

# Kā Paetae o Ōtākou

## 2025 Annual Review Summary

Enviroschools  
Ōtākou

### Celebrating 101 Enviroschools across Ōtākou

#### Creating a Healthy, Peaceful, Sustainable World Through Learning and Taking Action Together

Enviroschools has had a bumper year of activity across the region, keeping up the momentum of sustainability in schools despite the many curriculum changes that has posed challenges for teachers time and energy. Perseverance, good humour and collaboration were key values that shone through as schools built and maintained community gardens, advocated for and created better recycling systems and planted trees on muddy river banks and wetlands. Young people across Otago showed up for the environment and continue to be the change in their communities.

Over the year, we welcomed John McGlashan College to the Enviroschools kaupapa and we are pleased to welcome Oamaru Kindergarten Association to our whānau starting early 2026. Two of our goals for the 2025 year was on increasing our reach into Early Childhood and decreasing barriers to participation by hosting more hui locally in the districts.



*Enviro Leaders and Key Kaiako from Queenstown Primary School take a photo with Queenstown Lakes Mayor, Glyn Lewers, after presenting at the Otago Regional Council meeting in April, 2025.*



*Ākoka from Waitahuna School enjoy a lunch break during the Dunedin Enviroschools Primary Hui at Orokonui Ecosanctuary.*

#### Reflection in Ōtākou

2025 saw the start of the new reflection process across Aotearoa, enabling a more authentic appreciation and celebration of a schools sustainability journey and creating more opportunity to launch into next steps. We had one school reflect in 2025, St. Joseph's School in Queenstown, which was attended by councillors and staff from Queenstown Lakes District Council.

In 2026, we have several schools and Early Childhood centres planning to hold a reflection, starting with Little Wonders in Oamaru with their very first reflection planned for early March.

## Empowered Learners

Empowered Learners participate in genuine ways in their community. Their unique creativity, perspectives and questions are valued and honoured. They feel connected to the whenua and support each other as a learning community to create meaningful change and hopeful action.



*Ākoka from St Joseph's School in Oamaru buried different types of rubbish in term 1, then dug it up in term 4 to see what had decomposed and what hadn't. They then discussed the impact landfills have on our environment, especially when we can't see them.*

### ● Cromwell College - Central Otago

The Environmental Committee met regularly throughout the year at Cromwell College and were inspired by the Enviroschools Secondary Hui in term one to establish a dry garden at their school. During Term 3, ākoka ran a raffle to raise over \$400 to start the garden and then the Enviro Prefects, Lani and Charlotte, designed, created and planted the dry garden with support from Cromwell Polytech. They hope to encourage native species back to the school and encourage others in the school to take care of their environment.

### ● Carisbrook School - Dunedin

Keen ākoka at Carisbrook School are being encouraged to learn about composting at their Breakfast Club as well as learning more about what to do with their food waste and teaching others in the school. Inspired by participating in the Enviroschools hui, the ākoka were exposed to some great ideas and different ways of think that has led into practical tasks that they could action within their school.

### ● Queenstown Primary School - Queenstown Lakes

Three ākoka leaders from the schools Envirogroup were able to participate in local government and speak directly to Otago Regional Councillors at a Council meeting in April. These ākoka talked about the impact Enviroschools has on their school and community and what they really enjoy about being a part of a sustainable school community. They were able to showcase the mahi they have been doing with community groups across the district and showed that you can never be too young to make change in your own community.

### ● BestStart Oamaru Kindergarten - Waitaki

Tamariki at BestStart know that their actions have an impact both positive and negative on living things and all the tamariki work hard to continue the environmental and sustainability actions that have come before them and enthusiastically support the newer tamariki to be involved. Respect for nature is top of the list for the young people, learning to avoid picking garden flowers or harming insects, and they are always seeking more information that would help them with their garden, composting and worm farm.

## Empowered Learners in Action



### ● Clutha Valley Primary School - Clutha

An Enviroschools hui the year before sparked an enthusiasm from the school for learning more about local wetlands, so the whole school started 2025 with a whole day field trip to Waipahi Wetlands. Ākoka learnt more about how important wetlands are to our ecosystems as well as the history before settlers arrived and were able to release tuna into the wetland. This field trip got ākoka excited about doing more in their community which they now celebrate with an Enviro Shield for a dedicated Enviro Leader in their school.



*Enviro Leaders at Macandrew Bay School did a stream health assessment as a part of their school wide project looking into stormwater drains and the impact that this has on their local community.*

## Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability is a holistic, action and future-focused approach to learning, that engages our whole selves and addresses all aspects of our local and global environment.

### Learning for Sustainability in Action

#### Warepa School - Clutha

A whole school approach to Enviroschools has meant that there are now three Envirogroups a part of the daily school life at Warepa and all ākoka are given opportunities to be engaged. These Envirogroups are instrumental at providing direction and encouraging new initiatives throughout school like the 'Zero Plastic Day' supporting ākoka and whānau to improve their lunch boxes so that it has no plastic or tinfoil in it. Ākoka across the school were given helpful hints and tips for a waste free lunch box including recommending beeswax wraps and using organising dividers to separate the food in the lunchbox.



*Ākoka at Rosebank School learnt how to recycle and make their own paper during an art unit in their school. Being able to be creative with their sustainability choices was a big topic of conversation.*

#### Ōmakau Primary School - Central Otago

The Year 8 ākoka were part of a Community Action project working with the local business, Vulcan Hotel, and their recycling systems. This was a huge project, which also integrated waste reducing measures into the curriculum for the senior class. Ōmakau School includes all ākoka in their Enviroschools journey, meaning that whatever one year level learns, the rest of the school benefits and learns from as well.

#### Elmgrove School - Dunedin

The term 1 inquiry for Elmgrove ākoka was all about oceans, pollution and food webs which gave them plenty of ideas and inspiration for how sustainability works holistically in their school and wider community. This has flowed naturally into the work that they do with Silverstream with planting and the maintenance of the stream but also planning ahead and sharing ideas and thoughts about new areas for the planting that would support the mahi that others are also doing along the Silverstream.

#### St. Joseph's School - Queenstown Lakes

Term 2 ended with a Holistic Reflection for ākoka at St. Joseph's school where ākoka ran a guided tour for members of the Queenstown Lakes District Council and showcased the efforts they have been making educating the rest of their school in sustainability actions. Elected members and staff at QLDC were shown the schools worm farms, recycling systems, bughouses, playshed, exercise stations, vegetable and flower gardens, their efforts towards school lunch waste reduction, all supported by their kaitiaki leaders within the school.



*Queens High School ākoka get experts in during the Enviro group meetings to learn more about what they can do to support their sustainability initiatives.*

#### Fenwick School - Waitaki

The recycling project is continuing to gather momentum for ākoka at Fenwick School with ākoka stepping into leadership roles and keeping the expectations for the project working well. Over the past year, every classroom has its own recycling boxes that ākoka maintain and they have noticed that there is less rubbish going into the containers. This has evolved into composting where many ākoka collect the food scraps and they are looking ahead to reducing the amount of soft plastic that comes in lunch boxes with the leaders of this project taking ownership to get this going.

## Honouring Te Ao Māori

Te Ao Māori holds insights, knowledge and ways of being in relation to the taiao. Honouring this acknowledges the intrinsic relationship of tangata whenua with this land. When we are envisioning and taking action for a sustainable future in our community, we are guided by the history, knowledge, tikanga, traditions and aspirations of local hapū.



*Tamariki at Little Wonders ECE create Ātua inspired artwork using traditional Māori methods and a deep connection to te taiao.*

### Goldfields School - Central Otago

Te Ao Māori is woven throughout the school and their Enviroschools journey at Goldfields School with ākoka beginning and ending each day with karakia, singing waiata and ensuring a karakia kai is said every day. When considering their environment at the school, ākoka are generous in sharing their knowledge with their wider school community, encouraging use of whakatauki and creating videos for their parents to learn Te Reo Māori.

### Waikouaiti School - Dunedin

The whole school of Waikouaiti have been enthusiastically working with Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki on a joint project of Te Waipaku (the local awa) which supports place and wellbeing for Waikouaiti ākoka through exploration of the local community, stream testing and predator monitoring. This included designing a karakia and waiata for Te Waipaku that ākoka can use to connect more deeply with their place of belonging, and their roles as kaitiaki of the awa with Mana Whenua.

### Makarora School - Queenstown Lakes

The focus of term 4 for Makarora ākoka was geology and bringing alive the Māori narrative of Poutini, the Taniwha of Pounamu, who swims up and down the west coast of the South Island, protecting the people and the mauri of Pounamu. This exploration is considered the first geological map of Aotearoa, drawing on Mātauranga Māori geological knowledge. The project involved re-telling the story with movement and mime, using the narrative as a map. The history maps out geological features such as obsidian and sandstone and the narrative highlights that Whatapu was the only Taniwha that Poutini feared.

### Macraes Moonlight School - Waitaki

The schools relationship with Puketeraki marae has brightened the school with their own pepeha, whakataukī and waiata. Nikki from Puketeraki Marae visited and introduced the chorus of school song to the ākoka, which acknowledges the rivers of the Macraes area. This brought alive the mahi ākoka had been doing with their kapa haka, showcased when they performed their waiata at the East Otago Hui Ako in June.



*Clutha Valley Year One ākoka at a whole school field day at Waipahi Wetlands got the opportunity to learn traditional Māori games with Sport Clutha.*

### Te Ao Māori in Action

#### Waihola District School - Clutha

To celebrate Matariki, Waihola school ākoka came together as a school community for some relaxed whānau crafts and activities as well as shared kai - including the soup that ākoka made themselves. Ākoka sang, spoke and shared at the celebration in ways that truly reflected the spirit of the occasion and the night was topped off with a beautiful Matariki cake that was as delicious as it was stunning.



## Respect for Diversity

Respect for Diversity is celebrated, and all forms of identity and ability are respected to foster a society that is fair, peaceful and cooperative. Cultural traditions and practices from all people are experienced, valued and appreciated in learning spaces, honouring practices led by that community. Access to safe and engaging learning is available to everyone.

### Respect for Diversity in Action



#### Waiwera South Primary School - Clutha

The community is their classroom at Waiwera South school, with ākoka learning about diversity through actions like beach clean-ups, bird counts, exploring rock pools and planting natives at the local river. Ākoka took a closer look at biodiversity of their local ecosystem and analysed the findings of all the litter they found when they have been out in the community, showcasing how closely intertwined our worlds are.

#### St Gerard's Primary School - Central Otago

There are so many different cultures and religions at St Gerard's school that the school hosted a cultural expo day and it resonated deeply with the entire school. This flowed on from and to other activities around the school including their Protest art project with Year 7 and 8's which encouraged ākoka to research and think deeper about current challenges around the world on social and environmental themes and created their own posters inspired by Banksy and Marilyn Webb.

#### Trinity Catholic College - Dunedin

Ākoka from the Trinity Envirogroup had a bumper year supporting diversity within their school through an Enviroweek focusing on stormwater and the impact on the ocean; a clothing swap and sustainable mufti fundraising; and running a compost system with the Let's Grow Together class. The mahi that they have been doing was nominated with a Keep Dunedin Beautiful award showcasing the power of the Envirogroup working together and creating strong actions within the school.

#### Wānaka Primary School - Queenstown Lakes

Respect for Diversity has been a significant strength for the school this year with several initiatives encouraging differing perspectives on biodiversity, social and cultural events and the bringing together of school whānau for the environment. A highlight of the school year was the Sri Lankan day, which featured a whole-school performance showcasing culture, including Te Ao Māori and an opportunity for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners to participate in the Sri Lankan dancing performance. Wānaka school ākoka encourages the celebration of cultural traditions to support their learners and whānau in being valued and appreciated in their learning spaces.



Ākoka from Alexandra Primary School get the opportunity to do some stream health assessments with Otago Regional Council and COREAP on the Manuherikia river.



Senior Secondary ākoka from Waitaki Girls show off a new penguin house that they built during the Waitaki Secondary hui at the Ōamaru Blue Penguin colony. Ākoka had the opportunity to reflect on the diversity of the area that encourages more blue penguins to nest locally.

#### Maheno Primary School - Waitaki

The moment you walk into Maheno Primary School, you are greeted by the flags from every nation that ākoka belong to and ākoka regularly do an 'airplane' activity to learn more about different countries. In March, the school celebrated 150 years with a massive mural showcasing the schools diversity, the native birds that are also the names of the classroom and the sports that ākoka all play while at school.

## Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities act in ways that nurture all aspects of nature, including people, now and in the future. By working together and supporting each other we create safe, healthy, equitable and thriving communities.



Ākoka from Wānaka Primary School pick strawberries in preparation for learning how to make smoothies using friction via a bicycle. Food resilience is a key area of upskilling that make sustainable communities.

### Sustainable Communities in Action

#### Rosebank School - Clutha

Critical thinking and exploration of sustainability was a natural flow on of the schools unit on art and expression during term three at Rosebank School. Ākoka got really stuck into making their own paper with recycled paper and used these as a part of their art projects. Ākoka then went on a field trip to a local farm and helped plant out a riverbank with native plants while learning about stream health.

#### Poolburn School - Central Otago

The junior class got the chance to explore Lab in a Box in February, a resource to get ākoka interested in and more knowledgeable about science, working together with Wairoa Manuherekia to explore what all lives in the water around their school and homes. The ākoka then headed off to Naseby for a school camp and they were able to follow up their learning of the creatures in a space a bit further away, showing that no matter where you are, communities are all inter-connected.

#### North East Valley Normal School - Dunedin

The community gardens at North East Valley school is an exciting collaboration between community groups, parents and the school, giving each classroom an opportunity to get out in the garden weeding and harvesting kai which ākoka are now learning how to cook through Garden to Table. The class gardening sessions are run by parent volunteers and supports the schools long term plans and every Friday a new class gets an opportunity to make an impact that supports both the school and the wider community.

#### Glenorchy School - Queenstown Lakes

When Glenorchy School takes action within the school, they invite the wider Glenorchy community to share the learning and provide their expertise so that ākoka become leaders for their own actions in the community. 2025 saw the school start with a mapping activity to assess what works well for the ākoka and what they would like to add that would support the rest of their community. This led to reconnecting with their community garden and they were lucky to have parent support to plan, reorganise and replenish the gardens.

#### Waitaki Boys High School - Waitaki

Paper recycling was the goal for the Waitaki Boys Enviro Group in 2025 and they were so successful that they have offered to pick up Waitaki Girls paper recycling as well. The Enviro Group bought 20 bins, labelled them and put them in every class. Every second Thursday, these are collected and then an Enviro Prefect takes them to Waitaki Resource Recovery Park. Combined with the work they are doing with compost, which has a group of dedicated young people running it, the school has really nailed it's sustainability goals for the year.



Ākoka from Shotover Primary School get busy making beeswax wraps to share with their classmates, whānau and wider community in an effort to prioritise plastic free lunches across the school.

## Creating Connection Across Ōtākou Through Hui

A key part of our role is creating student leaders and supporting the professional development of teachers for environmental action in schools. We hold multiple accessible hui across Ōtākou for different age groups, including separate ones for teachers and principals. This connects the Enviroschools kaupapa and the different sustainable journeys of schools across Ōtākou, enabling shared stories and support for future plans.

At the end of 2025, Ōtākou Enviroschools trialled a regionwide online cluster meeting that upskilled kaiako in the theme areas of the Enviroschools kaupapa. These are once a term and provide local curriculum links for kaiako as well as opportunities to deepen understanding for ākoka through environmental and sustainability actions. The trial was successful, and has been rolled out to include Murihiku Southland, with the view to rolling it out to the rest of Aotearoa by 2027.

Each of our hui have a theme or topic that is designed to spark interest or inspire young people in progressing their sustainability journey at their school. Whether schools are new to the kaupapa or have been working for years on their sustainability goals, ākoka always come away with new skills especially surrounding leadership, advocacy and climate literacy.

To reduce the barriers to participation and the growing need for professional development for kaiako in environmental education, Ōtākou Enviroschools supports kaiako attending the hui with a contribution towards teacher release.

In 2025, Ōtākou Enviroschools ran 19 hui across all 5 districts/areas.



*Getting to learn about bicycle maintenance was a highlight for many ākoka at the Dunedin Year 7-10 hui in November.*



*Ākoka spend a quiet moment listening for different bird songs at the Clutha Enviroschools hui in November.*



*Senior Secondary ākoka went on a sea lion adventure around the St Clair community and listened to the story of a sea lion at the Dunedin Secondary Hui in February.*



*Building on the natural and man-made history of the upper Clutha helped ākoka to understand the challenges to community at the Central Otago/Queenstown Lakes Secondary Hui in March.*



*Waitaki Secondary school ākoka pause for a photo during the Waitaki Secondary Hui at the Ōamaru Blue Penguin Colony in February, 2025.*



*Clutha Valley ākoka get right into beekeeping at the Clutha Enviroschools Primary Hui at Waitahuna School in March, 2025.*



*Ākoka at the Dunedin Enviroschools Primary hui held at Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary jump through obstacles like a penguin.*

# Enviroschools Ōtākou



## Ōtākou Outcomes for 2025

This year has been an absolute blast for our team. We have created more opportunities for engagement and shared more stories of our Enviroschools in Ōtākou than we have previously. A particular highlight was the strengthening of our relationship with the Murihiku Southland Enviroschools team, where we supported each others hui multiple times.

We also strengthened our work internationally, with our partnership with Kapten Kepik through Peri Bumi in Indonesia. Ākoka from both Aotearoa and Indonesia benefit from this relationship by sharing their ideas, plans and environmental initiatives from their respective countries, inspiring each other and providing much needed global perspective.

With more schools and facilitators joining our team, we're looking forward to 2026!



*Dunedin Facilitators, Jennie and Megan, celebrate during the Dunedin Primary Hui at Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary in October.*

## Changes to the Ōtākou Enviroschools Team

The Ōtākou Enviroschools team welcomed two new members to our team in 2025 - Megan Greer, Enviroschools Facilitator in Dunedin and Lexie Davidson, Regional Coordinator - Central, who joins Leisa de Klerk at Otago Regional Council. At the end of 2025, Scott Martin left his role for a new opportunity in management at Clutha District Council, so we hope to have the new Clutha Enviroschools facilitator by the start of term 2 in 2026. We will also be welcoming two Early Childhood Facilitators from Oamaru Kindergarten Association, Euan Scrivener and Karen Hailes, at the start of 2026, with four new kindergartens also joining the Enviroschools whānau.

## Enviroschools Ōtākou 2025 Tīma



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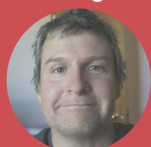
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