



Tauranga Special School **Therapy Team** 2025



Please feel free to contact us by calling the school main phone number 07 578 4424, asking your class teacher for us to email you, or by popping a note in the home/school book.

To see each of our individual team members please see below.

Our Therapy Team includes:

Speech and Language Therapy

The SLT team works to develop communication and eating, drinking, and swallowing skills.



Billie Hampton Edwards
Kaiaarataki mātanga - Team Leader
Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero
Speech Language Therapist



Kit Spurgeon
Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero
Speech Language Therapist



Rebecca Scott
Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero
Speech Language Therapist



Kathleen Jones
Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero
Speech Language Therapist

Occupational Therapy

The Occupational Therapy team works with students to help them develop functional skills for everyday life, in areas such as: self-care, play, school, and in the community. We also support their sensory and behavioural needs.



Erin Connolly
Whakaora Ngangahau
Occupational Therapist



Amy Prouse
Whakaora Ngangahau
Occupational Therapist



Kate MacLean
Whakaora Ngangahau
Occupational Therapist



Amy Bisley
Kaiawhina rongoa
Occupational Therapy Assistant

Physiotherapy

The Physiotherapy team works to improve students' physical wellbeing and accessibility, inclusion and participation in the curriculum. We provide therapy programs, support students in the gym, provide specialised equipment, support families at external medical appointments, run a schoolwide swimming/hydrotherapy program and coordinate the school Riding for Disabled (RDA) program.



Mana Kaha

The Mana Kaha team works proactively using a solutions-based approach to facilitate the delivery of cohesive support for student wellbeing. Mana Kaha is led by Penny Gee, the Leader for Hauora in school and our PLL Nicky Boonen also sits on the team. Here are the therapy members of this team:-



David Keightley-Phillipps
Kaimātai Hinengaro o te Kura
Psychologist



Amy Prouse
Whakaora Ngangahau
Occupational Therapist





Rebecca Scott
Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero
Speech Language Therapist




Naomi McDonald
Mātanga Hinengaro
Psychology Consultant

Kia ora to all of our families, caregivers and whānau!
Here is the list of the Therapists, the classes they each have responsibilities for and their email contact.



Name		Contact and days of work	Classes
Billie - Kaiarataki mātanga - Team Leader Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero Speech Language Therapist		billiehe@taurangaspecialschool.nz Monday to Thursday	
Megan - Physiotherapist Kairomiromi matai arotamariki		meganm@taurangaspecialschool.nz Monday to Friday	All Classes

Kate - Occupational Therapist Whakaora Ngangahau		katem@taurangaspecialschool.nz Mondays and Wednesdays	Lead for the Kai Aroha feeding group Welcome Bay Pāpāmoa College
Erin - Occupational Therapist Whakaora Ngangahau		erinc@taurangaspecialschool.nz On maternity leave - returning Term 3	
Amy - Occupational Therapist Whakaora Ngangahau		amyp@taurangaspecialschool.nz Monday to Friday	All classes except Pāpāmoa and Welcome Bay
Kit - Speech Language Therapist Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero		kits@taurangaspecialschool.nz Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	Welcome Bay and TC3
Kathleen - Speech Language Therapist Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero		kathleenj@taurangaspecialschool.nz Monday to Friday	Room 1 and Room 4 at Base, Te Kura o Manunui, Intermediate and DRC
Rebecca - Speech Language Therapist Kaiwhakatika Reo Kōrero		rebeccas@taurangaspecial.school.nz Monday to Friday	Rooms 2 and Room 3 at Base, DRC, Pāpāmoa College.

Dave - Psychologist Kaimātai Hinengaro o te Kura		davekp@taurangaspecialschool.nz Tuesday mornings and Wednesdays	All classes
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What do our Therapists do?

Physiotherapy Team

The physiotherapist's role in the school environment is to help students with their physical wellbeing and to increase their accessibility and participation in the school curriculum. Individual therapy programmes are developed for children with physical needs to encourage the development of gross motor skills, improve or maintain their level of function and to experience better health and enhanced personal dignity.

Physiotherapy is integrated into the daily curriculum to ensure it is functional and meaningful. Physiotherapists work individually with the student or in a class session. We also use hydrotherapy/swimming, specialised equipment such as standing and walking frames, tricycles and horse riding to help students achieve their goals.

We have a year round swimming program where the students participate in either hydrotherapy or learn to swim programs depending on their needs. We have a heated pool at base school and the senior students access the community pools. We follow the Swimming NZ learn to swim program and swimming and pool coordinator is a qualified swimming instructor.

Our Physiotherapist is an accredited assessor for provision of specialised equipment and can apply for funding of equipment such as standing frames and walking frames from Enable NZ or ACC as required.

Each term, a cohort of students attend Riding for the disabled (RDA) to participate in the Therapy Riding program. We coordinate with RDA around the students physical, communication and sensory needs and goals.

We may also accompany students with their family on visits to specialists, clinics or other agencies to

- Discuss medical needs and intervention
- Provide a link between educational and medical needs
- Advocate for changes or alterations or equipment
- Discuss equipment for independence

Speech and Language Therapy Team

Here at Tauranga Special School we use a 'Rule of Two' and a 'Total Communication' approach. The 'Rule of Two' means that in addition to spoken language we always add in another visual support whether it be a sign, gesture, coreboard or object to help understanding and model expression.

The Total Communication approach is defined by using all possible means of communication to help our students' to understand their world and to be understood. This may include:

- Gesture and body posture
- Facial expression

- Tone of voice
- Vocalisations
- Sign Language
- Picture based systems
- Reading and literacy access
- Speech
- Assistive Technology - such as high tech Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA) to low tech core boards for example.
- Objects of reference

The Speech and Language Therapy team are an intrinsic part of each class at Base school, the Satellite classes and our offsite classes. The Therapists provide assessment and advice on all aspects of communication and eating, drinking and swallowing skills. Following assessment and in consultation with whānau and class teams programmes and recommendations are made.

Communication and sometimes mealtime strategies, which can include the adaptation of the environment, are used in each class to support all the students.

All new students admitted have an assessment period and individual programmes are set as required. Students are supported around major transition periods or through transition to other schools.

Workshops and in-house training about communication and safe eating and drinking are available according to need.

Occupational Therapy Team

The Occupational Therapists and Therapy Assistant support students to participate in and develop functional skills for everyday life in areas such as; self-care, life skills, play and school work. They work collaboratively with other specialists, often with joint group work.

The Occupational Therapy service provides input into the following areas:

1. Life skills and personal care occupations:

- Eating/drinking
- Toileting
- Dressing and undressing
- Support for Sexuality Education / puberty programmes
- Food preparation
- Shopping
- Accessing recreational or community activities

2. Equipment needs

- Ministry of Health: hoists, slings, toilet supports, eating equipment, liaison regarding wheelchairs
- Ministry of Education: access to assistive technology, seating and transport equipment (car seats, harnesses, buckle guards)
- Other equipment (weighted blankets/vests, postural supports, hand/arm splints)

3. Programmes

- Sensory processing and visual perceptual skills
- Fine motor skills
- Play and engagement skills
- Support for behavioural issues.

4. Work and educational occupations

- Hand function (pencil skills, using scissors, using a switch/ mouse for the computer)
- Class routines (using visual timetables, task analysis, sequence strips)
- Preparation for transition into the community (leaving school)

The aim of the Occupational Therapy service is to support the student to access the school curriculum and to be as independent as possible in their functional life skills.

Prioritisation across the Therapy Team

In light of a growing school roll and the need for more Specialist support, a prioritisation system for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy was trialled in 2024 and adopted moving forward in 2025. In addition to this prioritisation system, in line with the IP schedules, Terms 1 has a focus on assessment and IP attendance with Terms 2, 3 and 4 involving regular and ongoing support.

Mana Kaha Team

Mana Kaha is a term we use at Tauranga Special School, meaning “being the best we can be”.

The Mana Kaha Team is currently made up of:

- Psychologist
- Speech Language Therapist
- Kaiārahi Hauora - Leader of Wellbeing Pathways/TeamTeach Trainer
- Occupational Therapist
- Psychology Consultant/TeamTeach Trainer
- Professional Learning Leader (Teacher and Team Teach Trainer)

Our Mana Kaha team members support school-wide wellbeing initiatives and education best practice. We aim to provide cohesive staff, class team and individual student support. Examples of support include professional conversations and consultation, advice, creation and delivery of professional development, modelling of skills and strategies, delivery of programs as per therapy sessions, meeting support and more.