



# Wesley College

Principal: Dr. Brian Evans, ONZM, PhD, MEd, BA, Dip Tchg

PO Box 58,  
Pukekohe 2340  
New Zealand  
Phone: 64-9-237 0224  
Fax: 64-9-238 3582  
Email: [admin@wesley.school.nz](mailto:admin@wesley.school.nz)

20 November 2023

Kia ora, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Ni sa bula vinaka, Fakatalofa atu, Fakaalofa lahi atu,

In many ways the last few years have been made up of 'watershed moments' for the College, moments that have given us reason to pause, and then the momentum to move towards the place we all want to be – a school that has the highest standards and expectations for our students, academically, socially, culturally and spiritually.

As we reach the final weeks of the 2023 school year, we thought it would be useful for us to collectively outline some of the many positive steps and actions that have been taken to strengthen various aspects of our school and hostel. We recognise this is a lengthy letter, but we wanted to be thorough and detailed in our reporting to you so that you feel confident about the College's actions and optimistic about its future.

To get to where we are today has been a long journey and one which we have been working hard to progress, particularly since 2019. Changing a challenging aspect of a school's culture, especially when it has been entrenched for decades, is a long-term project but we hope that you are now seeing the tangible changes and benefits of this focus.

Our initial starting points were research based - a Dorm Review in 2019, followed by a Wellbeing Review by a leading independent consultant (Jan Hill) in 2020, and supplemented further by a Senior Leadership Team Review in 2021. The findings of these reports were taken very seriously, and action plans were put in place.

The spotlight was then firmly put on the school last year through the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care and this year the Education Review Office (ERO) conducted special reviews on both the school and the hostel.

The rate of progress slowed as we worked through the covid years and the hugely significant toll that covid has had on young people and their education and wellbeing, their level of disconnection with school and community, and their loss of socialisation and fun for a couple of years. There is evidence from schools across the country that the effects of covid on attendance, behaviour and achievement of young people will be significant challenges for schools for many years to come. We are seeing this in our communities through a rise in antisocial behaviours and this inevitably impacts on our school environment.

However, as we reach the end of 2023, we feel it is important to take stock and share where we are at. In this light, the following are some of the initiatives, programmes and system improvements that are in place or in the process of being implemented:

- At the forefront of everything we are trying to achieve is the special character of Wesley College. Our Methodist ethos has been at the core of our College for nearly 180 years and will continue to provide its students with the foundation to excel in the spiritual, academic, cultural and sporting aspects of their lives. School begins every day with Chapel for all, which is led by the Chaplain, with students also regularly taking a lead role.
- Our Kairangi values continue to grow in strength and prominence. We are committed to ensuring that every decision relating to curriculum and pastoral care, and every interaction that takes place at Wesley College reflects the collective values of Family, Respect, Responsibility and Excellence. They are woven into the fabric of school life.
- We have begun an ambitious programme to become a 'child safe' organisation, where the safeguarding of our rangatahi is at the heart of all that we do as a school. We are committing

to operating above legislative requirements by leading safeguarding and child protection best practices in all our undertakings.

- As part of our safeguarding project, we are about to appoint a Holistic Safeguarding Officer who will drive continued changes to our environment to make the school safer. The goal is not to be just a safe school, it is to be the safest school in the country. We will update our school community more on this role early next year.
- We are aware that there have been concerns about a 'code of silence' operating throughout the school in the past. Evidence tells us that this is breaking down and we will continue to strive to ensure this is the case across all aspects of the school and hostel. Additionally, we are optimistic that recent health and safety initiatives, and the development of a stronger student culture over the past several years, has led to a major decrease in incidents involving physical violence or the threat of violence.
- We have reviewed and overhauled school and hostel health and safety systems, policies and procedures.
- We have worked with external agencies to develop a holistic approach to student safety for 24/7 care of all students. This encompasses student management, adult recruitment, bullying, cyber safety and pastoral care.
- We have appointed a Complaints Officer to ensure our new complaints policy and procedures are followed. A new system records all steps of the complaints process and dates/times when actions were taken, which means that the steps taken to resolve each complaint can be easily traced. We will be looking for ways to further streamline reporting across the school and hostel so that important information is shared and tracked across the hostel and school sites.
- Behavioural management training and professional development has been undertaken by relevant staff across the College (school and/or hostel) including de-escalation training to minimise/resolve conflict situations, bullying reduction; and restorative practices to diffuse and resolve conflicts in the classroom and dormitories.
- Behaviour management strategies have been refreshed and procedures clarified to generate consistency and high expectations of behaviour and conduct across all aspects of the campus.
- Using the motto "If you see something, say something", at the start of 2022 we launched Stymie ([stymie.co.nz/](http://stymie.co.nz/)), an anonymous concern reporting tool which allows students to report incidents of concerning behaviour in a safe way. It may be used by any student who witnesses anything unsafe or who has a wellbeing concern for themselves or others. Stymie has been rolled out in many other schools across the country and we will continue to promote it widely throughout the school.
- A system of active duty has been introduced in the hostel, which involves monitoring night time activity. This allows students to feel safer and have someone to go to if needed during the night.
- A Girls Wellbeing committee has been created.
- A Student Council will be in place in 2024 to facilitate greater student voice and partnership in decision making around issues that impact on students.
- A wellbeing survey tool is being used twice a year to examine how students and staff feel about different aspects of college life. Additionally, Year 8 students are surveyed to give the school an overview of the new intake of students in terms of confidence in learning, their relationship with teachers and around attendance. This data allows the college to support individual students better throughout school.
- The team in the Health Centre are exactly that, a strong unit/team that has worked hard to improve what is on offer for students. They provide health services, including physio, counselling and have very high levels of care for our students. Feedback tells us students feel safe and confident in this space and they continue looking for ways to improve the service.
- The Superintending Chaplain is also a resource person / counsellor / spiritual advisor to all who live within the Wesley College Parish. Supported by our Pou Manaaki, the Chaplain provides pastoral support for all students and staff which includes pastoral care visits to

families and staff when required. The Chaplain is an integral part of the College's pastoral care obligations.

- Alongside appropriate training for staff, a wellbeing and personal development map is being created to provide support for each year level's physical and emotional development. It is intended to give students the tools and resources to be happy and successful at the College and beyond and to build resilience.
- The introduction of new night school procedures, including tutoring, has led to greater engagement by students and is having a positive impact on achievement. This involves up to 16 teachers/tutors tutoring at night school, including our own teaching staff and external staff.
- We also have 3-4 teachers working in dorms which has increased communication links between school and hostel.
- Achievement data is consistently shared across school and hostel to allow learning conversations between students and staff, and promote a focus on learning, achievement and attaining qualifications. Hostel staff are upskilled to discuss achievement data.
- The hostel is now compliant with current Ministry of Education standards for hostels. A complete review and modernising of all cameras, lighting and alarms is underway to ensure that the site is safe and welcoming and in line with Holistic Safeguarding guidelines.
- Te Roopu Maaori was established to strengthen kaupapa Maaori within the school while embracing meaningful engagement through te whakapono, ngaa tikanga, te taha wairua, te maatauranga o ngaa aahutanga Maaori within the everyday life of our students and community. Many initiatives are well established and are in process as we speak:

Kaupapa include:

- Whaanau group established
  - Whakawhanaungatanga/relationship building trip for students to Rotorua
  - Development of a Waharoa
  - Development of a Kapa Haka group
  - Development of Haka Powhiri
  - Community engagement through Powhiri
  - Leading Karakia/Waiata during Chapel
  - Attendance at kaupapa Maaori - Koroneihana, Mangatangi Poukai
  - Senior Maaori leavers dinner
  - Strengthening links with local haapu
  - Created a Maaori Success Responsiveness Plan
- We continue to be committed to Tapasa and the Pasifika Education Plan and raising the achievement of Pasifika students. Our celebrations on occasions such as Polyfest and language weeks highlight the rich historical diversity that has made Wesley College a special place.
  - Changes of use/configuration and refurbishment of existing spaces are being considered for the entire site. Over the summer the old Denton building will be demolished and outdoor improvements (e.g. shade sails and sports areas) are in the planning stage.
  - Over several years 60 senior students have been trained in student-coaching-student processes to guide and facilitate academic goal setting with junior students. To change our culture, we realised we had to equip students with the relevant tools to ensure positive interactions. This has led to junior students reporting very positive relationships with seniors.
  - An additional 60 students have participated in the International 'Launching Leadership' programme that provides students with increased tools to make good decisions and increase their self-awareness and leadership skills.
  - Increased numbers have taken part in enrichment activities such as Spirit of Adventure, Duke of Edinburgh, Sir Edmund Hillary and outdoor education programmes.
  - Our sports participation data show nearly 70% of our students are engaged in school sports and physical activity. When we add in the other enrichment activities available at Wesley

(Polyfest groups, music, spoken word etc) it is fair to say we have exceptional levels of student participation which all leads to a vibrant and happy environment.

While there are a great number of changes underway, we are mindful of the need to embed these within the College so that they can be sustained over the long term. We will continue to work on integrating our pastoral care and information flows across the school and hostel as we know this will have the best outcomes for our students.

We will also continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all of these initiatives, programmes and system improvements over the coming year, and will report back to you as we move through 2024. At any time, students, families and our College whaanau should feel welcome to contact us with any questions, concerns or feedback. It is important that you always feel welcome at Wesley College.

We know that we will continue to have the spotlight on us, but trust that our students, families, staff, former students and other Wesley College stakeholders can also chart the progress that has been made. We understand that 1News will likely be running another story on the school looking back at what has been before, but we hope that you can see significant progress has, and is, being made.

It is also important to understand that our desire for change is not simply because the spotlight is on us. It is driven by the fact it is the right thing to do for our wonderful school. Hence, we use the term 'cultural renovation'. There are many parts of our history and traditions to be rightfully proud of and we aim to carry these through while we foster the growth of the very best version of Wesley College for our current and future students.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank our students, families, staff, community, Dr Shane Edwards (our Limited Statutory Manager) and the external agencies and professional development providers that have supported us to date in our cultural renovation.

In closing, those of you who attended the recent Senior Prize Giving will have heard the Principal's acknowledgement of the Year 13s of 2023 and how these students have supported the cultural renovation of the College. They have indeed played an instrumental part in making the College a more vibrant and safer place for students. We wish them all the very best for their futures and hope that they will aim high and find ways to take the Wesley College values of Family, Respect, Responsibility and Excellence into their lives beyond school. You will be missed, but we know that the Year 13s of 2024 are well-equipped to carry on your work and your legacy.

All the very best for the last few weeks of 2023. Our roll is very close to full for 2024 and we look forward to a terrific year. Thank you again for your support and we hope that you feel confident with how the school is placed for the future. Again, please don't hesitate to make contact with any of us if you would like to discuss any aspect of this letter in more detail.

Ngā mihi nui



Dr Brian Evans  
Wesley College Tumuaki/Principal



Ms Jan Tasker  
Wesley College Trust Board



Mr David McGeorge  
Wesley College School Board