



New charter schools approved

Two new charter schools – one focusing on Māori education and the other on nature-based learning – will open in term one next year, Charter School Agency Chief Executive Jane Lee says.

“Sponsors of these two new schools have been approved by the Authorisation Board. When the schools open early next year, they will join the existing charter schools to provide further innovative educational opportunities for children,” Mrs Lee says.

Te Kāpehu Whetū – Tamaki, in Auckland, and The Forest School in Warkworth will join the eight charter schools already open. Tōtara Point School, which was contracted earlier this year will also open in term one 2026.

Te Kāpehu Whetū – Tamaki has been approved as a boarding school for students in years 11-13. The school will provide an opportunity for senior Tai Tokerau students to attend an Auckland school and to retain strong links to whenua and whānau.

“Te Kāpehu Whetū has been delivering Māori education in Whangarei for the past 11 years, operating education establishments from kohanga reo through to primary and secondary education,” Mrs Lee says.

The school aims to empower students to be bilingual, confident, and well-prepared for the future. It will offer the NCEA qualification.

The Forest School in Warkworth will accept students in years 1-6 when it opens and by 2028 will accept students up to year 8. It will adopt an experiential learning approach - the process of learning by doing. For Forest School students, this means spending at least four hours outside each day, year-round.

“The school says this nature-based learning means students will build resilience, confidence and self-management by connecting with nature and having hands-on experiences,” Mrs Lee says.

“Forest School will be guided by the Reggio Emilia approach which is a philosophy that respects children’s natural curiosity. Students will have limited screen time, focusing instead on hands-on creativity.”

Forest School has operated a one-day school for 4–12-year-olds in Hatfields Beach since 2016, catering mainly to disengaged and underachieving students.

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