

Te Kura Pi'ohapatanga o W'akaa'hurangi/ Taranaki Diocesan School for Girls

Report to Synod 2026

At Te Kura Pi'ohapatanga o W'akaa'hurangi/ Taranaki Diocesan School for Girls our long-term mission is to conduct the school within its special character, so that students are educated in an inclusive, and supportive extended family atmosphere, which emphasises established Christian standards, values and observances in the Anglican tradition and faith.

The Boarding House is key in pursuing the goal of shaping courageous, resolute and successful young women, who care for others and the Earth, respecting others, taking responsibility and persevering in study and in life. We aim to create and maintain a school and boarding house which reflects the best in leadership, technology and innovation.

It has been a year of change at Taranaki Dio and we are poised for a new era. We were sad to farewell Principal Maria Taylor at the end of Term 1. The process of finding our next leader is underway. We were also sad to say good-bye to long-time Board of Proprietors' Chair, Archdeacon Emeritus Pat Scaife. Pat had been interested in the school for decades and held such memory for its past and care for its future. Rest in peace, Pat. Bishop Philip has also resumed his place at the head of the Board and we thank Archbishop David Moxon for his great contribution over the last years as Bishop Philip's alternate.

In support of our Anglican Special Character, Rev Kim Wright was employed 30 hours a week as our chaplain until the end of last year. Rev Kim invited our students to be curious and engaged in their spiritual journey and to encounter Christian teachings and practices, taking some classes for Religious Education and leading regular and engaging chapel services. She worked with the chapel team, who took on leadership in this area also, planning services and acting as liturgists (in English and te reo), readers and intercessors. Special services for welcoming school student leaders, for Ash Wednesday, Easter, St Mary's Day, the Blessing of Pets and for Christmas (with a Nativity Play) were held. Rev Wright took a group of girls to New Plymouth for a Parihaka celebration, where they sang and presented the story of Parihaka. A visit to Te Whare Hononga at the Taranaki Cathedral in New Plymouth was also undertaken for the girls to understand the history of the area and reconciliation work. Kim also organised a cultural exchange trip for the year 9s to travel to Waikato Diocesan school in term 4 of last year which was a huge success and eye opening for all who went on this journey.

Kim was also available for counselling girls. She prepared five girls who requested it for baptism and confirmation and we were delighted to share in the service. Sadly, we had

to farewell Kim as she and her family moved away. At present we are delighted that our Acting Principal, Caroline Gonouya, is working with the chapel team to continue services. Once we have a new Principal in place, a new Chaplain will be appointed. Rev Paul Bowers-Mason, missionary for Taranaki has also assisted, enabling the school to hold communion services when required, including for the school's recent St Mary's Day service.

Our Anglican Special Character also permeates the school in such things as grace before meals and restorative justice as the response to misbehaviour and disagreements. The girls choose and support charities during the year. This year, acting principal Caroline Gonouya organised the school's St Marys Day celebrations, introducing the concept of servant leadership into the mix, with all students spending their morning serving the wider community in some way, before the traditional chapel service, shared lunch and games component of the afternoon. Students and teachers visited rest homes and primary schools, polished brass at Holy Trinity, picked up rubbish in the town's parks and walkways, and cleaned windows at the marae.

We were pleased to see extra plantings going in, courtesy of a special grant this year, with the girls also receiving tuition in the care of gardens.

Our Boarding House staff are of high quality, leading a programme of daily life that nurtures the girls in a safe and inclusive environment with a mixture of routine activities and special occasions. Individual interests can be pursued (eg after school sports, both in teams and socially) and school requirements are supported (eg supervised homework). Activities like pickleball and team building games, and events like a talent show, an 80s disco and a special Christmas lunch enliven the year. The kitchen staff provide nutritious meals and snacks for all those in the boarding house (and for day girls at lunchtime). When all boarders are in, this is for 47 girls. At full extent, the boarding house could hold 132 girls but this has not been the experience of the school in recent years. We are keen to have more boarders, especially weekly boarders.

The Big Sister programme operated again this year, whereby an existing student welcomes a new one and shows her the ropes, especially at the beginning of the school year. This played a big part in the transition process for the year 9s and was a great opportunity for the senior students to care for others. This programme's main focus is always to encourage relationships between students that go beyond school.

Snippets from a survey of boarders provide insight into what's especially appreciated – or not! The favourite thing about boarding was overwhelmingly to do with friendships but the proximity to school, the food and the matrons also featured; the matrons were noted for their kindness, caring, understanding and supportiveness, as well as having good listening skills, and also appreciated were practical things like providing routine and safety and driving boarders to where they needed to be.

The global view and inclusive aspect of our school were experienced in the Boarding House with two Gap Students from Germany assisting, as part of the staff last year and one this, with another joining her soon. We have also had several Japanese students stay for varying lengths of time. Work is currently underway in extending the school's international student programme, with the aim to increase the number of students from overseas over the next few years. The hope is to also expand into the Three Tikanga (three-way partnership) of the Diocese and get some pasifika students from The South Pacific Nations (Tikanga Polynesia), and Europe to also join the school. This will benefit all Taranaki Dio students, with the opportunity to learn more about other cultures and to build friendships and connections across the world.

Academic, sporting and cultural life is obviously core to a school. Having small classes means the girls get plenty of individual attention from our excellent teaching staff, and programmes can be designed to suit. As well as working towards NCEA in the classroom, there have been opportunities for some of the girls to take up programmes offered by WITT, ITO, Nznet and te kura in order to pursue subjects of interest. Science badges in a variety of sub-topics are a strong interest for some of the girls and the YES business programme has been pursued to good effect too. Visits to the world outside the school, taking a look at future career and study opportunities among other things, are part of school life too. Our supported learning department is growing as part of our inclusive approach to learning. We welcome students who live with learning and physical disabilities to become who they were created to be and are an important part of our daily school life, including some being a part of the chapel team.

The school celebrates academic success with a special assembly. A pleasing number of students received an excellence endorsement for NCEA at their level last year, including around a quarter of the 2025 level 3 cohort getting an overall excellence endorsement. Many of our student leavers were able to secure scholarships to universities of their choice in 2025 based on their academic achievements and overall contributions to the school.

A wide variety of sports are enjoyed at the school and in competitions, locally and around the country, at levels from strictly social through to highly competitive. An equestrian team joined the variety this year and has gone as far as Napier to represent Taranaki Dio at the Secondary Schools Equestrian Cup in Taupo. The girls also get an opportunity to participate in sporting events organised by the Taranaki Secondary Schools Sports Association which provides competitive and non-competitive sports. This is an organisation set up for all secondary schools in Taranaki to provide opportunities for students to have meaningful and rewarding sport and physical activity experiences to enhance their wellbeing. The size of our school does not limit girls from pursuing sports they are passionate about because of our good relationships with other local secondary schools. This year we had a composite football team with Stratford

High School which enjoyed considerable success, a composite hockey team with Inglewood High School and one of our girls went to the Maurice Hulme Tournament in a composite team with Waitara High school.

Cultural and musical group activities over the last year included: a strong kapa haka group, which performed at school events but also at Te Korimako o Taranaki competitions; Showquest, where the school won Excellence in Dance and a recognition in the Music, Culture and Technology at Regionals coming first overall, and went on to compete at the Nationals, where they won the Best Story and the Live Music award for their performance; House Music was an in-house choral competition, as was the Talent Show; a successful season of High School Musical was put on this year with much of the school involved. There is also the opportunity for students to take up individual lessons in vocal or instrumental skills.

Taranaki Diocesan School is a small school with a huge heart and proud to be part of the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki family.