



# Otaika Valley School

# New Entrant Parent

# Information Book

## Term Dates for 2026

4 Feb -17 Dec

<b>Term 1 2025</b>	<b>Term 2 2025</b>	<b>Term 3 2025</b>	<b>Term 4 2025</b>
<b>4 Feb - 2 April</b>	<b>20 Apr - 3 July</b>	<b>20 July - 25 Sept</b>	<b>12 Oct- 17 Dec</b>

# Welcome to Otaika Valley School

Kia ora Parents / Caregivers

Starting school is an exciting time and an important step in your child's life and also your own. We look forward to working alongside you and your child to make the transition from preschool to school a positive experience.

This booklet provides you with some information about how to help your child settle into Otaika Valley School and how to assist them with their learning in the first year at school.

During a child's first year at school we focus on developing foundation skills in literacy and numeracy along with encouraging the children to begin to develop the key competencies of Thinking; Relating to Others; Understanding Language, Symbols & Text; Managing Self; Participating, and Contributing. These are skills they will need to be successful life-long learners. In addition to these core areas, the New Entrant programme also covers Health & PE, The Arts, and Topic Studies (Science, Social Science & Technology).

Communication between home and school is an integral part of your child's learning journey at Otaika Valley School. We have an open door policy and view communication between home and school as an integral part of your child's learning journey. You are welcome to approach any of the teachers and arrange a meeting at an appropriate time if you have any concerns.

Once again a warm welcome to our kura. We look forward to working in partnership to help your child achieve our school vision 'TOGETHER WE GROW' - 'Kia tupu Kotāhi ai tatou'

Ngā mihi

Rick Sayer (Tumuaki/ Principal)

Here is a link to the Ministry of Education website regarding enrolling your child at school:

[Enrolling and Starting Your Child at School](#)

## **Contact us**

**Phone:** 09 4322731

**Website:** <https://www.otaika.school.nz/>

**E-mail:** admin@otaika.school.nz

# Pre-School Visits

We encourage all new pre-school children and their parents to have two visits prior to starting school. Please contact or call the school administration up to 6 months prior to your child starting school on 09 432 2731 (admin@otaika.school.nz) with the following details:

- Your child's name & date of birth.
- Your name, phone details, and email so that we can send notices to you.

We hold pre-school visits on Monday and your child's teacher will contact you 6-8 weeks prior to starting school to arrange to visit dates with you.

Rick Sayer and I also plan a visit to kindys and centres prior to your child starting.

- Visit 1: 9.00am-11.00am
- Visit 2: 9.00am-1.20pm
- Visit 3: 9.00am-2.00pm

**The purpose of these 'three' visits is to:**

- **make the transition to school an enjoyable experience for your child and yourself;**
- **meet fellow pupils, staff, and prospective friends;**
- **develop confidence in class;**
- **become familiar with the layout and facilities at school;**
- **experience some school activities, and to become familiar with school and class routines.**
- **meet our principal Mr Sayer during one of these visits.**

**FIRST VISIT** Please do the following:

- Pack a drink bottle and 'brain snack' in a lunch box
- Arrive before the morning bell goes at 9.00 am and sign in at the school office where the administration team will introduce you to the class teacher.
- Help your child place his/her bag in the bag bay before school
- Support your child with the activities in the classroom
- Help your child identify his/her bag when it is time to leave

**SECOND VISIT**

- Remind your child to place his/her bag in the bag bay before the bell
- Line up with other children outside the classroom (unless wet - go inside)
- Encourage your child to enter the class independently.
- You might also like to purchase the required stationery for your child from the office administration team. Stationery lists are also available in the office if you wish to purchase items in town.

**THIRD VISIT**

- Talk about your plan for drop off and you leaving
- Encourage prior routines
- Ask your child to enter the class independently.
- Leave promptly

# The New Entrant Teacher

**Class: Room 1**  
**Rachel Dickens.**  
**Email: [r.dickens@otaika.school.nz](mailto:r.dickens@otaika.school.nz)**

Otaika Valley operates one new entrant (Room 1) and one year one class (Room 2).

## Classification of children

New Entrant children currently start school throughout the year on their 5th birthday. The time of year your child starts school will determine their year group classification until in Year 4.

Five-year-old children starting school from the beginning of the school year until the end of March will be classified as Year 1.

Five-year-old children starting school from May 1st until the end of the school year will be classified as Year 0.

Children who turn five during April will be classified by the school as either Year 0 or year 1. Otaika Valley School requires new entrants to spend 3 terms in year 1.

We prefer to give children the best start to school by being taught in a New Entrant class for 2 terms prior to transitioning into Year 1 the following calendar year.

## Enrolment

Please ensure you have filled out the following items and returned them to the school office prior to your child starting school:

- Enrolment form
- Pupil cyber safety consent form

The office needs to sight:

- Verification of date of birth - a copy of your child's birth certificate or passport
- Your child's immunization certificate
- Any custody papers or concerns around family circumstances
- Health information e.g. asthma plan, EpiPen plan, speech therapy, audiology, specialist reports

# Starting School

Your child will use the skills and knowledge they have learned at pre-school, Kohanga Reo or Kindergarten when they start school. They will also experience some new activities in the New Entrant class.

Children bring to school many different skills and experiences and we spend the first few weeks getting to know your child. We assess their knowledge in a range of areas and plan our learning programmes to meet the needs of all children. After your child has been at school for 3-4 weeks we will email you to arrange a mutually convenient time to phone you and have a discussion with you about how your child is settling into school.

Your child needs to arrive at school from 8.30 - 8.45 am and will finish school at 3.00 pm.

In the mornings, your child needs to put their bag and belongings in their cubby hole and put their reading bag in their file box in the classroom. After the first week please encourage your child to do this independently.

Your child will need a brain snack, morning tea, lunch, and a water bottle each day. Please name all clothing and personal items. Sunhats are compulsory in Terms 1 & 4. It is advisable for children to also have a change of clothes as they tend to get wet while playing in the sand pit at times.



# Tips for a positive start

Help your child to prepare for school by

- Talking about school with enthusiasm
- Downplaying any unhelpful comments that people make about school
- If possible, try to purchase stationery at one of the two Friday pre-school visits so your child's teacher can have it all ready for them on day one.

**It is also expected that your child can:**

- Recognise their own name
- Write their own first name
- Manage scissors and crayons
- Manage their own clothes and shoes
- Manage their toileting independently and wash their hands
- Blow their nose
- Sit down for a short time and listen
- Follow simple instructions
- Ask for things they need
- Get changed into and out of swimwear in term 1.

**It is also helpful, but not essential if your child can:**

- Recognise and name colours
- Count to 10 and recognize numbers 0-10
- Write their own name
- Recognise that each alphabet letter makes a different sound and is associated with pictures e.g. apple makes the sound a
- State some letter names
- Recite some Nursery rhymes - rhyming is an essential part of learning to read
- Experiment with jigsaw puzzles. [Jigsaws](#)
- Play memory/listening games e.g. Snap, pairs, Simon Says

Help yourself prepare for school by

- Remembering you may feel unexpected emotions e.g. anxiety, grief, nervousness
- Make sure you have your own support in place to help you handle the event. It may help to organize to go to a friend's house for coffee rather than go home and worry all day. (We can call you during a break if you are concerned). Your child will be safe and happy at school once they get to know the routines.

When you get to school:

- Encourage your child to put away their own bag/belongings in their cubby hole
- Say hello to the teacher and other friends with your child
- Show or remind your child where the toilets are and any other place that is important to know about, such as where they will play
- A code on your child's hand so they know how they are getting home e.g. B for bus or ASC for After School Care
- When the time comes, make goodbyes short. Teachers have a lot of practice helping children to settle in and managing an upset child. If you appear upset or anxious this may affect your child
- If your child is upset when you leave, we still recommend that you go promptly, children settle down after 2-3 minutes. We will send you a photo not long after you have left. If your child does not settle we would notify you. So please do not worry

#### After School:

- Expect your child to be very tired for the first two weeks. They will probably be very hungry too. Let them adjust to being at home before asking too much about their day. It is a lot easier to get children of any age to talk about school when they are doing something else with you e.g. helping to make dinner, tidying up, etc.
- Make a time to read together each day. Your child may have a reading book on the first day. It's a good idea to get into the habit of having some shared reading every day right from the start.
- Teachers love to share their child's successes and will often pop over for a chat with you. However, they are often busy after school with meetings so if you have any concerns please make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher.

**Remember we will arrange a parent conference with you after your child has been at school for 3-4 weeks. This conference is an opportunity to discuss how your child has settled and their learning needs. You will also receive a "Transition to School" report after the phone conference.**



## Mihi Whakatau

We start each term with a mihi whakatau to welcome all manuhiri (new students and whanau) who are starting with us that term or who started during the previous term. This is held on the first day of school of the new term and is followed by an opportunity for whanau to sit down with the Principal and Deputy Principal over a cuppa and some kai.

# Helping your child with their learning

## Alphabet

**Learning the alphabet is a focus in the first year at school. To help them with reading and writing, children need to learn letter names, letter sounds, pictures associated with each letter and the upper and lower case pairs.**

### **Some ideas for helping your child learn the alphabet include**

- I spy
- Magnetic letters on the fridge. E.g. "Find the letter at the start of sun. Can you find all the B's" etc. Use for spelling practice with more able readers. E.g. "Make cat, Now can you change it to make sat?"
- Put alphabet on cards and play snap, fish, etc. Can be done for either letter names or sounds.
- Play "Odd One Out". Say 4 words e.g. apple, ant, tiger, as. Which is the odd one out that starts a different way?
- When your child brings home their reading book please encourage them to read it with you.
- Playing a guessing game is a fun way to learn - say a word and get your child to find the letter it starts with. Choose a letter and get your child to tell you words that start with that letter. Do action and get your child to tell you the sound or letter name
- Put an alphabet poster up and help your child identify letters or match letters and sounds
- Mix up the order you do this in
- Alphabet jigsaws and books
- Make letters with playdough
- Draw letters outside with chalk or water and a paintbrush - or even in the sand on the beach
- Puzzle books: dot-to-dot, same and different pictures, mazes.

## Reading

We currently have all staff using the Structured Literacy Approach. The Structured Literacy Approach is an integrated classroom literacy programme for Year 0-8 classrooms. The approach is based on several years of research trials investigating the most efficient and effective methods to support children's early reading, writing, and oral language success. It incorporates vocabulary development using quality children's story books, structured teaching of critical phonological awareness skills and letter-sound knowledge through fun, game-based activities, activities making explicit links to the reading and spelling context, and structured small group reading sessions using the new Ready to Read - Phonics Plus early readers series, This approach follows a phonics scope and sequence that is used in the class and small group reading teaching. It also incorporates carefully designs monitoring assessments focused on critical early skills known to influence reading success. This includes letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, oral language, word reading and spelling, and connected text tasks, specifically designed to monitor children's literacy growth in their first year of school, and provide specific direction for teaching at the class and individual level. Whanau engagement is a critical component of early literacy success.

### **Some ideas for helping your child at home include**

- Talk to your child about the book. Look at the pictures together and encourage your child to retell the story in their own words
- Listen to your child read to you and help them point to each word. After a while they will be able to point at each word by themselves as they read
- Make a regular time each evening for your child to read their book to you and also for you to read to them. A bedtime story is a great way of enjoying books with your child - including Nursery Rhymes and Fairy Tales

- Beginning readers need to use pictures to help them work out the words. Encourage them to do this. Never cover up the pictures
- When you read with your child use book language such as author, illustrator, cover, title, pages, words, letters, etc.
- We will be focusing on some heart words at school. These are all the common little words e.g. is, to, the, we, I, an etc. Help your child recognize these words in their reading book. You can also adapt lots of the ideas for learning the alphabet for learning to read and write heart words

**Remember to make reading fun and enjoyable and to give your child lots of praise for their effort and new skills!**

## **Numeracy**

**In the first year at school your child will focus on becoming confident with numbers from 0-20. This includes counting forwards and backward, reading and writing numbers, and simple addition and subtraction.**

**Ideas for helping your child develop numeracy skills include:**

- Pointing out numbers in your local environment e.g. letter boxes, signs
- Reading number books or doing number jigsaws, dot-to-dot
- Provide opportunities for your child to practice counting as they help you with simple chores e.g. Laying the table - "Can you get 4 forks and 3 spoons to lay the table for tea". At the Supermarket - "Put 8 oranges in the bag for me please".
- Talk about simple maths problems with your child e.g. "I need to make 2 sandwiches for you and 2 for your brother. How many will that be altogether?"
- Talk positively about maths (especially if you found it challenging yourself at school)
- Let your child help with baking. This activity involves lots of maths concepts: measuring, counting, fractions
- Using maths language with your child e.g. tallest, heaviest, long, short, before, after, etc.

# Lunches and Breaks

We have 2 breaks during the school day. Children play first then eat afterward. Break 1: -11:00-11:30. Eating 11:30-11:40. Break 2: 1:20 -1:50 - Eating 1:50 - 2:00

School lunches are currently provided at OVS. These are brought in by an external company and we eat these at 11:30 - 11:40 am

To help your child develop healthy eating habits please:

- Fill their drink bottle with water only
- Remember fruit or nuts are best for brain snack time and sugar-free snacks for morning tea
- Please don't send lollies, chocolate, or uncooked noodles to school

On occasion, the school may also run a sausage sizzle or similar at lunchtime as a fundraiser. You will receive advance notice in your child's bag and/or via a school email. Orders, with appropriate money, must be received no later than the day prior to the event.

# Communications

**Keeping in touch...**Please download the **HERO** (Parent and Teacher) phone app so that you can see the school calendar with events happening this year and receive our e-notifications and information updates. (Download from App Store or Google play store). See attached brochure.

You may also use our school website to find our calendar, policy information, strategic plan, Board of Trustee members, and other useful school information.

The school sends out fortnightly notices or newsletters. These are emailed to you provided you have provided the office with your email address and are published on the school website.

**Class notices:** Your teacher will have a preferred way of communicating with whanau and caregivers. This will be via hard copy notices, via email, or via a communications app called Seesaw and our school communication app 'HERO'. Find out how to expect to receive information from your child's teacher.

# Unwell Children

Please refer to the Ministry of Health link below to find out what our guidelines are around childhood illness.

[Ministry of Health Infectious Diseases Chart](#)

# Buses

## **Ministry of Education School Bus Eligibility**

Our bus currently only runs from Jobe Road to school.

Students must meet all three eligibility criteria:

1. The school must be the closest state or state-integrated school where the student can enroll.
2. Students must live more than a certain distance from the school.

Years 1-8: at least 3.2km from the school, over the shortest public road or pedestrian route from the home roadside gate to the school's front gate.

3. There must be no suitable public transport.

Schools are responsible for determining whether students are eligible for school transport assistance. An application is not required for a place on a school bus. Caregivers should speak to their school's Bus Controller or another staff member to confirm their child's eligibility and find out what school transport options are available.

Follow this link to find out about our School Buses each day. [School Bus Information](#)

# Specialists

We have two staff members assigned to support students who have special learning needs. Mrs Nieddu is the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), and Mrs O'brien is our Learning Support Coordinator. We also have a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour at school one day a week who supports staff with the learning needs of children.

We also have contact with Ministry Psychologists and Speech Therapists. If your child already has contact with either of these it is really helpful to let us know when you enroll your child.

# Guidelines for Concerns

If you have any concerns about your child, incidents or school policies please follow these steps as soon as possible:

1. Arrange an appointment to meet with the class teacher - give him/her some idea of what you wish to discuss. We can then have time to gather the relevant information in order to discuss how best to help you and your child. It may also mean inviting another teacher or specialist to the meeting.
2. If you are still concerned after the meeting, arrange a further meeting with the Head Teacher for Senior classes (Years 4-6) with Mrs Neiddu or Miss Keogh (Years 0 -3) to further discuss the issue.

***By following these guidelines it will alleviate the stress levels for you and your child promptly as well as put your mind at rest knowing that we are working as a team in the best interests of your child.***

A copy of our complaints and concerns policy is also available from our website or from the school office.

## Being Ready to start at Ōtaika Valley School:

We are excited your child is about to start school, and like you we have expectations for your child. We know that 5 year olds are very capable children, and that they have long left being a baby, toddler and preschooler. They are at school, therefore in the first 5 weeks at school, it is essential we all work together on these expectations.

### We expect:

<input type="checkbox"/> Your child to carry their bag to school, at least from the gate and place it on the hook by their name.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can complete any morning tasks, such as put their book bag away, hand in a note, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can write their name, neatness is not vital. 4 & 5 year olds can do this well.
<input type="checkbox"/> You to prompt your child on arrival to go and say hello to the teacher.
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your child to show you around and then say goodbye - <u>adults who delay</u> can create an upset child.
<input type="checkbox"/> As you leave encourage your child to do something: play, puzzle, blocks, books, etc
<input type="checkbox"/> When the bell goes we expect students to come to class - support your child to know this.
<input type="checkbox"/> When asked to come to the mat, your child will come.
<input type="checkbox"/> When your child's name is called, we expect them to respond.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child will listen when someone speaks to them.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child will sit on the mat, on the space allocated.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child will use manners where needed, especially please, pardon and thank you.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child will hold a pencil correctly - excellent YouTube sites to explain correct grip.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can hold and use scissors correctly.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can listen to a story on the mat.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can follow class routines.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can blow their nose, can manage collecting a tissue and disposing of it in the bin.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can put things away when asked.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child will tell an adult they need to use the toilet and can manage themselves at the toilet.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can tell us how they are feeling - happy, mad, sad, unwell, etc
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can undress and dress for swimming.
<input type="checkbox"/> Your child can ask a question and ask for help.

Our expectations are all based on setting up your child for success. Five year olds are amazing and capable. We appreciate not all children have the same learning rate, however, if we all support them to gain mastery towards the above expectations in 5 weeks, then we are telling your child they matter. Early mastery of these fundamental expectations for school will lead to continual success.

**Thank you for your interest in starting your child at Otaika Valley School. If you require any further information please contact us**

**Please check our website [otaika.school.nz](http://otaika.school.nz)**

**Or contact the school at:**

Otaika Valley School

11 Valley View Road

RD 10 0170

Whangarei

Ph: 09 432 2731

Principal/Tumuaki: Mr Rick Sayer

Email: [principal@otaika.school.nz](mailto:principal@otaika.school.nz)

