

Here's What Our Community Told Us Matters Most

This report summarises the feedback gathered from Cobden School's community as part of the review process for updating the Strategic Plan (2026–2028). It reflects the aspirations of whānau and ākonga regarding the school's vision for learning and strategic priorities.

Presented to Cobden Board of Trustees, August 2025

As part of the review process to update the Strategic Plan (2026–2028), we recently invited community feedback about how Cobden School can best reflect the aspirations of our community, while meeting the needs of their tamariki. This was a two-pronged process – reflection on the school’s current **Vision for Learning** and **Strategic Priorities** for learning.

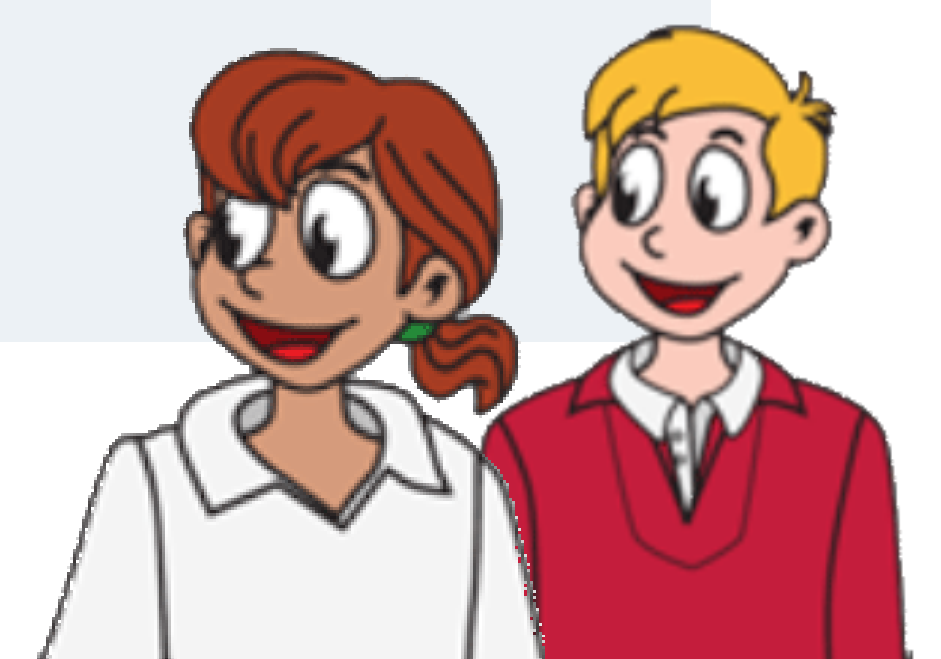
Vision for Learning

We initially invited input about our current school vision for learning, *A community of learners where wellbeing and relationships encourage ākonga to be confident, engaged, and caring, critical thinkers*. Consultation took place during Matariki, where the following themes emerged:

- People being kind
- Happiness
- Educational success
- Friendship
- Fun
- Good school days
- Whānau days
- Music
- Health
- Lego

While the current vision aligns well with the 2025 Strategic Plan, particularly in areas of wellbeing, strong relationships, educational success, and whānau involvement (Mahi Tahi. Ākoanga, Hauora); there is a strong desire for a learning environment that is not just about academics but is also joyful, relational, inclusive, and creatively engaging.

Feedback also supported co-constructing a renewed vision statement that reflects the evolving priorities at Cobden School, as well as the values and aspirations of the wider community.



Three vision statement options were proposed.

The first suggests a light enhancement by adding 'joyful learning' and 'creativity' to the existing vision. *A community of learners where wellbeing, relationships, and joyful learning empower ākonga to be confident, engaged, creative, and caring critical thinkers.*

The second offers a more substantial rewrite, emphasising belonging, creativity, and strong whānau relationships. *A vibrant learning community where wellbeing, creativity, and strong relationships – including with whānau support ākonga to thrive, belong, and grow as confident, caring, critical thinkers.*

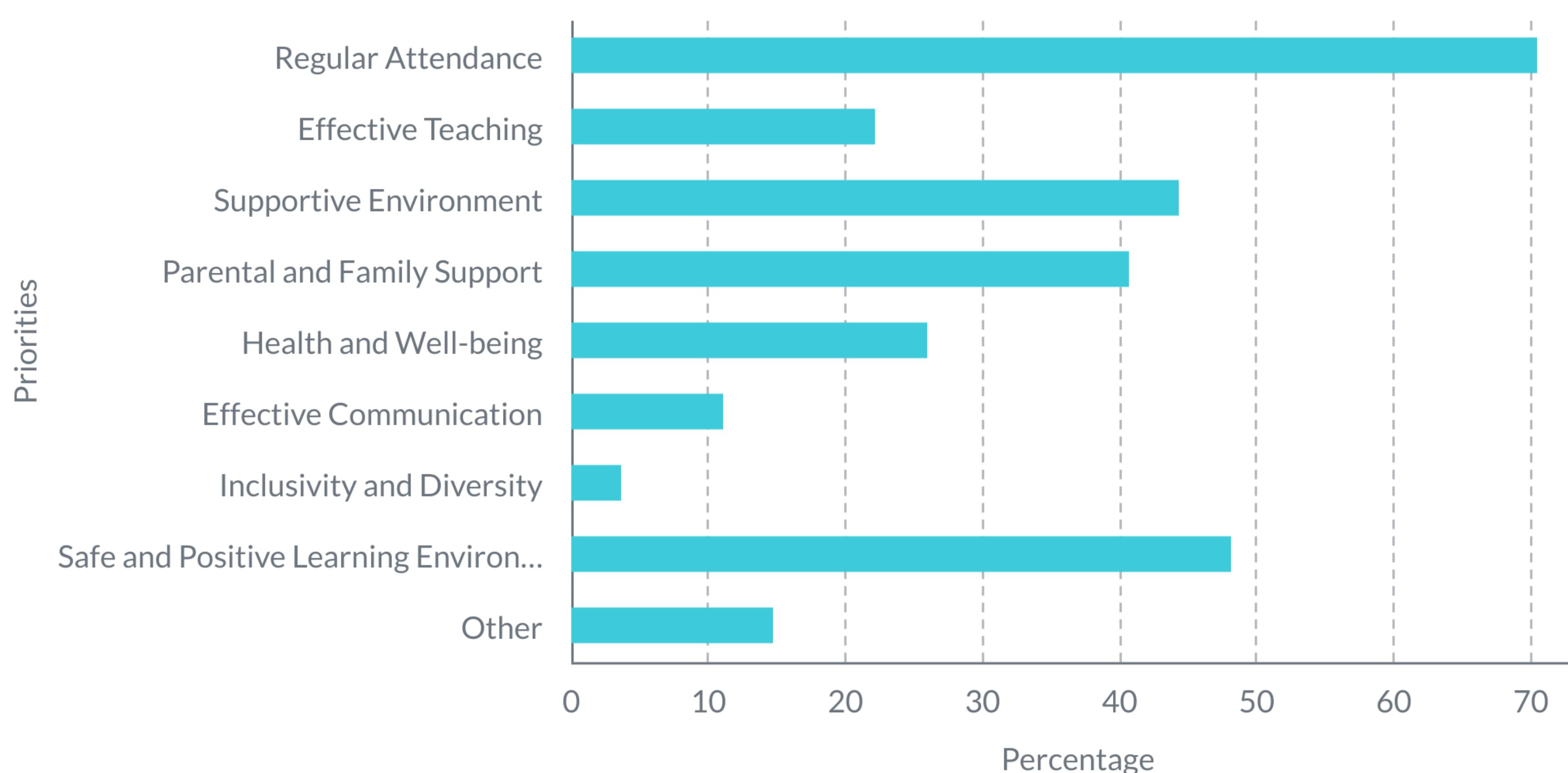
The third, driven by whānau and learner voice, focuses on nurturing a joyful, inclusive environment where ākonga feel safe, valued, and inspired. *Together with whānau, we nurture a joyful and inclusive learning environment where ākonga feel safe, valued, and inspired to explore, connect, and succeed.*

Recommendation

A final vision will reflect the community consultation and feedback – and visually represented through student artefacts and school-wide documentation.

Strategic Priorities

We recently invited whānau to virtually share their feedback about the school's priorities for learning. We were happy with the uptake, higher than usual, indicating a commitment to sharing what matters most to them. Here's what they told us:



Survey results highlight that **Regular Attendance (70.4%)** is seen as the most critical factor for student success, followed by a **Safe and Positive Learning Environment (48.1%)** and a **Supportive Environment (44.4%)**. Other key priorities include **Parental and Family Support (40.7%)**, **Health and Wellbeing (25.9%)**, and **Friendships (25.9%)**. The strong emphasis on attendance likely reflects the impact of the school's sustained community awareness campaign over the past two years, demonstrating that the message around the importance of regular attendance is resonating with whānau and the wider school community.

These priorities closely reflect the feedback that described Cobden School as a *warm, welcoming place where everyone feels safe, accepted, and valued*. They spoke of a strong sense of connection, where students and teachers work together to build confidence and support both academic and social growth.

What stood out most were the heartfelt comments describing the school as an extension of home—a *close-knit, family-like environment where relationships matter and staff are approachable, passionate, and genuinely caring*.

We're proud that our school is already reflecting many of these values. Here's how we're continuing to build on those strengths.

Regular Attendance

We're actively continuing to support regular attendance through:

- Daily check-ins with students needing extra support,
- Follow-ups with whānau when children are repeatedly away,
- Social media campaigns promoting the importance of being at school,
- Breakfast to help start the day right.

This reflects the goals outlined in our [Attendance Plan](#).

Safe and Positive Learning Environment

Across the school, we're proud to create spaces where students feel safe, supported, and excited to learn. Our effective teaching practices help ensure tamariki are well, feel a strong sense of belonging, and are set up for success in their learning. An example of what this looks like can be seen in [Kowhai 1 Classroom](#).

This also reflects the nature of the community feedback, which described the culture at Cobden School as *energetic, tidy, and full of laughter, learning, and student voice*.

Supportive Environment

A continued focus on health and wellbeing includes:

- MoE healthy lunches, fruit, and breakfast initiatives,
- Fun lunchtime activities including music and games,
- Sports equipment and coaching opportunities,
- Library access, competitions, and a student-run tech centre,
- Manukura support from student leaders,
- Our hauora garden to promote wellbeing,
- Added support from our Public Health Nurse to help whānau keep their tamariki healthy and thriving.



Parental and Family Support

We value your partnership and we'll continue to strengthen that through:

- Our open-door policy,
- Three-way learning conferences,
- Positive communication via text and email,
- Support with uniforms and vouchers,
- Opportunities for whānau to contribute meaningfully within the school,
- Community events such as Matariki.

Everything that we've promised to deliver in our [Engagement Plan](#) and more.

Our tamariki are at the heart of everything we do, so we made sure we heard from them as well. When we shared our current vision for learning, we asked what words resonated most to them. Ākonga chose:



Whānau expressed a strong desire to see a future with a focus on:

Maintaining the Current Positive Culture and Environment – They want to see Cobden School continue to be the warm, inclusive, and supportive place it is today– an extension of home.

Student Wellbeing and Emotional Support – With a stronger focus on trauma-informed practices and emotional wellbeing, ensuring all staff feel confident supporting ākonga through challenges.

Small Class Sizes and Growth Management – Whānau value the small community feel and want to preserve it, even as the school grows. Suggestions included more classrooms and teachers, and possibly zoning to manage roll size.

Student Voice and Leadership Opportunities – Feedback highlighted the importance of empowering students through leadership roles, student councils, and opportunities to contribute to school life and decision-making.

Community Connection and Engagement – Families want Cobden School to remain the ‘heartbeat of the community,’ with ongoing collaboration between school and whānau, and events like shared lunches to maintain strong relationships.

Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment – A continued emphasis on safety, inclusivity, and a space where all students feel they belong was frequently mentioned.

High-Quality Teaching and Learning – Whānau envision a future where Te Kura o Cobden continues to deliver excellent education, with confident graduates, low staff turnover, and a strong values-based approach to learning.

Summary



Gathering feedback from the community has proven to be incredibly valuable. The hopes and aspirations shared by whānau closely mirror the vision, values, and everyday practices at Cobden School, reinforcing the strategic direction we are taking and affirming the strong alignment to our community’s expectations. It also reflects the impact of the ongoing awareness campaign around attendance and wellbeing. Families are not only aware of the importance of regular attendance but also deeply value the holistic, inclusive, and community-driven approach the school has cultivated.

In conclusion, we’re confident the renewed focus on our **School Vision** and **Strategic Plan** will continue to reflect the values and aspirations of the diverse communities we serve.

