



Pakaraka School conversion

Background – October 2026

From Term 4, Pakaraka School in Northland will become a charter school.

The Pakaraka School community has chosen to become a charter school. The move gives the school more flexibility about what they teach their students and to have their education better reflect their community. This decision was made by parents, whānau, staff and school leaders.

The school will be led by a sponsor, the Society of Holistic Learners (SOHL), which is contracted by the Government to deliver attendance and achievement results. SOHL is a charitable trust made up of members of the existing Board of Trustees.

The move to a charter school gives teachers more freedom to do more of what works for their students.

What students and families can expect

Students and families will have the same teachers, school leaders and classrooms.

The school will remain open to all students and will continue to teach the New Zealand Curriculum. What will be different is that the school will deliver the curriculum their way, with a strong focus on creativity, movement, outdoor learning and relationships.

Why convert

In 2024 the school partnered with a local kindergarten to introduce a Steiner classroom. The programme was successful and attracted more families to the school.

The community and staff saw the difference it was making for their children and wanted to build further on that approach. As a charter school, they have greater flexibility to do so.

The school has more freedom over what and how they teach, how they use their resources, how they structure their governance, and how they can do things differently to better meet the needs of their community.

Staff arrangements

Staff supported the move to a charter school and will transfer to new employment agreements based on their current terms and conditions.

Local union representatives have supported staff in moving over to these new contracts.

Funding

Charter schools funding is based on state school funding. State schools receive a minimum level of funding regardless of their size. As a charter school that funding is converted to a per-student rate.

SOHL will have greater flexibility in how they use their funding but must meet clear accountability, reporting, attendance and achievement requirements.

Property

SOHL will lease the school property from the Crown. Unlike when it was a state school, SOHL will be responsible for most property maintenance and capital works.

Approval process

The Charter School Authorisation Board approved the conversion of Pakaraka School after it determined that the community supported the conversion, and that SOHL had the capability and capacity to successfully run the school and achieve its attendance and achievement targets.

Accountability and oversight

As a charter school, Pakaraka School will be accountable to a range of independent organisations and government agencies.

It will be subject to oversight from the Education Review Office (ERO), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand.

It will also be accountable to the Charter School Authorisation Board and monitored by the Charter School Agency through their charter school contract. The school will need to show that students are attending regularly, achieving strong results and making good progress.