and did not expect to have to have)” (p. 34). This experience will be examined at Longview Primary, as it may provide insight into the extent of the involvement and awareness of BOT members regarding the road crossing initiative.

Schools are busy environments and staff have heavy workloads (Hayes & Chodkiewicz, 2006), so it is not surprising that they may find it difficult to fit RSE into crowded teaching schedules (Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011). Schools and teachers may also view RSE as dull (Chamberlain & Hook, 2012). To further complicate the delivery of RSE, schools are presented with a multitude of services and “market choices” offering HPE curriculum materials (Macdonald, Hay, & Williams, 2008, p. 9). Soames Job and Sakashita (2012) further describe this situation as “unsystematic content development, ad hoc delivery, delivery by (well-meaning) presenters with little education experience or understanding of students’ learning needs, and content which is distinctly old paradigm, focussed only on changing the behaviour of the student audience as road users” (p. 1). This highlights “the messy realities” of operating within the neoliberal setting (Nairn et al., 2012, p. 65). The methods and tools adopted at Longview to deliver RSE and the road crossing will be examined. Along with this, an insight into whether the assortment of HPE curriculum resources bombards, empowers, or has no effect on the delivery of RSE at Longview Primary will be enlightening.

Parents may play a central role in the operation of school road safety initiatives so schools should work to actively engage with them. There is the encouraging endorsement that “positive relationships between schools, parents, whānau, and communities have a high priority in both policy and practice in New Zealand” (Mutch & Collins, 2012, p. 173). However research has alluded to a wide range of varying parental experiences and opinions concerning the curriculum and their child’s learning. Parents may wish to be “involved in decisions that might affect their child’s learning and well-being” (Mitchell, Cameron, & Wylie, 2002; Mutch & Collins, 2012, p. 180). In contrast, others may “not feel well informed about their child’s learning or about how they could work more closely with the school to benefit their child” (Mutch & Collins, 2012, p. 168) and “parents often feel ignorant of the curriculum and processes of schools” (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 45). Alternatively there may be no expectation for parents to participate in what is taught or how topics are delivered in schools (Gellert, 2005). In support of

this, Bull (2009) provided evidence that parents were happy with their “current, relatively passive, involvement in their children’s formal education” (p. 3).

A related finding is that decile 1-4 school communities appear to be less welcoming to changes and initiatives regarding their child’s teaching and the curriculum (Wylie & Hodgen, 2010).

The neoliberal ideology of parental choice (Smyth, 2011) is pertinent here as it is evident that parents can choose their level of involvement in their child’s learning (Gellert, 2005).

Longview Primary is a decile 4 school and like each school, has a unique parent community.

Parental awareness of the delivery of RSE at Longview Primary will be explored, as well as their involvement in school activities, and by extension the road crossing.

Parental involvement and volunteerism may be taken for granted or simply expected as a desirable way of contributing within a school community. Indeed, as Davies and Bansel (2007) explain, there is the assumption that:

the state, in this new belief system, can (and should) no longer be responsible for providing all of society’s needs for security, health, education and so on. Individuals, firms, organizations, schools, hospitals, parents and each individual must all take on (and desire to take on) responsibility for their own well-being (p. 251).

This belief may be endorsed by the important, yet perhaps covert and unrecognised characteristic of the neoliberal ideology that it has “pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). Likewise, NZC principles “embody beliefs about what is important and desirable in school curriculum – nationally and locally” (Culpan & O’Neill, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 9; Wylie, 2011). This suggests that schools are permitted to self-govern yet are influenced and steered by background ideologies and principles. Longview Primary’s perceptions and expectations of the involvement of parents in the provision of RSE and the operation of the road crossing will be investigated.

### *Legal obligations*

#### Providing a safe environment

The BOT is responsible for providing a safe emotional and physical environment for all staff, students, and visitors to the school (Ministry of Education, 2014a; Zink & Boyes, 2006). The BOT is also legally responsible for all activities that occur at the school, which includes a school traffic safety team (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Appendix B includes

information on the relevant legal acts and the Ministry of Education's (MOE's) National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) that the school is required to adhere to.

The BOT has “a duty of care to students as they also have a direct relationship with students”, where the expectation is that “reasonable care” will be taken to safeguard students, rather than protecting against all injury and hurt (Haddock & Sword, 2004, p. 40; Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2014c). It is clear that schools may not be reasonably “expected to know, control or be able to alter many places outside the school grounds” (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 57). With reference to school outdoor education programmes, Haddock and Sword (2004) advise that it is challenging for schools to try to create a safe physical and emotional environment.

The law on the subject of which agency is responsible for children during the home to school journey in that “legally and socially ambiguous zone” (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 207; McDonald & Aalborg, 2009; Mitchell, Kearns, & Collins, 2007) is unclear, as it has not yet been determined by a court of law (Darlow, 2011; Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002). Schools and BOTs may be fined if their action or inaction causes a pupil to suffer harm (Ministry of Education, 2014c), or if they do not “eliminate, isolate or minimise” hazards that could foreseeably result in harm (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 61).

Given this uncertainty and ambiguity and the potential consequences, schools may therefore be prudent to work with parents to support “child pedestrian safety initiatives that modify or regulate the behaviour of students out of school hours” (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 202). This is relevant to the proposed road crossing as Longview Primary would be required to consider child and volunteer safety at a site that is not near the school grounds. This scenario presents unique challenges for Longview Primary and how it manages the legal obligations will be investigated.

Encouragingly, Hay-MacKenzie and Wilshire (2002) remark that “most New Zealand schools today are alive to the importance of putting in place policies and procedures ... and in so doing appear to be motivated more by a genuine desire to ensure that their students are kept safe at school, than primarily to fulfil their statutory obligations and minimise the risk of liability” (p. 61-62). It would likely be an insurmountable and time-consuming task for the Longview Primary BOT to determine what is reasonable in ensuring a safe environment, particularly as the Ministry of Education (2013a) advises BOTs to “make the best use of the valuable time

trustees have together” (p. 4). Advice and guidance are provided to Longview Primary which is then able to be interpreted and acted on as it suits the school. Yet Longview’s actions and policies need to lie within the set boundaries of the legal acts and guidelines.

#### Safety of parent volunteers

Protecting parent volunteers as they assist school children at the crossing site, including pupils from different schools and other people’s children, is a vital consideration. A BOT has the “ultimate legal responsibility for students”, even when parents and volunteers are involved on behalf of the school (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 40). Parent volunteers and the school would be protected under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (Ministry of Education, 2014c) and the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2014c). For additional information on these Acts, refer to Appendix B.

Historically, the legal doctrine of *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent) in school authority may have been used to describe the role of school teachers as they are “expected to act like a diligent and prudent parent” (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 40). Whether this theme would extend to parent volunteers is unclear. However, today *in loco parentis* has little influence in modern case law and is no longer particularly relevant within the education setting, as the school’s legal authority and power to manage students is determined by the law rather than by parents (Hancock, 2002). Currently in New Zealand, “the source of school authority is clearly encapsulated in the Education Act 1989”, which gives schools “the legal mechanisms with which to govern themselves, make rules, suspend and exclude students, [and] establish enrolment schemes” (Hancock, 2002, p. 45).

To further protect volunteers and the school during activities, parents may be required to sign a school consent form prior to a trip conceding that their child is allowed to take part despite the associated risks. While this does not “indemnify schools or those responsible for organising or supervising the activities against responsibility for negligence giving rise to accidents, injuries or illness”, it may show that the school has “acted reasonably in all the circumstances” (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 56).

Despite the murkiness and ambiguity of meeting the legal obligations, it is clear that protections are in place. The extent to which the Longview Primary community is aware of these existing protections will be examined. Supervising children at a crossing site that is some distance from the school site may impact on the willingness of parents to volunteer. It will be insightful to investigate whether the principal and BOT chairperson share the same concerns

regarding volunteer safety as the parent volunteers, as each party views the topic from different perspectives.

### *Civic policies*

Longview Primary has a long history of working with the Dunedin City Council. The DCC is required to act in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002, annually report on performance, conduct community consultation, and formulate budgets and plans amidst economic expectations and financial management (Internal Affairs, 2011). The complex workings of local government management are highlighted in the findings of Nyamori, Lawrence, and Perara (2012). They explain that “the exigencies of daily work and the emphasis on the financial aspects of work (dollars and cents)” (p. 588) are a reality of local government, as well as the “palpable tension between managers’ expressed preference for efficient solutions (quick decision making, with limited political interference) and the statutory requirement for residents to participate in local decision making” (p. 590). There is also the admission that local councils “have a duty to listen to community views, not act on them” (Anderson, 2008, p. 289).

Using a similar example from health promotion in New Zealand within a neoliberal setting, community expectations may be high and “tension between government and community agendas” is not atypical (Lovell, Kearns, & Prince, 2014, p. 316). Parusel and McLaren (2010) reinforce the local government complexities and challenges by explaining that:

city council documents, which tend to frame school traffic safety as a problem of engineering and individual driving behavior, provide little information on the status or activities of school traffic safety. But in keeping with the wider context that is inattentive to school traffic safety, the documentation suggests that efforts to improve it are hampered by inadequate resources (p. 137).

Thus an awareness of the workings of local government is worthwhile when considering Longview Primary’s dealings with the DCC. While the DCC’s processes and strategies may be rigid and stringent, Longview’s experience of attempting to install the crossing within that setting will be examined. The partnership between the DCC and Longview Primary is discussed in further detail in the Partnerships section.

### *School self-management*

Following radical changes to the education system in 1989, the MOE and Education Review Office (ERO) were created (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.). Parent-

elected BOTs were established consisting of school staff, parents, and community members (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.).

Professional, management, and educational issues are dealt with by the staff and principal (Mutch & Collins, 2012), the principal fills the role of chief executive officer, and a “market managerial model of principalship” is installed (Court & O’Neill, 2011, p. 119). The BOT makes operational or governance decisions (Mutch & Collins, 2012; Notman & Henry, 2011) and maintains “documents of accountability” alongside the Minister of Education (Witten et al., 2003, p. 207). BOTs are required to maintain a charter:

to establish the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the board that will give effect to the Government's national education guidelines and the board's priorities, and provide a base against which the board's actual performance can later be assessed (Haddock & Sword, 2004; Ministry of Education, 1989, s 61(2)).

Schools are required to self-govern within boundaries framed by the state and continue to meet academic outcomes (Lee et al., 2004; New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.; O’Neill et al., 2004; Smyth, 2011) without being dependent on state support (Raby, 2014; Robertson & Dale, 2002). This state support does not solely come in the form of direct funding to schools. One scenario of how this might play out is that a school is responsible for delivering a curriculum or managing child safety in a manner that parents are happy with and which fits within the government’s guidelines. If this is not the case, parents may choose another school for their child, causing a drop in the school roll, or an outside agency may be required to intervene in school business.

In support of this notion, it is claimed that “individual success will emerge from a combination of innate talent, hard work and wise choices” (Nairn et al., 2012, p. 25). However, there is often little or no acknowledgement that the inability to self-govern may in fact be due to “structural limitations” (Nairn et al., 2012, p. 43) and socioeconomic hardship as a result of “the structure of the system and the consequences of the market” (Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 477). To demonstrate further, Smyth (2011) argues that:

the most vulnerable schools who are unable to compete in this new and inhospitable environment because of their histories, their locale, and the effects of wider circumstances on them, have effectively been allowed to wither (p. 113).

This evidence reveals that it may be difficult for schools to self-manage based on access to the various resources that the school community is able to deploy. The success of the road crossing or any new initiative is not solely dependent on the characteristics of the school and its community. In other words, to be successful schools need to be proficient at managing the economic, political, and social realities they face (Gordon, 2003). Longview Primary's ability to address these challenges and utilise the necessary resources and support when attempting to install the road crossing will be examined.

Finally, there is the neoliberal requirement of the expectation for schools to juggle the inevitable inspections and checks (Pope, 2013) and "extensive auditing, accountability and management requirements" (O'Neill et al., 2004, pp. 33-34) put in place by the government. An important element is the requirement for schools to report to the MOE each year and monitor their performance against the school's charter (Crooks, 2011; Wylie, 2011). This endorses the neoliberal theme of state surveillance (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Power, 2003) where the state adopts a hands-off approach yet ensures standards continue to be met within schools (O'Neill et al., 2004; Robertson & Dale, 2002). Smyth (2011) supports this view by arguing that the government in fact "retreated into an even more powerful role of 'policy' setting – steering at a distance, while increasing control through a range of outcomes-driven performance indicators" (p.112).

Yet according to Chisholm and Shaw (2004), with reference to the New Zealand outdoors industry, "imposing audit and accreditation does not mean that some sort of guarantee is offered against mistakes and accidents" (p. 325). If accidents happen at the crossing site or if the safety of individuals is compromised, the government or state will intervene or conduct school or workplace inspections (Sullivan, 2006). This is permitted via the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and the Health and Safety Amendment Act 2002 (Sullivan, 2006).

As such, Longview Primary is required to work with and report to the MOE and the ERO, a government department independent of the Ministry. The ERO is involved in assessing the quality and performance of schools and early childhood services through evaluation and reporting (Education Review Office, 2014; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The department normally reviews institutions every three years (Education Review Office, n.d.-a). It would likely review the road crossings at Longview Primary in terms of the provision of a healthy and safe learning and working environment, and compliance regarding the physical safety of students (Education Review Office, n.d.-b). Tying in with this is the endorsement for school policies concerning

road, personal, and traffic safety regarding AT initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008b). The presence and significance of policies at Longview Primary will be investigated.

In summary, with reference to safe travel initiatives in a neoliberal setting and the framework adapted from Parusel and McLaren (2010), individual schools are given the choice to opt in and adopt an initiative and take on the accompanying obligations and risks of its operation. In conjunction with this is the requirement to self-manage and meet government standards of performance. Understanding this neoliberal environment provides additional insight into factors that are likely to affect school and parent involvement in the implementation of a road safety initiative.

## **Partnerships**

### *Inter-organisational partnerships*

The NZTA endorses collaboration between agencies and schools and advises that the “school traffic safety team is a partnership between your students, principal, board of trustees and teachers, the school community, New Zealand Police and the local authority or NZ Transport Agency responsible for controlling the roads in your area” (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b, p. 5; Wigmore, Baas, Wade, & Bass, 2006).

These relationships demonstrate “transdisciplinary cooperation and collaboration” (Eyler et al., 2008b, p. 964) and the development of linkages (Thibault & Harvey, 1997). From the guiding theoretical framework, Parusel and McLaren (2010) endorse parties involved in school traffic safety initiatives joining forces to become partners and adopt a co-ordinated approach.

Partnerships can bring access to innovation, funding, and new ideas (Diamond, 2006), exposure to “broad and diverse referral networks and valuable connections to public agencies” (Walker, Smithgall, & Cusick, 2012, p. 9), and are frequently “more than the sum of the parts” (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 413). Improved goods and services and saving resources (Jacobson & Ok Choi, 2008) may be positive outcomes of “co-production”, when the state, agencies, communities, and individuals collaborate to meet their specific needs (Larner & Craig, 2005; Parker & O’Leary, 2006, p. 32).

In relation to the current project, the road crossing initiative will involve Longview Primary working directly with the New Zealand Police, Sport Otago, and the DCC. Parent volunteers are required to undertake training provided by the police in order to operate the road crossing and are advised on how to deal with unruly child behaviour or illegal driver actions (New

Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Longview Primary has a long-standing relationship with police representatives. Sport Otago is a regional sport trust based in Dunedin and is “a supplier of sport and recreation services, expertise, advice, resources, and catalyst for change, as well as a leading advocate on a wide range of issues affecting the sport and recreation sector” (Sport Otago, n.d., p. 2). The extent to which Sport Otago can be involved in implementing the Longview Primary adult-assisted road crossing will largely be determined by available funding. Longview’s relationships with the police and Sport Otago concerning the road crossing initiative are of interest.

With this context in mind, the partnership between Longview Primary and the DCC will also be investigated. The DCC acknowledges the need to improve the safety of students and other road users around schools, which it suggests “is likely to require creativity, new thinking and a co-operative approach between schools, parents, pupils, the Police and the DCC” (Dunedin City Council, 2013, Schools, para. 10). A feature of the neoliberal setting is the joining of state agencies, local institutions, iwi/Maori groups, and community groups to establish local partnerships (Larner & Butler, 2005). Local partnerships can align the wider goals of the government agencies with the specific needs of the school (Larner & Butler, 2005). To illustrate, one benefit that the Longview Primary community may experience from this partnership is the addition of a pedestrian refuge island, as it is near the existing crossing site and was part of the DCC’s Minor Improvements Programme.

While there are benefits within a partnership, there are also difficulties that need to be managed. Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis (2004, p. 110) advise that “the complexities of simultaneously managing several partners from different sectors becomes apparent when one considers that each partner will be operating from different professional norms, values and procedural systems” (Baker et al., 1991; Walker et al., 2012). The DCC’s position and perspectives will be influenced by the complex and pressured system of local government management (Nyamori et al., 2012). There is also evidence that there are “numerous and complex influences” (Hodgson, Namdeo, Araujo-Soares, & Pless-Mulloli, 2012, p. 77; Hosking, Ameratunga, & Bullen, 2011) concerning school travel and the relationships between various agencies and policy-makers. Hodgson et al. (2012) encourage the acknowledgement of:

the various layers of assumption we make about transport and transport behaviour, as individuals, researchers, government and society. By working together to appreciate the costs and benefits that might fall beyond our own limited experiences or fields of expertise we can start to

unpack these assumptions to make more balanced judgements about the pros and cons associated with the transport choices we make and/or values we assign to these travel modes (p. 76).

It is no surprise then that Parker and O'Leary (2006) declare that “delivering outcomes is hard work” (p. 67). Longview Primary’s experience of managing the necessary partnerships alongside the complexities of school safe-travel initiatives will be of interest.

Coupled with the complexities of working with different partners is the potential for “conflict and competing agendas” (Shaw & Allen, 2006, p. 222) and for power relations to occur in the “inter-organizational web of partnership relations” (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 123). Power inequalities can limit what can be achieved in collaborations (Diamond, 2006) so power should shift from professionals to shared decision-making (Diamond, 2002). A co-ordinated “plan of action and shared responsibility” can be created (Baker et al., 1991; Eyler et al., 2008b; Fotel, 2009; Zaccari & Dirkis, 2003, p. 137) alongside a recognition of the “differing models of working utilised by the participating agencies” (Diamond, 2002, p. 306; Walker et al., 2012), and identifying clear roles and responsibilities (Jacobson & Ok Choi, 2008).

A practical consideration raised by Diamond (2002) suggests that while employees in public sector agencies may be proficient at the professional aspects of their role, they may not be skilled at working within partnerships. Diamond (2002) goes on to state that as a result people can view this as “indifference and neglect by professional agencies” (p. 305), leaving them angry, confused, and “their expectations of public sector agencies diminishes” (p. 306). Longview Primary has a history of collaboration with the DCC and New Zealand Police. The extent to which that background shapes the participant expectations of these partnerships and what might be achieved concerning the road crossing will be examined.

The availability of resources and funding is a key consideration in the delivery of safe travel programmes. Parusel and McLaren (2010) emphasise that school road safety initiatives operate within an environment of sporadic support, funding, and coordination. Similarly, “as with the traditional school traffic safety measures, the new campaigns are underfunded and underresourced” (Moghtaderi, Burke, & Dodson, 2012; Parusel & McLaren, 2010, p. 138). Eyler et al. (2008b) highlight the importance of funding to increase the sustainability of initiatives, particularly funding for staff rather than volunteers, enhancements to the built environment (pavements, parking spaces), and programme materials (rewards, promotional

items). The level of involvement of the associated partners in the implementation of the Longview Primary crossing will largely be determined by available funding.

Longview's experiences of the local partnerships with the DCC, New Zealand Police, and Sport Otago will provide insight into the complexities and demands of managing multiple relationships (Larner & Craig, 2005). The DCC and police have a long history with Longview Primary yet their direct involvement with individual projects such as an adult-assisted road crossing may be short term. So while there is government involvement, the local partnerships may be a further way for the state to adopt the hands-off approach and continue to govern from afar (Larner & Butler, 2005). Elements that are enablers or barriers to the road crossing initiative as a result of these partnerships will be identified and discussed.

### Formal agreements

According to Davies and Hentschke (2006), "relationships involve the rules by which organizational entities relate to each other and/or to clients" (p. 206). Communication is a vital feature affecting school-family-community partnerships (Swick, 2003) and is critical to the success of collaborative ventures (Devine, Boyd, & Boyle, 2010; Jacobson & Ok Choi, 2008; Mutch & Collins, 2012).

A feature of partnerships that is becoming increasingly common are formal agreements or "relational contracting", which document the responsibilities and roles of each of the agencies involved (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 415). In addition, Larner and Butler (2005) outline that charters, terms of reference, protocols, statements of intent, and memorandums of understanding are being used to respond to questions regarding how to build inter-organisational partnerships. These agreements also "provide a mechanism for specifying and aligning outputs and outcomes" (Larner & Butler, 2005, p. 91), allocating responsibilities and boundaries, and determining "rewards and consequences of non-performance" (Davies & Hentschke, 2006, p. 219). Yet such contracts are not likely to be referred to unless "working relationships had broken down and the partners had to resort to legal means to seek remedies" (Davies & Hentschke, 2006, p. 219). A caution is also made that such "codification of trust doesn't always make things better in practice, and that sometimes relational contracts inhibit the expression of different political points of view" (Larner & Butler, 2005, p. 97).

In terms of the formal agreements concerning Longview Primary, the DCC requires schools to complete a "Dunedin City Council authority to operate a kea crossing" form, which is an agreement between the DCC, New Zealand Police, and the school (Transport Operations

Division (TOD), personal communication, July 4, 2014). At a kea crossing, the patrol controls pedestrians and traffic (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). The kea crossing only operates when two orange flags, two swing-out STOP signs, and the school patrol are present, which is normally before and after school (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2009).

The NZTA also encourages schools to develop a school travel plan. The plan, while not compulsory, helps the school and the wider community to collaborate and make travel to school safer for students (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011a). There are a number of ways that schools can opt to implement a plan, including an organised scheme which may have involvement from the local council and ideas for engineering measures (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011a). Alternatively schools can include safe travel as part of their curriculum and can work to find safer solutions specific to their school (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011a). Considering the compulsory DCC/Longview Primary agreement and the prudent school travel plan, the principal's awareness of the presence and importance of each document will be examined.

#### *Principal and board of trustees relationship*

The responsibilities and functions of the BOT and school principal are distinct, yet the parties work in partnership (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The BOT is responsible for making governance decisions, while the principal has responsibility for how the school will meet the expectations of the BOT and is permitted to recommend ideas to it (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The principal is the chief executive officer of the BOT as well as a board member (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The BOT may delegate the operation of school traffic safety teams to the principal, as well as “including the authority to sub-delegate to a teacher” (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b, p. 8).

The BOT is free to delegate to the principal the daily implementation of some of its responsibilities, yet it cannot delegate accountability (Ministry of Education, 2013a). This is reinforced by Notman and Henry (2011), who found that BOTs take part in collaborative leadership with the principal “by concentrating on their governance role and trusting the principal's ability to manage effectively the school operation” (p. 383). Yet there is an accompanying caution that the BOT may be seen as a “largely taken-for-granted part of the school” (Wylie, 2007, p. 1). The relationship between the principal and the BOT will be investigated as well as the extent to which the principal is trusted to manage the

implementation of the road crossing initiative. Tying in with this will be an examination of the BOT's involvement and support for the initiative.

### *The school's relationship with parents*

Schools are largely dependent on adult and parent volunteers to supervise road crossings and WSBs. An outcome of the neoliberal ideology is that social responsibility has shifted in "areas of care" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251) from the public or government domain to the private, with more tasks becoming the responsibility of families, households, and individuals (Clarke, 2004; Witten et al., 2003). This is evident in the number of requests from schools for parent and adult volunteers, financial support, fundraising, and donations (Blackstock, 2013; Clarke, 2004; Codd, 2005; Wylie, 1999, 2011). In relation to the current study, this is reflected in the principal's requests to parents from the Longview Primary community to volunteer to operate the road crossing. She had previously stipulated that teachers were not to be involved in the on-site running of the road crossing due to their heavy workloads.

It is therefore worthwhile recognising that school leaders are vital components in establishing solid partnerships with parents (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008; Rapp & Duncan, 2012) and individual schools "can and do influence" the level of parental involvement (Feuerstein, 2000, p. 37). The MOE implements initiatives to enhance engagement with families (Education Review Office, 2008; Mutch & Collins, 2012) and the NZC includes community engagement as a principle that "should underpin all school decision making" (Bull, 2009, p. 9; Ministry of Education, 2007a). More specifically, the involvement of parents as partners needs to be unequivocally and clearly recognised in a school's actions and ethos (Bull et al., 2008; Christenson, 2004).

While the ethos of partnership between the school and parents is endorsed, the challenge appears to be how schools can formulate systems that welcome and include all parents into family-school partnerships (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Of particular interest to this project is the inclusion of parents as volunteers to operate the road crossing. As Bull (2009) urges, within the school setting, time and effort should be invested into "working with teachers, parents and the wider community to think differently about education and to think differently about the roles of each of these groups in bringing about change" (p. 4). Fesperman et al. (2008) posit that "a multidisciplinary approach that develops promotional materials, resources, school support, and environmental changes to sustain factors that influence parental buy-in will prove critical to the success of future walk-to-school initiatives" (p. 1). The methods used by Longview Primary to

encourage parent involvement in the road crossing programme will be examined, along with the effectiveness of those methods.

An aspect of the neoliberal environment is that the volunteer role has become “formalised with an associated increase in training and skill development” (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 408; Sullivan, 2006). As an example, in Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) within schools “specialised knowledge systems are required for practitioners to demonstrate their competence” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 13). Parent volunteers at Longview Primary would be required to undertake training provided by the police in order to operate the road crossing (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). This process confirms that the parents are “codified as (worthy) ‘partners’” (Katz, 2005, p. 625) and would assure the Longview school community that the parents had received the necessary information and instruction to enable them to safely cross children at the site (Kong et al., 2009).

There is also the view of volunteers to consider. Volunteers express the need for organisations to support them to undertake their duties, either materially or psychologically, and by being interested in issues that they may face (Vantilborgh, Bidee, Pepermans, Willems, & Huybrechts, 2011). Training is one tool that can help parents feel empowered and confident (Kong et al., 2009), and may promote personal growth (Vantilborgh et al., 2011). It is therefore important that Longview Primary acknowledges and protects any parents who volunteer and give freely of their time and efforts.

### **Individual responsibility**

Parusel and McLaren (2010) suggest that “educational and civic policy environments ... construct school traffic safety as the primary responsibility of individuals, particularly children and parents” (p. 135). Similarly, “as with the traditional school traffic safety measures, the new campaigns are underfunded and underresourced; they leave it up to individuals and groups to ‘choose’ to adopt the programs and to assume responsibility for their enactment” (Parusel & McLaren, 2010, p. 138). In relation to the current project, this topic will be analysed from the perspectives of the responsibilities of both Longview Primary and the parent volunteers.

### *Overall responsibility for the adult-assisted road crossing*

Schools wishing to implement a WSB or assisted road crossing must first gain approval from the NZTA, New Zealand Police, and the local road controlling body (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). The local council installs and maintains the crossing facility, the school agrees to supervise the crossing, and the police approve the physical road crossing site and provide

training (Christchurch City Council, 2012). Consequently, the school community and volunteers who staff these initiatives are required to adopt responsibility for the safety of those children using these initiatives (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Kearns & Collins, 2003; Kingham & Ussher, 2005; Mackett, Lucas, Paskins, & Turbin, 2003).

The topic of responsibility for the road crossing and child safety plainly has various dimensions. The MOE states that it is the responsibility of caregivers and parents to transport their children to school (Lewis, 2012; Miller, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2014b). There is also the consideration of who is responsible for a child's safety and behaviour in the space between home and school (Kearns & Collins, 2003) as children undergo "a social transition from 'child' to 'pupil' that entails a transfer of wardship and supervision" (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 200). The perceptions and definitions of school responsibility from the perspectives of the Longview Primary principal, BOT chairperson, and the parent community will be explored. In addition, how Longview negotiates this multi-faceted topic will be investigated.

#### *Daily operation of the adult-assisted road crossing*

As parents often co-ordinate and operate a school's road safety initiative (Buliung et al., 2011; Eyler et al., 2008b; Kong et al., 2009), their involvement is a vital factor influencing the sustainability of the initiative (Eyler et al., 2008a). With school traffic safety initiatives, responsibility quickly transfers from the official bodies to the school and volunteers (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Kearns & Collins, 2003; Kingham & Ussher, 2005; Mackett et al., 2003; Parusel & McLaren, 2010) or "individual and community 'responsibilisation'" takes place (Witten et al., 2003, p. 204). It is argued that a:

feature of neoliberal subjects is that their desires, hopes, ideals and fears have been shaped in such a way that they desire to be morally worthy, responsibilized individuals, who, as successful entrepreneurs, can produce the best for themselves and their families (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251).

Tied in with this notion is the importance of schools 'owning' the road safety initiative (Kearns et al., 2003). This ideology is demonstrated plainly through the experience of an Auckland school principal who stated that "right from the start we said that while the school fully supports the walking bus initiative the school was in no way involved directly. The management is left to the parents" (Collins & Kearns, 2005, p. 65). This is an example of the shifting of responsibility for the initiative from the school to parents. It also suggests that the

neoliberal subjects at Longview Primary, or in other words the parents, should therefore be willing and happy to take on the ownership and responsibility for the daily operation of the crossing (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Whether this explicit expectation is accepted or ‘bought into’ by the parent community may be reflected in the number of volunteers that Longview is able to recruit to run the crossing.

An important aspect that may be foremost in a parent’s mind considering volunteering is the on-site, operational realities of running safe travel initiatives. Parusel and McLaren (2010) reveal that “verbal altercations between parent parking patrollers and drivers at the school gate” (p. 137) are a reality. Likewise, the experiences of parents involved with Auckland WSBs reveal that children’s disruptive and playful actions can be difficult for parent volunteers to manage (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Kong et al., 2009; New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Therefore, chaperones are likely to attempt to reduce unruly behaviour by “preventing over-aggressive play, ball playing or use of electronic devices” (Moghtaderi et al., 2012, p. 7). However, the “laxer-than teachers disposition of parent volunteers” has also been seen as a cause for disruptive child behaviour on WSBs (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 205). What may be concerning for the Longview Primary volunteers is the potential for this child behaviour to occur while they are in sole charge of the road crossing at a site away from the school grounds.

Unsurprisingly, Kearns and Collins (2003) caution that “insisting on a level of formality when children are released from the more disciplined time and space of the school can be problematic. This is especially the case when a non-teacher needs, by default, to discipline children” (p. 207). Similarly, it is suggested that when allowing their children to cross roads, parents “reposition their children to a traffic environment where other traffic users are expected to pay extra attention to them. Thus, these rules transfer some of the child’s responsibility for its own safety to other traffic users” (Fotel & Thomsen, 2004, p. 545; Heelan et al., 2008; Lang, Collins, & Kearns, 2011; Mammen, Faulkner, Buliung, & Lay, 2012), or “trusted adults” (McDonald & Aalborg, 2009, p. 337). These statements confirm the position that parent volunteers are in during the on-site operation of the road crossing and the responsibilities and expectations associated with that role. Whether this impacts on their decision to volunteer will be examined.

Parent volunteer teams often disperse for a variety of reasons and few schools are able to maintain the volunteer-led safety patrols (Parusel & McLaren, 2010). A possible solution to the complicated problem of a lack of volunteers is that school staff co-ordinate and operate the safe

travel initiative (Eyler et al., 2008b), particularly in lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods (Collins & Kearns, 2005). How favourably this is viewed by the staff at Longview Primary is questionable, as the principal stated that teachers were not to be involved in the on-site running of the road crossing.

These elements may be significant for volunteers as they raise questions concerning the power and authority they can exert over the children they are supervising and may influence their decision to volunteer. Claims that neoliberal individuals are likely to shoulder the responsibility for initiatives without any accompanying power is pertinent here (Peck & Tickell, 2002). This may relate to Longview parents who accept responsibility for the on-site operation of the crossing. Any power the parents may possess outside of simply assisting children and reporting incidents is questionable. As child safety is a key reason for the installation of the road crossing, parents may desire to help operate the crossing to produce a safe environment for Longview's student community. This attitude may exist until parents consider the realities of operating the road crossing.

### **Site-specific concerns**

Each school site has specific needs and "local circumstances" (Mitchell et al., 2007, p. 625) that need to be considered when attempting to install a safe travel initiative (Wigmore et al., 2006). Parusel and McLaren (2010) state that school traffic safety is defined "as a site-specific, rather than systemic, concern" (p. 135) and "pressures at the school site are contradictory" (p. 136). Eyler et al. (2008b) identified a number of elements that can be distinct between schools, including policies, geographical factors, weather, demographics, school site selection, economic, and "local cultural factors" (p. 973). As an example, research suggests that schools located in areas already viewed as "highly walkable" by the community might find it easier to gain support for AT initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008b, p. 973).

Following the assessment of a school's site-specific factors, the resources "to fund the real costs of choice" may not be present (Gordon, 2003, p. 27; Pope, 2013). The participant perceptions on whether Longview Primary or associated individuals possess the necessary resources to install the crossing will be investigated. Furthermore, if there are site-specific factors that prevent the installation of the crossing, it will be enlightening to examine Longview's response to this.

### *The built environment*

The location of the school site can impact the success of safe travel initiatives, along with factors such as distance from neighbourhoods to the school (Davison, Werder, & Lawson, 2008; Falb, Kanny, Powell, & Giarrusso, 2007), congestion, traffic speed, and the physical terrain near the school (Eyler et al., 2008b). For the current project, the site of the proposed adult-assisted road crossing is approximately 800 metres from Longview Primary and about a nine minute walk (Googlemaps, 2014). The impact of these factors on Longview's ability to successfully install and maintain the road crossing will be evaluated.

Policies and public funding are committed to improve the safety of the physical environment and make it more likely for AT to occur, which assumes that urban design and form is a major factor contributing to travel behaviour and AT (Boarnet, Anderson, Day, McMillan, & Alfonzo, 2005; Eyler et al., 2008b; McMillan, 2005). However, Fotel and Thomsen (2004) caution that safe travel initiatives will be sustained in the long term only if they are coupled with traffic regulation. Other research has stressed that changing the built environment will not necessarily increase AT by children (McMillan, 2005).

This has been the experience of Campbells Bay School in Auckland when implementing a safe travel plan. Initiatives contained in the travel plan included "engineering projects (e.g., new pedestrian crossings and refuge islands, extended no-stopping lines), promotional walk-to-school days, and correspondence with parents regarding sustainable transport" (Lang et al., 2011, p. 510). Regardless of these initiatives, about two-thirds of the student body were still driven to school (Lang et al., 2011). In relation to the current study, in June 2014 the DCC installed a pedestrian refuge or island at the proposed crossing site in order to enhance safety for pedestrians. This installation may be one of a number of "creative solutions and policies" to overcome features within the natural environs that can present a barrier to AT (Eyler et al., 2008b, p. 970). Whether the presence of this island influences parent volunteerism and school support for the road crossing initiative will be explored.

### *Factors affecting parent volunteerism*

Parusel and McLaren (2010) suggest that social and economic disparities existed between numerous Vancouver neighbourhoods and "these differences are likely to have a complex relationship to school travel and traffic safety (e.g., access to a vehicle; proximity of schools to major thoroughfares; traffic congestion at the school gate; parental volunteerism)" (p. 143). School support and parental involvement are key factors that will likely influence the

implementation and sustainability of school safe-travel initiatives (Buliung et al., 2011; Collins & Kearns, 2005; Eyler et al., 2008a; Kearns et al., 2003; Kong et al., 2009). Even though the benefits and outcomes of a school traffic safety initiative are promoted and acknowledged, there are factors that may make volunteering an undesirable and unrealistic option for parents. For Longview Primary to operate the adult-assisted road crossing, parent volunteer involvement is necessary so a key consideration for the principal should be the identification of factors affecting parent volunteerism.

There is a wealth of research pinpointing these factors. Parents from lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods may avoid participation due to challenging work hours, ill health or poverty, feeling uncomfortable in the school setting, and the perception that they do not possess the necessary skills or abilities (Collins & Kearns, 2005). Working parents (Eyler et al., 2008a) and the requirement to look after preschool-aged children or other family members contribute to a lack of volunteerism in females (Collins & Kearns, 2010).

Other factors identified have been lack of time (Strazdins, Broom, Banwell, McDonald, & Skeat, 2010), insufficient drive and money, being unfamiliar with other parents, and a fear of being lectured to (Van Lippevelde et al., 2011). Inclement weather may be a barrier to children using school safe-travel initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008b; Van Lippevelde et al., 2011), while volunteers may no longer be available as their children leave the school or the family moves from the area (Eyler et al., 2008b).

Parents who are known to volunteer for school activities may be directly approached or shoulder-tapped to contribute to other initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008a) and they are likely to accept the offer, especially if asked by someone in their social network (Kong et al., 2009; Putnam, 2000). To illustrate:

If I join the PTA, I'm very likely to be asked to volunteer for the fund-raising picnic, and someone I meet there may well invite me to help with the Cancer Society walk-a-thon. Once on the list of usual suspects, I'm likely to stay there (Putnam, 2000, p. 121).

Parent communities at individual schools will have specific elements affecting parent volunteerism. Likewise Longview Primary will have site-specific factors that will influence whether parents are willing to volunteer.

### *Socioeconomic status*

Parusel and McLaren (2010) argue that “little research ... has investigated how markers of social distance are related to mobility, and how educational policies that ignore this relationship might undermine school traffic safety practices” (p. 143) and “schooling traffic safety requires attention to the possible contradictions in governance that ignore socially systemic issues that shape mobility practices” (p. 144). These statements suggest that how children travel to school is likely to be influenced by their socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds.

To provide a neoliberal lens on this topic, according to Apple (2004) neoliberals are not concerned with the marginalised or exploited within society, do not recognise the concept of others (Peters & Marshall, 2004) or community (Fitzsimons, 2000), and are “hostile to social democracy” (Codd, 2005, p. 195). As a result, inequality or a “we/they” mind-set occurs (Apple, 2004, p. 10). The group labelled ‘they’ are deemed to be “lazy (dole bludgers, benefit defrauders, solo mothers or gang members), ‘at risk’, immoral and permissive”, indigenous, or poor people (Apple, 2004, p. 10; Fincher & Saunders, 2001). While ‘we’ have western cultural ideals (Raby, 2014), “are in paid employment, entrepreneurial, efficient ... self-funding and self-helping” (Fincher & Saunders, 2001, p. 33), are “law-abiding, hard-working, decent, property-owning ‘middle’ New Zealand” (Apple, 2004, p. 10).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is recognised as a symbol of the “social distance” highlighted by Parusel and McLaren (2010, p. 143). An indicator of the SES of schools in New Zealand is the MOE’s decile ranking system (Collins & Kearns, 2005). Research suggests that low decile schools in New Zealand are the least likely to receive voluntary support from parents and the community (Wylie, 1999), lower decile schools are less likely to introduce a WSB (Collins & Kearns, 2005), while decile 10 schools are the most likely (Collins & Kearns, 2010). Whether the decile ranking of Longview Primary influences the installation of the adult-assisted road crossing will be investigated.

Gladstone School in Auckland is an example of a school that may be viewed as a winner, successful and popular (Robertson & Dale, 2002). The school, with a roll of approximately 919 students (Education Review Office, 2013) and a decile 8 ranking (Education Review Office, 2007), collaborated with the Auckland City Council and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) to establish a “Safe Journey Coalition” (Collins & Kearns, 2001, p. 293). The group worked to find solutions to road safety concerns near the school including sites for pedestrians to cross the road, a lack of parking spaces, and traffic congestion (Collins &

Kearns, 2001). The first WSB in Auckland was implemented as a result (Kearns & Collins, 2003). It is suggested that the reasons the school was in a position to successfully implement the WSB were an enthusiastic principal and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and adequate funds within the school (Collins & Kearns, 2001).

When the need arose to address the matter of road safety concerns, Gladstone School possessed “the cultural and financial resources to respond to perceived risks, in part through forging innovative alliances with key agencies and professionals from various fields” (Collins & Kearns, 2001, p. 304). Collins and Kearns (2001) argue that while “market-oriented education reforms” have caused schools to compete and increase their rolls, potentially creating an unsafe environment for students, Gladstone School may have inadvertently challenged the neoliberal philosophy by promoting collaboration and community benefits (p. 294).

These findings are relevant to Longview Primary, as the school currently has a decile 4 ranking. Gordon (2003) specifically identifies lower decile schools as “market losers” (p. 30). A decile 4 school would have characteristics and resources that likely vary widely from a decile 10 school community. For example, factors affecting parent volunteerism in a decile 4 school may not affect a decile 10 parent body. Whether Longview Primary possesses and utilises the necessary resources and alliances to successfully install and maintain the adult-assisted road crossing is a focus of this study.

Parusel and McLaren (2010) identified access to a vehicle as a factor that may affect traffic safety and travelling to school. To further reinforce this idea, car ownership is linked with a family’s SES (Mitchell et al., 2007) and is a determining factor of exposure to risk in youth pedestrians, which may be regarded as a “direct consequence of an unequal societal distribution of wealth” (Roberts, Norton, & Taua, 1996, p. 165). To further illustrate, Hodgson et al. (2012) suggest that walking as transport has “marginal status”, which is emphasised by pedestrian exposure to unpleasant elements including high traffic flow, few sites to safely cross the road, and a lack of pavements (p. 72). This suggests that those who cannot afford to own a car are required to walk as they do not have any other option, and therefore are exposed to the dangerous traffic environment (Roberts, Keall, & Frith, 1994). Members of the school community who reside in Eastville may walk or cycle to school out of necessity, thus potentially would likely use an adult-assisted road crossing. It may be worthwhile investigating the social issues that will influence the mobility practices of Eastville residents as the users of the crossing.

### *The importance of the adult-assisted road crossing initiative*

The extent to which individuals consider the Longview Primary road crossing to be significant and important will be investigated. In particular, how this consideration influences the inclination of parents to volunteer to operate the crossing will be of interest. An important element to consider is that “parents participate in activities that meet their needs” (Pena, 2000, p. 53) or activities that have significance to the parent and fit with their family routine (Eyler et al., 2008a). Therefore, a request for adult volunteers does not guarantee their willingness to take up the role. Neoliberalism’s influence on volunteerism is illuminated by Thomas (1992), that:

for a government that has laid such emphasis upon self-interest as the determining factor in shaping individual choice and behaviour, the *paradox* lies in its expectations that 300,000 private citizens will freely give their time to the government of local schools (p. 327).

In addition, Tranter and Pawson (2001) suggest that a characteristic of New Zealand and Australian cities is individualism or the theme of not interfering in the business of others, rather than collective responsibility for others. This fits with the suggestion that the neoliberal subject takes responsibility for their own welfare via decisions they make (Robertson & Dale, 2002) and are able to behave in ways that obtain the best for their families and themselves (Apple, 2004; Bush & Gamage, 2001; Davies & Bansel, 2007). The neoliberal parent may acknowledge the need for the road crossing at Longview Primary, yet if they are not directly affected by the situation or if it is not important to them they may not wish to volunteer.

Tying in with this notion is the evidence that a lack of school support, especially from the principal, may make it difficult to recruit parent volunteers (Eyler et al., 2008a). Thus if the principal at Longview Primary is not supportive of the initiative and does not consider it to be important, this ambivalence may be evident to parents. In a sense, if the principal does not support the road crossing, then why should we? Substantiating this argument, Garrard (2009) discovered that every school will view AT differently, which will in turn be reflected in the school’s commitment to encouraging AT. For one school, the priority may be implementing an assisted road crossing, yet for another it could be reducing traffic congestion (Garrard, 2009).

The significance of the adult-assisted road crossing could also be viewed as an aspect of the long-term vision for a school community. Yet long term planning, which is concerned with social outcomes and benefits, is contradictory to the neoliberal notion of the market

determining outcomes (Baeten, 2012; Watson, 2006). More specifically, planning within the neoliberal environment produces a conflict between social and economic components (Baeten, 2012; Watson, 2006). The place of the road crossing initiative in Longview Primary's long-term strategies will be explored. In particular, the principal and the BOT chairperson's opinions are of interest, as two people central to setting the future directions and goals of Longview Primary.

Smyth (2011) emphasises that principals in the self-managing school are required to undertake "image and impression management" (p. 108) and "image self-promotion" (p. 113) in order to compete. Installing a WSB "satisfies a concern for safety that extends beyond the school gate as well as a desire to be *seen* as concerned with safety" (Kearns et al., 2003, p. 291). When schools use signs and logos to publically promote the initiative, it is declaring "that the school is responsibly addressing risk and extending its commitment to safe journeys beyond the school gate" (Kearns et al., 2003, p. 290). It would be useful to determine where the principal and BOT chairperson at Longview Primary predominantly consider the importance of the adult-assisted road crossing to lie: as part of image management, as a genuine concern for child safety, or a combination of elements.

#### *The process of installing the road crossing*

Introducing a school traffic safety initiative within a New Zealand primary school is likely to encounter elements that may hinder or facilitate its implementation and maintenance. A fundamental finding from Parusel and McLaren (2010) is that:

relying on traditional organizing of volunteer patrols, sporadic speed and parking bylaw enforcement to control individual behavior, and on occasional "hard measures" involving engineering planning and road redesign, the City is unable to consider the system of automobility and its failures (p. 138).

This explicitly cautions that when schools continue to adhere to the same conventional practices of utilising volunteers, policing, and local council engineering operations, the successful installation of school traffic safety initiatives is not guaranteed. Another layer of complexity is added when the neoliberal environment along with factors from the framework, specifically policy, partnerships, responsibility, and site-specific concerns, are considered. The processes followed by Longview Primary to install the crossing and recruit parent volunteers will be examined, along with the participant opinions and impressions of these processes.

## **Summary**

The findings from Parusel and McLaren (2010) provided the four main themes of educational and civic policy, partnerships, individual responsibility, and site-specific concerns as a model to begin investigating the influences on schools attempting to install safe travel initiatives.

Despite the model's utility, it would likely prove difficult, insufficient, or incomplete to adopt a view of the influences on New Zealand primary schools without considering the neoliberal environment. Therefore, the literature that was reviewed on these four main themes revealed numerous additional influences on schools.

The educational and civic policy topic highlights the realities of government policy and accountability that steer and direct school decision-making processes. Each partnership that Longview Primary is required to maintain for the road crossing initiative is unique and governed by different ways of working and expectations. The topic of individual responsibility illuminates the realities and expectations on Longview Primary and the parent volunteers. The site-specific factors at Longview Primary are numerous and unique to that school. The ability of the principal, chairperson, and school community to manage these factors and access and utilise available resources will likely influence the sustainability of the road crossing initiative.

The many social, political, and economic pressures on Longview Primary became clearer through a deeper reading of the literature. It highlighted the multitude of elements and the complex interplay between them that Longview Primary is expected to manage when attempting to install the adult-assisted road crossing. The literature raised considerations and layers of complexity concerning the road crossing that each school would need to manage regardless of decile level, available resources, environs, and the school community. Therefore, the theoretical framework adapted from Parusel and McLaren (2010) now presents a broader guide with which to investigate the research questions of the current project.

## CHAPTER THREE - CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of this case study is Longview Primary, a Dunedin primary school that made the decision to attempt to install an adult-assisted road crossing that was considered significant and unique to this school community. The research questions for this project were:

1. What are the school's perceptions of the experience of implementing an adult-assisted road crossing initiative?
2. What are the perceived influences on the school's ability and willingness to implement the road crossing initiative?
3. What are the perceptions of the related agencies and groups associated with the implementation of the road crossing initiative?

Throughout this thesis, all attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the Longview Primary community and the surrounding residential and geographical areas. Pseudonyms have been used as follows:

- The crossing site: the site where the adult-assisted crossing was to be installed. This is also the site of the newly installed DCC pedestrian refuge/island.
- Eastville: children in this area are no longer eligible to be transported to and from school by a subsidised school bus service and are therefore likely to be the main users of the adult-assisted road crossing at the crossing site. Children living in Eastville could be expected to walk approximately 1.2 to 1.9 kilometres to school (GoogleMaps, 2013).  
This would be the most direct route along footpaths and crossing roads where necessary.

### **Timeline of the process**

When the principal was approached about the prospect of Longview Primary being the focus of this research in 2014, she was agreeable. The BOT was subsequently informed of that decision.

A meeting at the proposed road crossing site was held on February 12, 2014 between the principal, the DCC, the New Zealand Police, and me. Approval was granted by the DCC and police representatives for the crossing to be installed and operated using parent volunteers. The understanding was that Longview Primary could call on the DCC and police for assistance and training where required, but that the Longview school community would be responsible for implementing and running the crossing. This overt transfer of responsibility to the school, and

subsequently parents, occurred early on in the process of this research and appears to have been conducted as a matter of course.

The role of parent volunteers as school wardens is to assist children to cross the road safely normally at a crossing site that is not marked, and they are not permitted to control or stop traffic (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Longview Primary school teachers, pupils, and the principal currently operate two road crossings near the school every weekday afternoon from 3.00 pm until 3.20 pm (Principal, personal communication, February 27, 2014). The school management is therefore already aware of the process of installing a crossing near the school grounds.

By the end of February 2014, the principal had already suggested a parent who might assume the role of co-ordinator for the road crossing programme. This female parent came forward to fill that role. All parents in the school community were invited to volunteer to take part in the adult-assisted road crossing programme via the school newsletter and Facebook page.

Newsletter requests were posted in the first three weeks of term two, on May 6, 15, and 22, 2014. Informal discussions between parents, the principal, and the BOT chairperson also occurred.

Only two volunteers were willing to take part in the operation of the adult-assisted road crossing and as a result the road crossing did not proceed. Previous attempts at formulating a group of parent volunteers to staff a road crossing at Longview Primary had met with little success. In June 2014, the DCC moved the proposed crossing site north of its original location and installed a pedestrian refuge island in the middle of the road at the crossing site.

## **Methodology**

The methods for this research project were selected as the best fit for the research aims, and because I also identified with them as a researcher. The methods appealed to my personal inclinations and preferences (Tracy, 2013). The case study model, qualitative approach, and interpretive paradigm all fit well with answering the research questions, but also appeal to me as they allow the participants to freely explore and explain their experiences of the road crossing implementation within the real context of the school setting. The participant experiences and stories are accepted as valuable, valid, and worthwhile, and are not considered to be right or wrong.

As with all research, ontology and epistemology are central assumptions guiding this project. Ontology is “the nature of reality” (Tracy, 2013, p. 38) or the simple features of the reality (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge (Hennink et al., 2011; Tracy, 2013) and “the relationship between the inquirer and the known” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). The epistemological and ontological assumptions linked to the interpretive paradigm support the idea that knowledge is constructed via lived experiences (Sandberg, 2005), and humans construct the world, rather than discover it (Wardekker, 2000).

The research paradigm is the lens used to view and comprehend reality, gather data, and construct knowledge (Hennink et al., 2011; Tracy, 2013). The present study uses the interpretive or constructivist paradigm. This paradigm views people “as interpreters and constructors of a meaningful world. Humans think about themselves, about other people, and about the world and attach meaning to everything they encounter” (Wardekker, 2000, p. 265).

Tracy (2013) proposes that through this paradigm, knowledge is socially constructed via interaction and communication, and reality is understood through ideological and cultural classifications. This construction of knowledge needs to recognise other people and is influenced by history and personal experience (Wardekker, 2000). The notion of objective truth is therefore contested (Sandberg, 2005). The experiences of the participants may be affected by school culture, family backgrounds, and the home-school relationship, in conjunction with policy, partnerships, individual responsibility, site-specific concerns, and neoliberal influences. It is necessary, therefore, for the researcher to select research methods that are appropriate for an interpretive or constructivist paradigm. With that aim in mind and the acknowledged assumptions, a qualitative approach was adopted.

### **Qualitative approach**

A qualitative approach is “useful for exploring new topics or understanding complex issues; for explaining people’s beliefs and behaviour; and for identifying the social or cultural norms of a culture or society” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 10). Qualitative research allows the researcher to try to make sense of a scene or culture by immersing themselves in it, in order to “investigate the particular circumstances present in that scene, and only then move toward grander statements and theories” (Tracy, 2013, p. 3). Topics may also be investigated from the viewpoint of the research participants, using their interpretations and meanings of an experience to understand an issue (Hennink et al., 2011).

A case study was used for the current project as it fitted with the interpretive or constructivist paradigm. The interpretive viewpoint emphasises the need to strive to understand, “*verstehen*”, or to empathetically consider social actions through the viewpoints and attitudes of the participants themselves (Tracy, 2013, p. 41). This approach may also be referred to as the inside perspective (Hennink et al., 2011). Along with this, the interpretivist seeks meaning from numerous participants and standpoints, including their own (Tracy, 2013).

Single cases or small sample sizes in qualitative research allow for in depth investigation of “information-rich” cases that can provide a wealth of information on the topic under investigation (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 11; Marshall, 1996; Patton, 1990). This case study emphasises the question of what one can learn from a single case or event (Stake, 2000). In addition, case studies can consider how the topic under investigation may be “influenced by the context within which it is situated” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). This is relevant to the current project, as the neoliberal context within which Longview Primary operates is likely to be influenced by policy, partnerships, responsibilities, and concerns specific to the school. Generalisation of the findings was not intended in this study.

### **Data collection methods**

A range of sources was used to collect data. These included interviews, email correspondence, document analysis, and my reflexive diary. As outlined by Baxter and Jack (2008), data from these sources are “converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source is one piece of the ‘puzzle’, with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon” (p. 554). This can strengthen the findings and enhance the researcher’s understanding as the gathered information is considered as a whole rather than as individual components of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The interviewees were selected as they were viewed as “key informants” who would have a unique understanding and awareness of the topic (Eyler et al., 2008a, p. 139). My supervisors and I considered these interviewees to be those most involved with the road crossing initiative at Longview Primary. Therefore, the principal and the BOT chairperson were selected as they were directly responsible for the management and governance of the school and any projects or initiatives. The female parent who volunteered to fill the role of parent co-ordinator was also selected to take part in an interview. Invitations to participate in an interview were not extended to those members of the school community who did not take part in the road crossing initiative.

The viewpoints of numerous key stakeholders and agencies were also investigated via document analysis and email correspondence. A representative from each of the DCC, MOE, Sport Otago, and the New Zealand Police answered questions via email. Email correspondence occurred in May and June 2014. The email correspondence and questions largely concerned the role that each agency played in school road safety initiatives. Their involvement with and support offered to Longview Primary during the attempt to install the road crossing was examined.

### *Structure of the interviews*

The principal, BOT chairperson, and parent representative each attended one face-to-face interview of 45 minutes to one hour duration in term two in June 2014. Interviews were conducted in a setting and at a time of the participant's choice and were recorded with a digital recorder. The interview began with each interviewee being asked to outline their association with Longview Primary and how long they had been involved with the school. The interview guide contained a list of predetermined questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) which focussed on a non-functioning road crossing. These questions were formulated based on the four themes highlighted by Parusel and McLaren (2010) of policy, partnerships, individual responsibility, and site-specific concerns.

Topics were investigated in-depth with the added benefit of being able to observe participant body language (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). Participants were permitted to raise any conversation topics they wished (Marton & Pong, 2005) and additional interview questions emerged throughout the discussion between the interviewees and myself (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interview participants were provided with a list of some of the interview questions the day prior to their interview. Appendix C contains the list of potential interview questions.

### *Document analysis*

Document analysis enables a researcher to review and evaluate relevant documents to gain background information, raise additional questions, and add to their existing knowledge base (Bowen, 2009). This method also contributes to the understanding of the context within which Longview Primary and the associated agencies were required to operate when attempting to implement the adult-assisted road crossing. In this study, document analysis was conducted via the examination of correspondence including letters and emails, maps, newspaper articles, and background articles. The school charter, school travel plan, and volunteer policy (where

available) were also available to be investigated. The DCC's 2013/2014 Rooding Safety Improvement Works Final Brief document and the MOE's Traffic Management Checklist were referred to in order to gain background information.

### **Role of the researcher**

The interpretive paradigm asserts that a researcher will bring their subjective experiences and principles to the process, potentially influencing the collection and interpretation of data (Hennink et al., 2011). Therefore, interpretivism argues that knowledge without values is impossible, and "researchers need to make their agenda and value-system explicit from the outset" (Scotland, 2012, p. 12). A researcher's background, prior experiences, demographic information, and values will shape the way they approach and conduct research (Tracy, 2013).

After conducting a research project with Longview Primary in 2013, I was interested in being involved with the current project and the implementation of the adult-assisted road crossing. Having established a prior relationship with Longview Primary, I had insight and background knowledge into the justification for the crossing. I therefore understood the perceived need for the initiative. Despite the fact that two of my children attend another local primary school, my involvement with Longview Primary in 2014 was as a researcher, concerned community member, and parent.

My previous involvement with Longview Primary provided me with the confidence and familiarity to deal with the key members of the school community, in particular the principal and the BOT Chairperson. The topic of my first project with the school concerned the impact of the bus cuts on the school community and active transport. The neoliberal education setting was not a feature of that first project.

Yet for this thesis, neoliberalism is the main thread that has guided my research. This has forced me to examine influences and pressures on Longview Primary concerning the road crossing installation that I had never previously acknowledged. The themes raised in this thesis have also unexpectedly enabled me to now realise the neoliberal influences on Longview concerning the bus discontinuation. I now have a better understanding of the arguments of Burrows & Wright (2007), Bush & Gamage (2001), Collins & Kearns (2001), and Smyth (2011). As a result, it is important to understand the commonplace issues that primary schools face within a broader social context and the forces and pressures present within that context.

## **Ethical considerations**

For the purposes of the current project, voluntary consent was sought from the interview participants, and they were advised that they could withdraw from the research project at any time without negative consequences. Interviewees have not been named or identified in any research reports, and were informed about how their responses would be treated. All attempts have been made to preserve the anonymity of the school community and the surrounding residential and geographical areas. Pseudonyms were used where necessary to ensure anonymity. Interview participants were invited to check their data to ensure its accuracy and were able to correct that information if necessary (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this research project, ethical approval was granted by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, Category B: D14/152.

## **Data analysis**

Data were analysed via a general inductive approach in order to identify themes and categories from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). The open-ended interviews were transcribed and the transcripts and emails read numerous times and themes were identified (Thomas, 2006). The data included in the interview transcriptions and email correspondence were coded and analysed in order to “make sense of the data” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 277).

During the coding process, words or phrases were labelled in the data that identified a particular concept, theme, relationship, action, or belief (Tracy, 2013). Cross-case comparison was also used as part of the data analysis process. This occurs when a single code or topic, such as ‘partnership’, is compared in different data sources to determine similar or different experiences of that topic (Hennink et al., 2011). Analysis was conducted with the research aims in mind.

The findings from Parusel and McLaren (2010) provided the four major themes of the theoretical framework: educational and civic policy, partnerships, individual responsibilities, and site-specific concerns. The review of literature provided some of the specific sub-headings, as they were identified as being relevant to the case study and the New Zealand neoliberal educational environment. Specific quotes from each transcript were copied into four separate Word 2010 documents under these four headings. Within each of these documents, there were headings and sub-headings identifying further topics and the participant quotes were linked to each topic. Quotes were selected where they clearly demonstrated aspects of the four major

themes and were connected to the research questions. Quotes were also taken from the email communications with the four external agencies. To illustrate:

Major theme	Heading	Sub-heading
<b>Educational and civic policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Zealand Curriculum</li> <li>• Legal obligations</li> <li>• Civic policies</li> <li>• School self-management</li> </ul>	Providing a safe environment Safety of parent volunteers
<b>Site-specific concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The built environment</li> <li>• Factors affecting parent volunteerism</li> <li>• Socioeconomic status</li> </ul>	Recruiting volunteers Importance of the initiative Impressions of the process

### **Rigour of the research**

It is important that the researcher can show their study to be credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000), and to articulate what “a good qualitative study entails if we are to pursue our own research in a way that merits the consideration of others” (Angen, 2000, p. 380; Scotland, 2012; Tracy, 2010). To explain the concept of rigour, (Davies & Dodd, p. 2002) argue that ethics is a vital component of rigorous research and suggest that rigour should be viewed as “an attentiveness to research practice” (p. 288). They use the following terms to describe rigour in qualitative research, including “attentiveness, empathy, carefulness, sensitivity, respect, honesty, reflection, conscientiousness, engagement, awareness, openness, context” (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 288). Along with this, the interpretive paradigm maintains that there are different interpretations of the world and knowledge and it is not possible for someone to persuade anybody by rational methods “that he or she has a better story about the world” (Wardekker, 2000, p. 265).

It can be difficult to ensure and judge the quality of research as there are different criteria linked to individual paradigms and philosophical approaches (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Wardekker, 2000; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Davies and Dodd (2002) acknowledge that “the criteria for evaluating rigor must be appropriate to the research and the type of research methods used” (p. 280). In addition, Angen (2000) posits that:

how carefully the research question is pondered and framed, how respectfully the inquiry is carried out, how persuasively the arguments are developed in the written account, and how widely the results are

disseminated become much more important issues than any criteria-based process of accounting that occurs after the research is completed (p. 387).

This encourages the researcher to strive for rigour throughout the entire research process. Along with this, Koch and Harrington (1998) suggest that if the research document is skilfully written, “the readers will be able to travel easily through the worlds of the participants and makers of the text (the researchers) and decide for themselves whether the text is believable or plausible (our terms for rigour)” (p. 882).

Member checking provides interviewees with the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy and check for errors or omissions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Sandelowski, 1993). Participants may also have the opportunity to offer further information or perspectives on the topic (Baxter & Jack, 2008). An important step in this process is the documenting of any changes that may have been suggested and noting that the checks actually took place (Guba, 1981). The three interviewees were invited to read their interview transcripts and amend accordingly. Only one interviewee checked their interview transcript. Despite this, it is argued that at least verbal accuracy can be ensured as the interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed directly from the recording (Koch & Harrington, 1998).

Thick description is another useful method as it allows the reader to be “transported into a setting or situation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). The researcher needs to provide as much vivid detail as possible to help the reader recognise the credibility of the research account. Thick description is an inductive process which allows the researcher to identify links and to notice associations between topics that will help to build future descriptions and explanations (Hennink et al., 2011). As suggested by Scotland (2012), layers of understanding emerge as the topic under investigation is “thickly described” (p. 12). Shenton (2004) encourages researchers to provide detailed descriptions of the research as this allows the reader to gain a full understanding of the topic and the context surrounding it. The reader may be informed enough to compare the topic under investigation with those that they have seen in other situations (Shenton, 2004).

Throughout this research project, I have kept a reflexive diary to record my thoughts and experiences as well as decisions taken and methods used. Rolfe (2006) endorses the place that reflexivity has within research and encourages “researchers to leave a ‘super’ audit trail” (p. 309). With this in mind, a reflexive journal is a valuable tool that can be kept by a researcher throughout the entire research process to address “biases and assumptions that come from their

own life experiences or in interactions with research participants” (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). In addition, throughout the project the researcher will contribute findings, literature, “a positioning of this literature, a positioning of oneself, and moral socio-political contexts” (Koch & Harrington, 1998, p. 882). Thus continual self-appraisal and self-critique is encouraged (Koch & Harrington, 1998), which a reflexive diary is likely to foster.

Throughout the research project and during the writing of this thesis, I was able to reflect on my experience as a researcher. The reflexive diary helped me do this, as it brought to mind elements that I had forgotten from months earlier. My prior experience with Longview Primary in 2013 meant that I was familiar with the principal and the BOT chairperson. While I knew their opinions concerning road safety initiatives in response to the bus cuts, I did not assume that I knew their views on the processes surrounding the installation of the adult-assisted road crossing. I conducted the interviews with an open mind and discussed any topic they wanted raised. As a parent I was particularly drawn to the experiences and perceptions of the parent coordinator. The NZC and parent volunteerism are topics that I have little awareness of or involvement in through my children’s school. Therefore it was interesting to investigate how my experiences related to those of parents from other schools.

## CHAPTER FOUR - EDUCATIONAL AND CIVIC POLICY

This chapter will examine the experiences of the interviewees and agencies regarding the presence and influence of educational and civic policies within the education setting. The key themes concerning policy include the NZC, legal requirements, local civic agencies, and school self-management.

### *New Zealand Curriculum*

The principal clearly articulated where RSE fits within Longview Primary's curriculum, with reference to the existing road crossings at the end of the school day:

It fits in perfectly well [as] health is part of our curriculum ... I do road patrol here every day and I make comments which is educating, "that car's showing really good respect knowing that they have to slow down when there's children around" (PRI).

The principal offered additional insight concerning the actions that she uses to communicate road safety messages to the school community. She stated that "I frequently put things in the [school] newsletter about driver speed, about congestion at the gate and courtesy and being respectful" (PRI).

In contrast, the BOT chairperson was clearly unsure about where the adult-assisted road crossing initiative and RSE would fit in the curriculum. She explained that "I don't know if it fits with the curriculum ... I think more than the curriculum itself, per se probably. I don't know about the curriculum" (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator acknowledged the need for students to learn how to safely negotiate the traffic environment, yet had difficulty in stating where, and in fact whether RSE would have a place in the school curriculum. She posited that "I suppose it could be through ... the children's education as well ... I don't know how much that gets built into the curriculum" (PCI).

The respondents also suggested that as well as fitting within the curriculum, the road crossing and RSE had a place in the values of the school community:

It's also part of our school values ... or school rules ... So there is a wonderful opportunity to remind children about respect and their responsibility (PRI).

Doesn't it fit more with our overall community values and looking after our community? Isn't it? I think more than the curriculum itself. At [Longview Primary] we're big on our values and respect and responsibility is kind of our umbrella and I think it fits more [with] taking responsibility for our community (BOTCI).

There is a clear distinction between the participant viewpoints and interpretations on where RSE and the road crossing fit within the curriculum. The principal gave the most definite answer, while the BOT chairperson was obviously puzzled and largely unaware of the particulars of the curriculum. In what appears to add further confusion, the reflections of the interviewees suggest that RSE also fits well within the school values. While the descriptions of the curriculum intent are explicit, it is not surprising that there was uncertainty and also disparity between the principal and BOT chairperson's viewpoints, which may be attributed to their different roles. This appears to be standard practice within schools as BOTs may expect to be informed by the principal and staff on curriculum matters (Ministry of Education, 2007b; Wylie & King, 2004).

The parent co-ordinator's uncertainty of how RSE would be delivered supports research that indicates that "parents often feel ignorant of the curriculum and processes of schools" (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 45), and they may "not feel well informed about their child's learning" (Mutch & Collins, 2012, p. 168). The reality may in fact be that parents "are not expected to get involved in what is taught in school or in how it is taught" (Gellert, 2005, p. 315). This suggests that it is not crucial for the parent co-ordinator to have knowledge of the curriculum, which appears to be in line with her experience.

Schools are free to choose to deliver the curriculum, however they see fit (Parker & O'Leary, 2006; Petrie et al., 2014; Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011), as well as determining the amount of time and effort dedicated to each learning topic. At Longview Primary, the principal's experience of running a road crossing herself and discussing road safety on-site helps children to gain practical knowledge and experience of traffic safety risks (Collins & Kearns, 2010). This can also be viewed as "an extension of the school in terms of its practical educational value" (Kearns et al., 2003, p. 287). The delivery of RSE at Longview Primary clearly not only occurs in the formal classroom setting.

The parent co-ordinator commented that "there are so many things that are community issues, that everyone says 'oh, we'll do that at school' and ... actually I don't know if it's their role to do that" (PCI), which highlights the multitude of topics the school might be expected to deliver

to students. This idea is inadvertently supported by the principal's view that "in reality, it's a parental responsibility as well as ours. So we put things in the newsletter but also we have talks about being safe generally. So road safety is just one of them" (PRI). In addition, Parusel and McLaren (2010) caution that "civic and national programs have increasingly contained the multiple goals of health, environmental sustainability and traffic safety ... The danger exists, however, that traffic safety is being conflated with the other goals" (p. 142). At Longview Primary, RSE and the road crossing are considered to be important and the topic is delivered formally and informally in the school curriculum. Yet as the respondents explained, the subject is just one of many that Longview Primary needs to consider (Petrie et al., 2014).

Unsurprisingly, the participant interpretations of where RSE fits within the curriculum highlight the difficulty that New Zealand primary schools may encounter within the current education setting. Schools may simply be overloaded with trying to remain competitive, adhere to policy, meet performance goals, and satisfy parent expectations (Lee et al., 2004). Therefore if an initiative or teaching topic is not seen as a priority it may not fit in (Raftery & Wundersitz, 2011). The messiness of operating within this neoliberal educational setting (Nairn et al., 2012) is evident.

The purpose of the road crossing and RSE ultimately concerns the safety and wellbeing of individuals (Soames Job & Sakashita, 2012). The obvious confusion of the participants revealed that they are unsure as to where RSE and the crossing fit within the curriculum and the priority they should be given, despite the obvious child safety element. The current project is not concerned with the extent of the curriculum knowledge of the interviewees, but rather their experience of delivering RSE and providing an adult-assisted road crossing within a neoliberal educational setting.

The principal seemed to have a greater awareness of the educational policies than the BOT chairperson and parent co-ordinator, and there is no evidence that the principal felt bombarded by the various HPE curriculum materials on offer (Macdonald et al., 2008). Parusel and McLaren (2010) state that safe travel initiatives in schools are predominantly specific to individual schools and sites, rather than being a universal or systemic matter. So where one school may easily be able to manage to formally deliver a topic as part of their curriculum, another school may not.

### *Legal obligations*

This section highlights the legal obligations of the BOT in terms of the health and safety of students and parent volunteers concerning the road crossing initiative. Appendix B outlines the details of the legal Acts and requirements that Longview Primary is expected to abide by. The subject of Longview Primary's legal obligations was complicated and confusing for the participants to navigate. Two main themes emerged from the data regarding Longview's responsibilities: providing a safe environment and protecting parent volunteers during the daily on-site operation of the crossing.

#### Providing a safe environment

The BOT is responsible for providing a safe emotional and physical environment for all staff, students, and visitors to the school (Ministry of Education, 2014a; Zink & Boyes, 2006). It also has legal responsibility for all activities that occur at the school, including a school traffic safety team (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). Despite these overt and explicit expectations, the principal appeared to be unsure of the school's legal responsibilities in the space outside the school gate:

In terms of supporting children to cross safely I think it is a community responsibility and if there are volunteers helping support that, then they're more visibly responsible ... I think legally it used to be, and I don't know whether it's still the case, that apparently the school is supposed to take responsibility from the time the child leaves school until they get home. I always found that really difficult. I don't know how you could enforce that ... I don't think that's ever been taken to court (PRI).

The BOT chairperson was also unable to provide a clear explanation of where the BOT's responsibility begins and ends:

Is that part of our environment? I don't know. I mean how far do you expand your environment? I don't know ... Is it just the physical environment within the school perimeter or I mean we're probably looking at it in the wider concept, aren't we, by really saying we're wanting that crossing for our safe environment for our children (BOTCI).

Additional clarification was sought from the principal via email about whether the duty to provide the proposed adult-assisted crossing was diminished, as Longview already meets health and safety obligations by operating the existing crossings after school. Her response was:

I understand that the school does these crossings in good faith and to act in a responsible way to protect our children at this high traffic time.

Ideally, we would support the crossing of children at [the crossing site]. In practice covering [the crossing site] is not practical (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014).

The BOT chairperson seemed to suggest that if reasonable care was taken to make it safer for children to cross the road, this might be adequate to meet Longview's obligations. She said "you think well, can I make a difference, can I do something that might make a difference? ... How would the school feel ... if there was an accident with one of our children, and we hadn't tried harder?" (BOTCI). This sentiment highlights the overarching expectations on Longview Primary to attempt to enhance the safety of students as the right thing to do, exclusive of any legal obligations.

Confusion and differing perspectives emerged from the respondents on the topic of legal obligations. In particular, the BOT chairperson clearly struggled with the school's boundaries and when responsibility would start and finish. While the confusion may be justified, there are in fact legal Acts and concrete statements in place that may reduce the confusion and fear around ensuring a safe environment. The respondents did not name or mention any of the specific Acts and legal statutes that would protect the school. The comments support previous research that the reach of Longview's responsibility outside the school gate is a grey, murky area (Kearns & Collins, 2003; McDonald & Aalborg, 2009). This 'murkiness' may be perplexing due to a lack of awareness or understanding of the current legal obligations and also the fact that the crossing site is not on or even near the school grounds.

The chairperson's suggestion that the BOT should try to "make a difference" could be interpreted as Longview Primary taking reasonable steps to enhance safety, yet she did not provide insight into what it would take to make a difference. Such vague statements add to the obvious confusion of the topic. It is not surprising therefore that Longview Primary could not install and maintain the adult-assisted road crossing initiative. This experience supports Haddock and Sword (2004) who state that it is challenging for schools to try to create a safe physical and emotional environment.

The main impediment to the road crossing initiative appears to be the fact that the crossing site is a distance from the school grounds. This in turn appears to add another layer of complexity for Longview that may not be relevant when considering other activities within the school locale. Schools are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure a duty of care towards its students (Haddock & Sword, 2004), yet are not expected to protect against all harm, but to do

what is reasonable (Haddock & Sword, 2004; Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2014c). Such statements obviously need to be interpreted by individual schools and how they are played out in practice will be unique to each school. Therefore, given this ambiguity, schools and parents are encouraged to work to support “child pedestrian safety initiatives that modify or regulate the behaviour of students out of school hours” (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 202).

Longview Primary can choose to install the crossing while being governed by state and legal policies. Yet if the principal and the BOT do not correctly interpret how to do what is reasonable, there will be consequences. In relation to the road crossing, this translates into the possibility that schools may be fined due to their actions or inaction if a child is hurt (Ministry of Education, 2014c). By distributing its power to the individual and the community, the state maintains its ability to govern at a distance (Robertson & Dale, 2002; Smyth, 2011; Witten et al., 2003).

Hay-MacKenzie and Wilshire (2002) encourage that “most New Zealand schools today are alive to the importance of putting in place policies and procedures ... and in so doing appear to be motivated more by a genuine desire to ensure that their students are kept safe at school, than primarily to fulfil their statutory obligations and minimise the risk of liability” (p. 61-62). This certainly appears to be the case at Longview Primary. It is clear from the principal and the BOT chairperson’s comments that they do endeavour to provide a safe environment and educate pupils on traffic safety risks through the curriculum.

#### Safety of parent volunteers

At Longview Primary, parent volunteers would be expected to operate the road crossing and assist children at the site. This is in line with Parusel and McLaren (2010) who claim that “educational and civic policy environments: ... construct school traffic safety as the primary responsibility of individuals, particularly children and parents” (p. 135). The parent co-ordinator’s concern came from the perspective of one who is not employed by Longview Primary and therefore did not have the same jurisdiction as a staff member:

What training do we have? Because we’re not on school grounds, not on school hours, where do our responsibilities start and finish, it sort of feels a little bit uncomfortable in some respects because there would probably be other children from local schools crossing ... Our own personal safety in terms of managing children who, you know, parents aren’t giving consent for us to be helping them cross the road (PCI).

A police representative stated via email that “adult crossings are adult assisted crossings and aren’t trained by police, and there is not any legislation to help them” (New Zealand Police, personal communication, June 10, 2014). This response reinforces the lack of certainty and clarity expressed by the interviewees and tends to reveal a lack of support from the police.

Parent volunteers from Longview Primary would be seen as taking the place of school staff and parents, or *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent). Today *in loco parentis* has little influence in modern case law and is no longer particularly relevant within the education setting (Hancock, 2002). The school’s legal authority and power to manage students is determined by the law, in particular the Education Act 1989, rather than by parents (Hancock, 2002). Thus the Longview Primary volunteers who cross children at the site on behalf of the school are protected by the legal statutes that apply to volunteers in schools. More specifically, the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 are concerned with employee health and safety, extending to any person employed by the BOT (Ministry of Education, 2014c). Appendix B includes this information in greater detail.

Schools are expected to “take all practicable steps” to guarantee volunteer health (Haddock & Sword, 2004; Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2014c, p. 15). Yet given the distance of the crossing from the school locale, Longview Primary may not reasonably be “expected to know, control or be able to alter many places outside the school grounds” (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 57). It is clear that deciphering the expectations of Longview Primary is ambiguous and open to interpretation. A BOT consisting of members with varying opinions and priorities may spend valuable time struggling to define what is reasonable and practicable and still not reach a clear explanation.

In addition, if parents did in fact sign a consent form as highlighted by the parent co-ordinator, it does not protect schools against negligence (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 56). By signing the permission slip, parents are allowing their child to take part in the activity despite any associated risks (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002). Obtaining parental consent for children to use a school road crossing does not appear to be the normal practice in New Zealand schools, yet it may at least reassure the volunteers.

The parent co-ordinator raised related concerns that the adult-assisted road crossing would operate outside school grounds and hours, in that “legally and socially ambiguous zone” (Kearns & Collins, 2003, p. 207; McDonald & Aalborg, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2007), which added to the uncertainty of the responsibilities of the potential volunteers. The principal did

acknowledge that there are numerous health and safety policies in place to meet administrative requirements and these are reviewed every three years (Principal, personal communication, July 23, 2014). However, the legal statements and policies described had obviously not been communicated by the principal or the BOT to the parent co-ordinator. Those statements may have given her some peace of mind. What appears to be missing is clear communication between the principal, the BOT chairperson, and parents concerning these protections. A lack of awareness of these safeguards by Longview Primary's key management and governance personnel may exist, which only adds to the bewilderment concerning legal responsibilities.

The neoliberal influence on Longview Primary is obvious through the state governing at a distance (Robertson & Dale, 2002) via the various Acts and legal requirements the school needs to abide by. The idea of the checks and inspections, accountability, and performance measures (O'Neill et al., 2004; Pope, 2013; Smyth, 2011) is pertinent here. Therefore, Longview is free to install and operate the road crossing but the legal and health and safety statutes and expectations are always present. While the statutes and policies may not be explicitly referred to daily, they are the guidelines governing the safe operation of activities at Longview Primary and cannot be ignored.

The respondents did not explicitly cite legal obligations as a reason for the road crossing failing to get underway, yet the legal and safety expectations were clearly profuse and perplexing. Legal responsibilities are an unavoidable feature of a school road crossing initiative and for good reason. Upholding school health and safety requirements may be difficult, yet is a necessary duty of schools in New Zealand.

### *Civic policies*

The DCC is required to act in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002. The following interviewee comments reveal different perspectives and priorities when dealing with the DCC:

One of my discussions has been over the use of having a proper pedestrian crossing and there is no way that [the DCC] want to have pedestrian crossings. For some reason they are philosophically opposed to having any more pedestrian crossings ... They say that people don't stop at pedestrian crossings and I have yet to see that research which I have requested, because that's not my experience ... Unless there's a change of philosophy [at the DCC], it's not going to happen. I think paint must be expensive (PRI).

In our initial meetings with [the DCC], the idea was a pedestrian crossing and [a DCC representative] said they don't do pedestrian crossings ... [The DCC] did a count of the number of people crossing the road ... I don't even think it was in school time ... [The DCC] said there wasn't a demand for a pedestrian crossing ... Maybe we should've lobbied the DCC harder for a pedestrian crossing ... I'm just hoping [the adult-assisted road crossing] is a temporary measure until they then see we need a pedestrian crossing (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator said that "I'd like [the DCC] just to have traffic lights there ... but they're very expensive so [the DCC is] unlikely to do that" (PCI). These statements highlight that the DCC is governed by boundaries and processes.

The DCC's perspective is illustrated in the following email communication:

The Council are moving towards having 8 high level strategies, of which the transport strategy is one. The draft Transport Strategy covers high level pedestrian issues, and includes investigating a strategic pedestrian network. In addition the Transportation Strategy includes an upgrade to the [town] CBD which although focussed on the centre has the scope to look at routes to the centre, and pedestrian routes to schools could be included in this work (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2013).

This comment outlines how the DCC works with and is bound by strategies and plans to achieve outcomes. Parusel and McLaren (2010) identified inadequate resources as one challenge that city councils may face. The participant comments are in line with Parusel and McLaren (2010) as they highlight this obvious theme of financial constraints. The comments suggest that the participants assume that funding is a major reason why their requests for improvements or enhancements to the built environment are stonewalled by the DCC.

The respondent comments also support Nyamori et al. (2012) who highlight the focus on the economic elements in local government as well as the "palpable tension between managers' expressed preference for efficient solutions (quick decision making, with limited political interference) and the statutory requirement for residents to participate in local decision making" (p.590). The DCC consults with Longview Primary regarding new initiatives they are investigating (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2013) yet it does not mean that they have to act on the school's requests (Anderson, 2008). Chapter five further investigates the relationship between Longview Primary and the DCC and the perspectives and priorities held by each party.

It is clear that the complex workings of local government are difficult to manage (Nyamori et al., 2012). The city council aims to make plans, meet performance goals, and take part in community consultation amidst an environment of government policy and fiscal limits. Longview Primary has a ‘wish list’ of improvements for the DCC to enhance student safety which includes traffic lights (PCI) and a pedestrian crossing (BOTCI, PRI). While these improvements may indeed enhance safety, they will not be installed if they do not fit within the DCC’s plans or strategies. The BOT chairperson’s idea that “maybe we should’ve lobbied the DCC harder for a pedestrian crossing” (BOTCI) likely would have made little or no difference.

In addition, the principal’s view signalled resignation and acceptance that the situation was not likely to change unless the philosophy at the DCC changed. Longview Primary is one group amongst many that the DCC needs to manage when implementing its long-term wide-reaching plans. Yet the DCC is a key partner that Longview is required to collaborate with concerning the road crossing.

#### *School self-management*

A feature that was identified from the data was that schools are permitted and required to self-manage amidst the expectations and boundaries of educational, legal, and civic policies. Two parties which play a role within schools concerning these policies are the ERO and the MOE.

The ERO is a government department independent of the MOE which reviews and assesses the quality and performance of schools and early childhood services through evaluation and reporting (Education Review Office, 2014; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The BOT chairperson revealed that “we’ve got ERO here this week, yeah, I should be better on the curriculum. But they don’t ask me questions about that” (BOTCI). The principal identified the presence of an external agency reviewing the school’s formal health and safety policies, which is likely to be the ERO:

We have a huge number of policies and procedures for Health and Safety ... Policies and procedures are part of our administrative responsibility and are reviewed every 3 years as part of the school self review. These stand behind the charter which includes providing a safe and healthy environment (Principal, personal communication, July 23, 2014).

School policies addressing AT initiatives are imperative, according to Eyler et al. (2008b). The principal was asked whether Longview Primary had specific policies regarding safe travel or the operation of road crossings, and if not, how staff members would know the expectations

and responsibilities of running the road crossing. The principal stated via email that “we use common sense. Talk about any issues as they arise. Interesting question – our role is to look confident and our presence seems to keep motorists more polite. We will report to police breaches” (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014). The principal was also asked about the procedures and policies in place that might protect or support Longview’s actions if an accident occurred and a child or staff member are harmed at a crossing. Her response was “our practice would be as in any accident within the school grounds. i.e. provide aid and support as first aiders if we can, call appropriate agencies” (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014).

As school management is driven by the principal, her preference appears to be a more informal and reactive approach to managing the school rather than a more formal style. This was demonstrated in her conversations with pedestrians when she operated the road crossing and her statements about using “common sense” (PRI) and talking about issues as they are raised. That is not to say that this is or is not best practice, but it is how Longview Primary chooses to use its freedom and operate within the neoliberal setting. It is clear that formal health and safety policies do exist at Longview Primary which may provide protection for the principal to manage the school as she sees fit. An informal approach may be commonplace within schools when managing the day-to-day operations of the school as well as impromptu conversations and meetings with staff, parents, and children. The informal approaches taken by the principal are not likely to be specific or unique to Longview Primary.

The principal’s comment on the “administrative responsibility” (Principal, personal communication, July 23, 2014) reinforces the view of the requirement to meet the checks of the ERO every three years (Education Review Office, n.d.-a; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The BOT chairperson’s comment on the ERO visit taking place at the time of her interview highlighted her lack of awareness of the curriculum, yet also highlighted the accepted regulation and surveillance role of the ERO at Longview Primary. The comment also added further support to the suggestion that the BOT leaves the staff and principal to manage curriculum matters (Ministry of Education, 2007b; Wylie & King, 2004).

The MOE is another party that has a presence and an influence regarding the road crossing at Longview Primary. The principal highlighted the involvement of the MOE regarding the road crossing initiative by saying that “[recruiting volunteers] that’s a school management issue that [the Ministry of Education] would have nothing, no role in ... No interest. In fact they wouldn’t

even be checking up whether we man our crossings” (PRI). The BOT chairperson stated that “it’s not affecting our funding, it doesn’t impact on the delivery of the curriculum or any of those kind of things so ... we can just go and do that. I’m not dealing with them” (BOTCI). This view provided similar insight into the self-managing school and the MOE’s place in that environment.

Regarding the intervention of the Ministry in this self-managing school, the principal commented that “where they would come in is if there was a community outrage that we were not taking care of the children, if there was a complaint against the school, that’s when they would become involved” (PRI). The Ministry of Education was approached directly for a comment via email on their expectations and requirements of schools installing adult-assisted road crossings and the support schools might expect to receive from the Ministry to do this. The following website links concerning traffic management and safer journeys to school were provided (Ministry of Education, personal communication, May 27, 2014):

- <http://minedu.moe.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PropertyToolBox/StateSchools/Design/TrafficManagement.aspx#Creating>
- <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/safer-journeys-for-schools/>

The traffic management link provides suggestions for making the passage to school safer for pupils and managing traffic inside school grounds (Ministry of Education, 2014d), thus allowing schools to choose how to direct such matters. The following comment was also made, further indicating the neoliberal hands-off approach from the Ministry and the distinction of the roles of different agencies: “In terms of actual implementation of any road safety measures outside the school gate, this would be something for the local Road Controlling Authority (local councils, the Transport Agency, unitary authorities)” (Ministry of Education, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

The state (via the MOE and ERO) is utilising its tools of surveillance (Davies & Bansel, 2007) on Longview Primary and will govern invisibly and remotely via policies and guidelines such as the Health and Safety Act 1992, National Administration Guidelines, and the NZC. The following adds weight to the idea of state surveillance in schools, in that the ERO will “notify them [the Ministry of Education] of any schools ... of concern” (Education Review Office, 2014, p. 9). Yet according to Chisholm and Shaw (2004), “imposing audit and accreditation” does not ensure against accidents or mistakes (p. 325). If accidents happen at the crossing site

or if the safety of individuals is compromised, the government or state will intervene or conduct school or workplace inspections (Sullivan, 2006).

It can be seen from the participant responses that the ERO and MOE take a hands-off approach to working with schools regarding road crossings. At the same time, the Ministry gives schools the freedom to implement systems that work best for their school by maintaining distance, rather than working alongside schools to install initiatives. It is also clear that these agencies are present yet in the background and will leave the principal and the BOT to self-manage unless there is a reason to intervene.

By placing the neoliberal filter over this situation, there is evidence of Longview Primary self-governing and making independent decisions through the BOT (Mutch & Collins, 2012; Notman & Henry, 2011), at the same time as meeting legal and policy requirements installed by the state (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Ministry of Education, 1989; Robertson & Dale, 2002). The statement by the principal that it was simply not practical to support the adult-assisted road crossing (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014) indicates that Longview can choose to attempt to install the road crossing, yet may also opt out if it does not suit. Her statement also suggests that the school community was unable to access or utilise resources as well as manage the economic, political, and social realities (Gordon, 2003) it faced when trying to install the crossing.

### *Summary*

An analysis of the curriculum, legal requirements, civic policies, and the self-managing school shows that the experience of Longview Primary supports findings from Parusel and McLaren (2010). In particular the claim that “educational and civic policy environments: provide only sporadic support to elementary school traffic safety programs, thereby ensuring their underdevelopment; construct school traffic safety as the primary responsibility of individuals, particularly children and parents; narrowly define school traffic safety as a site-specific, rather than systemic, concern” (p. 135). What this means for the installation of the road crossing is that Longview Primary was required to follow predetermined procedures, policies, and systems. Government policy provides a framework that gives self-managing schools the freedom to implement the school curriculum and deal with legal and civic responsibilities as they see fit. Yet, at the same time, government policy and the neoliberal education setting are major influences steering schools and shaping the decisions that they make.

## CHAPTER FIVE - PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter will investigate the experiences and opinions of the interviewees and agencies on the topic of the partnerships that are a feature of the road crossing initiative. The key themes that will be examined are the inter-organisational and intra-organisational relationships that Longview Primary is required to maintain and the influences on these relationships.

### *Inter-organisational partnerships*

Overall, the BOT chairperson endorsed the need for good working relationships with the associated agencies, including the DCC, Ministry of Education, police, and Sport Otago. She commented that “yeah, very important. We need to have good relationships with those [agencies], because I mean that’s how you get things done. You’ve got to have those good relationships with them” (BOTCI).

The primary agency that Longview Primary works with regarding road safety is the DCC. The principal explained that during her tenure at the school she had been dealing with the DCC regarding the safe passage of children to and from school. The principal described her experience:

I would say I’m not sure of the process involved. I’ve found the process quite difficult to follow, to be honest. I feel that we’ve been requesting for a long time and then it just kind of happened in a hiss and a roar [with much enthusiasm], off and on ... So I would say I just don’t understand the process (PRI).

The BOT chairperson explained how she viewed the school’s relationship with the DCC:

How is our relationship with the DCC? I mean, it’s okay. I don’t think they really understand the issues that we have here... We talk with him [a DCC representative]... It’s an okay relationship... I mean we have got something from them [an engineering measure]. So I guess that’s a bit of a win (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator was not certain of the partnerships required for the adult-assisted road crossing initiative but she acknowledged the role of outside agencies. She suggested that “once we had our pool of volunteers we were going to have a few meetings and get the police involved, and the DCC and I don’t know whoever else may be relevant” (PCI).

The respondent comments outline evidence of sustained discussion and contact between Longview Primary and the DCC regarding specific road safety initiatives (Parusel & McLaren, 2010; Wigmore et al., 2006). Yet while the principal and BOT chairperson acknowledged that the ongoing discussions with the DCC had at times been productive and beneficial for the school, overall the process was slow and cumbersome. The parent co-ordinator's lack of knowledge of the roles of the BOT and outside agencies may be normal across the parent community within schools, as ERO assessments revealed that parents may "not feel well informed about their child's learning or about how they could work more closely with the school to benefit their child" (Mutch & Collins, 2012, p. 168). Yet, in contrast, Mutch and Collins (2012) also found that parents valued "being involved in decisions that might affect their child's learning and well-being" (p. 180). The situation within the parent community at Longview Primary cannot be easily determined from the voice of only one parent.

While the DCC has plans to follow and strategies to implement (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2013), it is also required to consult with the local community, including the school (Nyamori et al., 2012). A representative from the DCC provided insight via email into their dealings with the school by explaining that "in accordance with normal procedures we have had dialogue with the school principal and have kept them up to date with initiatives we have investigated" (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2013).

In addition, the following comments outline the nature of the relationship and it is apparent that on some topics the school community and the DCC have different opinions:

I have actually given some feedback to [the DCC] about how this would've been such a good opportunity to promote good things that the council are doing, and this is about safety of children ... If I was in his [a DCC representative's] shoes or in the shoes of the council, they have kind of missed an opportunity to be visible and seen in the community making a difference to kids (PRI).

The BOT chairperson also highlights the different perspectives between the school and the DCC:

Because I know when [a representative] from the DCC came and spoke to us, he couldn't see why the teachers couldn't [operate the crossing] and we tried to explain to him that it's physically removed quite a distance from the school and to ask teachers to get down there [was difficult] ... I don't think they really understand (BOTCI).

The respondent comments reveal the “conflict and competing agendas” (Shaw & Allen, 2006, p. 222) in the DCC/school relationship as well as the complex system of local government administration, which is likely to be difficult to manage (Nyamori et al., 2012). The comments from the respondents clearly show that while they are invited to provide suggestions and feedback on council projects to the DCC, the final decision for the project remains with the DCC. This supports the statement that councils “have a duty to listen to community views, not act on them” (Anderson, 2008, p. 289). Yet the DCC recognises the necessity of improving the safety of students and road users around schools and endorses collaboration between itself, the school community, and the police (Dunedin City Council, 2013).

Partnerships can bring benefits (Larner & Craig, 2005) as well as access to different networks (Walker et al., 2012). It should therefore be acknowledged that the DCC has responded to “consultation with key stakeholders” by installing the pedestrian refuge island at the crossing site (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2013). Unfortunately the refuge island did not make a difference to the success of the implementation of the adult-assisted road crossing.

By way of context, in February 2014 the principal, representatives from the DCC and New Zealand Police, and I visited the proposed site of the crossing and pedestrian refuge island. This visit certainly appeared to be a rubber stamping measure, where both the DCC and the police acknowledged that they were happy with Longview Primary operating a road crossing run by parent volunteers. The DCC showed its plans for the refuge island, introduced a new staff member to the principal, and effectively stepped back from the school’s road crossing initiative. The police representative agreed that he was available to provide training if requested and the DCC would provide ongoing advice to the school if needed. It was enlightening to see that the DCC considered that it had completed its obligations to the school regarding the adult-assisted crossing and now it was over to the Longview community to install it.

There does not appear to be a strong and obvious “plan of action and shared responsibility” between the DCC and Longview Primary for the current adult-assisted road crossing initiative (Baker et al., 1991; Eyler et al., 2008b; Fotel, 2009; Zaccari & Dirkis, 2003, p. 137). This is indicated by the principal’s acknowledgement that she is unsure of the processes involved when working with the DCC, and the BOT chairperson’s belief that the DCC is unaware of the concerns faced by the school community. In addition, Diamond (2002) discovered that while public sector employees may be skilled at the professional aspects of their role, they may not work well within partnerships. With reference to this case study, the BOT chairperson stated

that following discussions with a DCC representative, “he’s never come back with anything” (BOTCI) and the principal believed that on another occasion the DCC had missed an opportunity to be noticed in the community. These comments hint at a feeling of indifference and low expectation (Diamond, 2002) of the DCC.

This case study also has to consider the additional intricacies of road safety initiatives, or “the various layers of assumption we make about transport and transport behaviour, as individuals, researchers, government and society” (Hodgson et al., 2012, p. 76). Therefore, to help the partnerships function successfully, strategies to reduce or resolve the power relations within the partnerships and enhance the status and legitimacy of the agencies will help (Diamond, 2002). These suggestions would ideally see the school representatives including the BOT, principal, and parents learning about the processes and regulations the DCC is required to follow regarding school road safety. Conversely, the DCC could allow Longview Primary representatives more input into the decisions taken and give their input more consideration. In reality, however, it is unlikely that this would happen as it does not appear to already be a priority for these particular parties. They also operate within busy, complex environments that such a suggestion may simply be another complexity to have to deal with.

#### Formal agreements

Formal agreements or contracts are part of the school/DCC relationship. For the two existing road crossings at Longview Primary to operate, a “Dunedin City Council authority to operate a kea crossing” agreement needed to be signed by school, police, and DCC representatives (TOD, personal communication, July 4, 2014). The principal stated via email that she was “totally unaware” of any such agreements being in place and that there was “not one of which I am aware (nor for any other school at which I have worked)” (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014). Similarly when asked if Longview had a broader school travel plan, the principal responded with “mmm wonder what that would look like. Should we have one?” (Principal, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

When approached, the DCC advised that a school representative had in fact signed a “Dunedin City Council authority to operate a kea crossing” on April 2, 2007 (TOD, personal communication, July 4, 2014). This was before the current principal took up her role, hence her lack of awareness of the agreement.

The presence of formal agreements or contracts between Longview Primary and agencies, in particular the DCC and the New Zealand Police, is a common feature of partnerships (Davies & Hentschke, 2006; Larner & Craig, 2005). Agreements highlight the responsibilities of each party, as well as accountability and outcomes (Larner & Craig, 2005). However, when formality was introduced at Longview via the “authority to operate a kea crossing” agreement, it was present yet largely ignored. As warned by Larner and Butler (2005), formalising partnerships through codification “doesn’t always make things better in practice, and that sometimes relational contracts inhibit the expression of different political points of view” (p. 97). Therefore, the principal’s lack of awareness of the existing agreement may not be surprising, as such contracts are not likely to be referred to unless “the partners had to resort to legal means to seek remedies” (Davies & Hentschke, 2006, p. 219).

Informal communication methods as identified by Shaw and Allen (2006) are evident at Longview Primary. In this case study, telephone and email communication, site visits at the school and surrounding locale with DCC, police representatives, and parents concerning traffic safety matters had taken place. The principal followed the necessary steps for satisfying the official requirements when installing road crossings by liaising with the DCC and police. Once those steps were completed, the principal appeared to organise and operate the initiatives in a more informal way which obviously suited her method of management. This is likely to be acceptable as long as the DCC and police have given their prior approval and support of the road crossing initiative.

#### New Zealand Police

A representative from the DCC advised that every school in Dunedin is assigned a school community officer (SCO), who is a member of the New Zealand Police and whose role is to provide training ranging from “stranger danger” to “road and traffic safety” (TOD, personal communication, June 19, 2014). The SCO also provides training for children and parents on the procedure for operating road crossings. Collaboration between a school, the SCO, and the DCC traffic engineers is required when identifying and installing the road crossings (TOD, personal communication, June 6, 2014).

The principal explained her experience of working with the police representative:

We have our School Education Officer and basically there has been limited involvement there ... The police have helped us, have come to school on two occasions with that. But in terms of planning the crossing ...

I drove around with [the School Education Officer], so there was one time that there were a number of areas that I was concerned about generally ... I wanted to have a talk with the police about my concerns about children coming to and from school (PRI).

She provided further insight via email by saying “we have only ever had input/discussions about road patrol with [a police representative]. He trains all our children on road patrol – about an hour at the end of the year to prepare the next group” (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014). The BOT chairperson also acknowledged the school community’s involvement with the New Zealand Police by stating “yeah, I think we have [a good working relationship] because [the police] come and train our kids for doing road patrol. I think we’ve got a good relationship with the police” (BOTCI). Similarly, the parent co-ordinator’s responded that “they do a sort of block learning about road safety or whatever, and they have the police come in” (PCI), indicating a limited knowledge of the police involvement.

The perspective of the New Zealand Police on the relationship with Longview Primary was provided via email:

As far as I’m aware [Longview Primary] doesn’t receive any greater response than any other school. Apart from programmed traffic safety taskings throughout the term (“back to school” and “speed around schools” campaigns) we would respond to any specific request as and when it was made. We’re fortunate with the likes of [the] School Community Officers (SCO’s) as they have a strong relationship with the schools for which they are responsible and liaise well with other workgroups within the police (this e-mail is a good example) (New Zealand Police, personal communication, January 22, 2014).

### Sport Otago

The principal explained the relationship between Longview Primary and Sport Otago, by saying that “we did contact Sport Otago and they no longer organise that kind of thing (safe roads/walking school buses, etc.) anymore so that was a finish point” (PRI). The BOT chairperson stated that “as far as I’m aware, we haven’t talked to Sport Otago” (BOTCI). When prompted for a comment on Sport Otago’s involvement, the parent co-ordinator stated that “I don’t know what they do actually, sorry. I don’t really know ... Importance about walking to school, so Sport Otago presumably would do some information about health and fitness and learning responsibility” (PCI).

The interviewee comments highlighted that Sport Otago no longer offers substantial support to AT initiatives, thereby affecting the partnership with Longview Primary. Sport Otago was approached for a comment via email regarding the level of support they currently give to schools installing road crossings. A representative provided the following background:

Sport Otago have had an Active Transport Coordinator whose role was to promote walking and cycling to and from school ... The installation of any adult assisted road crossing would be something that the Police Education Officers would assist with (Sport Otago, personal communication, May 22, 2014).

Further clarification was sought on the removal of funding for the initiatives. AT roles were funded through the DCC, which was funded by the NZTA (Sport Otago, personal communication, July 2, 2014). To fund a full-time position, Sport Otago was required to gain contracts from other organisations (Sport Otago, personal communication, July 2, 2014). In addition:

The DCC were unable to continue to fund Sport Otago to the level required to maintain the position. Hence the DCC now just fund a portion of the Walk n Wheel programme and we currently have a supportive funder that has covered the shortfall for the last few years (Sport Otago, personal communication, July 2, 2014).

The reduced input from Sport Otago in road safety initiatives in schools is hardly surprising due to the removal of funding. This experience is consistent with Parusel and McLaren (2010) who observed that school traffic safety initiatives may receive sporadic funding and support, which can in turn stunt their development or stop operation all together. Without adequate funding for engineering measures, staffing, and programme materials, Eyler et al. (2008b) claim that initiatives will be difficult to sustain. The clarification from Sport Otago also highlights the interconnectedness, “inter-organizational web of partnership relations” (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 123) and “linkages” they are required to manage (Thibault & Harvey, 1997, p. 46) with other agencies, including the DCC and NZTA. Respondents’ lack of insight into the role of Sport Otago is to be expected, as they are no longer as visible or involved in school road safety initiatives as they once were.

Larner and Craig (2005) state that partnerships develop solid links between the state, communities, and local institutions in order to meet the needs of local communities. This would appear to be an ideal situation. In this case study, Longview Primary was required to join with

the relevant agencies such as the DCC and New Zealand Police when installing the adult-assisted road crossing (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b). The road crossing would clearly meet a social need in terms of providing pedestrian safety, rather than solely being an economically viable and market-driven project (Larner & Craig, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002). From the participant responses, the partnerships with the DCC and the police in general are ongoing and valuable, yet their involvement concerning this specific adult-assisted road crossing was short term and could be interpreted as ‘rubber stamping’. This may be standard practice with programmes in general and may not be specific to road safety initiatives.

Confusion surrounding the roles of the DCC, New Zealand Police, and Sport Otago as partners in the road crossing implementation was evident from the interviewee responses. Parusel and McLaren (2010) state that school traffic safety is an intricate system filled with “an array of programs and actors, including school and city personnel” (p. 132). Likewise “each partner will be operating from different professional norms, values and procedural systems” (Diamond, 2002; Frisby et al., 2004, p. 110). As discussed, confusion concerning the relationship with the DCC may be overcome by gaining an understanding of the “differing models of working utilised by the participating agencies” (Diamond, 2002, p. 306) and well-defined roles and responsibilities of the participants (Jacobson & Ok Choi, 2008). While this is sage advice, it would appear that it is unlikely to be taken by Longview Primary. The principal and BOT chairperson have had continual dealings with the agencies and it appears that they have accepted the standard procedure of dealing with them. The process seems to be that school representatives request an initiative or solution, and if it is not forthcoming the parties will undertake ongoing discussion or lobbying for a time, even if a final decision has been made.

#### *Principal and board of trustees relationship*

The principal is required to work closely with the BOT regarding the operation of Longview Primary. The principal commented on her relationship with the BOT in relation to the road crossing initiative. She explained that “that’s a management rather than a governance issue once it’s established. So they’re not really going to be checking up, again unless there is a complaint ... If [the board] was concerned they would raise a concern” (PRI).

The BOT chairperson’s opinion on the process of recruiting volunteers for the road crossing was revealed when she said “it’s more of a management issue, it’s not a governance ... Yes, we charge her [the principal], get on and run the school. And I’m very clear on the line between governance and management” (BOTCI). Of note, in the early stages of this research project, the

principal indicated that she would advise the board that the current study was going to occur. She certainly did not suggest that she needed to gain the board's approval for this study.

The parent co-ordinator was unsure of the board's involvement with the road crossing initiative:

I suppose they have a role in terms of approving whether or not such a programme is utilised at the school. I don't know if that's ... operational or whether it's the school. I don't understand exactly where that would fit, but I suppose any new initiatives they [the board] oversee or do they? I think they have a bit of input into it ... [They would need to be] aware of it ... They'd say "yeah, that sounds like a good idea, go with it" (PRI).

The school principal and the BOT work in partnership yet their roles and responsibilities are clear (Ministry of Education, 2013a). The board is responsible for making governance decisions and the principal is responsible for how the school will meet the expectations of the board (Ministry of Education, 2013a). It is clear from the BOT chairperson's responses that she is well aware of the difference between the governance and management roles within Longview Primary. This intra-organisational relationship reveals the distinct role of each party regarding the adult-assisted road crossing. The principal manages the process of installing the crossing and the BOT assumes overall responsibility for the road crossing initiative.

On numerous occasions, the BOT chairperson indicated that she was not sure whether there had been communication with an external agency and may not have been certain that it should in fact do so. This perhaps highlights the intra-organisational relationship between the BOT chairperson and the principal. The chairperson allowed the principal to advertise and run the road crossing programme and liaise with the relevant agencies, as it was not her role as chairperson to do so. At Longview Primary, this appears to be satisfactory to both parties. On reflection this may be how the BOT shows support for the principal and her decision-making abilities.

#### *The school's relationship with parents*

Partnerships between a school and its parent community are strongly endorsed in New Zealand (Bull et al., 2008; Education Review Office, 2008; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The respondents' comments suggest that the ethos of partnership is encouraged between the Longview Primary (principal/BOT) and the parent volunteers. The principal was enthusiastic about parents being responsible for the co-ordination of the road crossing initiative:

[A] parent [co-ordinator] would be the one that would come to us ... And if it wasn't a parent it could be a staff member. I think a parent would be better because I think a parent has their finger on the pulse [is closely involved with and aware of the school's activities] (PRI).

The BOT chairperson commented that "I would've thought that surely a dozen parents would've said "yeah, I'll help" [as a volunteer]" (BOTCI). An ethos of partnership was suggested by the parent co-ordinator throughout the various stages of the installation of the adult-assisted road crossing. This appeared to be a more formal approach:

I think it's a shared responsibility ... At the beginning to get it up and running ... I'm wondering if it needs to be a very heavy school campaign, but then I think it can be easily run by parents... In terms of initiating it ...there probably does need to be more from the school (PCI).

It was also evident from the parent co-ordinator that her interactions with the principal were informal, casual, and ad hoc:

I see her [the principal], we yabba [talk] every now and then. It evolved. No, I didn't go and make a point of going to talk to her about it. It's just a casual conversation that we had had, that I think sort of built up to the point where we kind of said "well, maybe we should try to do something about it (PCI).

Communication has been identified as being crucial to school-family-community partnerships (Swick, 2003) and is a vital component of collaborative relationships (Devine et al., 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Therefore, referring to Davies and Hentschke (2006) and "the rules by which organizational entities relate to each other" (p. 206), the principal and parent co-ordinator's experiences clearly highlight the informal and relaxed communication that occurred between these individuals. Informal communication in partnerships may be popular and perceived as a strength (Devine et al., 2010; Shaw & Allen, 2006) and it appears to be a feature of the partnerships related to the road crossing initiative.

The parent co-ordinator also provided insight from her experience with other volunteer activities at the school, indicating challenges and complexities:

Sometimes [at other events] I've felt as a volunteer at school ... you're a bit out of your depth and you're not very well schooled up beforehand ... And sort of fumbled through and as a volunteer ... [other experiences] felt really unsupported and I actually did get to the point where I said I'm actually not going to do this anymore and I said no ... I don't feel

supported ... I'm just not going to do it. It could be a school-wide thing really. That's just sports related. But I do know in terms of school outings and stuff, often they struggle to get parents to go along (PCI).

The principal highlighted that she is unsure about how to show appreciation to volunteers at Longview Primary. This may be a factor that deters parents from volunteering. She queried "how do we make those people who do put their hands up, especially for sports, how do you value them?" (PRI).

The idea of parents being responsible for the operation of the road crossing initiative was simply assumed by the interviewees and it seemed to be the most suitable solution. Yet the parent co-ordinator's explanation of her experience of feeling unsupported by school representatives in her volunteer roles (Vantilborgh et al., 2011) suggests that Longview may have difficulty in recruiting parent volunteers in general. The principal is uncertain of how to "value" (PRI) or acknowledge the volunteers within the school community, but she does realise it is important to do so (Vantilborgh et al., 2011). The police training provided to the parent volunteers is a necessary step in preparing the parents for the role (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b) and for increasing parent confidence in their ability to undertake the role (Kong et al., 2009). It also reflects the neoliberal influence on the school through the state governing from a distance via surveillance (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Power, 2003; Smyth, 2011; Sullivan, 2006). This is also one way to formalise the parent volunteer roles (Larner & Craig, 2005) and as the parents are not permitted to participate unless they have undertaken this training, it makes them appear more "worthy" as partners (Katz, 2005, p. 625).

The involvement of the parent volunteers in this road crossing initiative influenced the sustainability of the crossing (Eyler et al., 2008a). Longview Primary decided to attempt to introduce the crossing, so it was required to work with parent volunteers to operate the initiative. This reflects the neoliberal environment in which the school operates, as social responsibility shifts in "areas of care" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251), from the state to the private and tasks become the responsibility of families and individuals (Clarke, 2004; Codd, 2005). Schools call on support from fundraising, donations, and parent volunteers (Blackstock, 2013; Clarke, 2004; Codd, 2005; Wylie, 1999). It is a worthwhile process when the state (DCC, New Zealand Police), communities (schools) and individuals (parents and students) undertake "co-production" to achieve a goal specific to these parties (Parker & O'Leary, 2006, p. 32). This appears to support Larner and Craig (2005) who suggest that partnerships are a response to the breakdown of social connections connected with neoliberal reforms.

Longview Primary's relationship with parents is essential, as the road crossing will not proceed without parent volunteers. Out of all of the partnerships that Longview Primary is required to enter into regarding the road crossing initiative, the relationship with the parents appears to be the weakest yet is likely the most important and enduring. The Longview Primary parent community may feel that there is insufficient support for them from school staff and representatives, despite the principal's ideal endorsement of valuing volunteers and the training offered by police. Hence there is a lack of volunteers for yet another initiative, team, or operation at Longview Primary.

### *Summary*

The examples and experiences provided by the respondents outline the many relationships, interconnectedness, and "numerous and complex influences" (Hodgson et al., 2012, p. 77) that Longview Primary is required to manage regarding the road crossing initiative. There is evidence that Longview Primary maintains partnerships with outside agencies and the BOT and parents within the school community. This is necessary and strongly endorsed when introducing an initiative (Baker et al., 1991; Fotel, 2009; New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b; Zaccari & Dirkis, 2003). Reflecting on the analysis of these partnerships reveals that "delivering outcomes is hard work" (Parker & O'Leary, 2006, p. 67).

Despite the efforts of each party, the adult-assisted road crossing was not implemented at Longview Primary. This scenario is not surprising given the advice from Parusel and McLaren (2010), who state that "institutional bodies, including the school board, city committees, provincial and national ministries, fail to consider how their own practices help to maintain the current structure of mobilities and its inherent dangers" (p. 135). This suggests that the role of the various agencies and partners can influence how successful the road crossing initiative may be. For this case study, the important "actors" (Parusel & McLaren, 2010, p. 132) and their roles include the principal recruiting volunteers and promoting the initiative, the BOT giving support to the principal, parents willing to volunteer, the DCC making the road crossing more likely to happen through the newly installed traffic island, and the police providing training for volunteers. Despite these actions the road crossing initiative did not proceed.

## CHAPTER SIX - INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter will investigate the viewpoints of the Longview Primary principal, the BOT, and the parent co-ordinator concerning the topic of responsibility surrounding the operation of the proposed adult-assisted road crossing initiative. The themes include Longview's overall accountability for the road crossing initiative and the daily operation of the initiative.

### *Overall responsibility for the adult-assisted road crossing*

The principal provided her view on Longview's responsibilities by explaining that "in terms of a village ... we are all responsible as the adults in a community ... I don't believe it's a board responsibility ... that wouldn't be a board job to put a crossing in" (PRI). The BOT chairperson provided a contradictory view to the principal and could not provide a clear answer as to which party has overall responsibility for the road crossing. The factors that appeared to make this difficult to determine was that parents, rather than staff, would be helping to children cross, and that the crossing site was a distance from the school grounds:

At the end of the day the responsibility falls back on the school and it probably falls back on C in the office or a motivated parent. How do we [the board] feel about that? We would prefer it wasn't our [the board's] responsibility ... It's not the school taking responsibility to cross the children, isn't it? ... I'm just trying to look at it from all directions ... Is that how you see it? ... Is it the board's responsibility? I guess are we making it our responsibility? Because technically it probably isn't ... I don't know the answer (BOTCI).

It is clear from the principal and BOT chairperson's comments that discussing the topic of the school's responsibility for the crossing is confusing and complex. Their responses were relatively vague and nebulous as they approached the topic from two distinct perspectives – the act of crossing students at the site and the overall responsibility for the initiative. To add to the confusion, it is unclear as to who is responsible for a child's safety and behaviour in the space between home and school (Kearns & Collins, 2003).

The MOE states that it is the responsibility of caregivers and parents to transport their children to school (Lewis, 2012; Miller, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2014b). The BOT chairperson highlighted her awareness of this requirement by saying "it's [the parent's] responsibility to get their child to and from school safely ... And maybe we're just the conduit for allowing [the road crossing] to be an organised way of getting their kids to and from school safely" (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator inadvertently addressed this topic when considering her own role as a volunteer running the road crossing. She stated that “I considered when I contemplated putting my name down, I thought ‘well, how am I going to get my children to school? I’ll be over at [the crossing site], how are my children getting there?’” (PCI).

The principal appeared to be happy to transfer responsibility for the act of crossing children at the site to any wider community members who happened to be at the crossing site. The idea of wider community involvement may be feasible and idyllic, yet school representatives obviously cannot transfer the responsibility for the road crossing to community members. The BOT chairperson acknowledged that the overall responsibility for the operation lay with Longview and then admitted that the BOT would prefer that was not the case.

The following comments reinforce this theme of the transfer of responsibility for initiatives from Longview Primary to other parties. The BOT chairperson provided her unprompted opinion of the ideal safety measure at the crossing site by revealing that “I think [the board] would prefer the pedestrian crossing ... To me, that’s the ideal, and then it doesn’t have to be manned” (BOTCI). The parent co-ordinator also offered her ideal solution for the crossing site by suggesting that “I’d like them just to have traffic lights there ... The DCC could put traffic lights in because that would solve everything” (PCI).

The above opinions reveal two main themes. They explicitly show that the respondents would prefer a road safety initiative provided by the DCC that did not need to be staffed by school staff or parent volunteers. This is understandable as the need to operate such an initiative requires school time, resources, and accountability, yet it once again underlines the idea of the transfer of responsibility for an operation. These themes combine to show that the Longview Primary school community did not assume ownership of the road crossing initiative (Kearns et al., 2003).

The contrasting views of the principal and BOT chairperson on significant matters surrounding the initiative is perplexing and brings confusion, which may filter through to school staff and parents. In addition, these key players may not in fact be fully aware of the expectations on Longview Primary representatives regarding the overall responsibility for the road crossing initiative.

### *Daily operation of the adult-assisted road crossing*

Parents play a vital role in the sustainability of school road safety initiatives (Eyler et al., 2008a). Parusel and McLaren (2010) advise that parent volunteer teams often disperse and few schools are able to maintain the volunteer-led safety patrols. Therefore, answering the question of who would be responsible for the daily operation and co-ordination of the road crossing was straightforward for the respondents. The principal outlined her opinion by saying “I would’ve thought the volunteers, they were responsible for helping anyone cross over that needed help” (PRI).

The BOT chairperson further endorsed the role of parent co-ordinator:

It is a big thing about organising and manning it ... I would think it needs to be a parent who’s directly concerned ... Because then you’re motivated to do it ... So I would think it really would be a parent who is directly affected by it. And I guess seeks to get the benefits from it in the long run ... It would need to be made clear at the end of the day they [parent volunteers] are the ones being responsible to cross the children (BOTCI).

When contemplating this matter, the parent co-ordinator suggested “develop your pool of people, a parent can organise the roster and ring around and organise it. I think that can be run fine by parents” (PCI).

Each of the interviewees strongly endorsed the suggestion that a parent should fill the role of co-ordinator for the road crossing programme (Buliung et al., 2011; Eyler et al., 2008b; Kong et al., 2009). Even the parent co-ordinator readily accepted and supported the idea and recognised the practical sense of it, which highlights her position as a willing neoliberal subject (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The principal had previously made it clear that teachers were not to be involved in the on-site running of the road crossing due to their already heavy workloads. Additional staff would not be employed to assist and thus the no-cost option was to call on parents within the school community. This could be viewed as the principal creating an environment that puts additional pressure and expectation on parents as it actively transfers the responsibility from staff to parents. Perhaps this subtle pressure was not accepted or welcomed by Longview’s parent community which resulted in a lack of volunteers. Yet while the responsibility for the operation of the crossing can shift to parents (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Kearns & Collins, 2003; Kingham & Ussher, 2005; Mackett et al., 2003), Longview Primary is responsible for protecting those parents.

The reality of the daily running of the road crossing would see parent volunteers dealing with and managing other peoples' children and potentially dangerous vehicle actions (Parusel & McLaren, 2010). These factors emphasise another responsibility of the school, which is to ensure protections are in place for parent volunteers. While the parent co-ordinator endorsed the idea of parents running the road crossing, she also noted her anxiety about dealing with disorderly students and parental consent:

What do we do if there's any behavioural problems? We're not on school grounds, we're not on school time, we're just a parent ... And I'd talked to [the principal] about them and we'd started to talk about how ... the local police might become involved and talk to us ... And I thought it would feel really supported if it had gone ahead ... we actually had thought about those issues because I think they're really important in terms of safety (PCI).

The principal's opinion of how to deal with pupil misbehaviour was explicit:

If it was one of our children [who] did something unsafe or unacceptable, then I don't believe it's a community person's responsibility to discipline somebody else's [child] because it was organised through the school. I would definitely see that would be our responsibility to follow up inappropriate behaviour. And that's to support the child to get it right and also to support that person so they're not feeling that they're having to be growly. We'd want them to have a fun time, they're doing community service, the feel-good factor and if that's not the case we would try and put something in place as a learning experience for children ... You need to have a backup plan and I would definitely say that on the day that it happens, let us know immediately so the very next day we can follow it up (PRI).

The realities of operating a road safety initiative may raise concerns for the parent volunteers. Parent volunteers from Longview Primary or "trusted adults" (Mammen et al., 2012; McDonald & Aalborg, 2009, p. 337) would be required to stand at the crossing site, assist children across the road, deal with the realities of any interactions at the site, and enforce solutions instantaneously. The parent co-ordinator was explicit in her concerns about the personal safety of volunteers while managing child misbehaviour at the site. Her concern emphasises the neoliberal influence where people assume responsibility without power (Peck & Tickell, 2002). It is clear from the principal's comments that the parent volunteers have the power to assist children and report incidents or unruly behaviour, yet this appears to be the limit of their jurisdiction. The principal was explicit in her expectation that any issues

concerning Longview Primary students would be followed up and dealt with by school staff, not the on-site adult. According to the principal, this was due to the crossing being organised by the school, which acknowledged that parents are representing Longview Primary and are therefore entitled to the protection of the school.

The parent co-ordinator's comments that she would feel more comfortable about volunteering if she undertook the training provided by the police is in line with previous research. Parent volunteers are required to undertake training provided by the police in order to operate the road crossing initiative and report "any incidents of unsafe or illegal student or driver behaviour" (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2011b, p. 9). This can help parents feel empowered and confident (Kong et al., 2009) and it can also be a way that the school shows support for the volunteers (Vantilborgh et al., 2011). When parent volunteers undertake the training offered by the New Zealand Police, a layer of formality and protection is also put in place to legitimise their role.

Road safety initiatives become the responsibility of individuals and groups, and the responsibility for the daily operation of the crossing further transfers from the school to the parent volunteers (Collins & Kearns, 2010; Kearns & Collins, 2003; Kingham & Ussher, 2005; Mackett et al., 2003; Parusel & McLaren, 2010). This is certainly the case in this project. Referring to the neoliberal setting, Longview Primary has chosen to install the adult-assisted road crossing and therefore act independently (Davies & Bansel, 2007) while being monitored by the state via policies, legal, and safety requirements. This is a prime example of how the responsibility for tasks once filled by the state has transferred to families and individual volunteers in the school community (Codd, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007) or "individual and community 'responsibilisation'" (Witten et al., 2003, p. 204).

As previously mentioned in chapter four, the principal explained that she discusses road safety with children when she operates an existing road crossing at Longview Primary. She acknowledged that this was one way of educating children as part of the curriculum by providing practical experience and knowledge of road safety risks (Collins & Kearns, 2010). Thus it is worth considering whether parent volunteers assisting children at the crossing site would also be expected to deliver RSE messages to children as part of the curriculum requirements.

The volunteers who are required to manage the daily realities of operating the road crossing justifiably expect and require the assurance that they are supported by the principal. These on-

site factors may be significant for volunteers, as they raise questions concerning the power and authority they can exert over the children they are supervising. Parent volunteers would be protected under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002, as volunteers are usually treated as employees and are expected to have the same protections as employees at the school (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2014c). Perhaps this information needed to be communicated to the parent community which may have provided reassurance and in turn influenced their willingness to volunteer.

### *Summary*

At no stage was a definition of the term ‘responsibility’ provided to the interviewees, yet different perspectives on the term have emerged. Each interviewee revealed their perceptions of responsibility based on the role they play in the adult-assisted road crossing initiative. Two aspects of responsibility were identified in the comments: overall responsibility for the initiative and the daily operation of the initiative. Longview Primary chose to attempt to install an adult-assisted road crossing and the responsibility for its daily operation and co-ordination would therefore lie with the parent volunteers. The previous research revealed this to be the normal and expected process for schools when installing road safety initiatives. Involving the community may be beneficial and utilising parent volunteers is crucial, yet the overall responsibility for the initiative and its operation lies with Longview and the BOT, which is unavoidable.

## CHAPTER SEVEN - SITE-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

This chapter will investigate the participants' viewpoints and experiences that relate to those concerns and characteristics specific to Longview Primary, and the extent to which they may have influenced the viability of the adult-assisted road crossing. The themes include the physical environment, factors affecting parent volunteerism, socioeconomic factors, the importance of the road crossing, and the processes chosen by school representatives to introduce the road crossing initiative. The characteristics of each theme will be analysed.

### *The built environment*

The crossing site is approximately 800 metres from the school grounds (Googlemaps, 2014). The DCC installed a pedestrian refuge or island at the crossing site in mid-2014 as part of its Minor Improvements Programme. A DCC representative explained that the pedestrian refuge “will allow pedestrians to cross [the road] in two movements. Furthermore the [other] intersection will be tightened up by installing kerb protrusions. These will reduce the crossing distances for pedestrians and the speed of vehicles entering/exiting [the street]” (TOD, personal communication, July 15, 2014).

The BOT chairperson highlighted the placement of the crossing site as a limiting factor when she said “the physical site, because it’s not right at school ... I don’t know whether it’s specific to our school in general, only the location that it’s removed from here” (BOTCI). The parent co-ordinator held a similar opinion, in that “I think that it’s just quite a long way away from the school ... So site wise that is potentially a factor” (PCI). The principal did not mention the distance of the crossing site from the school, yet via email she clarified that “in practice covering [the crossing site] is not practical” (Principal, personal communication, July 5, 2014).

It is clear from the responses that the proposed crossing site was perceived as a major barrier to the successful implementation of the road crossing initiative as it is not near the school grounds. School location and the distance of neighbourhoods from schools have been identified as factors influencing the success of safe travel initiatives (Davison et al., 2008; Falb et al., 2007). In addition, the engineering enhancements provided by the DCC at the crossing site did not appear to make the road crossing programme more legitimate or worthwhile to the school community. This is not surprising as McMillan (2005) cautions that altering the built or urban environment does not guarantee increased AT, and Fotel and Thomsen (2004) argue that safe travel programmes need to be linked with traffic regulation to be sustainable in the long term.

For instance, Campbells Bay School in Auckland introduced engineering measures to enhance student safety, yet roughly two-thirds of the student body were still driven to school (Lang et al., 2011).

The encouragement by Eyler et al. (2008b) for schools to find “creative solutions and policies” (p. 970) to barriers to AT within the natural environs has not been effective at Longview Primary. This is supported by the principal’s revelation that that it was not practical to install the adult-assisted crossing at this site. The pedestrian island may in fact be utilised by the school’s pupils on the home to school journey, yet its presence at the site was not an enabling factor in the successful installation of the adult-assisted road crossing.

#### *Factors affecting parent volunteerism*

The respondents were able to identify numerous factors specific to Longview Primary that influenced the likelihood of parents volunteering to operate the road crossing. Initially, the principal provided her opinion on why it was difficult to recruit parent volunteers from the school community:

I think getting volunteers is difficult, full stop ... A number of our folk do work and I think getting buy-in (commitment) from people is hard. And I am wondering if they think [that as] they look after their own children, [then] everyone should look after their own children too. I have no other theory ... So I think it’s maybe saying something more about our society (PRI).

The BOT chairperson’s views aligned with those of the principal:

I just think it’s getting more and more our community unfortunately ... that people are not prepared to commit. It’s sad and they think also well, the kids have been getting across without them there, so why suddenly do they need them [parent volunteers] there when it’s going to be supposedly more improved? ... And I just wonder if our community is not as available as what it has been ... I think it’s a volunteer issue. Rather than a road crossing per se issue ... And see like our school fair, we had to shoulder tap, arm twist to get people ... I just think it’s a wider issue (BOTCI).

The BOT chairperson also named other school activities which struggled to get sufficient volunteers including taking the gate proceeds at the farmers’ market and sports teams. This endorses her view that the difficulties lie with recruiting volunteers, rather than the activity for

which volunteers are sought. The parent co-ordinator likewise suggested that “I think it’s a school-wide issue” (PCI).

A lack of time and competing demands or priorities were unanimously highlighted as reasons that parents were unable to volunteer:

I just think people are busy and stressed and their management cup is full ... They’re just managing and anything else would be another stress (PRI).

People are busier. They’re reluctant to volunteer the little bit of precious time they’ve got. Regardless of the issue and it’s going to get worse ... to get volunteers (BOTCI).

People work in the morning so they drop their kids off at 8.30 on their way to work to start work at 9 o’clock in town. So they don’t actually have time ... And after school there’s lots of after-school activities (PCI).

Unsurprisingly, parents may have younger children or pre-schoolers to care for, a factor that would make operating the road crossing on-site particularly difficult. The parent co-ordinator suggested that this was another factor affecting parent volunteerism:

People who didn’t have work often had pre-schoolers ... it was like “what do we do with the kids?” Some pre-schoolers are fine sitting in a pram ... if I was in the position when my daughter was at school and my son wasn’t, I wouldn’t have volunteered when he was a pre-schooler because it would’ve just been too hard (PCI).

The responses from the interviewees highlight the importance of parent volunteers in the success of a school road safety initiative. Parusel and McLaren (2010) explicitly highlight parent volunteers as one element that may influence the development of school traffic safety programmes. To place this situation within the neoliberal setting, the state should not simply expect parents to fill the roles that it will not (Clarke, 2004; Codd, 2005; Thomas, 1992) and therefore parent-led programmes may not be sustainable due to a lack of volunteers (Buliung et al., 2011; Kong et al., 2009). For Longview Primary, insufficient numbers of volunteers was an obvious and easily identifiable barrier. As only two parent volunteers were recruited, the road crossing initiative could not proceed to the installation stage.

The reasons given by the BOT chairperson and parent co-ordinator for the lack of volunteers are strongly supported in previous research. These reasons include working parents (Eyler et al., 2008a), caring for preschool-aged children (Collins & Kearns, 2010), lack of time

(Strazdins et al., 2010), weather (Eyler et al., 2008b; Van Lippevelde et al., 2011), and apathy or insufficient drive (Van Lippevelde et al., 2011). In addition, parents may no longer be available as their children leave the school or the family moves from the area (Eyler et al., 2008b). As there was only one parent respondent in this research, it was not possible to determine the specific reasons why parents within the Longview Primary community did not volunteer for the road crossing initiative. As a parent of two primary-school aged children and a pre-schooler, I can understand the reluctance to volunteer to run the road crossing. Time pressures, the presence of my pre-schooler, and having another activity to commit to are factors that would likely deter me from volunteering. This would be even more likely if the activity did not directly affect me or my family.

The BOT chairperson and parent co-ordinator also explained that the same people often filled the volunteer roles within the school. To illustrate:

It's always the same old, same old faces ... You're going to get people like me who volunteer too much (BOTCI).

We see the same volunteers doing everything. It's probably the same in every school (PCI).

This experience is identified in previous research that often the same people or “usual suspects” (Eyler et al., 2008a; Putnam, 2000, p. 121) fill the volunteer roles. The principal did not have any parents or guardians approach her about the call for volunteers or the road crossing programme in general. In fact there was “a resounding silence” (PRI). For this case study, the “usual suspects” (Putnam, 2000, p. 121) obviously did not come forward to operate the road crossing. Whether this suggests a disinterest in or apathy towards the road crossing specifically, or volunteering in general, by the Longview Primary school community is unclear.

The respondents, however, encouragingly acknowledged the contribution that parents already made within the school community. The principal said that “our parents ... are involved in lots of different ways in the school” (PRI). This view was endorsed by the parent co-ordinator who claimed that “[parents] contribute to the school in lots of other ways” (PCI).

The acknowledgement that parents are involved in a variety of activities within the school environment is similar to the situation concerning the place of road safety within the NZC. RSE is one of many topics that Longview Primary may deliver as part of the curriculum, and likewise the adult-assisted road crossing is merely one activity that the school community can

support. Therefore, if it does not fit with Longview's plan or capabilities, or there are insufficient parent volunteers, it may not be sustainable.

### *Socioeconomic status*

Another influence on the installation of the adult-assisted road crossing may be the SES of families within the school community. The principal did not raise this as a factor affecting the installation of the road crossing. However, the BOT chairperson provided the following unambiguous insights into the socioeconomic disparities between Longview Primary families regarding the road crossing:

I don't know whether higher socioeconomic communities are more motivated [to volunteer]. Possibly, because I mean the majority of kids on that side [Eastville], not all of them, are in a lower socioeconomic [group], and I don't know if there's been any studies where the people from those communities are less motivated or not ... Because a lot of those children who are walking are from families that don't have cars or only one car, and that's already gone with whoever to work. So maybe that has impacted on it ... I don't know whether those sorts of things have an impact on community involvement. I do know a lot of those kids that walk, walk because [their parents] have to work, there is no option. There's no car for them to get a ride to school (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator's comments reflected that of the BOT chairperson:

I think where we were looking at the crossing going, it really targets a select few families who are actually involved ... Because I talk to a lot of other people who live in other areas and they were really concerned about it. I don't think we should restrict it to that ... Being realistic, most of the people would probably be from that area ... Realistically that's the catchment area we're looking at (PCI).

There was agreement that the crossing site would service only those families from one area of the town, Eastville. As described, Eastville is characterised as a lower socioeconomic community. This illustrates the socioeconomic demographics of the neighbourhood referred to by the respondents as "that area" (PCI), "that side" and "those communities" (BOTCI).

The respondent comments about Eastville are also closely aligned with Parusel and McLaren (2010). In particular, the statement that the economic and social differences between particular neighbourhoods "are likely to have a complex relationship to school travel and traffic safety (e.g., access to a vehicle; proximity of schools to major thoroughfares; traffic congestion at the

school gate; parental volunteerism)” (Parusel & McLaren, 2010, p. 143). Likewise, the BOT chairperson’s claim that the families who live in Eastville may not own a car thus requiring children to walk to school supports Roberts et al. (1996).

The BOT chairperson’s and parent co-ordinator’s perceptions of the families living in Eastville emphasise the neoliberal influence in New Zealand. While it may not have been intentional, the language and descriptions used by the interviewees supports the neoliberal idea of inequality and a ‘them and us’ theme (Apple, 2004). Neoliberalism supports a “we/they” mind set (Apple, 2004, p. 10). ‘We’ have western cultural ideals (Raby, 2014), are “self-helping” (Fincher & Saunders, 2001, p. 33), are “law-abiding ... ‘middle’ New Zealand” (Apple, 2004, p. 10). ‘They’ are seen as lazy, poor, or at risk people (Apple, 2004, p. 10; Fincher & Saunders, 2001). Given that Longview Primary is a decile 4 ranked school and recruited only two volunteers supports the suggestion that low decile schools are the least likely to receive voluntary support from parents and the community (Wylie, 1999).

This links to the neoliberal ideal that the marginalised or oppressed are not valued or considered (Apple, 2004). The families and students in Eastville could be viewed as those who lost rather than won concerning the road crossing (Robertson & Dale, 2002) and the earlier bus cuts at Longview Primary. This contrasts with Gladstone School’s successful establishment of the first WSB in Auckland (Kearns & Collins, 2003). Their success was in part attributed to a supportive principal and Parent Teacher Association (Collins & Kearns, 2001) and the school may therefore be viewed as a winner and popular (Robertson & Dale, 2002). Despite the neoliberal educational setting and competition with other schools, Gladstone School was able to encourage and utilise partnerships and resources (Collins & Kearns, 2001). This was not the case for Longview Primary, yet the efforts of the key players and their willingness to attempt to install the crossing to aid pedestrians should be acknowledged.

#### *The importance of the adult-assisted road crossing initiative*

Two distinct categories were identified in the data regarding the importance of the road crossing initiative: significance to the parents and families and significance to Longview Primary. In terms of the parents and families, the responses were specific:

Nobody’s come to me saying “we’re sick of the school asking for this” (PRI).

I talked to a lot of people who did recognise the issue and really were concerned about it. And it doesn’t affect them directly ... There were

people really interested ... Some of the thing is [that] it's so far away from school as well it becomes less meaningful which is why we're only targeting those families there probably ... Maybe that means people generally don't think it's important ... Maybe we need to up the importance for other people (PCI).

The BOT chairperson's opinion was similar to that of the parent co-ordinator in that the road crossing may not be viewed as being important to some families. She suggested that "I think people are just generally apathetic really" (BOTCI). Yet she also added her personal view of the crossing, that "I think it's really important" (BOTCI). The parent co-ordinator suggested that as the proposed road crossing site was a distance from the school grounds, it may have therefore become "less meaningful" (PCI) to the school community.

The parent co-ordinator provided insight into her experience of working closely with the principal concerning the road crossing initiative:

I wonder if I hadn't had so many conversations with [the principal], whether I would have just initially thought "yeah, that would be a good idea" and carried on my merry way and not thought about it again (PCI).

This comment highlights the importance of the close contact the parent co-ordinator had with the principal concerning the crossing, which appears to have contributed to her motivation to commit to the initiative. This may also highlight that it would be even more unlikely for those parents to volunteer who were not interested in or directly affected by the initiative.

The parent co-ordinator outlined her concern at driving via the crossing site, which translated into the need for a safety initiative to be installed there:

I've actually got to the point now where I don't drive that way when I remember ... I actually go a different way now because it is so difficult driving. This is just driving, not even walking ... So I think something needs to be done there (PCI).

It is clear that the parent co-ordinator believed that the road crossing was important and meaningful to the school community. According to the chairperson, the BOT also considered the road crossing to be very important and the reason for the initiative, primarily child safety, was identified by the interviewees. Yet, in reality, while there was a school-wide call for volunteers it may not have been viewed as important enough by individual parents to feel compelled to volunteer. This may have been the case largely for those who did not live in the vicinity of the proposed road crossing site and were not directly affected.

The principal's experience of receiving no parental feedback on the initiative could posit a lack of importance for the parent body in general. As Pena (2000) explains, "parents participate in activities that meet their needs" (p.53), so perhaps the school community at large perceived that it did not need the adult-assisted road crossing enough or at all (Eyler et al., 2008a).

The parent co-ordinator endorsed the need to "up the importance for other people" (PCI), or those not living in the vicinity of the crossing. However it is likely that this would be an extremely difficult task given the principal's experience below:

Manning or having coaches sufficient for all of the children who want to play sport, that's a real challenge. And even those people who put their hands up, they become the object of criticism and less than positive interactions (PRI).

As illustrated, sports teams at Longview Primary have a history of parents being reluctant to volunteer, despite their child's involvement as a team member. The "resounding silence" (PRI) concerning Longview Primary's proposed road crossing may be in line with the suggestion by Tranter and Pawson (2001) that a feature of Australian and New Zealand cities is individualism instead of collective responsibility for others. This may also fit with the idea that the neoliberal subject takes responsibility for their own welfare via decisions they make (Robertson & Dale, 2002) and are able to create and obtain the best for their families and themselves (Bush & Gamage, 2001; Davies & Bansel, 2007). Perhaps despite the concrete and obvious reasons that Longview Primary parents may have been unwilling to volunteer, the overarching contributor may be a lack of care for or interest in others due to self-interest and obtaining the best for one's personal situation.

It was the intention of Longview Primary to install the adult-assisted road crossing, yet where the initiative fits within the school's long-term plan is unclear. The respondents articulated an immediate need for the crossing, yet did not mention its future maintenance or sustainability. This is unsurprising as the crossing did not reach any stage of implementation. It may also show the contradictory relationship between neoliberalism and planning, as the social consideration of improving child safety lost out to economic factors. The crossing may not have been feasible as there was no potential for income or profit making (Baeten, 2012; Watson, 2006). The following comment from the principal reveals resignation concerning the initiative and shows that the proposed road crossing is not in the principal's long term plan:

It's a bit like trying to set up a Walking School Bus ... It's flogging a dead horse really. We've got other things we can focus our energies on ... I like to try new projects and things so there's a bit of a mission there to start with. And if it doesn't work, you think "well, that didn't work". And so you divert your energy (PRI).

There is the endorsement for schools to take ownership of the road safety initiative (Kearns et al., 2003), and the support of the principal is important to the success of the initiative (Buliung et al., 2011; Collins & Kearns, 2005; Kong et al., 2009). Yet the view of the principal suggesting that if it does not work one moves on to the next project, could be viewed as the initiative having less importance to her which might have a flow-on effect to the rest of the school community. The road crossing may be one of many activities that could be supported, but it may not be a priority and therefore becomes swallowed up by other initiatives.

#### *The process of installing the adult-assisted road crossing: impressions*

The process followed by Longview Primary to advertise the road crossing initiative and recruit volunteers was considered by the interviewees. While the topic of the recruitment of volunteers highlights concerns specific to Longview, it also reveals the connections and collaborations with the parent community. The respondents offered ideas of what could have been done differently to make the recruitment of parent volunteers from the school community more successful. The BOT chairperson offered some suggestions specifically concerning the Eastville families:

Maybe we could've been more explicit about what the requirements were ... Maybe if we had actually identified those families who live in that ... [Eastville] area and ... shoulder tapped ... How else could we have done it? Send a note home maybe, possibly with every kid from that area (BOTCI).

The parent co-ordinator said "I wonder if there needed to be some intermediary step, maybe provision of information from somewhere. Like stats or something. A bit of a campaign prior to then asking who wants to be involved maybe" (PCI). She also revealed her thought processes when deciding to approach other parents directly asking them to volunteer:

I thought "there's no point asking you because clearly you've got way too many things to do anyway". If there was someone who I knew who wasn't overrun with busyness in the morning I would've asked them but there actually wasn't anybody. I had ... gone in thinking "right, let me figure out who I could approach", but I didn't see anyone I could approach ... I thought "well, I don't want to put you in the position

where you have to say no or make a decision, when I know you walk every day with your child to school” (PCI).

The resources available to Longview Primary were highlighted as affecting the installation of the crossing:

In terms of the school putting in effort to get it up and running, they don't have the resources realistically ... [There are] two other crossings that are staff run so maybe people think staff should be running [the adult-assisted road crossing] as well ... I'm talking about people resources, staff predominantly. If parents are thinking staff should be doing it, there isn't the staff to do it ... Even to campaign for it, there's not really the staff (PCI).

The neoliberal theme of the self-managing school is highlighted in this situation. Longview Primary has the ability and freedom to choose to not pursue the installation of the road crossing (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Pope, 2013) based on its site-specific factors and “local circumstances” (Mitchell et al., 2007, p. 625) or “local cultural factors” (Eyler et al., 2008b, p. 973). The suggestion that there simply may not have been the resources “to fund the real costs of choice” (Gordon, 2003, p. 27; Pope, 2013) substantiates this argument. The example shows that Longview Primary was able to examine its resources (time, personnel) and determined that due to a lack of volunteers the adult-assisted road crossing initiative was not worth pursuing. In addition, the BOT and the principal may not have been supportive enough of the initiative (Eyler et al., 2008a; Kearns et al., 2003), resulting in a lack of volunteers to staff the crossing and the termination of the initiative. Perhaps the “structural limitations” (Nairn et al., 2012, p. 43) and site-specific characteristics of Longview were too great a barrier or required too much time and effort to manage.

The parents also would have counted the cost and weighed up how much of a contribution would be expected of them to operate the road crossing. Perhaps the costs were too great or the benefits too few for the Longview Primary parents. The result of the lack of volunteers was that the road crossing was unsustainable.

Overall, the BOT chairperson was positive about the process and she acknowledged that the principal was responsible for its co-ordination:

It was a good idea. It was advertised a number of times, which is always good. Possibly it could've been done on Facebook. I don't know if it was ... I mean the process was probably fine, maybe we were just over

ambitious in thinking people would respond from that ...The poor response is probably more of the surprise ...Yeah, I'm happy with the process. I'm disappointed in the lack of volunteers, that's really what it boils down to (BOTCI).

While she appears to be satisfied with the process that was followed, the BOT chairperson was also resigned to the fact that the initiative failed and appeared to be very accepting of that. When she was asked for additional clarification on the fact that that the road crossing initiative did not have a future, the BOT chairperson replied "Yeah, I don't know if that is okay" (BOTCI). This topic tends to raise societal and moral questions especially as pedestrian safety is at stake.

As suggested by Kearns et al. (2003), the adult-assisted road crossing initiative for Longview Primary may have been a case of being "seen" to be concerned with student safety (p. 291). The 2013 research conducted at Longview Primary following the bus discontinuation revealed the principal's view regarding the school community's opposition to the bus cuts. She disclosed that "I think you need to fight it and you needed to be seen to fight it" (Principal, personal communication, August 27, 2013). This explicit example could be viewed as the Longview Primary principal undertaking "image and impression management" (Smyth, 2011, p. 108) and "image self-promotion" (p. 113). It was not clear whether this was the case with the proposed road crossing initiative.

### *Summary*

Longview Primary decided to attempt to install the road crossing using parent volunteers, the DCC provided a pedestrian island and traffic calming measures, New Zealand Police offered training for the parent volunteers, and the Ministry of Education allowed the school the freedom to implement the initiative. However as suggested by Parusel and McLaren (2010), there were also "site-specific" (p. 135) concerns and "pressures at the school site" (p. 136) that were too great for Longview Primary to surmount. Therefore, the road crossing did not go ahead so automobility was not challenged at that site (Parusel & McLaren, 2010). Individuals will continue to negotiate the crossing site unassisted and the school will focus its attention on other projects deemed to be important to the school community.

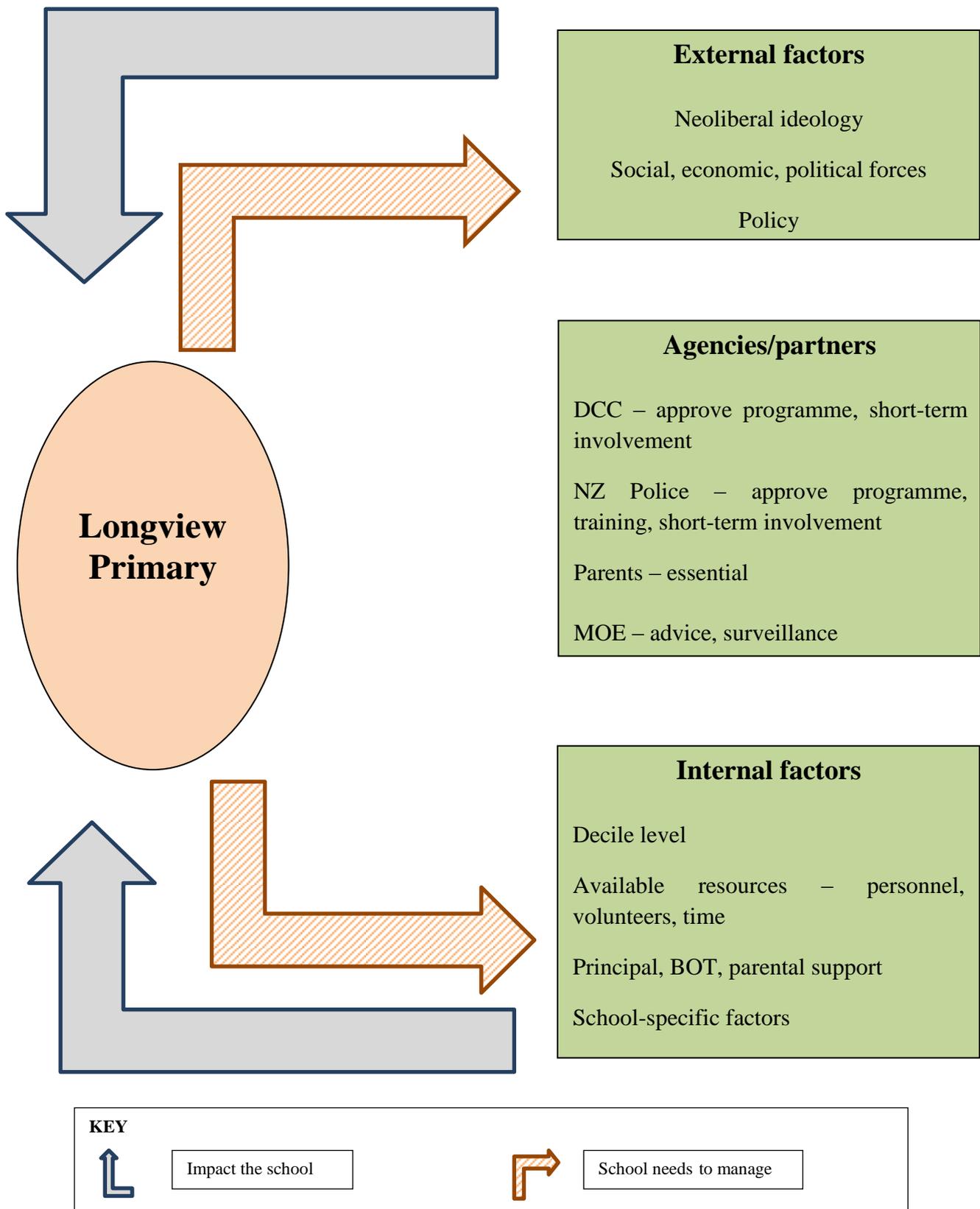
## CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the experiences of a local primary school, its community, and associated agencies throughout the process of attempting to install an adult-assisted road crossing initiative. This chapter will present a review of the central findings followed by the implications and unique features of the study. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for further research will be posited.

### **Summary of key findings**

This study expanded the four main themes of educational and civic policy, partnerships, individual responsibility, and site-specific concerns identified in Parusel and McLaren (2010). It contributed new knowledge and understanding to the adapted theoretical framework. Figure 2 has been created based on the data and presents the major themes and ideas that emerged. It is my interpretation of the relationship between the influences on Longview Primary and the elements that need to be managed by school representatives when trying to install a road safety initiative.

**Figure 2: Influences on schools when installing road safety initiatives in New Zealand**



The following findings and implications of the study show how the three research questions were answered.

The first research question that was posed was:

- What are the school's perceptions of the experience of implementing an adult-assisted road crossing initiative?

The principal's admission that operating the road crossing was not practical was revealing. The principal, BOT Chairperson, and parent coordinator each perceived that the distance of the crossing site from the school was a major barrier to the successful implementation of the adult-assisted road crossing. Other key perceived barriers that made the installation of the crossing impractical included a lack of volunteers and socioeconomic elements.

When I first discussed the idea of investigating the proposed road crossing initiative as a topic for this thesis, the principal was willing and interested. She appeared to think that I would play a major part in the road crossing's installation and operation, meaning the school would not need to. A later discussion clarified that my role would be an observer of the processes involved in the installation of the crossing, rather than an organiser. This seemed to come as a surprise to the principal and it made me question whether she would have in fact tried to install the crossing if I were not involved.

This study has illustrated that responsibility as a topic is messy and difficult to define and it means different things to different people. The theme of individual responsibilities most strongly identifies and emphasises the neoliberal influence on Longview Primary. Linked with this is the parent co-ordinator's concern for the personal safety of the parent volunteers at the proposed road crossing site. This view was not overtly voiced by the principal and BOT chairperson, which may reveal the different perspectives of responsibility and the roles held by the interviewees. The data also indicated that while the parent co-ordinator raised concerns, she also readily accepted that parents would be responsible for the operation.

The evidence from the study reveals that the road crossing was not a viable initiative for Longview Primary to pursue. This could be viewed as a failure, yet it should be acknowledged that Longview Primary was at least willing to investigate the initiative amidst a busy school setting.

The second research question was:

- What are the perceived influences on the school's ability and willingness to implement the road crossing initiative?

The evidence revealed that the partnerships that Longview Primary entered into concerning the road crossing were not always easy to manage due to the varying priorities and the methods of working of each partner. The data suggest that the parent volunteers are in fact the group which has the greatest influence on the sustainability and life span of the road crossing. Clearly it is not sufficient to rely on parental support for projects and this case study showed how a venture can be halted before it even begins. The partnership between Longview Primary and parents is constant and therefore should be fostered. It requires significant effort and input from both parties. This finding supports previous research, highlighting the essential role that parents play in the success and maintenance of road safety initiatives and endorsing the school/parent relationship. The data also suggested that Longview Primary has historically found it difficult to recruit parent volunteers for school-wide activities, thus the road crossing initiative was not unique in its absence of parent volunteers.

Schools do not have an equitable pool of resources available to them to install road safety initiatives. It is recognised that Longview Primary attempted to install the adult-assisted road crossing by calling on a decile 4 school community. The decile level of Longview Primary was not explicitly identified as a factor that may have contributed to the failure of the road crossing initiative. Yet in practical terms, a high decile school is likely to have a greater range of resources to utilise than a lower decile school, improving the chances of a successful installation. That is not to say that a lower decile school cannot sustain an adult-assisted crossing. It may simply be more difficult or require more effort or strategy to do so.

As a result, applying the standard process of calling on parent volunteers and city council engineering operations across all schools does not appear to be a successful practice to follow. This supports Parusel and McLaren (2010) who state that "in relying on traditional organizing of volunteer patrols, sporadic speed and parking bylaw enforcement to control individual behavior, and on occasional 'hard measures' involving engineering planning and road redesign, the City is unable to consider the system of automobility and its failures" (p. 138). While this is understandable, what is questionable is whether it is acceptable for the road crossing to be abandoned.

The third research question asked:

- What are the perceptions of the related agencies and groups associated with the implementation of the road crossing initiative?

The DCC and police gave initial approval for the crossing to be installed. It appears from this study that it is commonplace for these external agencies to completely step back from the project once their obligations are fulfilled. Future follow-up does not seem to occur and support is provided only when requested. I wonder if these agencies are even now aware that the installation attempt was unsuccessful at Longview Primary.

Yet in reality the level of involvement by external agencies may have been restricted by their own internal policies, plans, and boundaries. To illustrate, Sport Otago was prevented from becoming involved in the road crossing installation at Longview Primary due to a lack of funding. It is difficult to determine the extent to which greater external agency involvement would have assisted Longview Primary. At the least, increased and on-going support of the school by the DCC and police may have been helpful.

### **Implications of the study**

The results provide evidence that it was too difficult for Longview Primary to install the road crossing initiative within a neoliberal environment of policy, partnerships, responsibilities, and school-specific concerns. In reality, these four themes are factors that schools often do not have a say in. Schools are required to deliver the curriculum, meet legal requirements, enter into partnerships, be accountable and meet obligations, and survive with the resources they can access. Thus, partners and educational professionals that advocate for schools to take responsibility for safe travel initiatives should recognise the failings of the current system and influence change or improvements. Consideration should be given to the ways in which schools could be better supported and empowered to install and maintain road safety initiatives.

Throughout this project, the adult-assisted road crossing initiative at Longview Primary emerged as a much more complex topic than I had initially thought, which raised a number of societal questions. Given that the road crossing would meet the health and safety needs of current and future Longview Primary pupils, its absence suggests a lack of vision for that school community. This indicates the notion that neoliberalism and the market oppose future planning and societal matters (Baeten, 2012). More specifically, as the purpose of the road crossing was not financial profit, it could be deemed to be unviable.

Early on in the research project, the question of “is it acceptable if Longview Primary is not able to install this road crossing given that it addresses child safety?” became embedded in my mind. It also featured when I considered the interviewee responses. Should the interviewees as key players have done more and requested additional assistance from state agencies and community members? Alternatively, when a local school with an obvious need cannot fill the need itself, the state and community groups do not voluntarily help to fill that gap. Is it acceptable for society to tolerate that unless Longview Primary can provide the personnel and resources to operate the crossing, it will fail? This is clearly acceptable until a pedestrian, young or old, is hurt at the proposed crossing site.

By my own admission, as a parent I am unlikely to volunteer to run a road crossing thereby contributing to the potential stonewalling of that initiative. The need for the road crossing does not go away just because the need cannot be filled. These societal questions, however, may be idealistic and rhetorical as the neoliberal ideologies are engrained and difficult to challenge.

Undertaking this research project helped me to appreciate the invisible yet powerful influences on New Zealand primary schools. Even though my children attend a local primary school, I have been completely unaware and naïve to the influences affecting a school’s decision making and self-management. The question of “how difficult can it be to install a road crossing?” was promptly answered by examining Longview Primary’s experience. Installing a routine adult-assisted road crossing can be extremely complex and difficult for schools within the neoliberal environment. There are legitimate barriers that can hinder road safety initiatives despite the focus on child safety. This was a revelation to me.

Longview Primary was unable to install an adult-assisted road crossing. Managing the interplay between policy, partnerships, responsibilities, and site-specific concerns within a neoliberal educational environment proved difficult. The results of this study have highlighted problems with the current system used by schools to install safe travel initiatives in New Zealand.

The aim was not to provide generalizable findings, as I was working with one school. Yet Parusel & McLaren (2010) and other research (Collins & Kearns, 2005; Eyler, Brownson, et al., 2008; Wylie, 1999) identified the difficulties of attempting to install road safety initiatives using volunteers. This is the system that New Zealand primary schools would normally follow when installing an adult-assisted road crossing or walking school bus. Therefore based on the previous research and Longview Primary’s experience, the current system was not conducive to the successful implementation of the adult-assisted road crossing.

### **Features of the study**

While two parents volunteered to be a part of the road crossing initiative, only the parent coordinator was interviewed. This, however, should be viewed as a feature of the study rather than a limitation as it simply shows the reality of the absence of volunteers at Longview Primary.

### **Contribution of the current study**

This study was an in-depth investigation into the processes undertaken by a New Zealand school attempting to install a road crossing operated by parent volunteers. It has highlighted the various strands of complexity involved with a seemingly straightforward road crossing. The study also contributes understanding and knowledge of the influences of the neoliberal educational environment to the adapted Parusel and McLaren (2010) theoretical framework.

### **Recommendations**

The proposed road crossing was unable to operate within the neoliberal educational setting at Longview Primary and factors that affected the successful implementation of the crossing for this school were identified. When considering any recommendations, it emerged that there were in fact none. In addition, identifying recommendations that could be applied to the variety of schools in New Zealand was not an aim of this study.

### **Further research**

This study presents findings from a single case and the findings cannot be generalised. The results therefore outline the experience of one specific school which may be relevant and useful for other schools to consider when installing an adult-assisted road crossing.

A study determining the limiters and enablers of road safety initiatives from the viewpoint of the key players within a school community would enhance understanding and assist schools, external agencies and government departments. The findings could help agencies understand how they might further assist schools. However, in reality this may prove to be difficult because as illustrated by this study, schools self-manage within a neoliberal environment. There is limited state support for initiatives and schools are expected to abide by regulations and policies that may restrict their freedom. Also, further research into the societal and moral obligations concerning the provision of school road safety initiatives may be worthwhile.

## **Conclusion**

What this study has shown is that an apparently simple and straightforward adult-assisted road crossing initiative can be impossible for schools to install and maintain. When political, economic, and social elements are mixed into a neoliberal education setting, the interplay between them is complex and difficult to manage. All schools, regardless of their individual character, resources, abilities, and needs are expected to use the same practices and systems to install road safety programmes. When a school community cannot access the resources and support to install something as conventional as a road crossing, it clearly shows that the neoliberal and social, political, and economic pressures are too great. People need to be present at the crossing site to operate it. If the state or the school do not pay for someone to fill the role, and parents or community members do not volunteer, the adult-assisted road crossing will be non-existent.

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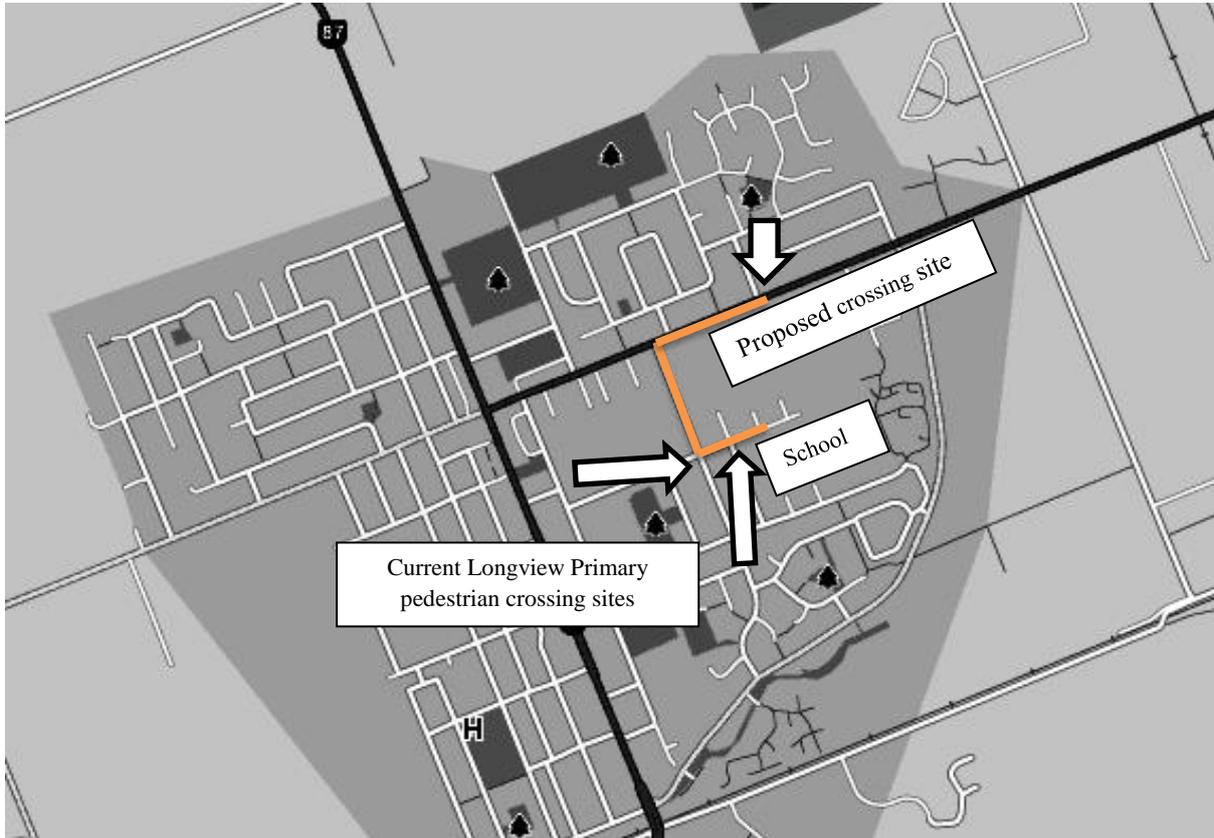
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

Map showing the route from the proposed crossing site to Longview Primary



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Legal requirements**

#### **National Administration Guidelines**

A school's Health and Safety policy needs to reflect a commitment to staff and student welfare, in connection with the Ministry of Education's NAGs or National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2013b, 2014a). The NAGs "for school administration set out statements of desirable principles of conduct or administration for specified personnel or bodies" (Ministry of Education, 2013b, para.1). NAG5 in particular requires the BOT to:

- a. Provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;
- b. Promote healthy food and nutrition for all students; and
- c. Comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees (Ministry of Education, 2013b, National Administration Guideline 5).

#### **Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992**

This Act is concerned with employee health and safety, extending to any person who is employed by the board of trustees (Ministry of Education, 2014c). This relates to "the safety of employees while they are at work, and other people who are not employees, but may be at, or in the vicinity of, the workplace or work site" (Hay-MacKenzie & Wilshire, 2002, p. 52). Under the Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992), a school and BOT may be fined if their action or inaction causes a pupil to suffer harm (Ministry of Education, 2014c),

#### **Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002**

Under this Act, volunteers are normally treated as employees at the school and are expected to have the same protections as employees (Ministry of Education, 2014c).

## APPENDIX C

### List of potential questions for open-ended interviews

#### PRINCIPAL

- How long have you been Principal at this school?
- Can you describe your involvement with the current road crossing programme?
- What is the school's involvement with agencies such as the DCC, NZ Police, and Sport Otago when setting up the road crossing programme? *Partnerships*
- How would you describe the interactions with those agencies? *Partnerships*

#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) CHAIRPERSON

- How long have you been in the role of BOT Chairperson?
- How long have you been involved with the school in general?
- What is the school's involvement with agencies such as the DCC, NZ Police, and Sport Otago when setting up the road crossing programme? *Partnerships*
- How would you describe the interactions with those agencies? *Partnerships*
- Can you describe your involvement with the current road crossing programme?

#### PARENTS

- What is your connection with the school?
- How long have you been involved with the school?
- Parent Co-ordinator: You've been involved with trying to establish a road crossing at this school previously. Can you explain your experience of that?

#### AGENCIES

- What is your role in the current road crossing programme?
- What are your impressions of this road crossing programme?
- What was your agency's interaction like with the school? *Partnerships*
- The road crossing has been suggested by parents and school staff as a means to make it safer for children to travel to school. How important do you think it is that the road crossing operates successfully? *Site-specific concerns, policy*

## GENERIC QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the programme didn't get enough volunteers?
- What do you think could be done to make it more likely for people to volunteer to run the road crossing?
- What are the concerns specific to this school that could suggest why the road crossing did not get underway? *Site-specific concerns*
- Do you think having a road crossing fits with meeting requirements for the curriculum? *Policy*
- The road crossing has been suggested by parents and school staff as a means to make it safer for children to travel to school. How important was it that the road crossing operated? *Site-specific concerns*
- How would the road crossing meet the legislative requirements of the Board of Trustees to provide a safe environment for staff and students, in particular the Ministry of Education's National Administration Guideline (NAG) 5? *Policy*
- How do you feel about other schools using that crossing site if the school operates the crossing?
- How would the school ensure that those responsible for staffing the road crossing are adequately equipped and prepared to do so? *Individual responsibility*
- Can you describe the decision making process when introducing the road crossing programme – communication between the BOT, principal, parents? What were the steps involved?
- So given how important all of these things were, why doesn't the school do more?
- How important are the school's connections with agencies, such as the DCC, NZ Police, Sport Otago, when installing a road crossing? Why/why not?
- If the road crossing programme had run successfully, what would it have looked like, the ideal process?
- Do you think the issue of not getting enough volunteers is specific to the road crossing or does it affect other voluntary activities within the school?
- Do you have anything else you'd like to add?