



# Pānui

## MAHENO KINDERGARTEN BUILDING UPDATE

There has been plenty of activity at the new Maheno Kindergarten building site, and it's exciting to see the project really starting to take shape.

The building progressed quickly over the summer months. It was out of the ground at the beginning of December 2025, and the roof was completed on 8 January 2026. Since then, the aluminium joinery and exterior cladding have been installed, and the fire wall on the east side of the



building has been completed. With the interior framing now in place, it is much easier to see how the spaces will look and function

once the kindergarten is finished.

The building is now secure and work continues inside. Contractors are currently installing insulation while subcontractors complete the electrical, data, and plumbing services. Once this stage is finished, the interior wall linings will be installed.

We have also made a small change to the outside layout

on the west side of the building. The stairs that were originally planned for the south end entrance have been removed and



this area will now be enclosed to create more space for lockers.

This will also reduce the number of gates and access points, making the area easier to supervise and creating more room for whānau during drop-off and pick-up times.



A small design change has also been made to the soffits under the deck roof. While this requires a little extra work, it will improve the overall look of the

building and support easier long-term maintenance.

The kindergarten appliances have now been ordered, and we are currently working with a supplier to finalise the interior equipment layout.

The next stage of the project will focus on the playground area. Planning is



underway for the outdoor environment including fencing, swings, playground storage, a sensory path, and a sandpit. This work will begin once the building construction is closer to completion.

We are also beginning to plan the official opening of the new Maheno Kindergarten building. This will be part of a special week of celebrations as ŌKA marks 75 years.



Please keep the week beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> of June free in your calendars as we celebrate

with several events, including the 75th Annual General Meeting, the 10-year anniversary of Maheno Kindergarten and the opening of their new kindergarten.

It will be wonderful to celebrate this milestone together with our kindergarten community.

## FROEBELIAN PRINCIPLES SECTION

In this edition of our newsletter, we would like to shine a light on the next two Froebelian principles: relationships matter and creativity and the power of symbols.

**Relationships matter.** Our kaiako create environments that support spaces where tamariki can feel safe, respected and valued. This is thought about from the transition into the programme and throughout the day and your tamaiti's time throughout kindergarten. We acknowledge and uphold your whānau aspirations supported by seeking to understand culture and language alongside our bicultural commitments. When tamariki have this feeling of connectedness in the kindergarten through strong responsive relationships, they are confident to play and explore, make friends, solve problems and develop an understanding of their learner identity and sense of self.

Relationships are deeply woven throughout our curriculum, Te Whāriki, and across all practices in the kindergarten. In quiet moments of reassurance, in collaborative play, in shared laughter, and in the way a tamaiti seeks out a kaiako to share an achievement or anecdote. Through these connections, tamariki develop a sense of belonging and begin to understand their place within a wider community.

**Creativity and the power of symbols.** This supports tamariki to represent their ideas in their own way, guided by responsive environments and people. As tamariki begin to use and create symbols, they express their inner thoughts and ideas while making a meaning of the world around them. Through mark-making, we highlight this as early literacy and as a way for tamariki to share their understanding that print carries meaning. Kaiako intentionally provide rich, open-ended resources and time for sustained exploration, recognising that creativity strengthens confidence, resilience, and flexible thinking.

These experiences are strongly reflected within Te Whāriki, and you may see them in action through drawing, painting, construction, music, movement, dramatic play, and storytelling.

By nurturing strong relationships and valuing creative expression, we are supporting tamariki to grow as capable learners who feel connected, confident, and empowered in their identities. - Karen Hailes

## ŌAMARU KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

THURSDAY, JUNE 4TH, 2026

BRYDONE HOTEL - WEAR STREET  
ŌAMARU

We invite you to celebrate a special milestone with us as ŌKA marks its 75th year at our upcoming AGM.

From 5.00pm, enjoy a relaxed meet and greet with light refreshments before the meeting begins at 5.30pm.



## NEW STAFF MEMBERS AT ŌKA

Please welcome two new staff members at Ōamaru Kindergarten Association.



The first new face is Charlotte Kingan, recently appointed Office Manager at ŌKA. Charlotte will often be the first person who greets you at the ŌKA office.

Charlotte outlined her new role at ŌKA, her family and ties to Ōamaru and North Otago. "I have recently been appointed as Office Manager at Ōamaru Kindergarten. In this role, I am responsible for supporting teaching and learning, working alongside whānau, managing daily operations. I was attracted to the position by the strong sense of community, the kindergarten's commitment to high quality early childhood education, and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to children's early learning experiences in Ōamaru.

"I have strong links to Ōamaru and the wider district, and I'm very pleased to be working within this community. I have lived in Ōamaru my whole life, apart from one year in Christchurch, completing my National Nanny Certificate. My family includes my partner Glen, my two children, and four stepchildren. We enjoy being part of the local community. Prior to this role, I have worked at The Brydone Hotel for almost 10 years. This has provided me with a lot of contacts within the Ōamaru area and within New Zealand. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my children, renovating our home and watching our children engage in sports.

"In my new role, I hope to bring leadership skills, a passion for inclusive education, creativity, cultural responsiveness, and relationship-building. I look forward to building strong relationships with tamariki, whānau, and the wider community".

Asked what book she was currently reading, Charlotte replied that it was the Maze Runner. "My children and I are reading this book at the moment as they are studying it at school. We have now watched the movie as well as reading the book. I feel its very important to be on track with what your children are working on at school, and it also brings the family together".

Welcome Charlotte.

The second new appointee is Alyssa Colina, who has joined the teaching staff at Holmes Kindergarten. Please welcome Alyssa.

1. You have recently joined Holmes Kindergarten as part of their staff, please tell readers about yourself.

A: "I am the eldest of 12 children, so I gained a lot of experience from a young age helping raise my younger siblings in a super fun but chaotic household. I was born in Ōamaru and have lived here my whole life. I began studying in 2022 and graduated last year in 2025, becoming a qualified ECE Kaiako. I also had the privilege of working as a relief teacher over the course of my studies, first at Barnardos Early Learning, then Montessori Ōamaru until finally joining the wonderful relievers team with ŌKA".



2. What are your hopes and aspirations of being part of the staff at Holmes?

A: As a beginning teacher, I hope to gain more knowledge and experience from other experienced Kaiako and to be able to put my own knowledge from my three years of study into practice. I look forward to progressing and building upon my own teaching practice and personal teaching philosophy, so I can ensure I am helping to create a rich and quality learning experience for all Tamariki".

3. Do you have any special interests that are related to your role?

A: "I really enjoy music, songwriting, and playing the guitar. I used to be involved in Bedford's School of Music here in Ōamaru and have been able to bring these skills into the learning environment. This means I am able to share one of my passions with the tamariki, and they also enjoy getting involved and engaging with the musical instruments and singing waiata together. Music is a wonderful way of bringing us together and supporting our sense of belonging, and celebrating our sense of identity".

4. Five years from now, where do you hope you will be with your career?

A: "In five years, I hope to be more confident in my Te Reo Māori language skills, consistently incorporating it throughout daily practice. I also hope to have gained much more confidence, knowledge, and experience in my role as a Kaiako". Welcome Alyssa.

## STORYPARK

This year, you may be aware that Ōamaru Kindergarten Association has made the transition from EDUCA to Storypark as our online platform used for communicating updates and sharing assessment for your children's learning. After careful consideration, we believed Storypark will provide a more interactive and accessible way to share children's learning journeys. The platform allows kaiako to document learning through stories, photos, and videos, while also making it easier for whānau to engage, comment, and contribute their own insights from home through the family app. Parents and guardians, as administrators of your child's portfolio, you will be able to invite extended whānau or friends to participate in your child's learning and continue to have access to the information after your child finishes with us.

We understand that any change in platform can take a little time to adjust to. We are here to support you through this transition and can provide guidance on how to set up and use Storypark. If you need any assistance, have questions, or would like help getting started, please don't hesitate to reach out to the kindergarten. You can speak directly with a kaiako, they are more than happy to help.

We're looking forward to this new chapter and the opportunities Storypark brings for stronger communication, collaboration, and celebrating children's learning together. - Karen Hailes

## WHITESTONE HONEY

We continue to receive ongoing support from so many within our local communities and we are so grateful for this.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a massive thank you to Whitestone Honey for their donations of honey for sale through the fundraising team and for tamariki's morning kai.

[www.whitestonehoney.co.nz](http://www.whitestonehoney.co.nz)



WHITESTONE HONEY LTD

### APRIL CLOSURES:

- » Good Friday: Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup>
- » Easter Monday: Monday April 6<sup>th</sup>
- » Anzac Day: Monday April 27<sup>th</sup>

### CASA NOVA KINDERGARTEN:

- » Term Break - closed from Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup> and reopens on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>.

