



# Kerikeri High School

Kerikeri, Bay of Islands  
New Zealand

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Dear Parents, Whānau, Staff and Students

As many of you will no doubt be aware by now, our Principal Elizabeth Forgie was named a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday and Platinum Jubilee Honours List 2022 yesterday.

This is a prestigious and significant recognition of Elizabeth's outstanding contribution to Education, most especially to Kerikeri High School and to the Secondary Principals Association New Zealand (SPANZ).

It is very appropriate that Elizabeth received her Honour during Queens Birthday Weekend as it coincides with the anniversary of her appointment as Principal in 1993.



*Elizabeth Forgie welcomed by the School Prefects at this morning's Staff Briefing.*

Under Elizabeth's leadership this school has been transformed and is highly regarded across New Zealand. The school roll has more than doubled during her time as Principal, and many families from beyond our school enrolment zone look to send their children to us.

Elizabeth has developed a strong reputation nationally as an outstanding leader and Principal. She has been elected by her peers and served on the Executive of the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand every year since 1995 and is by far the longest serving member of the SPANZ Executive. She served two terms as Vice President of SPANZ, in 1996 and 1997.

Elizabeth has twice been awarded SPANZ Service to Education Awards, in 2006 and again in 2016.

And she was recognised for her outstanding contribution to New Zealand education in 2018 when she was made a life member of SPANZ, one of only 19 Principals in New Zealand to have ever been awarded this honour since 1988.

As a SPANZ Executive member Elizabeth has served widely and represented Secondary Principals in several settings, including Secondary Qualifications Advisory Group for the last five years.

Currently Elizabeth represents the SPANZ on the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Reference Group.

And for many years she has been the convener of the highly successful annual SPANZ Conferences, where amongst other things she plays an important role mentoring New Principals.

Elizabeth is also one of the few people in New Zealand to have been awarded two Woolf Fisher Fellowships, the first in 1992 as a Deputy Principal at Kerikeri High School and the second in 2002 as Principal of Kerikeri High School.

The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International named her a Paul Harris Fellow.

And we all shared great pride when, in 2014, Kerikeri High School was the joint winner of the inaugural Prime Minister's Education Excellence Award for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Elizabeth led and sustained Te Kotahitanga in our school, a long term schoolwide educational reform which has been highly successful. Under Elizabeth's leadership Kerikeri High School was one of the original 12 pilot schools for Te Kotahitanga in 2004. Since then, we have remained engaged and committed to the Te Kotahitanga philosophy, sustaining the kaupapa which has seen Māori achievement increase from 28.6% in 2004 to 87.5% in 2020. This shift has assisted generations of Māori students in our school to realise their potential and has had a hugely positive impact on our local community.

It speaks to Elizabeth's open-mindedness that she embarked on Te Kotahitanga mid-way through her time as Principal. Most change occurs when a new leader is appointed, however Elizabeth was able to deeply examine the data, reflect on and question her own preconceptions and current practice, and lead successful change several years into her time as Principal.

Success in driving and sustaining this enormous shift in educational outcomes for Māori over nearly twenty years in a State, co-educational Secondary School is unprecedented, and was not always easy. It involves constant commitment and vigilance in ensuring gains are maintained. Equity and excellence are the norm here because of Elizabeth's vision, which she has realised by her positional authority, personal characteristics, and quality of her ideas.

Generosity in supporting the development of and sharing the story of Te Kotahitanga, supporting Professor Russell Bishop and Professor Mere Berryman in their kaupapa, advocating for them and for commitment to Māori students being successful, speaking at conferences nationally and internationally to share the journey and the learnings, are all part of Elizabeth's work in this area.

Professor Russell Bishop, reflecting on and asking how change occurred at Kerikeri High School says:

"An excellent staff who are very committed to the changes in pedagogy that are necessary to bring about improvements in Maori student achievement, along with a very supportive community have been central to these improvements. However, above all, it is clear that the main reason for the success and sustainability of these outcomes has been Elizabeth Forgie's leadership. Her understanding of the need for such an intervention led her to take on board both the pedagogic and structural messages of Te Kotahitanga and to insist in a very professional manner that such an intervention would persist in her school. Changing a modern secondary school to meet the needs of all of its students was not without its challenges. Despite this, Elizabeth Forgie persisted in her belief of the need for such an intervention with observably commensurate outcomes. Elizabeth Forgie is an intelligent, professional leader with a very high level of integrity and philosophy of social justice. In short, she provides a model for all others to

emulate in the pursuit of equity and excellence that is so needed in education and the wider society of New Zealand.”

Elizabeth has worked tirelessly to successfully build powerful and genuine relationships with Ngāti Rēhia, always supporting them as part of that relationship of care and connectedness. Ngāti Rēhia now have faith and confidence in our kura as a culturally safe environment where we do our very best for rangatahi.

During Elizabeth’s time as Principal the Kerikeri High School roll has more than doubled and this has necessitated significant property developments across the school over an extended period. She has demonstrated financial and project management acumen in running multi-million-dollar state of the art building projects which have benefited students and staff.

Our last three Education Review Office reviews have all been outstanding, with the school receiving three successive 4–5-year return reports, something ERO tell us is highly unusual. The stability and high performance in our school is a strong reflection of Elizabeth’s leadership.

Elizabeth grows leaders and is generous in sharing her experience to help guide others, within and beyond our school. Many of our middle and senior leaders come from within our own staffroom. It is also a reflection of the culture Elizabeth has built that we have a significant number of former Kerikeri High School students on our staff, with 25 ex-students here teaching, and another 9 in administrative positions. She encourages and supports staff to lead across a range of areas nationally from lead examination setters and markers to Education Review Office Leadership Partners, Microsoft Educators and panel members of various subject associations to name a few of the platforms on which Kerikeri High School staff contribute to education nationally.

Elizabeth also pioneered one of the first school Sports Academies in New Zealand, establishing the Kerikeri High School Sailing Academy; as a result, we enjoyed significant success nationally and internationally over an extended period of time in Sailing, and produced several Olympic sailors, medallists and America’s Cup winning sailors.

A key philosophy which guides Elizabeth’s leadership is the development of the whole person, in our school expressed as ‘the Four Cornerstones’. Her view has always been that holistic development is more important than just academic achievement, and so our students understand well the importance of involving themselves widely in academic, sporting, cultural and leadership with service activities. This has created generations of well-rounded young people who are willing to give things a go, operate outside their normal comfort zones and be positively connected with their peers and their school.

Elizabeth has made a significant contribution to International Education in Northland. She established the Kerikeri High School International Department, which has grown from a few initial students to taking nearly a third of all international students coming to Northland. This has greatly enriched our school and wider community, and has brought benefits for our own students, building relationships and confidence. It has also contributed significantly to the local economy in a positive way with as many as 96 students in family homestays in Kerikeri before covid.

Elizabeth’s contribution is immense – Kerikeri High School has been the foundation for generations of students to launch successful careers, and the high academic achievement levels of students has given our community great confidence in our local school.

What makes Elizabeth exceptional in achieving beyond the expectations of her position is the excellence demonstrated in her tenure as Principal across all aspects of her role: significant shifts in student achievement; forging and maintaining meaningful, deep and educationally powerful relationships with Ngāti Rēhia; contribution to understanding in New Zealand of culturally responsive curriculum and effective teaching; consistently recognised for the highest standards of excellence by external agencies such as ERO, the Prime Minister’s Award and the Woolf Fisher Trust; a leader of innovation and success in International Education in New Zealand; personal leadership qualities in leading our school through traumatic events yet retaining staff and maintaining achievement levels; dedication and a long term commitment to Principals and education on the national stage through SPANZ.

Elizabeth's New Zealand Honours Award is long overdue, and it is certainly well deserved. Congratulations from all of us. Kia manawanui.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Richards', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sue Richards  
**Chairperson**  
**Kerikeri High School Board of Trustees**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Clent', written in a cursive style.

Mike Clent  
**Associate Principal**