

# ŌTOROHANGA COLLEGE

## WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

Term One, Week One  
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January – Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026



From the Principal's desk

**Lyndsay Kurth**

Welcome, Nau mai, haere mai, Ni sa bula vinaka, Talofa lava

It is an honour to welcome you to the start of an exciting new academic year at Ōtorohanga College. To those families joining our community for the first time, we extend a very warm welcome, to those returning, thank you for your continued trust and partnership.

A new College year always brings fresh opportunities – for learning, for growth and for new achievements. At Ōtorohanga College, we are committed to creating a learning environment where every student feels supported, challenged and inspired to do their best. When students, staff and whānau work together, we build strong foundations that enable young people to flourish.

Our focus remains on providing high-quality teaching and meaningful opportunities that help students develop confidence, resilience and curiosity. Whether in the classroom, on the sports field, through cultural activities or in leadership roles, we want every student to discover their strengths and continue striving toward their goals.

We value the important role you play in your child's education. Open communication and positive partnerships between home and the College make a significant difference to student success. We encourage you to stay connected, reach out when needed and join us in celebrating progress and achievements throughout the year.

Thank you for the privilege of working with your child. We look forward to a year filled with learning, connection and shared success.

Warmest regards

Lyndsay Kurth  
Principal

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# Deputy Principal Hauora Whāea Jane Keir



## Ceid Meil Failte

## A Hundred Thousand Welcomes

### (Scots Gaelic)

Kia Ora, Failte, Welcome to the 2026 College year. My name is Jane Keir and I am the Deputy Principal, Hauora this year. I have taught in a number of schools in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Auckland and Scotland. I look forward to meeting you all at points throughout the College year.

Our Hauora Wellbeing Strategic Plan continues to focus on supporting the wellbeing of all students with equitable, inclusive and restorative practices across our College. Two key ways that we provide regular positive support are –

## Empower Whakamana

Empower Whakamana classes are arranged by House and Class Level. They are designed to support students each day as their connection point to College for all notices, attendance and College matters. Regular opportunities occur in these classes for students to share their thoughts and ideas as part of our College's Komodo Survey. The information obtained from these Surveys help our staff to better support students and ensures that all voices are heard. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to contact Empower Whakamana teachers as their first point of support and contact for their children.

## Deans

Each year level has a Dean available to support students who may have concerns. Students can approach their Dean about matters such as timetable or subject issues, uniform questions, homework concerns, attendance, friendship or bullying issues, study skills or further education planning.

When a student wishes to meet with a Dean they can check their schedules in their Empower Whakamana class, on their office door, or email the Dean.



*Liarna Slade*

**Relief Dean**



*Lacosta Hayward*

**Year 9 Dean**



*Whāea Samm*

**Year 11 Dean**



*Whāea Mickey*

**Year 10 Dean**



*Jen Roughton*

**Year 12/13 Dean**

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# Deputy Principal Achievement Stoffel Wilken



## Welcome to the 2026 Academic Year!

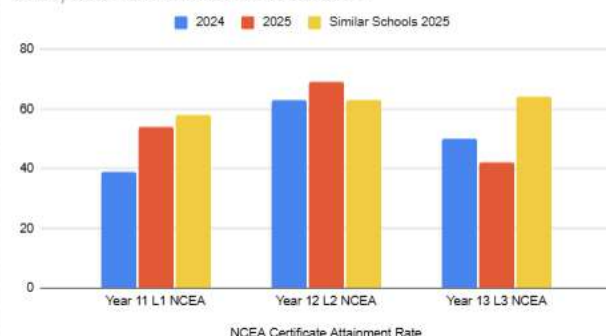
It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you all to 2026. As Deputy Principal, Achievement, my focus is on ensuring that every student has the tools, support and encouragement they need to reach their full potential. Whether you are returning to familiar hallways or joining our College community for the first time, this year represents a fresh chapter filled with opportunities to excel, innovate and grow.

We believe that achievement is a shared journey. Our goal this year is to foster an environment where academic rigor meets personal wellbeing, allowing our students to not only meet their goals, but exceed their own expectations. I look forward to working closely with whānau and celebrating the many milestones, large and small, that our students will undoubtedly reach in the coming months. Let's make 2026 a standout year for success!

### NCEA Certificate Attainment Rate - 2024 vs 2025

	2024	2025	Similar Schools 2025	% Increase / Decrease
Year 11 L1 NCEA	39	54	45.1	15
Year 12 L2 NCEA	63	69	63	6
Year 13 L3 NCEA (L2 NCEA)	50	42 (83)	64	-9

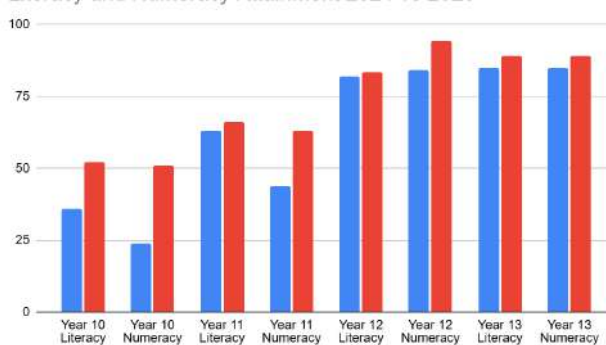
2024, 2025 and Similar Schools 2025



### Literacy and Numeracy Attainment - 2024 vs 2025

	2024	2025	% Increase
Year 10 Lit	36	52	16
Year 10 Num	24	51	27
Year 11 Lit	63	66	3
Year 11 Num	44	63	19
Year 12 Lit	82	83	1
Year 12 Num	84	94	10
Year 13 Lit	85	89	4
Year 13 Num	85	89	4

Literacy and Numeracy Attainment 2024 vs 2025



### Upcoming e-asTTle Assessments

Next week and throughout Week 3, our junior students will be participating in e-asTTle testing. These assessments are purely diagnostic, meaning they are designed to provide us with a clear snapshot of where each student currently stands in their learning journey. By identifying specific strengths and areas for growth in literacy and numeracy, our teachers can tailor their classroom instruction to meet the unique needs of every learner.

It is important to note that students do not need to study or prepare for these assessments, because they are used to guide future teaching rather than provide a final grade, we want to see a natural representation of their current knowledge. Please encourage your child to simply give their best effort so we can gain the most accurate insights to support their achievement this year.

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# New Staff



**Jane Keir**

## **Ceid Meil Failte**

Kia ora, my name is Jane Keir and I am the Deputy Principal, Hauora this year. Whilst born in Scotland, I have lived and worked in Aotearoa for most of my life. I have worked in education for many years, mostly in the Waikato, in primary, intermediate and area schools as well as in Parent and Special Education roles. Please feel welcome to come and introduce yourself to me and I look forward to getting to know you all this year.



**Kseniia Opaleva**

## **Привет!**

My name is Kseniia. I am from a small town in central Russia. I am an English and Social Studies teacher. I love learning languages. My family has just moved to Ōtorohanga. I have 2 children, one of my boys is a Year 9 student at College. I am glad to be a part of the College and community.



**Chamila Weerasinghe**

## **Ayubowan (Wishing you a long and healthy life)**

My name is Mrs Chamila Weerasinghe, a Sri Lankan living in Ōtorohanga with my family. I am pleased to be joining Ōtorohanga College as a Science and Biology teacher. I enjoy building positive relationships within the College and engaging with the wider community, while learning more about Aotearoa culture. In my free time, I love gardening, spending time in nature and being involved in local activities. I am enthusiastic about contributing to the Ōtorohanga College whānau and supporting student learning and wellbeing. Nga mihi.



**Sophie Andrews**

## **Kia ora**

My name is Sophie. I am originally from Whanganui and am thrilled to be joining the Social Sciences Faculty at Ōtorohanga College. I am looking forward to getting to know our tauira and becoming part of the Ōtorohanga community. Outside of the kura, you will usually find me reading, exploring outdoors or playing sports.

Ngā mihi.

Soph



# YEAR 9

## WELCOME TO 2026

This week we had the absolute pleasure of welcoming our newest students, our Year 9s, to Ōtorohanga College.

Thursday morning saw 91 excited and understandably nervous Year 9 students arrive, ready to embark on the next step of their learning journey. It was, as always, a special moment watching our newest cohort walk into the College, full of anticipation for what lay ahead.

Our Pōwhiri, led by Mr Parsons and Whāea Miriama, formally welcomed students and their supporters into our College community. It was a meaningful and fitting way to begin their secondary school journey – grounding them in our values, our tikanga and our strong sense of belonging.

To whānau, parents and staff from contributing primary schools, thank you for joining us. It was heartwarming to see so many of you present to support our Year 9 students as they made this important transition into College life. Your presence reinforced the strong partnerships that underpin student success.

Starting secondary school is a significant milestone. It brings new routines, new friendships, new challenges and many new opportunities. We were incredibly proud of the way our Year 9 students approached their first day – showing courage, curiosity and a willingness to get involved.

Over Thursday and today they found their way around the College, met their teachers, connected with their Houses and began building the relationships that will support them throughout their time here. We saw friendships forming, confidence growing and a real sense of belonging developing.

At Ōtorohanga College, we remain committed to ensuring every student feels known, supported and challenged to be their very best. Our Year 9 cohort has brought fresh energy, diverse talents and enormous potential to our College and we are excited to see them discover new passions, set ambitious goals and make the most of the opportunities ahead.

To our Year 9 students – welcome. You are now an important part of our College community and we are thrilled to have you with us.



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# Ready, Steady Cook

To begin the year, our first Staff Only Day focused on connection, collaboration and a little creativity. We started the morning with whakawhanaungatanga, taking time to reconnect after the summer break. Staff shared a holiday highlight or something that helped them recharge, along with what they are most looking forward to in their role this year. It was a great way to strengthen relationships, set a positive tone for 2026 and remind ourselves of the shared purpose that brings us together as a College community.

From there, the energy lifted as we moved into the College's very own version of Ready, Steady, Cook. In their Houses, staff were given a range of ingredients - all in House colours - and one hour and forty-five minutes to create dishes to be enjoyed together at lunchtime. The creativity, teamwork and House spirit on display were outstanding and the shared lunch was a real highlight of the day.



Congratulations to Eveleigh who took out the top spot in a closely contested competition!

It was a fantastic way to start the year - building connections, celebrating teamwork and having a lot of fun along the way.



## Key dates

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Years 9 - 13 at College

Waitangi Day

Year 10 and Year 11 NCEA Information Evening

College Swimming Sports

College Athletics

Badging Ceremony

Pi Day

Parent, Student and Teacher Conferences

Cross Country

Colour Run

Term One ends

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