

# Kā Paetae o Ōtākou

## 2024 Annual Review Summary

Enviroschools  
Ōtākou

### Celebrating 101 Enviroschools across Ōtākou

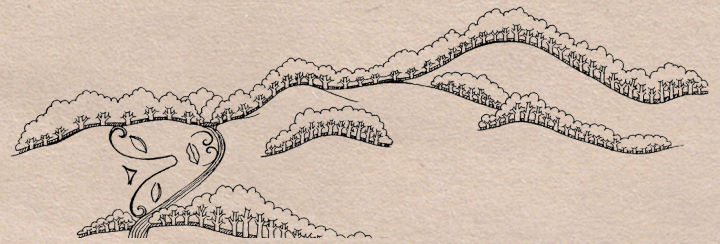
#### Creating Sustainable Schools Through Student Action

Enviroschools in Ōtākou has been a significant part of the local education sector for 22 years. Beginning with pilot Enviroschools, Waitati School and Glenorchy School - and now welcoming Romahapa School as our 101st school - we've shown our region that environmental education is a must. This year has been significant in showcasing how much work can be done by ākongā in their everyday lives, and so much of their impact ripples across their communities. Enviroschools isn't just a kaupapa for schools - it's a way of life for entire communities dealing with environmental impacts that can seem insurmountable.

In Enviroschools, we have 5 Guiding Principles and 6 Theme Areas. The Guiding Principles form the basis of this review summary, giving concrete examples from schools that show how they have placed themselves within the Guiding Principles. The Theme Areas naturally come through in these principles and through this summary, we can see what principles and themes Ōtākou schools are excelling at and where the gaps are.



Ākongā at the Ōtepoti Dunedin Primary Hui at Tomahawk Beach search blue skies for bird life at the Great Southern BioBlitz.



#### Changes in Holistic Reflection

Reflection has long been a part of the education sector, and Enviroschools has encouraged schools to undertake regular reflection as a part of their sustainability journey to understand our past and aspire for the future.

Holistic Reflection has undergone a two year review involving many schools, teachers, ākongā and stakeholders and we are now looking to start the new way of undertaking Holistic Reflection in 2025. Enviroschools Aotearoa would like to bring the Holistic Reflection Process back to the original intentions:

- A meaningful, holistic, celebratory and honest reflection at a moment in time
- An energising, inspiring and satisfying way that an Enviroschool can acknowledge people and practices, affirm community connections and ultimately deepen the sustainability journey.

This simplified process starts with building a shared understanding and co-constructing a plan for reflection, guided by the Reflect on Change questions from the Action Learning Cycle. This flows into sharing and celebration and continuing on the sustainability journey. It also means a shift away from a staged based approach and the bronze, silver and green-gold labels. The Ōtākou team have been working hard to make sure that Holistic Reflection remains authentic to schools and we are looking forward to getting into the formative reflection style for 2025.



## Empowered Learners

Empowered Learners participate in genuine ways in their community. Their unique creativity, perspectives and questions are valued and honoured. They feel connected to the whenua and support each other as a learning community to create meaningful change and hopeful action.



Ākonga from Queenstown Primary School had their artwork come to life on the back of a bus in June, encouraging the community to report land, air and water pollution.

### Empowered Learners in Action



Waiwera South School (Clutha) replaced their paper towels in their bathrooms with hand towels. This initiative was a flow on from a waste audit conducted in February where it was identified that paper towels was the largest source of waste for the school. Following donations of towels from the community, a washing and drying roster was implemented and maintained by ākonga and now forms a part of their daily duties.

Clyde School (Central Otago) saw more of their junior classes participating in the inquiry process for environmental outcomes at their school. Kaiako and whānau were amazed at the awesome things that can happen when their ākonga lead you down the inquiry. This all included planting lots of natives around the hall space and around the rest of the school as well as down Miner's Lane, which saw a lot of the wider whānau participating. From this grew a love of the diversity of insects, and the community helped ākonga to create new insect habitats in the school which has led into more research topics about insects that will continue into 2025.

The Kiwiana group at East Taieri School (Dunedin) is an important part of the schools week that has helped ākonga to have more discussions on sustainability and how it affects their school. The ākonga leadership team, Kaitiaki Ropu, have been instrumental in implementing bokashi bins in classrooms. Ākonga have also taken the lead on the Quarry Creek project, supported by NZ Landcare Trust, where they have learned about stream health and even created a mural and had a book published on Quarry Creek.

Our Queenstown Enviroschools Facilitator, Nicky Gray, supported the newly created Arrowtown School (Queenstown Lakes) Enviro Leaders group specifically around pre-loved clothes and the best way that ākonga can make a difference. The Enviro Leaders took an invested interest in lost property and took a trip to Wānaka Wastebusters to prepare to sell secondhand clothes at the school fair. The community pitched in and donated an incredible amount of clothing and the Enviro Leaders impressively sold at least three quarters of the clothing.

Maheno Kindergarten (Waitaki) knows Enviroschools is not something they do, it's who they are with sustainability so well integrated into the kindergarten, it's become an easy responsibility for ākonga, kaiako and whānau alike. Ākonga are responsible for themselves and take action for the environment, even when they are in the community, picking up rubbish they see while out and about. They don't throw out water - they water the plants instead. They are also redoing their gardens and ākonga are now starting vegetable gardens in their own homes. All apples and potatoes produced in the garden were used and ākonga are coming up with more information and questions which shows that they know what they are learning.



Waitaki Boys High School Year 9 and 10 ākonga listen to Ōtākou Enviroschools Regional Coordinator, Leisa de Klerk, as she encourages them to consider the environmental impact of humans on the wider Waitaki District.



## Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability is a holistic, action and future-focused approach to learning, that engages our whole selves and addresses all aspects of our local and global environment.

### Learning for Sustainability in Action

The Catlins Area School (Clutha) really reinvigorated their Enviroschools journey in 2024 by using the Enviroschools kaupapa as a key part of their “Change” inquiry topic in term 3. This resulted in a waste audit at the school that gave ākonga a clear idea of what was needed to change to make a positive difference to the schools waste challenges. Ākonga also participated in two Litter Intelligence beach clean-ups at Kaka Point and Port Molyneux. This not only supported the communities goals for waste reduction, but also gave ākonga more information about the types of waste and how they end up in the ocean and what they can do to prevent this.



Ākonga at Fairfield Primary School (Dunedin) spent an afternoon making beeswax wraps to help their whānau reduce the rubbish in their lunchboxes and decrease costs for rubbish removal for the school.

Kaitiakitanga was a whole school focus for Cromwell Primary School (Central Otago) which meant the schools sustainability projects reached the wider community as well. The school introduced new recycling bins and paper recycling into all the kitchens after a waste audit which also resulted in waste reduction through composting the classroom food waste into two new compost bins. Ākonga planted a dry garden to encourage lizards and birds to have a home in their environment and continued with their vegetable garden where excess harvested vegetables were donated to pensioner flats, the food bank and the community pantry.

A localised curriculum is an important part of Broad Bay Schools (Dunedin) sustainability goals as well as the wider peninsulas goals. Wahi (place) and kaupapa ako (programmes) are strong in the school and often involves experts offering ideas and advice for ākonga to make decisions on. Through a conversation about recycling with the community educator at EnviroNZ, the school has significantly improved their rubbish collection, identifying key areas for improvement and involving whānau in how this could be improved. Ākonga are now focusing on soft plastic recycling to reduce landfill, but ākonga are also encouraged to eat out of their vegetable garden during break time, so they’re not reliant on packaged food from home.

Ākonga from Te Whakatipu o Kawarau (Queenstown Lakes) have learnt about their school area, local area and the planning changes for the future, an important part of the change process for the Hanleys Farm space. With support from the community, they’ve been proactive in learning to garden and to cook their grown vegetables. Mapping their school to ensure no wasted space and plenty of thought goes into their learning and play environment has been a priority for ākonga!



Queenstown Enviroschools Facilitator, Nicky Gray, shows ākonga a bunch of worms from a compost bin at the Queenstown Enviroschools Hui in October.

Papakaio School (Waitaki) has integrated sustainability into their curriculum, providing ākonga with opportunities to learn about environmental issues and develop critical thinking skills. This has empowered ākonga to become active and informed citizens who are committed to protecting the environment. They’ve significantly reduced their waste; emptying 114 rubbish bins in 2023, down to 34 bins for 2024! Implementing a comprehensive recycling programme included worm farming and bokashi to further divert organic waste. These initiatives have meant they have also created their own valuable compost for their own use.



## Te Ao Māori

Te Ao Māori holds insights, knowledge and ways of being in relation to the taiao. Honouring this acknowledges the intrinsic relationship of tangata whenua with this land. When we are envisioning and taking action for a sustainable future in our community, we are guided by the history, knowledge, tikanga, traditions and aspirations of local hapū.



Weston School (Waitaki) has showcased their EnviroSchools journey using imagery from the pūrākau, Maui and Te Rā. The five tendrils of Tamanuiterā show the schools actions for each EnviroSchools guiding principle.

Tarras School (Central Otago) used Te Ao Māori histories and pūrākau to progress their sustainability journey in their school with polyfest and Matariki being a big focus for them and their community. Ākonga attended Mata-au Kapa Haka in Wānaka with the other Upper Clutha schools where they learnt new Haka, waiata, created a collaborative korowai (cloak) and played new kēmu (games). They then performed a waiata they had been learning called 'Matariki' for the other Upper Clutha schools.

Matariki was a big day for Macandrew Bay School (Dunedin) as they held both workshops and a hangi for the school and wider community. With the theme, Matariki Heri Kai - The feast of Matariki, hangi was an appropriate way to show manaakitanga and it involved a large number of the community for its success. Tuakana-teina relationships also supported the workshops for ākonga as they got involved in a number of matariki activities that had juniors and seniors working together. Workshops included making tukutuku stars, fabric weaving, planting in the Junior School gardens, learning about the star Tupu-ā-nuku, creating stained glass feathers and creating a Matariki Korowai Cloak with members of the staff and whānau.

Te Kura O Take Kārara (Queenstown Lakes) has explored Te Ao Māori through nature by learning about the lifecycle of tuna (eels) on the dams of Mata-Au. Tuna are of particular importance to Te Kura O Take Kārara, the name of the school being gifted by Ngāi Tahu similar to the name that was given to the historic site as a kāinga mahinga kai (food gathering site) where many fish, including tuna, were gathered. Also important to Mahinga Kai is understanding the landscape and ecological systems so ākonga learnt names for seedlings and using maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar) for gardening. This empowered ākonga to live life according to the seasons, closely following the life cycles of plants and animals. Ākonga also visited a marae and participated in Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori | Maori Language Week and regularly receive advice from their kaumatua, Dean Whanga (Bluff Marae).

### Te Ao Māori in Action



Waitahuna School (Clutha) has integrated Te Ao Māori into their everyday learning and lessons and have made a commitment to learning more about their local pūrākau (stories) to better understand their environment. Through their garden to table cooking classes, ākonga made Matariki soup for the holiday, celebrating this with whānau. The whole school even travelled to Ōtepoti and went on a hikoi with their Māori teacher who shared local pūrākau and place names with the students.



Ākonga at the Wānaka EnviroSchools ECE and Junior School Hui learnt the basics of rananga. Ākonga used these skills to create basic plant guards that help riparian planting happening across the Wānaka community.



## Respect for Diversity

Respect for Diversity is celebrated, and all forms of identity and ability are respected to foster a society that is fair, peaceful and cooperative. Cultural traditions and practices from all people are experienced, valued and appreciated in learning spaces, honouring practices led by that community. Access to safe and engaging learning is available to everyone.

### Respect for Diversity in Action



● St Gerards School (Central Otago) has noticed that diversity occurs naturally through their environmental practices and religious education. The school has worked hard to get ākonga to sit still and notice as well as encourage them to participate in a wide variety of events like Polyfest. The Year 7-8 ākonga experienced what a predator free Aotearoa could look like at their camp on Rakiura/Stewart Island and did a lot of biodiversity work before camp to support their learning of the wide range of animals and insects that co-exist with us.



*Project Salt school participants in Central Otago measure and record rare salt plants to help University of Otago researchers identify the challenges of their survival in the changing climate.*

● Wānaka Preschool (Queenstown Lakes) has strong relationships with the Hong Kong and Chinese communities in their preschool through both kaiako and ākonga, so they took the opportunity to read the legend of the Chinese Moon Festival and celebrate the day together. The preschool is on a journey of understanding culture, language and identity not just of the cultural identities at the school, but others as well. As well as the various cultural events like Matariki and the Moon Festival at the school, Wānaka Preschool ākonga develop a connection to nature and a sense of belonging to the environment and community through their Explorers and Discovery programmes which emphasises respect for people, places and things. This programme is a favourite for ākonga, prompting conversations that are diverse and varied and help children to reach their full potential through outdoor exploring.

● Ākonga at Weston School (Waitaki) regularly celebrate inclusive events like Matariki and participate in kapa haka performances as well as others to ensure all cultural traditions are honoured and appreciated. Their Kapa Haka and Pasifika groups take part in many community festivals and events such as the Council Citizenship services. The school has a lot of connections with the community, including people from the church who participate in shared reading with children and knitters groups that worked with the middle and senior ākonga on knitting projects. When the school has an event - the whole community comes out in support, especially at their bazaar as a fundraiser for camp which sold preloved items but also plants that ākonga had grown themselves.



*Ākonga from Te Kura Whakatipu o Kawarau get their hands dirty exploring the density of soil and how well it holds water during the Queenstown Enviroschools Hui in October.*



*Ākonga from Waikouaiti School get a closer look at Tomahawk Lagoon during the Dunedin Enviroschools Year 4-6 Hui, the "Great Southern BioBlitz" in September.*



## Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities act in ways that nurture all aspects of nature, including people, now and in the future. By working together and supporting each other we create safe, healthy, equitable and thriving communities.



*Macraes Moonlight School and Waikouaiti School decorated plant protectors before planting natives at a Toitū Te Hākapupu school education event in September.*

Maniototo Area School (Central Otago) have been working hard getting the Ewe Burn stream restoration site going with planting in collaboration with Ranfurly Hospital, Tiaki Maniototo and the Enviroschools team. Together, the community is taking a close look at riparian planting and are wanting to restore the health of Ewe Burn back to its natural state. This relationship meant that a senior student at Maniototo Area School was able to do work experience with Tiaki Maniototo and this has led to a paid position with them for 2025.

Lots of connection to local community projects help Portobello School (Dunedin) ākongā be a part of a sustainable community. Room 4 planned and designed a chicken coop and built it with the help of the caretaker. A whānau roster has been created to ensure that chickens are well cared for over the summer break. The eggs from the chickens are donated into the school's new Pātaka Kai, built by the Otago Peninsula Lions, as well as other produce from the school's gardens. The pātaka kai is an ideal way to distribute the school's produce among local families, and also gives people in the community a chance to share their excess fruit and vegetables with others.

Native planting with the community at Shotover School (Queenstown Lakes) has gone from strength to strength since the school opened in 2016. Not only do they plant natives at Shotover Wetlands and at the school, they also now plant at Bridesdale Reserve. All ākongā from Years 4-8 take part in at least 2 planting days a year. Year 3 ākongā have started a new project, planting natives into the SPS Wetlands soak pit and the school has also implemented monitoring projects like bird counts, trapping, tunnels and water testing led by the Year 7/8 Enviro Team who then teach and share these experiences with younger ākongā. The school's local stormwater enters into the wetlands and so it is important to the school to integrate planting with learning about the stormwater.

The change from unused tennis courts to Community Native Nursery has been a major success for Waitaki Valley Primary (Waitaki). Working with Hakataramea Sustainability Collective, the nursery is both a learning hub and facility to propagate and grow native plants. The project has an integrated education programme which combines a mix of hands-on learning modules and supports the education of local plant species propagation. Planting activities in and around the school help embed the learning through positive experiences preparing, planting and protecting areas of biodiversity with as many as 500-800 plants being potted out in a single day!

### Sustainable Communities in Action

Clutha Valley School (Clutha) saw great success in connecting with the wider community through their new community pantry. The community pantry sees a lot of movement of goods going in and out and the ākongā have expanded what's on offer so that it's more than just produce and plants grown from their own gardens. Other items like clothing, books and even small furniture are now being rehomed as a part of the pantry.



*Planting native bush and trees was a highlight for many Clutha and Southland ākongā at the Enviroschools and NZ Landcare Trust Waipahi Wetlands Hui held in November.*



## Creating Connection Across Ōtākou Through Hui

A key part of our role is creating student leaders and supporting the professional development of teachers for environmental action for schools. We hold multiple accessible hui across Ōtākou for different age groups, including separate ones for teachers and principals. This connects the Enviroschools kaupapa and the different sustainable journeys of schools across Ōtākou, enabling shared stories and support for future plans.

Enviroschools Hui cover Early Childhood, Junior school (Year 1-3), Primary (Year 4-6 and Year 7-10), Secondary (Year 11-13), Lead Kaiako (teachers) as well as Principals. The Enviroschools kaupapa focuses on a whole school approach and integrated learning into the schools curriculum so having hui with board of trustees and other stakeholders are also important.

Each district/city within Ōtākou aims to have at least three hui a year involving ākonga and kaiako depending on the needs and availability of local schools, with some schools travelling to other parts of Ōtākou to learn from other areas. Keeping them local is an important part of the connection to whenua, helping ākonga to establish relationships and recognise the local importance of their community for their future.

Topics can be diverse to match the locals interest and capturing important projects - like little blue penguins in Oamaru, and the Waipahi Wetlands in Clutha. They can also be a part of wider global events, like Ocean Week and the Great Southern BioBlitz, meaning interaction with communities across the world.

In 2024, Ōtākou Enviroschools ran 16 hui across all 5 districts/areas.



*Lead Kaiako at the Teacher Hui in May at Cromwell await instructions at the beginning of a learning activity using sunflower seeds.*



*Ākonga explore their natural resources with hut building during the Central Otago Enviroschools Hui in November.*



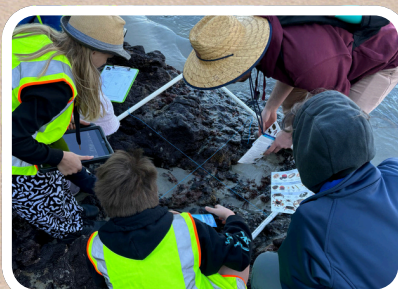
*Queenstown Enviroschools Facilitator, Nicky Gray, shows ākonga seedlings in different stages of growth during the Student Hui in October.*



*Encouraging authentic tuakana-teina relationships with ākonga from different schools and year levels was the focus of the Wānaka ECE and Primary Hui in December.*



*Lead Kaiako at the Dunedin Teachers Hui in May take a moment to pause, breathe and reflect before they head into the next part of their day focusing on the Enviroschools kaupapa.*



*Ākonga at the Ōtepoti Dunedin Primary Hui at Tomahawk Beach look at the rocky shore for sea life in September.*



*Clutha ākonga get a feel for how connected we and our planet are through the web of life activity at the Clutha Enviroschools Hui in November.*



# Enviroschools Ōtākou



## Ōtākou Outcomes for 2024

Enviroschools in Ōtākou for 2024 made significant strides in fostering environmental kaitiakitanga and sustainability within its communities. Schools have embraced a holistic approach to environmental education, integrating sustainability and respect for diversity into their curriculum and daily activities. For most schools, there has been notable progress in enhancing biodiversity, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting waste minimisation initiatives, with many schools achieving or exceeding their sustainability goals.

The involvement of students, teachers, and local communities has reinforced a collective commitment to safeguarding the environment for future generations. Schools have worked closely with local organisations and iwi, furthering a sense of shared responsibility for the environment. The collaborative efforts have led to the development of innovative projects such as native plant restoration, sustainable gardening, and water conservation initiatives.



*Waitaki Enviroschools Facilitator, Chantal Barnes, with Weston Schools Enviroschools board after their Silver Reflection celebration.*

## Changes to the Ōtākou Enviroschools Team

The Ōtākou Enviroschools team experienced a fair bit of change for 2024. The team welcomed Leisa de Klerk as the new Regional Coordinator Lead, taking over from long-serving Regional Coordinator, Robyn Zink, in April 2024. We also said goodbye to Chelsea Donnelly, the Regional Coordinator for Central Otago in June, Lucianne White, Waitaki Enviroschools Facilitator in October, and Tess MacKay, Dunedin Enviroschools Facilitator in December. Lucianne remains connected to the Enviroschools kaupapa in her new role at Waitaki District Council, and we are hoping to be back to a full team by the end of Term 1 in 2025.

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