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Building a strong board

A board that shares the load, asks the hard questions, and stands with you.

01 What is a board?

If your centre is a registered non-profit, you have a board — sometimes called a management committee or governing body.

A board is a small group of people who:

- Take legal responsibility for the centre.
- Make big decisions (budgets, policies, major changes).
- Hold the principal accountable.
- Support the principal through challenges.
- Protect the centre's mission, finances, and reputation.

The board does not run the centre day to day — that is your job. The board makes sure the centre is being run well.

02 What makes a good board?

The best boards are made up of people who:

- Care about the mission. They believe in early childhood education and your community.
- Bring useful skills. Finance, law, fundraising, marketing, governance — every skill on the board is one you do not have to pay for.
- Have time. A board member who never comes to meetings is no help.
- Are independent. Avoid filling the board only with family or close friends. Outside perspectives strengthen decisions.
- Are willing to ask hard questions. A board that just agrees with everything you say is not protecting the centre.

A board of 5 to 9 people usually works best. Smaller can struggle to share the work. Larger becomes hard to coordinate.

03 Common board roles

- Chairperson — leads meetings, supports the principal, represents the board.
- Treasurer — oversees finances, reviews budgets and statements, signs off on big spends.
- Secretary — keeps minutes, manages documents, sends out meeting agendas.
- Members — bring their skills, attend meetings, support decisions.

04 How often should you meet?

- **Full board meetings:** Once a quarter (4 times a year) is enough for most centres. Some meet every two months.
- **Sub-committees (e.g. finance, fundraising):** As needed, between full meetings.
- **AGM (Annual General Meeting):** Once a year. Required for NPOs. Members elect the board, approve financials, review the year.

Whatever you choose, be consistent. Pick dates in advance for the whole year.

05 What to do at a board meeting

A simple meeting structure:

- Welcome and apologies (who is there, who is missing).
- Minutes from the last meeting — read, corrected if needed, approved.
- Principal's report — enrolment, staff, key issues, wins, challenges.
- Financial report — income, expenses, balance, any concerns.
- Discussion items — big decisions, planning, policy reviews.
- Action items — who is doing what, by when.
- Date of next meeting.

Send out the agenda and any reports a few days before the meeting. Members should arrive prepared.

06 How to work well with your board

Be honest

Do not hide problems from your board. They cannot help with what they do not know. A surprise at a board meeting is almost always a bad surprise.

Send a short written report before each meeting

One or two pages is enough. Cover:

- Enrolment numbers.
- Finances (income, expenses, anything unusual).
- Staff updates.
- Major issues or decisions needing the board's input.
- Wins worth celebrating.

Keep minutes

Write down decisions. Write down who agreed to do what, by when. Send minutes out within a week of the meeting.

Respect their role

The board is not there to micro-manage you, and you are not there to ignore them. Each side has a job. When both do their job well, the centre is stronger for it.

Ask for help

If you are struggling — with a difficult parent, a funding gap, a staff issue — bring it to the board. That is what they are there for.

07 Common board pitfalls

- A board that only meets once a year. Not enough to govern properly.
- A board made up of the principal's family. Hard to challenge bad decisions.
- A board that interferes in daily operations. Decision-making becomes paralysed.
- No written records. No way to prove decisions were made properly.
- No clear roles. Everyone assumes someone else is doing the work.

08 When to refresh your board

Board members should serve a fixed term — usually two or three years, renewable once. This keeps the board fresh and gives others a chance to contribute.

When recruiting new members, look for the skills your current board is missing.

> **A board is a partnership. Bring them in, and they will stand with you.**