

Culture Report

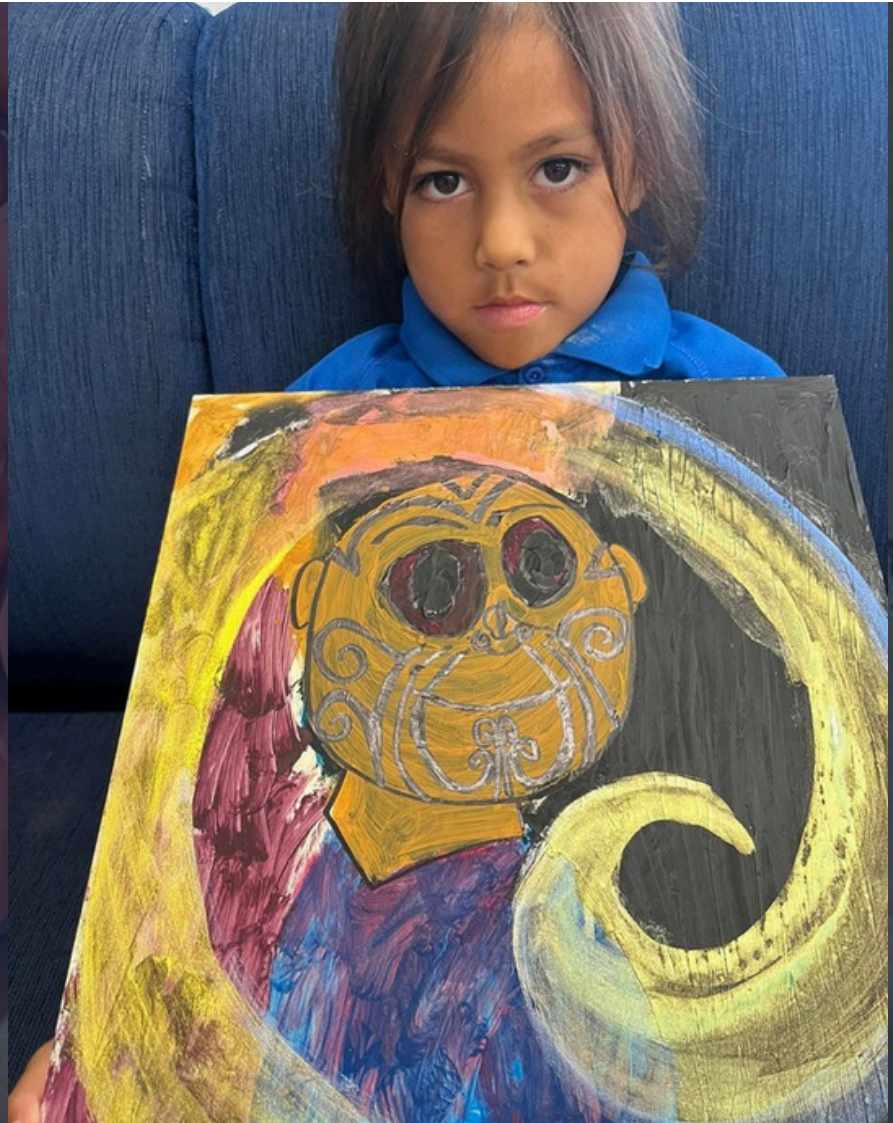
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Prepared by

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Prepared for

**Lake Rotoma
School BOT**



Executive Summary

Over the past twelve months I have led the development and strengthening of culture at Lake Rotoma School. My focus has been to intentionally grow a school environment where identity, language, values and belonging are visible, audible, lived and understood by students, staff and whānau. Through a range of initiatives, projects and systems, I have worked to both maintain important cultural practices within the kura and refresh key areas so they unify our school community and aspirations.

A key part of this work involved designing and implementing cultural learning projects that helped students understand what culture is and how it shapes identity. Through units exploring culture, tuakiritanga, Matariki, traditional Māori music and Ngāti Pikiao histories, students engaged in learning that connected them to whakapapa, local stories, the environment and their own family backgrounds. This learning has resulted in students becoming more confident in sharing their pepeha, speaking about who they are, and recognising the value of their own and others' cultures.

Strengthening my own level of te reo is important. It is easy for Whaea Te Aroha who is fluent in two languages. For me it is an opportunity for continued growth. The presence of te reo Māori across the school has been an important focus. Te reo is woven into daily routines through karakia, waiata, morning oral language learning and the use of everyday instructional phrases. As a result, students are increasingly confident hearing and responding to te reo in everyday classroom interactions. Te reo and cultural learning are also visible through classroom signage, displays and shared practices across our kura.

One of the most significant pieces of work I led was the refresh of the school's behaviour framework. I worked alongside staff and students to refresh PB4L into a system that reflects our kura values, resulting in the development of Mana Way. This approach frames behaviour management as Mana Restoration, focusing on restoring relationships and enhancing student mana. Clear expectations, visual displays and recognition systems have been implemented across the school, and students are now beginning to use Mana Way language when talking about behaviour and values.

To support this work, I named the Kotahitanga Room and activated the space for assemblies, sensory regulation, small group learning, whānau meetings and students mahi displays. Sensory zones were also introduced to support student wellbeing, allowing students to reset and return to learning ready to succeed.

Whakawhanaungatanga is important to me. I wanted to be able to bring the whole school together to really embed relationship building and connectedness. I introduced daily Hui ā Kura, inspired by my time in rumaki at Whanagamarino Kura. Gathering each morning for karakia, waiata and pānui, has created a shared rhythm to the school day and brought a sense of community and belonging for students and staff.

Student engagement in cultural learning has been particularly evident through whole school projects. Students participated in traditional Māori music experiences, created taonga pūoro, and contributed artwork for the Ngāti Pikiao Local Critical Histories project, with their paintings now featured in published books and films. Other projects, including the Matariki inquiry and Tuakiritanga unit, connected students to mātauranga Māori, local histories and family stories, while also encouraging stronger whānau involvement.

Overall, the work undertaken this year has strengthened cultural identity, language use, shared values and community connection within the kura. The impact of this can be seen through visible classroom displays, shared language used by students, increased confidence in cultural practices, and growing engagement from whānau and the wider community. Everything we do is shared on our private school facebook page to allow whānau daily updates into what is happening at kura.

The next stage of development will focus on deepening the use of te reo Māori across the kura, continuing to embed the Mana Way framework, and expanding the Ngāti Pikiao curriculum through place-based learning and stronger connections with local marae and knowledge holders. These steps will continue to strengthen identity, belonging and cultural understanding for all students at Lake Rotoma School.

Culture Unit Report



Lake Rotoma School – 12 Month Review

By Hayley Karere

Over the past twelve months I have had the privilege of leading Culture at Lake Rotoma School. Culture can be born into and organisational culture can be created. Still being relatively new to Lake Rotoma School when I took on the Culture Unit gave me the opportunity to see with fresh eyes, the greatness and beauty of our school and the community it sits within. I have been able to get to know whanau, listen to their stories and points of view. I'm definitely not here to "change" this school's culture, this unit has given me the opportunity to polish the diamonds. In this role I focused on strengthening the language we use to describe the cultural identity of our kura while also refreshing and developing systems that support our values, and sense of belonging.

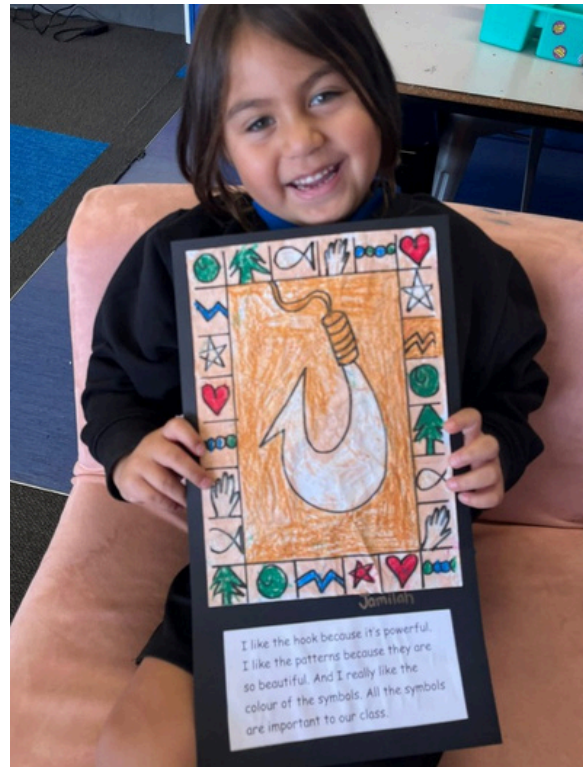
My goal was to maintain cultural practices already present in the school, and intentionally grow a culture where identity, language, values and community connections are visible and audible in everyday school life. This report outlines the work I led across the past year and reflects on the impact this has had across the kura.

Building Cultural Foundations

One of the first priorities I focused on was helping students understand what culture is and why it matters. I designed and taught a unit of learning that explored culture as something that shapes who we are as individuals and communities.

I introduced the idea of culture as being like a colourful puzzle, where each piece contributes something important and unique. Through this approach students explored the many elements that make up culture including:

- History and pūrākau
- Language
- Customs and traditions
- Beliefs and values
- Art and music
- Family and community connections
- Rules, leadership and responsibilities
- Jobs and economy
- Food and clothing
- Technology and inventions
- Tikanga
- Leisure and recreation



Through this learning, students began to understand that culture shapes identity and strengthens our connections with one another.

Evidence of impact

Across the school this learning is now visible in classroom spaces where students' work is displayed beautifully so they can be proud to show visitors what they have been learning. Students enjoy sharing their work in assemblies and whanau evenings.

Te Reo Māori



Strengthening te reo Māori has been a key focus for me personally. Together we have intentionally woven te reo Māori throughout daily classroom practice. Daily practices I have helped establish include:

- Beginning each day with karakia and waiata in our hui ā kura
- Teaching morning te reo lessons as part of oral language programmes
- Supporting students to learn and practise their pepeha- and they encourage me to do the same
- Using everyday instructional phrases, praise, weather language and classroom kupu

For me personally, developing my own te reo Māori is an ongoing journey. As my confidence grows, I continue to introduce more language into daily teaching and school routines. In our classrooms, te reo is natural, it flows through our day. We don't say "ok now it is time for Te Reo." At the moment it is a trickle through the day, like a little stream, but it is increasing, the current is getting stronger.

Evidence of impact

The increased presence of te reo Māori can be heard across the school. Tamariki regularly respond to instructions in te reo and are becoming more confident using simple phrases themselves. Te reo is also visible in classrooms through signage, labels and learning displays. As a result, the language is becoming a natural and normal part of daily life at our kura.



Customs, Traditions and Leadership

To strengthen connection and belonging across the school, I led the implementation of a daily Hui ā Kura. This was introduced as a way to bring the school together each morning and begin the day collectively.

Each Hui ā Kura includes:

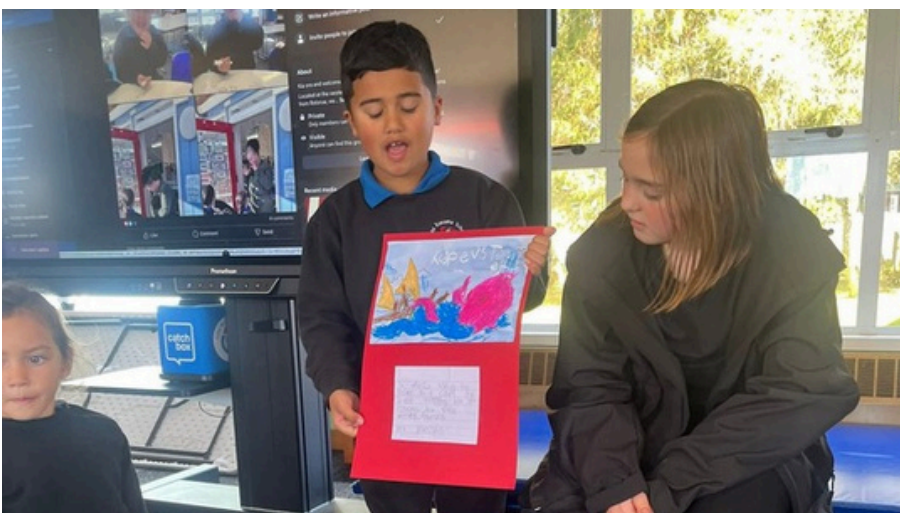
- Karakia
- Waiata
- Whakawhanaungatanga
- Pānui

This time allows us to start the day in a calm and positive way while reinforcing our shared values and strengthening relationships across the school.



Evidence of impact

Hui ā Kura has become an important part of our school routine and helps unify the kura and sets the tone for the day. Students confidently participate in karakia and waiata, and the gathering provides an opportunity for the whole school community to connect each morning. This practice has strengthened our sense of kotahitanga and supports a positive tone for learning.



Kotahitanga Room



When I arrived at Lake Rotoma School this room was tired looking. The vision I have for this space is more than a school hall. This space has been activated as a flexible learning and community space that can be used for:

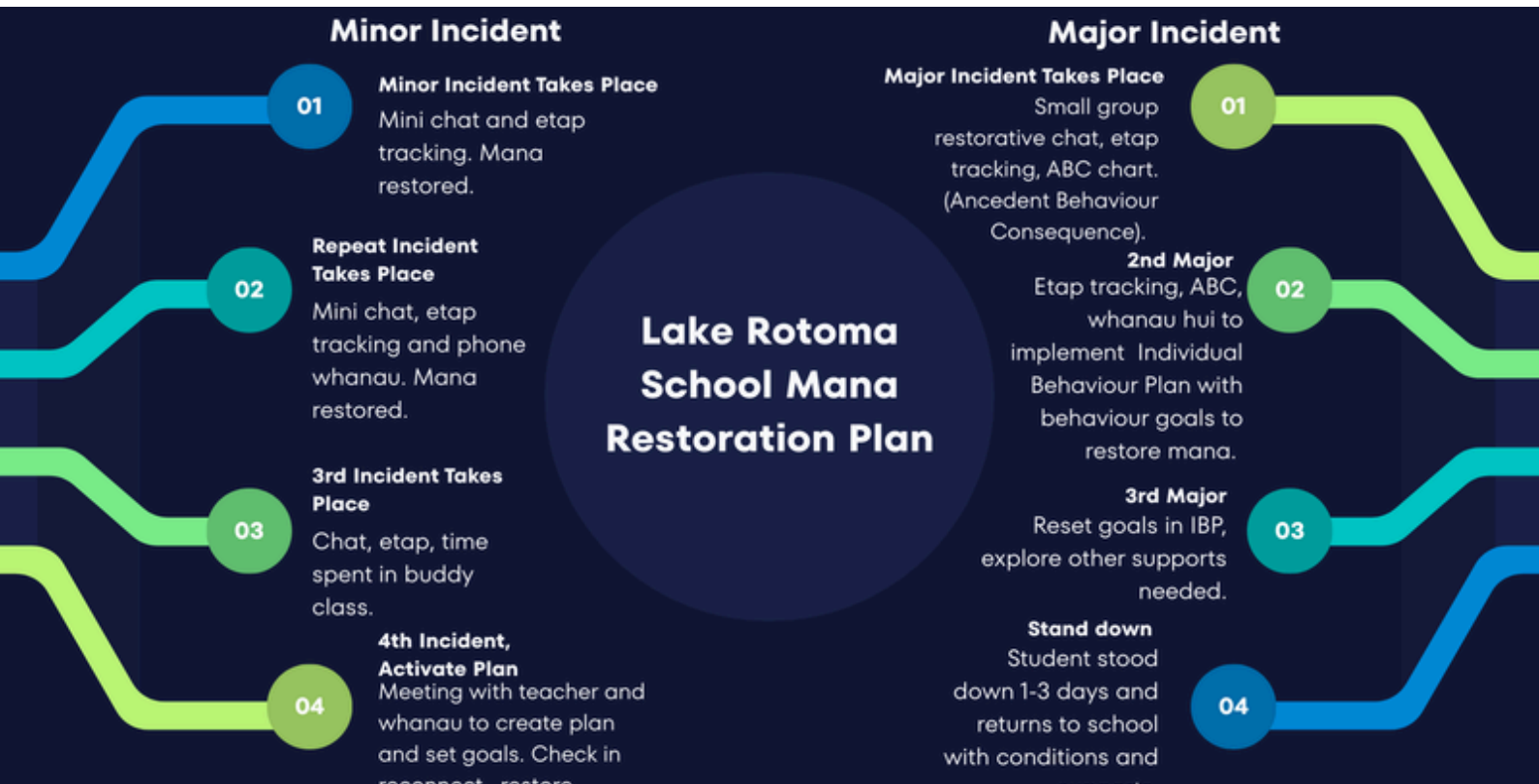
- School assemblies
- Sensory regulation
- Whānau hui
- Small group learning
- Breakfast club
- Art exhibitions and displays

Evidence of impact

The Kotahitanga Room is now used regularly by students and staff. It provides a calm and supportive environment where students can regulate emotions, participate in learning activities, or gather as a community. The space has also allowed us to display student artwork and cultural projects, strengthening pride in student learning.



Refreshing PB4L: From PB4L to Mana Way



One of the most significant projects I led this year was refreshing our behaviour framework. I may have led this but in all honesty, I inherited a functioning behaviour management system. I created a team (our whole school) to reimagine our PB4L approach so that it better reflected our kura. Through this process PB4L was rebranded as Mana Way, shifting the focus from behaviour management to restoring and enhancing mana.

Behaviour processes were reframed as Mana Restoration, encouraging students to reflect on their actions and repair relationships when mistakes occur.

Mana Way rebrand:

- Gave students the opportunity to develop school values that reflect our kura identity
- Rewrote the PB4L folder
- Clarified behaviour expectations for students
- Created posters that display these expectations in classrooms
- Defined and documented Mana Restoration processes

Evidence of impact

Mana Way signage and value posters are now visible throughout classrooms and shared spaces. Students are beginning to use Mana Way language when discussing behaviour and relationships. Staff have a clearer and more consistent approach to supporting positive behaviour across the school.

Celebrating Positive Behaviour

Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
Respect- Whakaute

"Ka tū te tūi, ka kōrero te iwi."
As the tūi stands, so does the people speak – presence & respect

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for Respecting people, our school property and our environment, you are a role model.

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
Ownership- Kawenga

"He Kererū e haere ana i tōna ara, e tiaki ana i ngā mea hei oranga mō te ngahere."
The kererū goes on its path, caring for the things that sustain the forest – emphasizing responsibility and stewardship.

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for showing the Value of Ownership by taking responsibility and using your initiative without being asked.

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
Kindness- Manaakitanga


"Ko te piwakawaka e rere i te ngahere, he harikoa ki ngā katoa."
The fantail flits through the forest, bringing joy to all – kindness & cheerfulness.

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for living the Mana Way Value of Kindness at Lake Rotoma School

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
Community- Hapori

"Ngā kākāriki e noho tahi, e ora ai te ngahere."
The kākāriki live together, and the forest thrives – teamwork & support.

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for continuing to build unity and strong relationships in our school community.

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
Full Set Achievement




"Mā te mahi ka rangatira ai."
Through action, one becomes a leader.

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for leading by example using respect, ownership, community and kindness at Lake Rotoma School.

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



Lake Rotoma School Mana Way
100 % Attendance


"Mā te mahi ka rangatira ai."
Through action, one becomes a leader.

This certificate is proudly presented to _____

for leading by example using respect, ownership, community and kindness at Lake Rotoma School.

Given this day, _____

Kalako _____ Tumuaki _____



To support the Mana Way framework I introduced a new system to recognise positive behaviour. I designed value certificates linked to native birds and whakatauki, with students working towards collecting the full set. Once students complete all values they receive a completion certificate. I also introduced 100% Attendance Certificates, which are awarded each term.

Evidence of impact

These systems have created positive motivation for students. Certificates are displayed proudly in classrooms and homes, and students are increasingly motivated to demonstrate the Mana Way values. Attendance certificates have also helped strengthen conversations around the importance of coming to school every day.

Sensory and Regulation Spaces

Supporting student wellbeing was another important focus. I introduced sensory and regulation spaces to support students who may need time to reset before returning to learning.

These spaces were established in:

- Kotahitanga Room
- Otari Room

Evidence of impact

Students now have safe spaces where they can regulate emotions and return to class ready to learn. Teachers have reported that this has helped reduce disruptions and allows students to re-engage more successfully in learning.



Art and Music

I led a whole-school Traditional Māori Music project which allowed students to explore taonga pūoro and traditional storytelling.

Students participated in experiences including:

- Learning the story of Hinemoa and Tūtānekai
- Making and playing kōauau, pūrerehua and poi
- Learning why these instruments are taonga
- Participating in a marae noho

Working together through tuakana-teina relationships

Students also participated in the Ngāti Pikiao Local Critical Histories Project. Through this project, students researched Ngāti Pikiao ancestors and created painted portraits representing these tūpuna. Students worked in tuakana-teina pairs to research, draw and paint the portraits. These artworks were later used as illustrations in two books and films documenting the project. The work was launched this term at Tapuaeharuru.

Evidence of impact

Students showed strong engagement and pride in learning about their whakapapa and local history. Their artwork is now part of published books and films, giving students a real sense that their learning has value beyond the classroom.



Technology and Inventions

I also led a whole school Matariki inquiry called Matariki and Our Journey From the Past to the Future.

This project connected traditional knowledge with modern learning and included:

- Learning about rongoā Māori
- Visiting the ngahere to collect kawakawa leaves and make tea
- Visiting Te Puia to learn about weaving
- Learning about traditional navigation and the stars
- Learning about double-hulled waka
- Studying Nikau Hindin's aute revival work
- Paper making and kite making inspired by aute traditions
- Learning about the maramataka

Evidence of impact

Students developed a deeper understanding of how mātauranga Māori connects the past, present and future. The kites created during the project incorporated Matariki stories and student reflections, showing how students connected their learning to cultural knowledge.



Family and Community Connections



Another project I developed was a whole school Tuakiritanga unit, focusing on identity and the importance of intergenerational knowledge.

Students explored who they are and where they come from through activities such as:

- Learning local pūrākau
- Interviewing grandparents about their life experiences
- Exploring the different ethnic backgrounds within our school
- Comparing past and present technology
- Creating visual pepeha
- Practising mihi and pepeha delivery
- Creating a whole school video explaining tuakiritanga, this has been shared on our school facebook page

The project will conclude with a whānau celebration evening where students will share their work with families.

Evidence of impact

Students are developing greater confidence speaking about their identity and sharing their pepeha. Whānau have also become more involved in the learning process through interviews, storytelling and upcoming celebration events.

Conclusion

Over the past year I have intentionally worked to strengthen culture, identity and belonging across our kura.

This work has included developing programmes that support behaviour, unity, language, traditions, values, arts, history and community connections. My aim has been to ensure that students understand who they are, where they come from, and how they belong within their community.

Across the school we are beginning to see visible evidence of this work through classroom displays, shared language, student confidence in cultural practices, and stronger connections with whānau.



Recommendations for Next Steps



Moving forward, I recommend that we:

- Continue strengthening the use of te reo Māori across the kura
- Continue embedding the Mana Way behaviour framework
- Maintain consistency so that all staff and students understand and live the Mana Way values
- Continue teaching culture and identity so students develop a strong sense of belonging
- Celebrate the diverse cultures represented within our school community

Another important next step would be to deepen our implementation of the Ngāti Pikiao Curriculum by developing a two-year teaching cycle.

This could include:

- Visiting Mateku to learn historical pūrākau connected to important sites
- Visiting Ngāti Pikiao marae to hear stories from local knowledge holders
- Creating a visual timeline or map of Ngāti Pikiao history
- Developing school murals that illustrate these stories and connect students to the whenua

These experiences would strengthen students' understanding of local history, whakapapa and identity while building meaningful relationships with the community.

Finally, I recommend activating the Breakfast Club in the Kotahitanga space. This would provide an opportunity to build leadership, practise tikanga around food, and continue developing the use of te reo Māori in everyday contexts.

