

TRANSFORMING FUTURES: PROGRESS & CULTURE AT HRC TE OTU MĀTUA



Halswell Residential College
HRC TE OTU MĀTUA

Summary

This document provides you with a snapshot of what HRC te Otu Mātua has to offer and how we ensure our ākonga excel.

What can you expect at HRC?

HRC is a time-limited intensive intervention for rangatahi with complex behaviours who experience neurodiverse challenges such as ASD, intellectual impairments, specific learning disabilities, ADHD, and trauma, as well as a range of similar presentations that may not have been diagnosed.

To experience success in education these young people need to feel safe, make connections, and learn ways to manage

their emotions. At HRC, we believe that every interaction with every ākonga by every kaiako has the potential to make a difference.

Our therapeutic environment, made up of day school and residential areas offers a unique 24/7 approach. We focus on supporting ākonga to develop the skills they will need when they leave HRC and transition back into mainstream schooling or vocational training.

We have had a difficult journey attaining an appropriate education for our son Ariki, who has been diagnosed as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). We have long struggled to find adequate support for him within the education system as he did not have ORS funding. When Ariki was in mainstream class, he was bullied and ostracised. This traumatised my son to the point where he no longer wanted to attend school. He was depressed and lonely. We are amazed at how many positive changes Ariki has made while at Halswell Residential College. He continues to make progress and achieve his goals and has an incredibly dedicated and invested team around him. We are grateful he has the opportunity to attend Halswell Residential College, and sincerely wish that other families and young people will also have the benefit of this very special education.

I enjoy the staff and having them take us out on trips, especially going swimming. I love all the friends that I have here. It is nice because they listen to me and talk to me in a nice way. My teacher helps with anything I need, and she is kind because she gives me work; sometimes it is easy and sometimes hard. I have a plan to help me with my behaviour.

I think HRC listens to me. When I have a problem, the

teacher leaves me alone and I talk to them later. This is different because at my other school they did not ask me what was wrong.

The school has great classrooms; they are big, and I have lots of room. We have a great playground which we play on together. We have a garden where we can plant vegetables. I have not yet planted anything, but I plan to. We have a great swimming pool. I like Kippa, the dog. I read to

him, and he gave me a hug. I try all the sports because I think they are fun and I can play with my friends. I win certificates, and they go on the wall.

When I get in a temper, staff are there to help me. When I have thoughts about my dad, and I start to feel upset, the staff calm me down. I now have lots of strategies to support me. I like it here because I get support.

Priscilla (Ākonga)



[While at HRC] Priscilla has learnt that all bad choices have consequences [and that] doing good things gets lots of praise.

[Being at HRC] has helped her with sports and team work and your people have also helped with her speaking being understood.

Ngā whānau o Priscilla



Residential Intervention: The other 19 hours of a school day

At its simplest, the word residential means a space designed for people to live in. HRC te Otu Mātua is a space where ngā whare, whilst designed for optimal safety, were purposefully designed not to look institutional. At its simplest, the word intervention refers to an intentional act or plan designed to prevent harm or improve functioning. HRC te Otu Mātua is a short-term intervention purposefully designed to support ākonga to improve functioning skills that will help them to interact with their environment as independently as possible, become contributing members of society, and build their mana.

Across our therapeutic milieu we work relationally with ngā rangatahi entrusted to our care. In kura, ākonga are supported for 5 hours a day to be ready to learn and to see themselves as learners. And learning does not stop at the school gate. Throughout the other 19 hours we support rangatahi to become the best they can be/whakarangatirahia as they live and learn together in a supportive whānau structure.

HRC te Otu Mātua is a whānau community. Just as every whānau has its own shared way of being/kaupapa, every whare has its own kaupapa. The uniqueness of kaupapa is most vividly illustrated in whare Tauawa and whare Owaka, where tikanga Māori is foundational to all they do. Tangata whenua in both whare practice manaakitanga. Both welcome rangatahi from any cultural background into their programme. Both welcome manuhuri who visit the campus. Maintaining connection

with ngā whānau o ngā ākonga is critical and all rangatahi know they have a place in the whare whānau even when they leave HRC te Otu Mātua.

Ākonga experience aroha through the clear and consistent rhythm of the day. Each day begins and ends with shared karakia, waiata, and pepeha. Consistency is the soil in which seeds of respect, identity, belonging, and compromise are sown and grow. The freedom to fail is a given and while ākonga are reproved, restoration and reconnection follow quickly, and mana is restored. Leadership model a non-hierarchical structure and where agreement cannot be reached, all look to the kaiwhakahaere for guidance. Kaiako and ākonga are accountable to each other. Formalised accountability is evidenced in the Poutama Programme which brings together in one place goals set at entry as well as ongoing residential curriculum goals and learning goals in te Reo at levels appropriate to the ākonga. Every day, every shift is required to sign off on that day's achievement for every ākonga. If kaiako forget, ngā ākonga, taking ownership of their own programmes, remind them.

Two quite different stories of two ākonga show how a short-term residential intervention empowers rangatahi to flourish and grow. Priscilla, a Pakeha girl in whare Owaka, initially responded to karakia time as the opportune time to misbehave and have meltdowns, often ending with property damage. By the beginning of her next term, Priscilla had gained confidence in the familiar and consistently lived kaupapa. She knew that her mana would be restored. She even began using te Reo to ask for her phone and for permission to leave the table after kai. She frequently asked to join whare Tauawa for games, activities, and karakia because she knew she would be accepted there. For Priscilla, whanaungatanga was a daily experience.

Kaiako built strong relationships with Ariki, maintained connectedness with his whānau, and supported him through daily life events. Resilience and self-regulation



were modelled, taught, practised, and reinforced through whaiwhakaaro. With the support of the whole community, Ariki learned to identify his triggers and more importantly, learned to move himself away to calm in a quiet space when his anger threatened to overwhelm him.

The other 19 hours, of course, include at least 8 hours of sleep. Consistent bedtime routines include handing in cell phones, completing ablutions, and quietening oneself in preparation for sleep. In the morning ngā rangatahi know they need to make their beds, tidy their rooms, and be dressed for whānau time together. The remaining 10 or 11 hours of awake time are for learning how to live well through daily life events shared with rangatahi under the guidance of committed kaiako.

When I first came to HRC I was nervous. Before I came to HRC I identified with my Tongan side, I'm Tongan. But being in Tauawa I am learning about my Māori identity; learning my pepeha, karakia, and saying simple te Reo phrases.

I find it good being at HRC. I get chances to make mistakes. I like the chances I get to make friends.

I have noticed that I'm not as violent or aggressive. I don't lose it straight away.

HRC is different because it's smaller, not loud and busy. Kaiako really understand me and help me the right way. They leave me alone when I need. I feel supported.

I am surprised that I have changed and learnt how I can control my anger better.

Ariki (Ākonga)



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