

Early Years Service Delivery at Ko Taku Reo - Deaf Education New Zealand



Philosophy statement:

Early Years Education at Ko Taku Reo is represented by a variety of nurturing environments that are strongly grounded in quality Deaf Education, tamariki and whānau centred practices that reflect true partnership.

Fully engaging with Te Whāriki and National Education Learning Priorities, we partner in a holistic way with the whānau and child at the centre. We provide part of the wider support network that becomes the start of a learning pathway that is rich in intentional practices, high expectations with a strong focus on full access to learning/acquisition of languages (NZSL, English, Te Reo or their home languages) and developing a strong self-identity and cultural understanding.

Active participation with our fully trained Teachers of the Deaf and variety of professional staff dedicated to success for Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) children provides a platform for flexibly meeting the individual needs of preschool children and their whānau. This includes parent to parent support and access to wider community events.

Positive communication with others serving the needs of DHH children provides seamless transitions to and from our environments for the best possible outcomes for the DHH child as they continue their learning pathway into the future.

Description and delivery models:

Te Whāriki, the national curriculum for preschoolers, underpins all services offered in the Early Years at Ko Taku Reo. This curriculum is rich and allows for many planned and spontaneous ways for a child to learn through play.

There are five strands that weave through any programme:

- **Wellbeing** – Fostering the child's sense of identity, including acceptance of hearing loss. Beginning to understand the concept of caring for themselves, including hearing aids. Songs and stories to support emotional intelligence. Developing the emerging Theory of Mind.
- **Belonging** – Connection to others, including other children with a hearing loss, and the Deaf Community. Knowing they have a place.
- **Contribution** – Learning and playing alongside others. Practising strategies to play and learn with others. Encouraging the child to be part of mat time, to take turns and be a leader.

- **Communication** – Language and engagement in reciprocal communication. Developing knowledge of spoken and signed language. Learning the stories and symbols of their own culture, including Deaf Culture.
- **Exploration** – Provides opportunities for reasoning and problem solving, through stimulating toys and activities.

We also have agreed practices across all Early Years environments that drive our practice which are aligned with the Learning Support Delivery Model (LSDM):



1 Whānau and family connection points

- Regular liaison points with whānau and family (meetings, events, group sessions)
- Invited to be a central part of the preschool or early years sessions and activities
- Access to daily activities through communication and sharing platforms



2 One plan

- Learning goals linked through IP (or Whānau Support Plan) process with the wider team around the child
- One plan worked on with all team members (Teachers of the Deaf, AoDC, First Signs, Audiology, Cochlear Implant Habilitation, Early Intervention Teachers, etc)
- Planning and progress is shared with families and all team members to ensure alignment and collaboration of goals



3 Working together

- Inclusive practices are always used with the wider team and pathway partners
- Whānau voice is recorded and prioritised through the IP (or Whānau Support Plan) process
- Active engagement with all working with the child and whānau to support positive outcomes



4 More flexibility

- Meetings and activities planned to ensure maximum whānau and family involvement – nothing for me, without me
- Innovational and solution focused culture prioritising removing barriers and providing access
- Options explored to meet the individual needs of the child



5 Better facilitation

- a. Leader in each environment focused on the cohesion of all team members
- b. Leaders and teachers responsible for the active involvement from a variety of professionals based on the holistic needs of the child and whānau
- c. The team facilitate assessment opportunities to meet the current needs



6 Sharing data

- a. Assessment, monitoring and reporting inform all data collection and sharing
- b. Learning is shared with whānau with opportunities to contribute to the next steps based on best practice
- c. We show progress of learning linked to Te Whāriki

Our individual environments provide choice and are locally responsive to meet the needs of the cohorts of preschool children it serves. They include:

Ko Taku Reo Preschool, Auckland:

Ko Taku Reo Preschool is a licensed early childhood centre that operates during school terms from Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 2.30pm. We welcome enrolments from preschoolers aged 2-5 years old: can be Deaf or Hard of Hearing children, their siblings, Children of Deaf Adults (CoDA) and children from the local Kelston or Deaf communities. We provide a rich and varied preschool programme following the Te Whāriki curriculum. Children are supported to learn social, emotional and cognitive skills as they learn and grow to understand themselves as learners.

We offer a specialist preschool setting for children who are Deaf and hearing to learn alongside each other. Our environment is modern and rich in visual communication and language, and we provide communication groups that match the needs of the diverse ākonga, some of whom have complex additional needs.

Our teaching programme is based on the children's strengths, interests and needs, with a strong focus on developing communication skills using New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), English and visual communication. Delivered by qualified ECE Teachers of the Deaf, Speech Language Therapists, NZSL tutors and Deaf role models, the programme encourages communication and identity development through natural interactions between adults and children and peers.

The Preschool staff work in partnership with the whānau and professionals such as Advisors on Deaf Children (AoDC), Hearing House, Deaf Aotearoa First Signs Facilitators and Early Intervention services to provide a collaborative service.

Early Years Whānau Centre (EYWC):

The EYWC in Christchurch operates playgroups during term time Monday – Thursday, 10am – 12 noon at Sumner and other locations, depending on need. The playgroup is run by Teachers of the Deaf and planning is based on Te Whāriki and children's individual goals delivered through a play-based environment with modeling of social skills and rich, targeted language interactions.

There are opportunities for individual parent-child communication sessions with Teachers of the Deaf or Speech Language Therapists alongside a 2-hour group session from 10-12pm. We support families to practice effective techniques and strategies for developing their child's communication and social skills in all environments. The EYWC programme allows time for families to form relationships, support each other and identify resources they need to meet specific needs.

Parents/whānau are given the opportunity to attend 'parent group time' during their weekly sessions. Parent group times usually includes an opportunity to learn NZSL with a Deaf NZSL Tutor.

We welcome enrolments from 0-6 years, Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) preschoolers (unilateral and bi-lateral) and their preschool siblings, as well as Children of Deaf Adults (CoDA). Parents/whānau attend sessions with their child and are encouraged to work in partnership with the team in all areas of their child's development.

The EYWC staff work closely with whānau, Advisor on Deaf Children, (AoDC) Cochlear Implant Habilitationists, Deaf Aotearoa First Signs Facilitators and Early Intervention services to provide a collaborative service.

Playgroups:

Playgroups provide opportunities for tamariki to access good models of NZSL and English through meaningful play-based interactions and to develop a visual awareness of language and Deaf Culture. We welcome all families with a connection to the Deaf Community.

We work collaboratively with First Signs Aotearoa, Ministry of Education Advisors on Deaf Children and the wider Ko Taku Reo staff to connect families and whānau to local resources to support their preschool children.

Resource Teachers of the Deaf provide theme-based activities, using the NZSL curriculum and Te Whāriki documents to plan these, as well as ensuring the interests of tamariki are followed through appropriate child-initiated play. Tamariki are encouraged to engage in meaningful play, learning the language and social/emotional skills appropriate for their age.

Playgroups are also an opportunity for whānau to ask questions about NZSL, educational pathways, technology and for parents to support each other in a relaxed, child-centred and welcoming environment. We aim to empower each whānau with knowledge, understanding and confidence of the learning journey their preschool child is on.

Preschool Residential Courses (PRC):

Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education offers on-site three-day Preschool Residential Courses (PRC) in Christchurch and Auckland that provides a tailored assessment and guidance program for preschool children and their whānau.

During the three days, support is provided in a variety of areas, including Deaf role models, NZSL/visual communication, Deaf Culture, Speech and Language Assessment, Early Literacy, Parent to Parent support, social support and guidance, Audiology, and resource ideas.

The foundation of the PRC philosophy is whānau-centred learning. We recognise that early involvement is a vital foundation for future success. PRC empowers whānau under the articles of Te Tiriti and supports a journey of inclusion, knowledge, belonging, and unity within the Deaf Community. Through our commitment to early childhood education, relationship building, and holistic development, PRC creates opportunities for children to reach their full potential. We value diversity and strive to create an environment where every child and whānau feels accepted and appreciated.





Early Years in the Outreach service:

Outreach services provide a continuum of service for students aged from 3 years. They provide specialist teaching, advice and guidance, assistive technology and NZSL support to Deaf or Hard of Hearing students enrolled in their local mainstream school or ECE setting. The level of specialist support provided to students is reviewed and allocated on a term-by-term basis following a process of locally prioritising and moderation.

Any DHH preschool child with a 1-year language delay or social needs can be referred to the Outreach Service for either an Interim Targeted Service (ITS) or direct support up to a maximum of 3 hours a week. The needs of the child will be assessed in collaboration with the AoDC, and a decision of level of service will be made as a result. Preschool children must be enrolled in a licenced ECE setting.

A preschool child receiving a Direct service in the Outreach part of Ko Taku Reo supports the student and ECE with hearing, language, social skills, and expressing and understanding their needs. The Resource Teacher of the Deaf (RTD) works with the whānau around their wants, needs and goals using Te Whāriki to support with their planning. They work alongside the Education Support Worker (ESW) and support the ECE with assistive technology, and they can support with the transition to school. RTDs take part in the IP process, working collaboratively with the wider team (eg First Signs). The AoDC is the lead worker and the RTD works collaboratively with them.

If an Interim Targeted Service (ITS) is identified as the best fit for the needs of the preschool child, this will involve a short piece of work with the student or upskilling the ESW and ECE. This is to provide knowledge, skills, or information for the child to continue to successfully access their ECE setting.

Co-Enrolment opportunities

The Outreach service provides the option for DHH children to access a Beacon Kindergarten (KidsFirst Kindergarten) within a co-enrolment philosophy. These two Beacon Kindergartens are currently being trialled in the hope of encouraging enrolment. The Beacon co-enrolment Kindergartens are working alongside a Teacher of the Deaf in establishing a Deaf friendly environment to support the specific recognised needs of DHH learners and utilising evidence-based strategies.

Outcomes:

Early Years environments will:

1. Work in partnership with whānau using a family-centred approach which promotes individual strengths, whānau empowering and resource building.
2. Support access to early language in the way that best meets the needs of the child.
3. Provide environments where shared goals inform the selection and alignment of strategies and resources at home and in the Early Years settings such as modelling of strategies.
4. Promote cultural understanding of Deaf through connectedness with the Deaf Community and also celebrating individual families' cultural identity.
5. Supporting social and emotional development through play that best meet their current needs and identity growth.

Monitoring and Reporting Protocols:

- Learning stories and learning notes shared with whānau
- Individual assessment and monitoring shared with team members and whānau
- Reporting as per our MoE Licensing criteria
- Progress reports to stakeholders
- Individual Plans/Whānau Plans (IPs/WPs)
- Termly reporting to Ko Taku Reo Board of Trustees and Deaf Education ECE Trust

Service Eligibility and Access:

Any DHH preschool aged child (0-5) can access many of our services. We welcome referrals for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, CoDA or siblings of DHH preschoolers. Whānau can self-refer or can be referred through AoDC (Ministry of Education), Cochlear Implant services, Teachers of the Deaf, First Signs Deaf Aotearoa, Early childhood services or Early Intervention Services.

- **Early Years Whānau Centre:**
We welcome all DHH children, siblings, whānau members, CoDA and anyone connected to the Deaf Community.
- **Preschool, Auckland:**
We are licenced for 2-5 years old and welcome children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, siblings, CoDA as well as the local community of Kelston, Glen Eden and New Lynn.
- **Outreach:**
An AoDC can refer a child if they are at least 3 and enrolled in a licenced ECE setting.

Application forms for all of our services can be found on our website:
www.kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/education/early-childhood

or scan the QR code below:

Scan to view
application form



