

# Annual Report 2024



This report to members of the Tauranga Regional Free Kindergarten Association tā Inspired Kindergartens formally covers the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 but there are some relevant subsequent events which are also reported. Audited Financial Statements covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2023 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 are audited and will be circulated shortly.

## Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan adopted in August 2021 and the version in te reo are both attached. This Annual Report is structured to report under each of the Goals contained in the Strategic Plan.

## TAHI - INSPIRED KINDERGARTENS DELIVERS 'TOP-QUALITY' EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WHICH IS RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITIES.

Inspired Kindergartens is committed to a vibrant and high-quality kindergarten education being available for all families. That means an ongoing review of our services to ensure they meet their community's needs and a rapid response to any changes in those needs. In the period under review Gwen Rogers Kindergarten moved to operate with a single daily session rather than the two previously.

We continue to enjoy high attendance in all our services but particularly in the 'school day model (6-hour sessions) With the move to more flexible working arrangements for many parents and the increasing cost of living this model is proving popular. So much so that our occupancy rate is in mid-90% for the year under review.

On 30 August 2024 we had combined waiting lists of 532 for the approximately 1100 places we offer.

Competition in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sector from private operators continues to be a key feature for our two all-day services. We aim to maintain a competitive position with the fees charged. However, due to our commitment to quality control, our costs are much higher than our competitors'. Our two all-day services - OPEYS in Otumoetai and Maunganui in the 'Mount' – are also well regarded serving that demand in the market.

Home Based education remains highly popular, particularly with the parents of younger children. The service was 'full' with both the maximum number of educators and children. Further growth is inhibited by government regulations.

## **Kindergartens Aotearoa (KA)**

Kindergartens Aotearoa comprises a group of 5 kindergarten associations with 370 kindergartens. It has the objective of developing a national organisation to strengthen kindergartens and provide an opportunity for all tamariki to engage in the kindergarten experience. No significant progress has been made on this project and the iK Board adopted an alternative approach to meet this objective – a merger with Whānau Manaaki o Tararua Kindergartens.

## **Merger with Whānau Manaaki o Tararua Kindergartens (WMK)**

The proposed merger with WMK was subject to consultation with staff and parents/whanau and two general meetings. The first of the general meetings voted to merge, the second voted against. Therefore, no further formal action was taken. The Board conducted a survey of the voting parents and staff to better ascertain the reasons for the change of heart between the two general meetings. These surveys have informed both the substance and process of the development of our next Strategic Plan 2025/30. The Board has approved a wide-ranging consultative process involving external facilitation to be completed in the first half of 2025.

## **RUA - INSPIRED KINDERGARTENS WILL HONOUR TE TIRITI O WAITANGI AS THE FOUNDING DOCUMENT OF OUR NATION.**

Te reo ma ona tikanga programme supports teachers, kindergartens and our Home-Based Service to implement the Māori world view in their work. Te Whaariki – the Early Childhood Curriculum – requires an increased emphasis on bi-culturalism and ensuring children have an increasing understanding of te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

This programme included:

- Te Pumaomao – a decolonisation workshop for new employees held on a marae
- Wananga
  - Te reo
  - Waiata and karakia
  - EnviroSchools collaboration
- Nga Haeranga – visits by staff to important sites in our area
- Local curriculum development
- Iwi and mana whenua engagement

An iK Waiata has been developed. You can watch it on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kU4YMIYVGM>. Thanks to composer Ngairo Eruera of Ngāti Ranginui.

Our teachers also engage with their local Kahui Ako (cross sector learning clusters) and the Professional Learning that they offer.

## **TORU - INSPIRED KINDERGARTENS WILL SUSTAIN ITS PEOPLE, PLACES, WAIRUA AND RESOURCES.**

### **Finances**

Inspired Kindergartens, as a not-for-profit charity, operates within constrained funding limits. While our enrolments remain strong, even slightly lower income from government sources cannot be addressed by reducing our costs. This is particularly so in times of high inflation. However, we remain committed to the principle of affordability by maintaining a donations system rather than fees in our six-hour kindergartens. From Term 4 2023 we sought a higher level of donations in our school day kindergartens, and we are delighted to report a collection rate of around 70%. The Board is committed to spending wisely and the most spent is on our tamariki therefore we do not maintain substantial cash reserves. Holiday Programmes in all school-day kindergartens reflect both a community need as numbers attending rise and the need to generate additional funding to maintain our commitment to 100% trained teachers and high property standards.

The 2023/4 Financial Statements are being audited and copies will be supplied to AGM attendees. The highlights include:

- Income increased to \$18,068,475 from \$16,219,617 in the previous financial year, mainly due to rises in government funding to cover teacher salary increases.
- An increase in donations to \$768,285 from \$604,609
- A post-depreciation surplus of \$544,833.
- An increase in the value of our assets to \$7,439,093 from \$6,894,260.

### **Capital Works**

Our positive financial position enables us to undertake our capital works programme, particularly upgrading our older kindergartens. \$212,834 was spent on Capital Projects in the period under review.

### **Matariki**

Staff undertook a variety of celebratory events to mark Matariki. Our iK annual Matariki event included the presentation of the following Awards:





**inspired**  
kindertans  
Ngā Kōhungahunga Manawanui

# 2024 Inspired Values Award Recipients



### **Being the Best we Can Be Award**

Characteristic of the star Waipunarangi in how she nourishes and nurtures those around her. This kaiako continues to find ways to develop her own mātauranga and her cultural understanding which she uses to get to know whānau and tamariki deeply and mindfully. This award goes to Tania Englebretsen (Teacher at Te Puke)



### **For the Good of the Children Award**

This wāhine demonstrates consistent and remarkable leadership, going above and beyond the call of duty. She is known for her calm strength, kindness and expertise. The good of the children and families is at the heart of her mahi. This award goes to Debbie Law (Lead Admin and Admin at Maungatapu).



### **Manaakitanga Award**

This wāhine's efforts in driving a kai initiative, from its idea to realisation, has demonstrated what can be achieved with tenacity and great aroha. Her efforts have served to gather the community together, strengthening relationships, and providing sweet, delicious kūmara for Te Puna whānau to enjoy. This award goes to Megan Burgess (Teacher Aide at Te Puna).



### Mana Award

This next recipient stands grounded in the knowledge of whakapapa, whānau and the importance of the whenua. She has respectfully passed on her deep understanding and knowledge to other kaiako. Kanohi ki te kanohi, whaea has stood and shared her voice of knowing, being and doing in all aspects of te ao Māori. This award goes to Jonelle Paul-Murray (Teacher at OPEYS)



### Aroha Award

Over the past nine years this wāhine has become an integral member of her team. Her expertise and efficiency is legendary, but it is her integrity and heart-felt care for the kindergarten which shines through in her all her mahi. Even ERO on a visit commented on her exceptional care and sensitivity to others. This award goes to Kay Frith. (Administrator at Katikati Kindergarten who left in July 2024 with over eight years' service)



### Kaitiakitanga Award

This caring, busy wāhine is well known for her 'can do' approach - driving a variety of sustainability initiatives and leading the way for others to follow. Under her guidance, kaiako and tamariki are learning about growing in a 'garden to table' approach with excess produce supplied to the local social supermarket and kai for the homeless. She has spearheaded planting and hauora projects and initiated our growing friendship with the local kohanga. This award goes to Maryanne Hoseason (teacher at OPEYS).

### Unsung Hero-es

And now finally, the Unsung Hero Award. Or in this case – a team of unsung heroes. Known in their community for their care and commitment to tamariki, these heroes consistently live out our values. These outstanding team members have demonstrated initiative and ongoing growth in their mahi, working together as a team to serve Otūmoetai. **This award goes to the OSCAR team associated with OPEYS**



## Marketing & Communications

The appointment of our new Communications Coordinator has introduced a wealth of expertise that opens new avenues for our organisation in automation and IT, artificial intelligence tools, video editing, and social media management.

In the realm of automation, we have initiated tools to streamline IT processes. This includes daily enrolment updates across our kindergarten network, available on our intranet, and modernised work management practices within Microsoft Teams. Our developing intranet will become increasingly valuable, hosting resources for training, onboarding, and shared duties across our organisation to enhance user experiences.

Emergency Communication is another key area for intranet integration. We are simplifying its online accessibility and navigation. A Standard Operating Procedure will provide clear instructions, particularly for programs such as Emergency Communications.

The recent expansion of artificial intelligence tools has greatly accelerated our content creation capabilities. Beyond the use of large language models, we are exploring graphic and animation tools. A recent training video, for instance, was produced with an animated character in significantly less time than traditional methods would have required. Additionally, AI tools in our fortnightly circular allow us to focus on content quality while enhancing visual appeal.

Previously outsourced video editing, photography, and media management is now managed in-house. This shift reduces costs, allows for greater project flexibility, and supports potential follow-up initiatives.

## Staffing

Inspired Kindergartens continues to attract quality applicants for our positions. We offer the 'best' employment and teaching conditions offered in the sector, and we remain committed to being a Living Wage employer for non-teachers.

The current teacher shortage and the lack of experienced kindergarten teachers applying for positions has prompted the development of our Teachers-in-Training programme. Four teacher aides/administrators are supported to engage in a three-year teaching qualification. The programme has its first graduate who is currently in a long-term relieving position. One further teacher will graduate in mid-2025: the others later.

Our thanks to our sterling bunch of relievers who continue to support our quality programmes. We acknowledge the greater use of relievers as teachers (and children) have suffered higher levels of sickness than previously.

## Learning Support

Our full-time Resource Teacher – Early Intervention (RTEI) oversees this programme. Over 20% of enrolled children have an identified learning support need which is recorded on our Learning Support Register. In the year under review the programme continued to utilise the:

- Targeted Funding for Disadvantaged Children (\$37,000)
- direct Ministry of Education Learning Support funding of \$91,000 for teacher aides; and
- association funds of \$237,000.

This enabled the allocation of nearly 3,000 teacher aide hours in kindergartens together with early intervention advice and support. Our RTEI also provides teacher professional learning by way of He Māpuna te Tamaiti programme

## WHA - INSPIRED KINDERGARTENS PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

### Enviro-Schools

We value our EnviroSchools partnership which continues to support kindergartens to deliver Education for Sustainability. All our Kindergartens are required to engage in knowledge and practice that reflects an EnviroSchools journey. The EnviroSchools 'awards' model has been reconceptualised to create a regular reflection on a kindergarten's application of the five principles of EnviroSchools.

For our Kindergartens that have been on this journey for several years, the EnviroSchools resources and professional learning provide opportunities for revisiting teaching and learning practice and introducing the EnviroSchools Kaupapa to our new iK people.

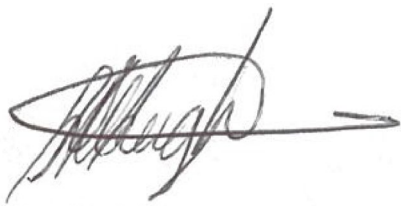
### Kindergarten Energy Project

The aim of this project is to make kindergartens self-sufficient in energy by 2025. We aim to install Photo-Voltaic cell technology in kindergartens after staff have maximised energy saving in the places. An additional kindergarten, Whakamarama has installed this technology this year bringing the total to eleven and Tai o Fenua



will install the system in 2025. The Trustpower scheme which permitted us to share power across two kindergartens was 'ring-fenced' or grand-parented when Mercury purchased Trustpower. It means that eighteen kindergartens still benefit from the scheme.

Thanks to our partner in this project, Sustainability Options.



Lisa Lightbourne  
Board Chair



Peter Monteith  
Principal/Tumuaki