

Waiheke High- Striving for Success Project Report

Report prepared for:

Waiheke High School Board of Trustees

Date: May 2019

Waiheke High School Striving for Success Project Report

Background

In 2018 the Waiheke High School Board of Trustees decided to investigate why a growing number of young people were going off Waiheke Island for schooling. There had been some concerns raised that students and their families were bypassing the school and that it may not be the school of choice for some. The need to understand why this was occurring was important. The Waiheke Board of Trustees (Waiheke BOT) identified this as a specific project called **“Waiheke High School Striving for Success.”**

Project purpose

The purpose of the project is to understand how Waiheke High School can develop to be the school of choice for the young people of Waiheke Island and their families. It is hoped the information and recommendations will enable the school to continue to grow and develop its provision of education.

Process

Holding and guiding the process is a Steering Group comprising three BOT members and five staff members, including the Board Chairperson and the Principal, who have met regularly since October last year. The steering group contracted Anne Bailey as the independent facilitator. Chris Rowan, an education consultant with experience in community consultation, was contracted as the Project Advisor and data analyst.

It was agreed to use a number of methods to collect information to encourage responses from the community. Specifically, an on-line questionnaire was conducted among parents, students, staff and prospective primary schools. Facilitated forums were also identified as an effective way to gather ideas and in-depth thinking from a wider number of key stakeholders. The forums held included a public forum and eight key stakeholder focus groups; Students, Staff, Interested Parents, Maori Whanau, Parents who have chosen senior education off Waiheke Island, Potential Parents, Business Community and Social Services.

The questionnaire and stakeholder forums were run during March 2019 and April 2019. All information has been analysed by the independent facilitators for key themes and messages. The information has been confidential to the two independent facilitators. The following themes and recommendations have been identified initially for the Steering Group to agree recommendations and or make suggested adaptations before presentation to the wider Waiheke High School Board.

The intention as agreed is to support current and future direction for Waiheke High School to be the best choice for local young students.

What we are currently doing well and holds families on the island for schooling

There were a number of positive themes identified in the information gathered. The major themes were, community feel to the school, environment of the school, teaching staff, collaborating and using our local community, BOT.

1. Community feel to the school

An initial theme identified as currently working is the school being part of a small community where many of the staff and students live locally. The small classes and small school feel was valued. Some noted that overall size of the school enhanced the relationships between learners, whanau and teachers.

2. Context of the school

It was noted that the location and setting of the school is great and the island feel with proximity to a big city feels like the best of both worlds. The surrounding natural environment is considered important to keep growing the education programmes. It was also noted that the new build will be important to improve opportunities for learning.

3. Elements of school culture

The positive elements of school culture identified were the non-pretentious feel of the school, student diversity and the focus on Te Ao Māori and kapahaka for all students. It was noted that the school had continued to grow and strengthen elements of teaching and learning.

4. Teaching staff and curriculum areas

It was recognised by respondents that a number of teachers were caring of the students at Waiheke High School and went out of the way to support individual students. It was noted that there were some areas of excellence among the teaching staff and some were using technology innovatively. The pastoral care team and the curriculum teams were viewed by some as effective and working to support learning for students. In general the school was seen to be delivering a range of subjects. Some respondents indicated the needs of Māori students were being catered for.

5. Community links and celebrating the community

There was evidence that people valued the links to local community for learning opportunities e.g. viticulture, sea scouts, building, IT and hospitality. It was noted that there are some strong partnerships occurring with industry.

6. BOT

Lastly the role of the BOT was commented on. Specifically the BOT appears to be listening and engaging more with whanau and community and that this was something they had been wanting for a while.

Major themes - areas needing development and recommendations

There were a number of major themes identified in the information gathered. The major ones we will discuss in the report were vision/school identity, leadership, school culture, communication, community links and curriculum and academic.

1. Vision/School Identity

An initial strong theme identified through the feedback was the need for the school to have a clearer identity, a clearer sense of who they were and what they stood for. There were a number of comments that indicate that the school is unsure of what it is trying to achieve, what the future direction is and therefore the messaging, branding and general communication about the school are often confused. It was also noted that the school needs a clear and coherent strategic plan that has had input from the community, and input from the student body and staff. There was reference made to schools who are clear what they stand for and by having this clarity they actually attract a number of students to them e.g. Mt Aspiring College.

2. Leadership – Senior Leadership

Another strong theme emerging from the feedback was that of leadership. It was noted that leaders of the school need to be engaging more with the community. Specifically engagement by leadership needs to be strengthened and more positive. There is a need for leadership to articulate the key direction and goals of the school more clearly. It was also noted that to be effective the school leadership needs to listen to the community and be more open to feedback, less defensive to suggestions. Lastly it was noted that engagement with staff and students also needed to be strengthened to ensure that staff and student voice was heard.

3. School Culture

The culture of the school was raised as a major theme in all focus groups and in the survey. There is a perception of poor school pride and little school spirit amongst the students and staff with many indicating the need for this to be significantly strengthened. The overall culture was described as uninspiring, underwhelming, and

even unsafe by some. There was discussion on the inconsistency of staff modelling the culture or behaviours desired by the school and community. It was also noted that the morale of the staff was impacting on some students.

Student behaviour was highlighted as another aspect of culture that was a current challenge for the school. There is a perception of behaviours not being dealt with, of behaviour management strategies not working for a number of students, of strategies for boys not working and the perceived lack of behaviour management impacting on the learning of other students in classrooms.

Uniform was the last major element of school culture commented on. It was noted that the school uniform is not worn with pride by many students and that the community see it as a signal that the school does not have high expectations. The desire for full uniform worn well or don't bother and opt for full mufti was repeated. It was noted that the uniform worn poorly impacted on student identity and feelings of school pride.

4. Communication

Communication with whanau and community is currently perceived as not particularly effective for Waiheke High School. The themes identified included, poor communication to families , little proactive social media, communication perceived as old fashioned and little promotion of the successes of students and the school.

Parents noted they felt they didn't always know what was going on in the school and that the variety of potential platforms for communication between the school and themselves were not being utilised well. They identified that at times the communication was not engaging from the school and needed to be more interesting. There was also a desire from parents for more effective communication around their children's learning.

The community noted that the school staff did not proactively promote the school. They felt there were multiple opportunities to celebrate and shout out the successes of individuals and the school to the community. There was also an opportunity to change the perceptions of the community about the school with more active communication and engagement with the local community.

Lastly it was noted that at times individual communication from some SLT and staff was not always positive or constructive. This was noted by many through the process.

5. Community links

As the only secondary school on the island in a small and close community the connection with the wider community is considered essential. Currently this

connection between the school and the community is not perceived as strong. Specifically noted were the desire for more connections to the community around learning opportunities, mentoring opportunities for students, increased engagement by the school in community events, and the taking up of offers by the community to support the school.

6. Curriculum, academics and high expectations for all

The feedback noted a number of areas around academic achievement and curriculum options for students that are perceived as needing attention. There is a perception of the school having a decline in academic achievement and a lowering of expectations around academic achievement. A number of respondents used the words “comfortable”, “mediocrity”, “not striving” and “don’t have high expectations of students.”

There was also a theme around the curriculum choices for students. Although some recognised the challenge for a small school to be able to offer some subjects there was a feeling that the school was not looking at ways to be more creative around the curriculum, student learning and timetabling.

7. Te Ao Māori

There was a clear request for promotion of a strong Māori identity for Māori students and further integration of Te Ao Māori within WHS. Specifically it was noted that parents wanted the school to be a safe place for their tamariki, that connections with whanau and the marae needed to be stronger and that there needed to be higher aspirations for Maori students in their learning. It was also noted that whanau wanted their children to be more connected to their own whakapapa and to move towards being fluent speakers of Māori. Another area discussed was the need to strengthen Te Ao Māori for all students, that there be more opportunities for all to learn Te Reo Māori.

Other themes

Alongside the above major themes a number of other important themes were also identified.

8. Staffing

- Investigate retention and follow up the findings to understand why teachers leave, especially to retain excellent staff.
- Ensure there are valuable upskilling opportunities for staff.

- Staff request that management ensures everyone is genuinely on board with decisions and things WHS does. Staff also want to know that poor staff performance is being dealt with.
- Acknowledge staff, create more opportunities for this and celebrate staff successes

9. Student voice

- Students feel that at times their voice is not heard and there needs to be more opportunities to include what students think
- Students and parents note the need for more student voice in their learning and more feedback opportunities about teaching to teachers
- Create opportunities for initiation, delegation and participation in school change
- Strengthen school student leadership structures

10. Inclusive education

- Strengthen the ability to support students with high level special needs, the programmes and physical spaces so this is a school for all
- Review and strengthen pathways for Gifted & Talented students.
- Strengthen programmes for more disruptive students with programmes that suit their abilities and attitudes
- Develop a culture that reflects the capacity every young person has, to be outstanding in their unique way, both aspirational and optimistic

11. Hauora /student wellbeing

- Create clear pathways for support for wellbeing of students. E.g. some children are coming to school hungry, some students need more support for mental health issues

12. Transition

- Through the Community of Learning develop a Waiheke Island pathway so the schooling transition across the ages and across the island schools is congruent

13. Global citizenship focus

- Identify opportunities for students to be contributing to the environment, the community, global issues

Summary

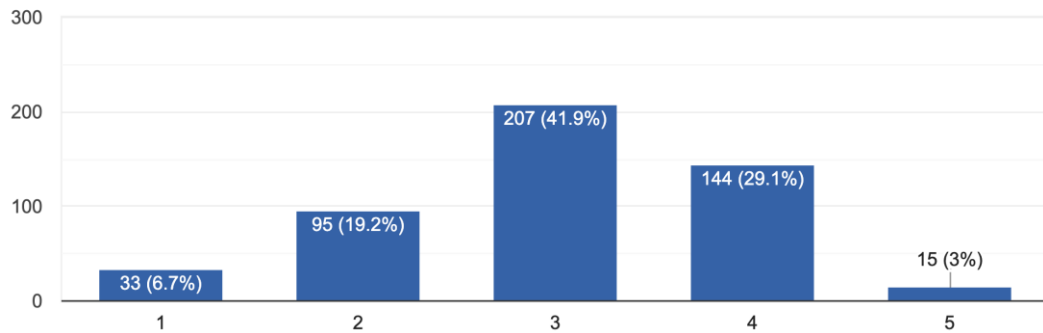
This report is based on information gathered from a range of sources and there is acknowledgement that some responses may be based on perceptions. However the themes coming through the data are very clear and whether perception or reality need some attention paid to change the rhetoric and feelings in and around the parent community, the wider community, the student body and the staff. The report is intended as a confidential discussion document for the Steering Group and BOT only and intended as a means to support next step discussions and decisions for the school.

Appendix – Survey Graphs

(1 = not great..... 5 = fantastic) 524 responses

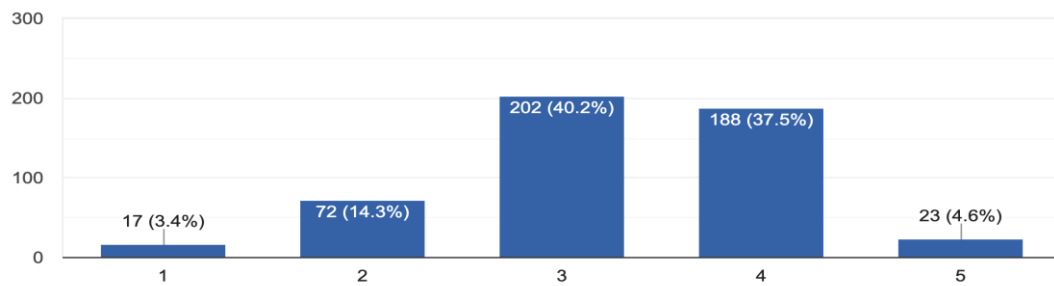
2. Preparing students for University or further study

494 responses



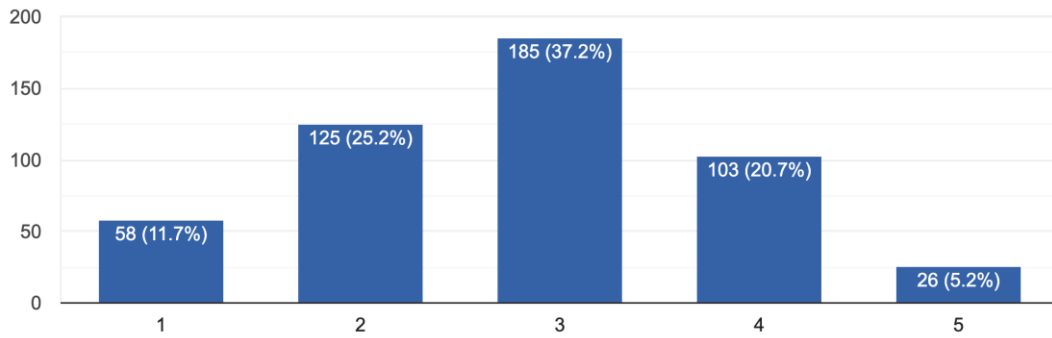
3. Improving students' knowledge in specific subjects (eg. English, Science, and Maths)

502 responses



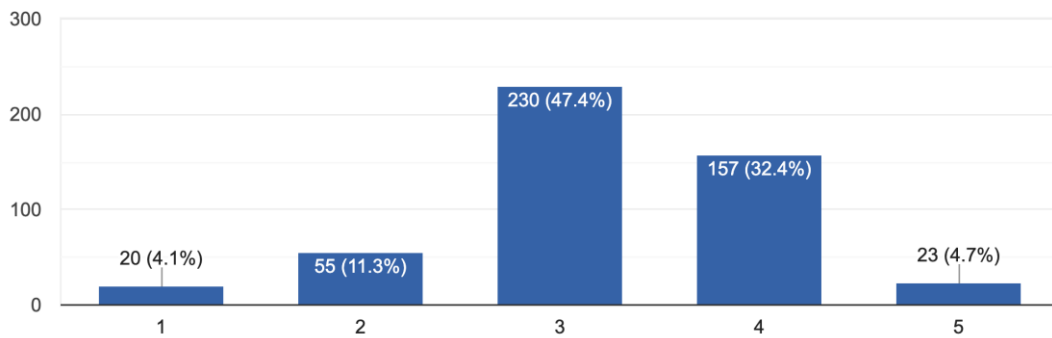
4. Developing students with special talents

497 responses



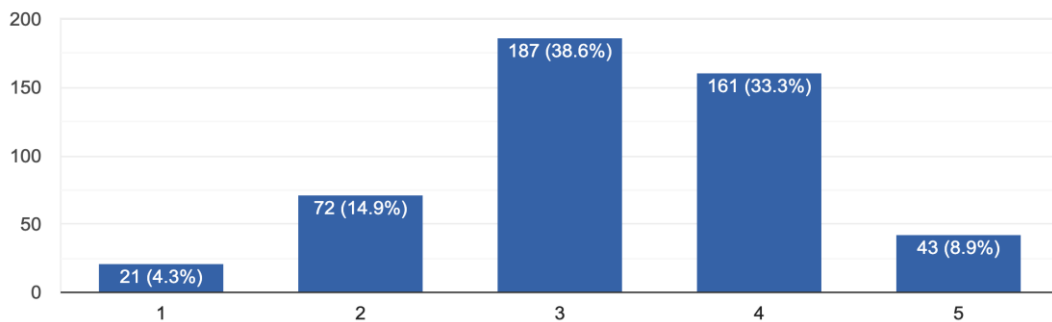
5. Having high rates of participation/achievement in senior school qualifications (eg NCEA 1,2,3)

485 responses



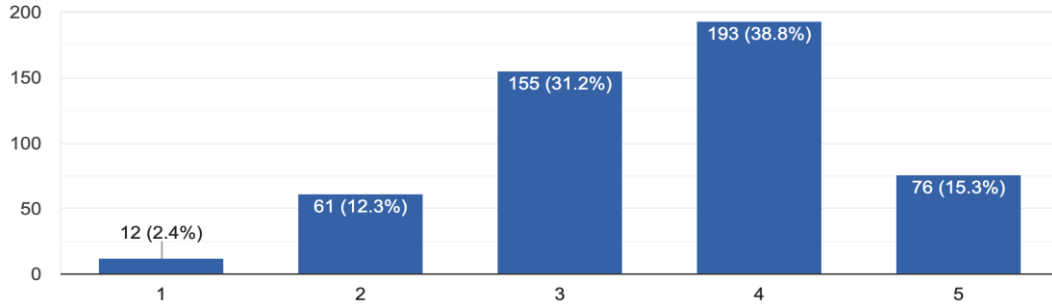
6. Offering work focused classes or job related programmes (e.g. IT, building and construction, hospitality)

484 responses



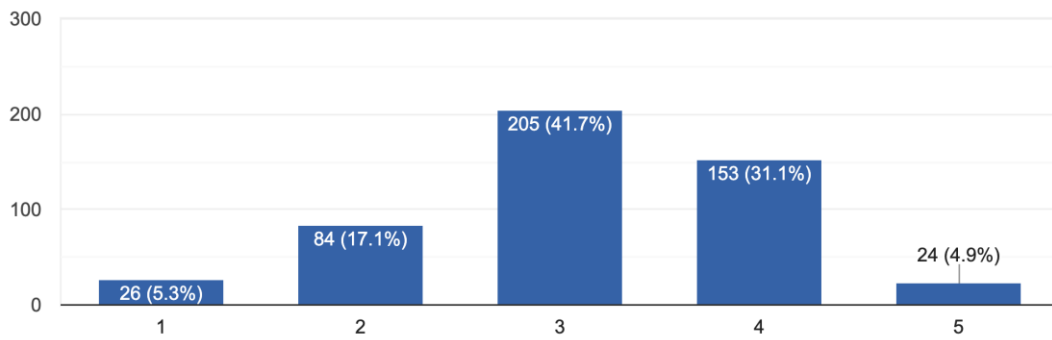
7. Making use of technology as a learning tool (ie computers, internet)

497 responses



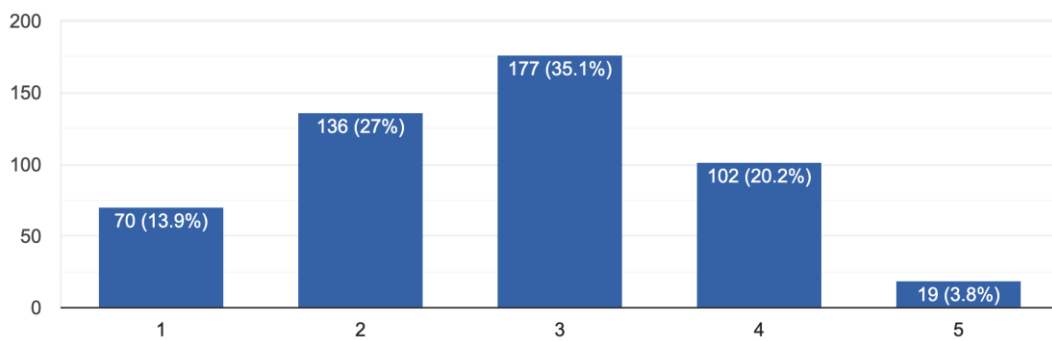
8. Preparing students to have good jobs and successful careers

492 responses



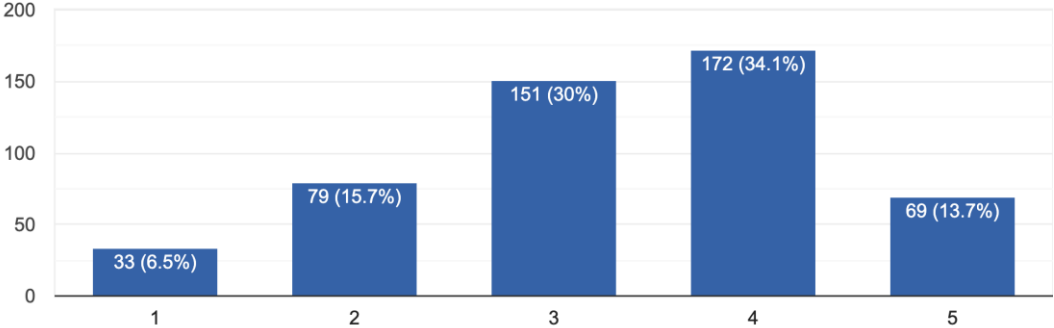
9. Creating vibrant learning environments that engage all students

504 responses



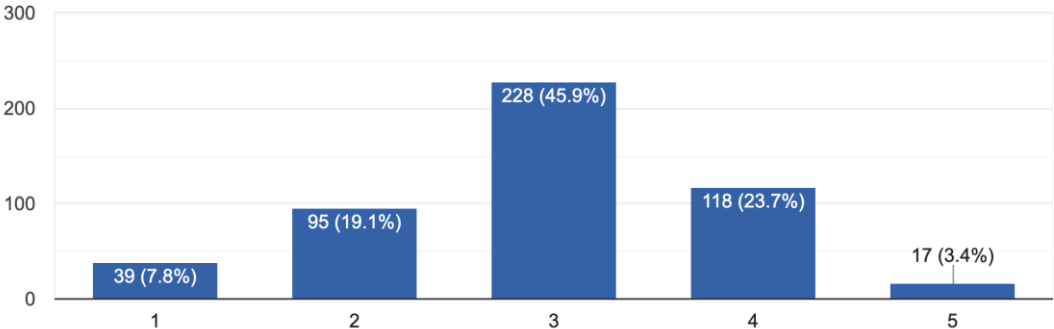
10. Delivering art, drama, music, cultural activities and physical education in addition to core academic subjects

504 responses



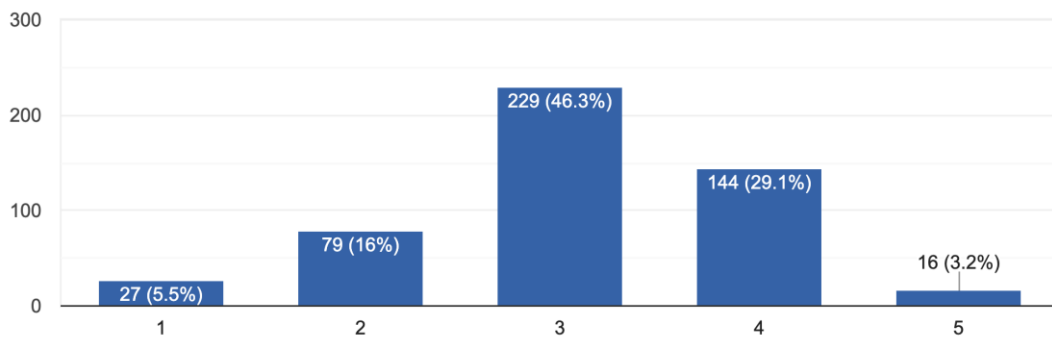
11. Developing student's critical thinking, questioning and reasoning abilities

497 responses



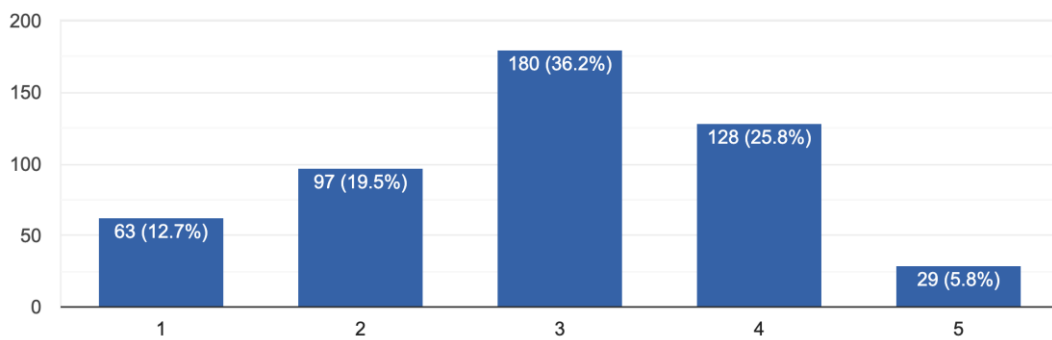
12. Developing student's verbal and written communication skills

495 responses



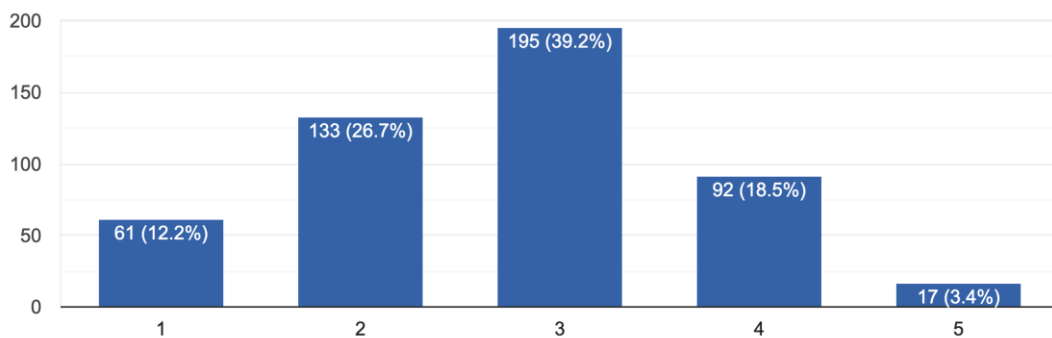
13. Developing student's social skills eg respect, conflict resolution, ability to make friends

497 responses



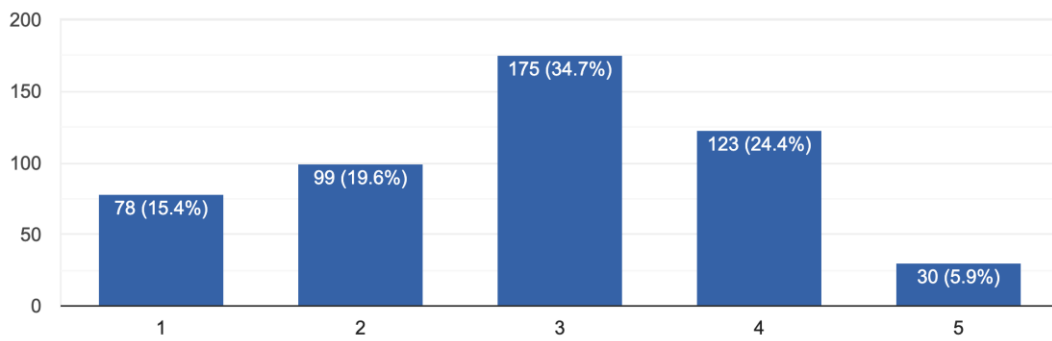
14. Developing student's study habits and self discipline

498 responses



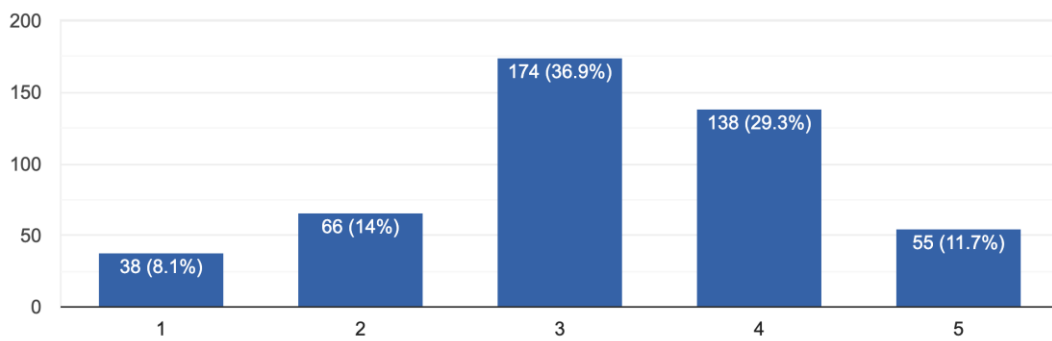
15. Setting high standards for student behaviour

505 responses



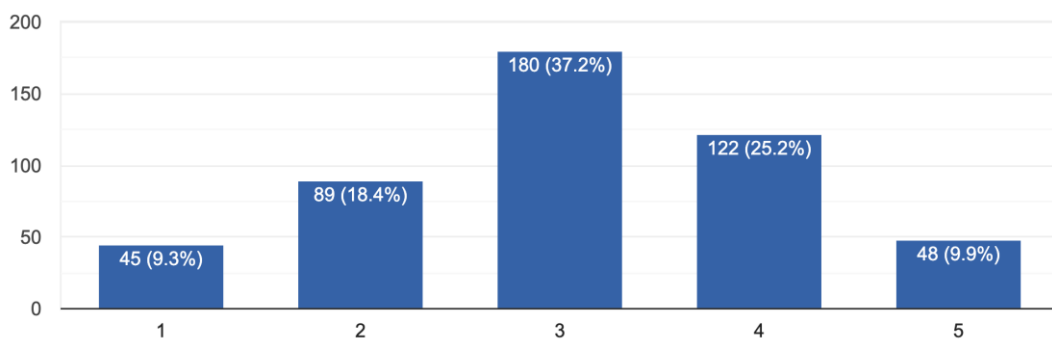
16. Meeting the needs of Maori students

471 responses



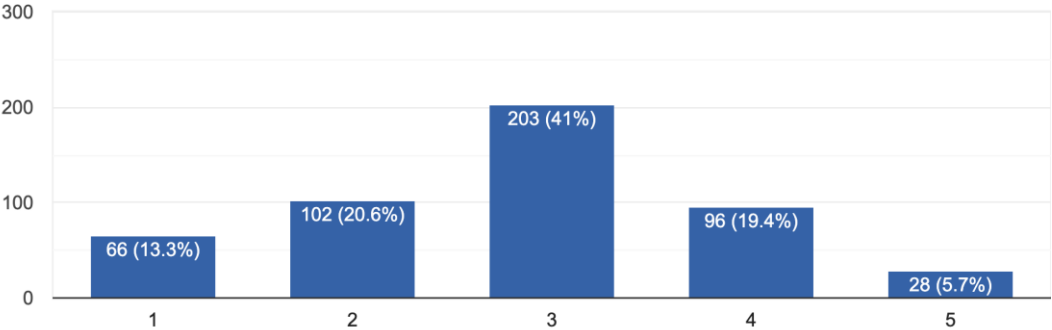
17. Helping all students gain knowledge of Maori tikanga

484 responses



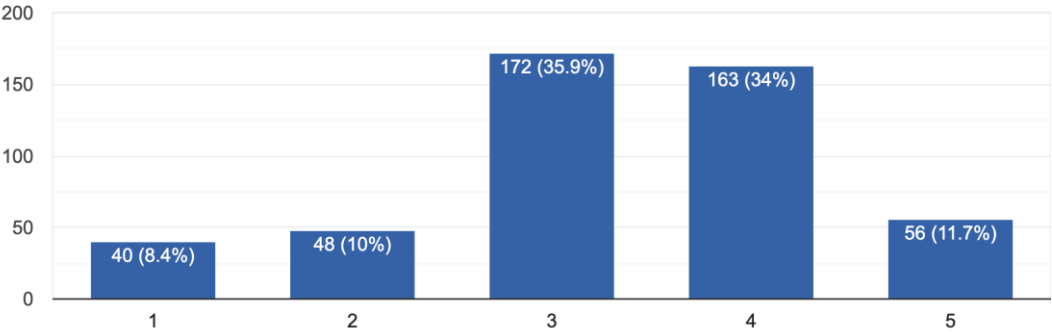
18. Providing a variety of ways of learning for students who need different approaches

495 responses



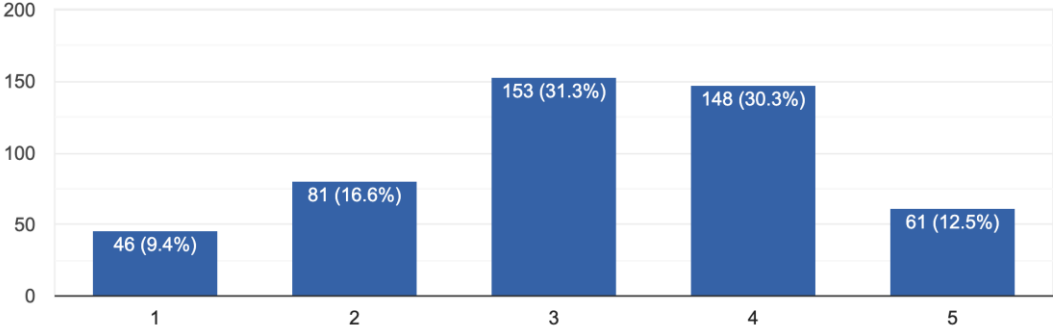
19. Making sure students with special needs have equal access to quality education

479 responses



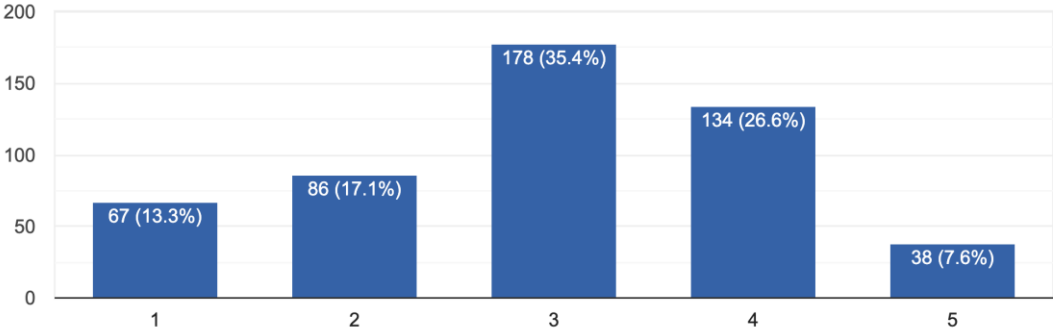
20. Protecting all students from discrimination including those of different races, religions and sexual orientations

489 responses



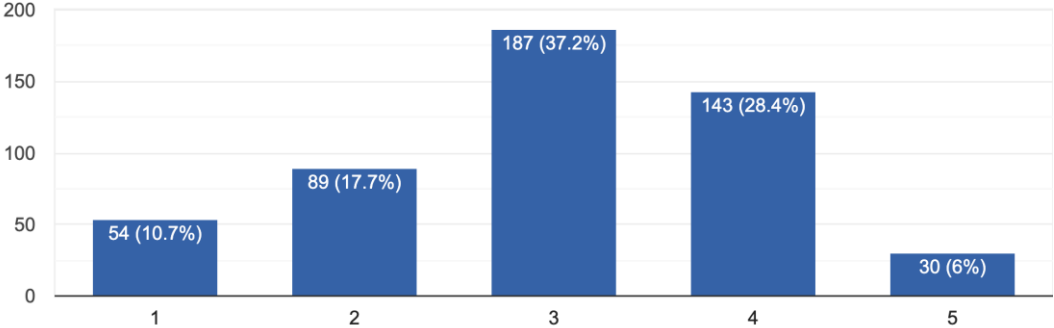
21. Making sure students feel happy and cared for

503 responses



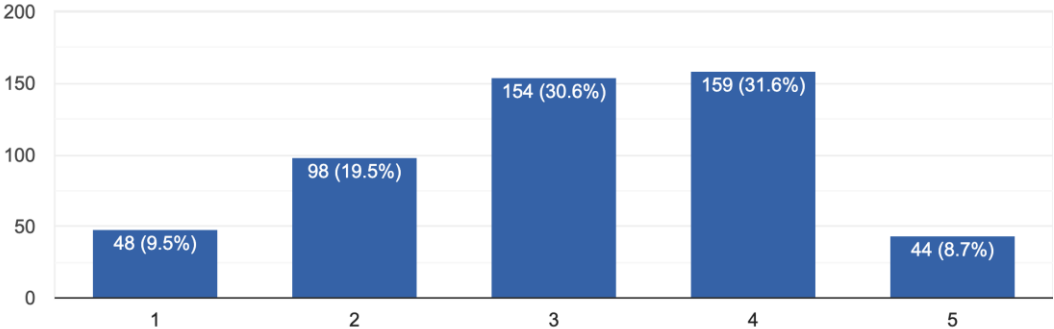
22. Promoting the healthy social and emotional development and well-being of students

503 responses



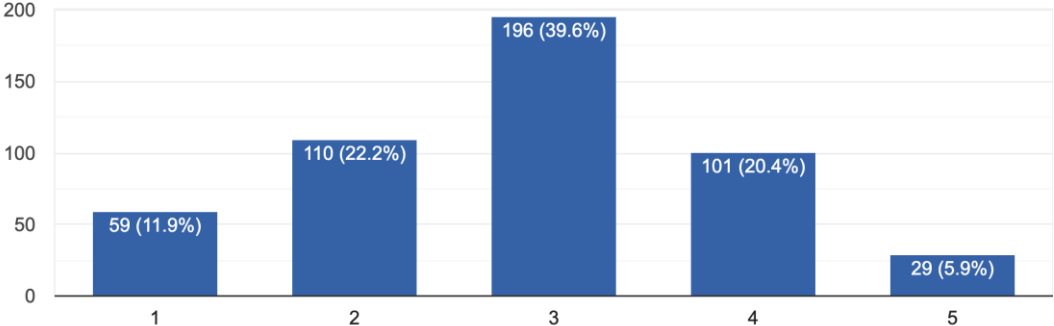
23. Providing a safe and secure environment for students

503 responses



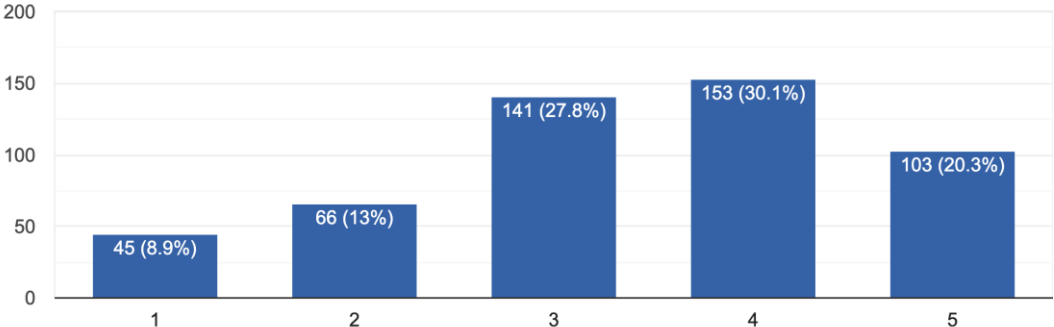
24. Making sure students receive sufficient individual attention in the classroom

495 responses



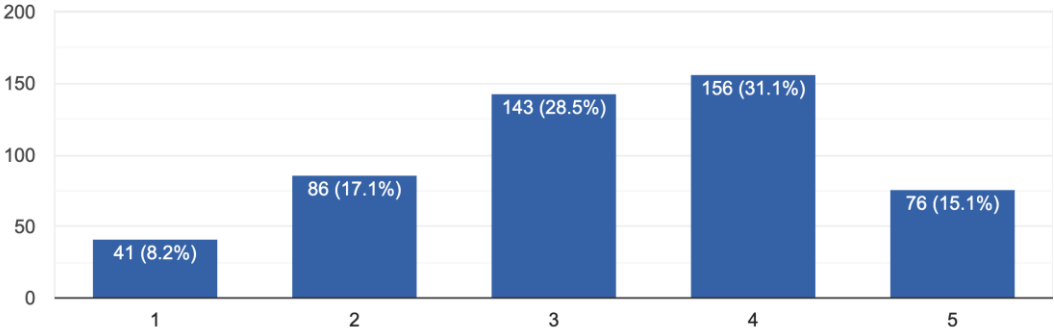
25. Do you feel welcome at the school?

508 responses



26. Does the school make the most of the special character and opportunities of Waiheke Island? (eg th...king, hospitality, tourism, ecology etc

502 responses



27. Do you think the school has the right level of involvement in the community?

506 responses

