

Welcome to Whānau Koru

Te Kura o Te Roto a Rangi

“ To value diversity and to develop curious, confident and connected learners.”

Tena Koutou Malo e Lelei Talofa Lava Bula Vinaka Kia Orana
Fakaalofa Lahi Atu Ciao Namaste Al Salaam a' alaykum
Ni hao Annyong ha shimnikka Greetings

We are looking forward to getting to know your child and their whānau. It is an exciting time as your child starts school. We hope you find the information in this booklet useful and that it helps make the transition to school as smooth as possible.



Some fantastic sketches by some of our New Entrants

Balmoral School Vision

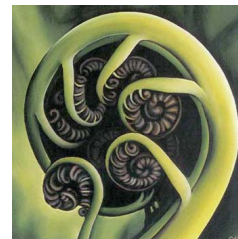
To value diversity and to develop curious, confident and connected learners.



Poipoia te kakano kia puawai
Nurture the seed and it will blossom



Welcome to Whānau Koru!



Our School Day

Our school day starts at 9:00 am, although the children can arrive from 8:30am onwards. If you take your child out for an appointment you need to sign them out at the school office.

We find that the children settle much better when they have time to get themselves ready for learning, e.g. unpacking their school bags, having a play and having time to make that first connection with the teacher. Ideally, please aim to arrive by 8:50am to give your child time to do this. The bell that you may hear at 8:30am and then again at 8:35am is the Intermediate School bell.

The Primary School Bell goes at 9:00am to signal the start of our day.

Our day is split into 3 learning blocks:

9:00am to 10:40am (Morning Tea)

11:00am to 12:30pm(Lunch)

1:30pm to 3:00pm.

From 12:30 to 12:40pm, the teacher will supervise the children eating. When the 'moving bell' goes at 12:40 the children are free to go and play. They can remain eating if they choose but the teacher may not supervise them at this time. We are a silver enviroschool and we



encourage litter free lunchboxes ie no gladwrap or packaged foods.

Please make sure that your child wears appropriate clothing – we do many different things during our day that might involve getting wet or dirty, so please keep a change of clothes in your child's school bag.

Whakatau ki te Kura o te Roto a Rangi

Welcome to Balmoral School

At the start of each term, the school holds a whakatau which is a traditional Māori welcome, which literally means to settle. This ceremony is our way of welcoming new students and staff, along with their whānau, into the Balmoral School community. You are very welcome to bring extended whānau plus anyone who is important to your child as they begin their learning journey at Balmoral. You will receive an invitation to the whakatau nearest to your child's start date.

What to expect at the whakatau

- The manuhiri (visitors) will gather together outside the hall then someone will lead you into the whakatau.
- The **tangata whenua** (hosts) will be seated facing the **manuhiri** (visitors) to welcome you.
- A **mihi** (welcome speech) will be made by a representative of the school. Then the children and staff will stand and sing a **waiata** (song) to support the speaker's message. (There may be other speakers and a waiata will follow each speech). Children and Staff will sit down.
- A representative from the **manuhiri** (visitors) will respond, then the group will stand and sing to support the speaker, a **waiata**. The group will sit down.
- The last speaker will then be from the school.
- **Hariru** – the hosts and new families involved will shake hands, hongis (nose to nose) or kiss.
- Balmoral School will offer a simple morning tea or **kai** for everyone to share. This concludes the whakatau and signifies the coming together of the visitors and the Balmoral community.

Tikanga – whakatau (Customs or Procedures)

After consultation with our school wide community, including staff, parents and the Board of Trustees, as well as consultation with local Kaumatua, we have developed our own school tikanga (customs or procedures) for our school whakatau, to reflect the visions and values of our school.

- Men and women are allowed to speak – this is both for the Tangata Whenua and the Manuhuri. The Principal will open the whakatau with a formal mihi.
- Speakers are welcome to speak in any language they feel comfortable with, however, a greeting in Te Reo Māori is encouraged.
- To recognise the Māori world view and respect the mana, members of the SLT, whānau leaders and the Tikanga team sit in the front row.
- Men and women can sit in the front row – speakers should sit in the front row.
- If in the front row, you will be asked to take part in the Hariru, you can choose whether to hongi, handshake or kiss on the cheek.
- Student leaders and representatives from the Primary and Intermediate will be invited to sit on chairs with the teachers as Tangata Whenua.
- A haka pōwhiri, welcoming chant, may be performed by staff and students.
- We do not have karanga, ceremonial call, at our whakatau. Karanga is traditionally viewed as a connection between the living and spiritual worlds, the karanga is steeped in tikanga and epitomises the mana wahine — the power of women within the marae. It is a spiritual call that has been heard through generations of whānau across the country and is usually used at a Pōwhiri, not a whakatau. As part of our whānau consultation, the local Kaumatua and whānau felt that it was not appropriate for girls of Primary school age to be asked to karanga. It is also something that would require specialist teaching and this is not something we are currently able to offer at school.

- Manuhuri are invited to stay for a cup of tea, coffee or drink and a bite to eat to remove the tapu, sacredness from the ceremony. A karakia kai will be recited before manuhiri are invited to eat.

In all of our classrooms, we work with students from a range of different cultures and backgrounds. It is important to get to know all of our students and their cultural beliefs, traditions and values so that we can acknowledge them in a culturally responsive way.

As a school in Aotearoa (New Zealand), we also have a bi-cultural commitment. It is expected that as professionals, we *“understand and recognise the unique status of tangata whenua in Aotearoa New Zealand.”*

Our school Karakia

This is shared every day. It is non-denominational and allows us to come together and begin our day in a calm way with the intention of reminding students of our expectations - this can be spoken in Te Reo Māori and also in English so that the meaning is really understood. It reinforces our school vision, philosophy and habits.

Our Karakia can be found on the school website.

Our school Tikanga is aligned with Māori Tikanga, therefore:

- We ask children not to sit on tables - this is because food may be eaten at the table.
- We don't put hats or bags on tables - again, this is because food can be eaten at the tables.
- Food is not wasted as part of our inquiry approach - ideally food would be out of date and able to re-purposed/composted at the end of its use. We are mindful of the environmental aspect of using food as part of our curriculum.
- Although this is a busy school, during lunchtimes, we encourage children to be aware of not stepping over lunchboxes or other children whilst they are eating - food is precious and should be treated carefully, it's not hygienic to walk over food. Heads are also considered to be tapu, sacred, in the Māori culture, as in many other cultures.



The Independent Child

One of our goals in whānau Koru is to foster a child's independence. We call it 'managing self'. You can help with this. Here are a few suggestions:

- Give your child food they can manage themselves - if there are packets in their lunch box, can they open them? Put a small slit in the package when you pack their food so they can just rip the packets open.
- Can they peel their fruit? – you might want to put peeled and chopped fruit in a small container for them to eat, or put a slit in the top of a banana. In general children do not want to spend any more time eating than necessary so as soon as the moving bell goes they are off to play.
- Footwear – encourage them to wear footwear that they can manage: velcro shoes and sandals are much quicker and easier than laces and buckles.
- School bags - the children are encouraged to pack their own bags and take care of possessions. Is their bag big enough? The bigger the better to fit their lunch boxes and book bags. Try not to do it for them at the start and end of the day!
- Getting changed - at times the children will need to change themselves, especially in the winter when they get wet and muddy. During Term 1 and Term 4, the children go swimming and need to be able to change in and out of their swimming togs. Can they manage their zips, belts and buckles?

Learning Model in the Junior School – Years 0-2

Balmoral School's rationale for Play

Educationalists have known for decades that play is an essential component of learning for all children, not just those in Early Childhood Education. In the last 20 years, an extensive amount of research has been undertaken globally, which supports this belief. It is understood that the development of the Limbic system, the part of the brain that deals with social and emotional skills, is just as important as developing cognitive skills.



There are a number of foundational skills that children need before they are ready for 'formal' reading, writing and maths. As young children develop, the acquisition of social and emotional skills is paramount and is now thought to be an indicator of success later on in life. How our students view themselves as a learner is critical. During the early years of school, 5yrs to 8 yrs old, it is crucial that we support our students to build their creativity, imagination, resilience and social and emotional skills. Our school curriculum helps our students to do this through Play and an Inquiry approach to learning.

Research from many areas of education, psychology, neuroscience, and behavioural science, support the fundamental importance of play in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that children will require for their future.

Often there is an idea that play in the classroom is an either/or approach – either the children are playing or teachers are teaching. This is not the case. An effective play environment is rich with opportunities for children to engage in Literacy and Numeracy, along with the other learning areas of the curriculum.

Play in whānau Koru



This will be a combination of self-initiated play and guided play, with the teacher asking questions, scaffolding and extending the play where appropriate. Teachers set up provocations each day, with different curriculum areas in mind, that children can choose to

engage with and which build on the thinking and learning happening in the classroom. Our aim is to prioritise self-initiated Play and we do this by ensuring that the children have a good amount of time each day, dedicated to their chosen play.

Children will have the opportunity to return to their play during the day while the teacher works with groups of children for instructional groups or class sessions in Reading, Writing, Maths and Inquiry. Other timetabled learning activities will also take place across the week outside of the children's play.

Reading

A number of international studies into reading have shown that there is no benefit to early reading. By the time children reach the end of Primary School, there is no difference in reading between those children that started reading at 5 years old versus those who started reading at 7 years old. What can happen though, is that children can lose self-confidence as they struggle to try and learn to read when cognitively, they are not necessarily ready for this until the age of 7. We want children to experience reading in a range of authentic forms - we do not want to give children the message that they can only learn to read when they are with a teacher. Nor do we want them to mistake reading as being something that is associated with a colour level.

Reading in whānau Koru

Throughout the day, there are multiple opportunities for reading to be shared and skills to be developed through the children's play and the class Inquiry. Daily sharing of books also ensures that there are rich oral language experiences for the children to build on.

Teachers will work with small groups of children daily, for instructional reading sessions and there will be a phonics session each day. There are many opportunities for practicing reading throughout the day.



Taking books home

These should be for enjoyment. Once a week, the class will visit the school library and children may bring library books home for one week. There are a range of books in the classroom, and children are encouraged to take them home to share with their whānau. If they choose a book which is of interest to them but perhaps too challenging, then please read the book to your children.

Reading at home should include lots of reading to your children – we want children to build a love of reading without the anxiety which can be associated with having to read a book from school. Research from the National Library states that “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading, is reading aloud to children.”



Writing in whānau Koru

We know from research, that effective writing happens when teachers: use authentic contexts for writing; plan instructional writing sessions; and are responsive to the 'in the moment' teaching opportunities.

As with reading, there are many opportunities for practicing writing throughout the school day. Writing will have an authentic context, and wherever possible, will link to the play and inquiry that the teacher sees happening in the classroom. Developing strong oral language skills is crucial to writing and play provides a rich and authentic context for developing these skills. In addition to the child initiated and teacher directed opportunities, there will be phonics sessions and smaller teacher directed writing sessions. Handwriting will be supported as part of the phonics session and within shared writing.



Maths in whānau Koru

Through their play, children are immersed in a rich mathematical environment. Teachers observe closely in order to recognise and build on the maths that is occurring naturally through the children's play and inquiry. With a Maths lens, teachers will make suggestions with a clear maths focus in mind. In addition, there will be instructional group teaching across the week and a daily focus on numbers.



Inquiry in whānau Koru

By observing and listening closely to the children in Play, teachers will notice recurring ideas and interests that could become a whole class inquiry focus. There will be one class line of inquiry that will be built on as a class through play and through whole class times. It will flow into other learning areas.



Philosophy for Children – P4C

In Year 0/1, the focus of P4C is, initially, on skills-building such as: listening to each other; being able to give reasons for our thinking; and building on each other's ideas. These skills-based sessions will be linked to the inquiry or play wherever appropriate and when it feels purposeful to do so. These skills are then built on across all learning areas.

Assembly

Primary School Assembly takes place every two weeks on a Friday and you are most welcome to come along. Your child's teacher will advise you when it is your child's class assembly. The assembly days are also on the school website calendar.

Communication

Please feel free to talk to your child's teacher before or after school. One of the advantages of teaching in this area of the school is that we are able to not only get to know the children but their families too. If you have a concern that may take more than a few minutes then we would prefer that you make a set time with the teacher where they can give you their full attention. Before school we are usually getting ready for our day and some days after school we have meetings. If you do have any concerns then you should address these with your child's teacher in the first instance.

Another good place to check what is happening at school is the school website (www.balmoral.school.nz) Your child's teacher will also send a class email to you at least twice a term. If you do not have access to email then please advise your child's teacher. School newsletters go home electronically. If you require a paper copy they are available from the school office. These are also downloadable from the school website.

Parent Help

We welcome parent help in our classrooms. However we do request that you wait until your child is settled at school, as sometimes seeing their parent in the classroom upsets them and distracts them from their learning.

Common questions about Play based learning in Years 0-2

What is Play based learning or learning through Play?

Learning through play is a pedagogical approach where play is the valued mode of learning – where children can explore, experiment, discover, and solve problems in imaginative and playful ways.

Learning through play is also called play-based learning. (TKI site)

Often there is an idea that play in the classroom is an either/or approach – either the children are playing or teachers are teaching. This is not the case. An effective play environment is rich with opportunities for children to engage in Literacy and Numeracy, along with the other learning areas of the curriculum.

Characteristics of Play:

Primarily, Play is:
self chosen and self-directed
process rather than product driven
contains structures or rules established by the players themselves
Imaginative, non-literal and removed from reality
Occurs between those who are active, alert and non-stressed
(Gray,2013; Brewer, 2007)

If my child is allowed to just play all day, how will they learn?

Having read the welcome booklet or looked through the website, you will of course know that children are learning so much through their play. Whilst teachers are present to observe, coach, question and extend the children's learning, we know that learning does not only happen when an adult is present. Our own experiences of figuring things out by ourselves, or with our peers, shows us this. Research from many areas of education, psychology, neuroscience, and behavioural science, supports the fundamental importance of Play in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that children will require for their future.

What are the benefits of learning through play?

Learning through play can help schools realise the vision of *The New Zealand Curriculum* to develop confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. Almost all of the values and key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* can be developed through play-based learning.

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that learning through play brings numerous benefits to students' learning and development.

Thinking skills

Play-based activities enable students to engage in flexible and higher-level thinking processes. These include inquiry processes of problem solving, analysing, evaluating, applying knowledge, innovation, and creativity.

Interpersonal skills

Play-based learning often requires interaction with others and gives students the opportunity to practice language development, cooperation, negotiation, leadership, empathy, active listening, and compromise.

Intrapersonal skills

Play contributes to a child's sense of well-being and can support the development of intrapersonal skills such as self-esteem, motivation, resilience, concentration, persistence, and time management.

Student agency and engagement

Play-based learning can encourage student agency and often results in deeper levels of student engagement in learning.

Smooth transitions to school

Our new entrant students settle to school quicker than in previous years, because of improved continuity between the school and early childhood curriculum.

[Taken from TKI website - click here to go to the site](#)

[Learning through Play - evidence white paper](#)

However, as much as we would like them to, the children don't play all day!

Across the day and week, the children participate in:

Inquiry	Story telling	Swimming T1 and
Maths groups	Independent	T4
Maths games and	reading	Music
investigations	Independent	Library time
Reading groups	writing	Health education
Writing groups	Shared reading	Kapa haka and
Phonics groups	Shared writing	waiata
Philosophy for	Physical Education	
Children	Time in the gym	
Visual ar		

Is Play-based learning less structured than a traditional classroom?

Each day the Junior school follows a clear structure and pattern with common routines which the children understand. Each day they will come together to sing and share the school Karakia, play, learn phonics, listen to some shared reading and stories.

The teachers also plan for each day, even for Play. There are intentional provocations set-up within Play and Inquiry and spoken about with the children. This allows teachers to scaffold and extend learning that they have observed.

How will my child be taught how to read and write if they are playing all day?

Instructional reading and writing sessions take place across the week, as they would in a non-play based classroom. The instructional teaching of reading and writing at our school is no different to how it would be taught in a non-play based model - the main difference is that children have regular opportunities to apply their reading and writing in authentic contexts through their play. Children also really develop their oral language skills in Play, which directly supports their reading. A child needs to be able to speak and understand a word before they can read it.

Across the week, all of the children take part in phonics sessions, reading groups, independent reading, shared reading, shared writing and independent writing.

If children are allowed to choose whether to bring a book home or not, how will they learn to read? How will I know how well they're reading?

Teaching children to read is a highly skilled task for which teachers undertake Professional Development. Taking books home to read should never become a chore as this can be discouraging and hinder their development of a love of reading. Research shows that promoting the joy of reading, and modelling an interest in reading yourself as an adult, leads to greater success in reading. The book that your child brings home is not an indication of their reading level, those books are for the teacher to use in their instructional reading groups. Your child's class teacher will talk to you about their reading progress through face-to-face conferences and written reports across the year. Encourage and foster the love of reading at home!

Are children left to their own devices and able to do whatever they want?

Children's Play is intentional. During the main Play session, children make their own decisions and direct their own play. Play is driven by the children's interests, questions, and the world that they live in. Their choices are intentional and often guided by their [schemas](#) (urges). The opportunity for children to create their own play and explorations helps to develop independence and creative thinking. Play is also a great forum for supporting the children to build relationships and learn how to interact with others.

Teachers monitor the play throughout the session and support, scaffold and extend through provocations and questions.

Clear boundaries around safety and behaviour expectations are also established with the children. Outside of the self-directed Play, there is more adult direction whilst still listening to the questions and wonderings from the children which guide the class Inquiry.

What happens when my child moves into Year 3 and beyond. Will they still be allowed to Play?

The school's curriculum model is based around Inquiry. An integrated approach is taken so that learning across the curriculum areas is linked, wherever possible, to the class Inquiry. Whilst the children won't have a regular period of time for self-directed Play from Yr3, as they move through the school there will be many opportunities for 'playful' learning as they explore their questions and wonderings through a range of hands-on learning experiences such as making, drawing, designing, building, acting out, making music. We refer to these as the 100 Languages of Learning. It is the belief that there are "multiple ways of seeing and multiple ways of being" and these languages (the Hundred Languages of Children) are symbolic and are open to the endless potentials in children. It allows teachers to give the children freedom to choose how they explore their learning, based on their strengths and interests.

Some further reading:

About schemas: <https://www.playcentre.org.nz/2019/11/what-are-schemas/>

How to help at home:

<https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/learning-and-development-at-home/ideas-to-help-with-reading-writing-and-maths/#Year1>

How to help with reading at home:

<https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/family-whanau-and-community-connections/reading-at-home?search%5Bpath%5D=items&search%5Btext%5D=reading+at+home>

TKI website - <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/NZC-Online-blog/Learning-through-play-What-s-it-all-about>

Wishing you and your whānau a great start to school life at Balmoral.

**Noho ora mai ra
Whānau Koru**





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