

## **Description of Whitiora School**

Whitiora School recently celebrated its centenary in 2019. The school motto "To Thine Own Self Be True" is still recognised and referred to today and has a more recent by-line "a great little school in the heart of the city". Whitiora School Vision is: "We are a community of empowered connected learners making a difference with HEART".

Whitiora School is a decile 2, full primary school, located in inner-city Hamilton with an enrollment scheme. It has a start of year roll of 220 students which will increase by 40-50 students through the year - mainly 5 year old enrolments and a gradual increase of transient students. Students are culturally diverse - 58% identify as Maaori, 7% NZ European, 14% Pasifika, 17% Asian, 3% MELAA, 1% Other; and 29% of students are ESOL funded by the Ministry of Education. 52.5% of students are girls and 47.5% boys.

At the start of 2021 the school celebrated opening 4 additional roll-growth classrooms, a triple Learning Centre and a large single. The school has a total of 12 classroom spaces (6 built in 2013, 2 renovated in 2017; and 4 newly opened in 2021). The grounds include a large field and a playground which provide plenty of outdoor space for play and sport, with a number of large trees providing relaxing shade.

Whitiora School classroom spaces are grouped into four Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) Learning Centres (LC) and a Roopu Rumaki: Kowhai LC -Yrs 0-2, = 42 students; Totara LC -Yrs 3&4 = 60 students; Matai - Yrs 5&6 =59 students; Rata LC -Yrs 7&8 = 47 students; Roopu Rumaki - Yrs 1-6 = 17 students; the Whitiora team also consists of two part-time teachers for ESOL & Library, and for Reading Recovery & CRT Release; 6 Learning Assistants; a half-time Learning Support Coordinator (LSC); Office Administrator; Caretaker; Cleaner; recent additions of a full-time School Counsellor, and a full-time Social Worker; Deputy Principal/SENCO; and Principal (U4).

The school enrolment scheme creates an inner city zone which results in a school community that is more transient than usual - with most families in rental accommodation including 25% living in MSD Emergency Housing motels. Whaanau comment that despite their current transient status they feel welcome in the school and that the school has a positive caring wairua. There is a real sense of community in the school which encompasses the values of whakawhaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kotahitanga. The staff work hard to use these values to make connections and relationships with students which creates a welcoming environment and supports students developing a sense of belonging and wanting to become engaged in learning.

Along with a dedicated teaching team and supportive learning assistants, we have a pastoral support team of DP/SENCO and a Learning Support Coordinator recently joined by a full-time counsellor and social worker. This team works alongside outside agencies to provide children and whaanau the best support available. Many of the needs being addressed by this team are trauma based needs stemming from transience, the stresses of emergency housing and Covid-19. The pastoral team, principal and Board of Trustees are currently in the process of applying for sustainable funding to extend this work.

Whitiora School utilises PB4L as the starting point for behaviour and learning expectations across the school. Through PB4L the school established its HEART virtue powers - Honest, Engaged, Attitude, Risk-taker, Thoughtful. Colourful murals around the school provide students a bi-lingual reminder of the HEART powers. The HEART powers are celebrated with the giving out of vouchers during the week and certificates and trophies awarded at Whanau (full assembly) Hui.

Overall student achievement sits below national averages. Contributing factors are the high levels of transience, low attendance, and trauma based stresses that affect wellbeing and the ability of students to engage in learning. Teachers are continually working to provide empathetic supportive learning environments that support positive wellbeing and tailor and target their teaching programme to encourage increasing levels of engagement and success in learning for all students. Included in the learning

programme are bi-annual school productions and cultural festivals, and EOTC learning opportunities ranging from day trips for all ages and a two night camp for Years 7&8.

Learning supports for students include Board of Trustee funded Reading Recovery and Rainbow Reading programmes to support literacy progress. The school also employs a 0.4 ESOL teacher with specified MoE funding, in order to provide in-class and withdrawal support for over 60 students. The school also accesses RTLB, RTLit and a range of MoE support for students as needed.

Another initiative in the school includes MoE provided lunches delivered fresh each day. These lunches have been greatly appreciated by students and whaanau alike, and the good nutrition they provide supports focused learning.

Whitiara School Board of Trustees provides an Out of School Care (OSCAR) programme to support parents who need before school (7:30am to 8:30am for 10 students) or after-school care (3:00pm to 5:30pm for up to 20 students), as well as a holiday programme which caters for 12-20 students.

There are sets of devices in each Learning Centre and are a mix of i-pads for junior school and chrome books for middle and senior years. Large TV Screens are in each Learning Centre to support the learning programme. The school uses the Google suite to support its work. Digital safety is supported by Line Wize who ensure the school can filter and monitor for appropriate use of the internet. The school uses a range of on-line Apps and material to support learning. The school Student Management System is Hero.

Te Reo and Tikanga Maaori play an important part of the school's commitment to Te Tiriti Waitangi. The school has engaged with local hapu and iwi - Ngaati Wairere, Ngaati Mahaanga and Waikato Tainui, in order to better understand the tikanga, kawa and narratives that makes up the identity of the school and the content of a localised curriculum. Another priority and commitment has been the recent establishment of Te Aahuru Rumaki Roopu which is now in its second year. Te Aahuru has 18 students from Year 1 to 6 who are learning at Level 1 Reo. The children in Te Aahuru are making excellent progress in their Te Reo and Tikanga learning. The remainder of the school is learning at Level 4 Te Reo and is supported by the teacher and tamariki of Te Aahuru.

Current PLD focus: in 2019 & 2020 nearly all Whitiara School teachers participated in Te Ahuru o te reo Maaori, a Waananga MoE funded Te Reo two term course in a commitment of solidarity to develop and utilise their own Te Reo Maaori speaking skills and tikanga understanding in the classroom. This has been further supported in 2019 and 2020 by the Principal's participation and signing up Whitiara School as a Maaori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) school. This has supported Whitiara School to start its journey of growing understanding of Tainui tikanga and local stories that support developing the localised curriculum. In 2021 the MAC participation is continuing, and Core Ed is providing additional PLD for all teachers focusing on the Localised Curriculum. Whitiara School Junior School teachers will be also participating in the new MoE backed Better Start Literacy Approach PLD.

Whitiara School is one of 13 schools which form the Hei Waka Eke Noa Kahui Ako. The Kahui Ako is a very positive and supportive community of schools whose initiatives have benefited its members. The Kahui Ako has a set of commonly identified goals and each school has the freedom to identify the activities within those goals. Whitiara School has fully aligned its goals with those of the Kahui Ako which are summarized by the headings: Personnel Efficacy, Learner Agency, Powerful Partnerships, and Cultural Responsiveness.

The Board of Trustees provides a steady hand of governance for the school, making good decisions to support all children's learning, and has persevered with projects to achieve success. School finances are audited and are healthy, and the school is a participant in the MoE donation replacement scheme. Student learning is also supported by a significant annual donation from the Friends of Whitiara who fund raise by parking cars for rugby supporters.