

Merrilands Kindergarten, Te Whare ō ngā Puāwai. Head Teachers Report to Annual General Meeting 2017

Kia Ora Tatou

Nau mai, Haere mai. Welcome to our Annual General Meeting for 2017. In this report I present a summary of the highlights, events and progress for children, teachers and whānau within our kindergarten community over the past year (March 2016- May 2017).

‘It takes a Community to Grow a Child’ - our Kindergarten mantra which sits beneath the Pikorua is embedded within the values, beliefs and culture which guide the way we interact as a community to support children’s learning and development as young citizens of this world. The Pikorua with its intertwined pikopiko at the same time acknowledges and celebrates the rich diversity of our community where we come together in support of mutual values in a spirit of care and respect. Our bicultural curriculum, Te Whāriki is holistic and inclusive, and places children at the centre of our practice.

Our Strategic Plan Goals are as follows:

- 1) To engage with our learning community to enrich our knowledge and experiences of whanau cultural identities, events and rituals;
- 2) To build our capabilities to provide play-based learning experiences and assessment practices that reflect Te Ao Māori;
- 3) To provide a high quality, well resources learning and teaching environment for children, whanau and teachers.

Strategic Plan Key Feature One: ‘A Sense of Belonging’ – Strong relationships based on kindness, support and respect are fostered among our learners, whanau, schools and community.

Our kindergarten programme over the year provided a number of opportunities for those within our immediate and wider community to be involved. Some of these events are held annually, including our wheel-a-thon back in March 2016 and again in April 2017, held at Merrilands School; a special day for fathers – our ‘Dads & Lads’ Olympics in August; and our Grandparents Day in November’.

The kindergarten conducts a review programme of policies and procedures which follows a three-four year cycle. We endeavour to foster a sense of contribution and ‘ownership’ for our community by managing those reviews through a Self-Review Group comprised of parents/whānau members who are representative of our diverse community. This year’s reviews have included Transitions Policy – and subsequent Children & Whānau induction to kindergarten processes: Sun-Safety Procedure; Community Philosophy; Birthday Celebrations Policy. Teachers also conducted spontaneous reviews of our emergency management processes and sundry procedures prior to our ERO visit in February.

The self-review group will continue to manage future reviews in consultation with our community. I wish to thank all members of our community who have participated in the Self-Review Process over the year, including past and present members: Marta Pizsel, Paul Holland, Raksha Vinitha, Theresa Corlett, and Tracey Gregory as well as members of the teaching team.

Reorganisation of the kindergarten session structure and hours progressed throughout the year, resulting in a substantially greater number of children attending kindergarten for all-day (six hour) sessions. We also have much younger children attending kindergarten, with a drop in the entry age from 2.5 years to two years of age. The changed dynamics have required the teachers to develop new ways of working and we are constantly refining our team practice to ensure we are responsive to all children’s needs and interests. We are acutely aware of the importance of developing close nurturing relationships to support our younger children’s emotional needs. At the same time we are encouraging independence in the older children, and a sense of tuakana teina, which sees more competent peers modelling and supporting the younger children.

Key Feature Two: ‘Bicultural and Inclusive’ – We celebrate the rich diversity of our community; and our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi supports learning and achievement for all.

We celebrated Puanga / Matariki, the Māori New Year, in June of last year with cooking and gardening activities, raranga (weaving), and a visit from the Mangorei School Kapa Haka Group, shared kai, waiata and pēpeha, and a community kete of goods for donation to families in our community.

We also celebrated our cultural diversity with the support of our families – events included Diwali, Japanese origami activities, The Eid, and the Chinese New Year.

We continue to work to ensure we provide equitable opportunities and a supportive learning environment to ensure all children experience progress and success at kindergarten, irrespective of language, culture, background or ability. Over the year we worked with a number of specialist professionals and para-professionals from the Ministry of Education and District Health Board to adapt our environment to ensure children with specialised education needs were able to access the curriculum and thrive at kindergarten. These included Early Intervention Teachers, Education Support Workers, Speech Language Therapists, Resource Teachers of Vision and New Entrant Teachers, as well as agencies and community organisations such as the Blind Foundation, and CYFs.

Key Feature Three: ‘Play is valued as learning’ – Children’s capabilities to communicate, develop friendships and experience a sense of joy for learning are fostered through play within a safe, yet challenging learning environment.

- Big Focus on child-directed, uninterrupted play – exploring through sensory activities, and open-ended resources and materials – especially supporting younger children, as well as adding complexity for older children.

The year has been another very busy one at kindergarten in terms of the learning environment and programme. It has involved children and families participating in a wide variety of activities - both child initiated, and teacher / community initiated. By and large, the Emergent Curriculum drives our planning and assessment processes and both individual and group interests were supported and extended.

As this report shows, much has been done to progress our Strategic Plan goals this past year: this work will continue. Our Community Philosophy review brought with it a new Strategic Plan, with new key features and goals for our community to work towards over the next three years. This work successfully set the priorities, direction and budget for the coming year, in order that our long term goals and vision for the kindergarten continue to be realised. Ongoing work that continues includes our Building Renovation Project. We formed a Building Steering Group which met throughout the year to develop priorities and an overall construction plan and to develop priorities for the first stages of the renovation. These include construction of a new Teachers’ Office, K.A. Office / foyer; a Whānau Room, and Meeting Room / Isolation area. This work has been the focus of our Community fundraising activities, and by the end of the year we had a finalised architect plan, and the Tender for Quotes, and Building Consent process initiated. Ongoing efforts to gain funding through a range of grant opportunities has been a Committee and teacher focus, in order to move to the next stages (construction).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our current President Kirstin Ashton, and all committee members and office holders (past and present); as well as my team for the commitment, enthusiasm, hard work and professionalism they have shown throughout the year. Thank you to outgoing members of our committee - I wish you well in your next endeavours. To those of you joining the committee, welcome to a great team. Thank you for your continued efforts and I look forward to working together with you for another year.

Nga mihi nui,

Jaime Broadmore

Head Teacher.

