



## CASE STUDY

### SUMMARY

#### Customer:

Otago Boys' High School in Dunedin is one of New Zealand's oldest boys' secondary schools with more than 800 students on the roll.

#### Need:

To increase communication with parents and the wider school community.

#### Solution:

An evolving communications solution that is driving information demand by parents.

#### Outcome:

A paradigm shift.

## Parents' demand for more communication drives paradigm shift

#### Customer:

Founded in 1863 in Dunedin, Otago Boys' High School is one of New Zealand's oldest boys' secondary schools. With a roll of over 800 students, the mission of Otago Boys' High School is to maintain and build upon its traditions of excellence in developing strong academic standards along with social, cultural and sporting abilities for success, leadership and personal esteem in educational achievement, the world of work and citizenship in a multicultural society.

#### Need: Demand drives increased information sharing and communication

In the age of advancing technology there is an ever-increasing demand for communication and information. In the past, for teachers and parents of students at Otago Boys' High School, there was often a lack of information being shared which was concerning, especially around things as important as school attendance.

Dougal McGowan, the Deputy Rector of Otago Boys' High School said that when he arrived at the school, they didn't have any idea about what the absentee rate was. They didn't communicate with anybody about it because they didn't collect the required data efficiently enough. The concerns around absenteeism and sharing this information with parents was a major driver for a new solution because parents voiced their concerns about not knowing whether their sons were at school or not.

With nothing in place for mass communication, particularly in emergency situations such as snow days, the school wanted to increase its communication with the parents and the community. The communications before implementation of the School-links solution were quite unreliable. "We put it on the radio and hoped people would hear it. We also used to put it on the school phone but because there is only one line it could get pretty jammed up".

There is an ever-increasing demand for more information from the school and how it's communicated, says Mr McGowan. Parents are always requesting more information from the school about what their sons are doing because the boys don't tell them.



*“There’s been a total paradigm shift. Notices that were sent home in the boys’ school bags rarely made it into the hands of a parent. Now, with School-links we can contact parents directly.”*

Dougal McGowan  
Deputy Rector of Otago Boys’ High School.

### Solution: Evolving with school community needs

“The Rector first heard about School-links at a conference when a friend of his at the ministry said it worked really well and said it was something we should look at,” explains McGowan, so the school did.

The School-links communication solution was implemented at Otago Boys’ High School over three years ago and the software is continually developing how communication works for both parents and the wider school community. “Whereas initially the School-links solution was used for absences, texting and emailing, it now helps deliver notices for a variety of different things from different groups within the school. So it could be form classes or different year levels,” explains McGowan.

The main users of the School-links solution are Otago Boys’ High School administrators who send information on behalf of various teachers, and of course parents. “We put our daily notices on there so parents can go on and have a look. We have used it for parent teacher interviews – which I really liked” says McGowan who also states that it is fairly easy to use. “It’s really useful. For both staff and students”.

### Outcome: Paradigm Shift

In the past it was paper newsletters and notices that were the standard communication tools from the school to the parents, and often as infrequently as weekly or fortnightly.

With the School-links solution in place, the school is able to maintain an increased level of communication with the parents. “We are contacting parents up to three or four times a day. However, we also try to make them come to us to get information as well,” McGowan explains.

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Regarding the relationship with School-links, McGowan says, “I’ve just really enjoyed the people that work for School-links. They’re very helpful and can never do enough to help us, which is fantastic, as no matter how silly your question is, they always make you feel like it’s a good question. I really enjoy what they do for us, and that’s what is most important as far as we’re concerned”.

### About School-links

School-links is a New Zealand-owned software product that provides affordable communication tools for education providers, from early childhood centres through to tertiary institutions. We are recognised by the Ministry of Education as an official provider for early notification services, and integrate with the mainstream student management systems. We offer extensive training and local helpdesk support.