

New bike track and play areas a school and community asset

Strathmore School, South Waikato



Strathmore School in Tokoroa has turned underused and outdated play areas into a dynamic school and community asset, supported by Sport Waikato and a range of funders.

With an Equity Index of 530 and 151 students, Strathmore School is the nearest play space for many local whaanau. However, facilities were old and limited - a decaying playground, unused sandpit, minimal court space, and no access to bikes for many students.

Sport Waikato's Professional Learning Partner, Anton Barr supported the school throughout the process, helping them to assess the existing environment, think differently and envisage the physical education opportunities for students at their school. He also connected them with bike track, playground equipment and turf contractors, funding opportunities, and cycle education providers.

"The Principal and Lead Teacher identified that students did not have enough equipment available to them and that they would love to see enhancements to the physical environment in terms of needing to upgrade the facilities - in particular the old courts and school playground," said Anton.

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Before we started upgrading our facilities, break times at Strathmore weren't always the best for our tamariki. The playground was unsafe and the main option was ball games on the field, which often led to behaviour issues. We had some skipping ropes, gutterboards and PE gear, but these wore out quickly and didn't give kids many choices for active play.

Without proper fixtures or variety, it was hard for everyone to get involved and enjoy themselves. That's why this project was so important - adding things like the bike track, scooters, basketball hoops and astroturf has not only made play safer and more fun, but also encouraged leadership and teamwork, with our student leaders stepping up to help run activities.

Anton was instrumental in supporting us through the entire project, helping us to see what was possible, how we could connect it to our student's learning and curriculum, and his advice and connections to providers and contractors invaluable.

Noa Tereu, Principal/Tumuaki of Strathmore School

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Anton also carried out global observations during break times alongside capturing student voice through a 'Voice of Tamariki' survey to help inform the guidance he would then give to the school in terms of creating a play zones project.

New Playground

The first part of this project was to demolish the old playground which had become a health and safety concern due to rotting timber and exposed nails and screws.

Although the school has not had the full funds to complete the entire new playground, the newly built playground has been future proofed in terms of the layout and design, so that it is able to have further playground accessory products added over time as funding is secured.



Bike Track

The second part of the project involved the scoping and building of a 260m asphalt flat bike track with some wooden challenge obstacles and a large shed to store bikes and scooters.

This involved connecting with the Bike on Charitable Trust who oversees the Bikes in Schools programme. They have supported the school with track design and construction as well as supplying helmets and supporting with the opening of the track event.

A large bike shed was built to contain the new bikes, with the bikes funded by Sport New Zealand's Tū Manawa fund, which are supervised and distributed to students by nominated senior student leaders in the school. These senior students help get the bikes out, ensure they are put away and note anything that needs fixing.

New turf for the old courts

With the old courts in need of an upgrade, the initial funding did not cover the cost of new turf for both courts. Rather than wait for funding for the full cost, a decision was made to put new turf on one court, allowing for the students to utilise one court and new basketball goals immediately.



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I think what's been good for all of us is, it's kind of broadened our view of what physical education looks like at school.

- Noa Tereu, Principal/Tumuaki

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BEFORE



AFTER

"Now there's a range of options for the kids... before it was just a lot of ball sports if they played soccer or touch or whatever. But not every child would engage in that. So we do have some of our quieter kids who really like the bikes and the scooters... it's just given a range of activities for the kids to do. And because they're a lot busier, we have found a reduction in our behavioural issues, which has been great," said Noa Tereu, Principal/Tumuaki of Strathmore School.

The community has access to the spaces after school hours and on weekends, with families making great use of the play opportunities.

Next Steps

- Discussions with South Waikato District Council to support community access to the school's spaces, creating a welcoming, active space for the community to enjoy outside of school hours
- Secure funding to finish the bike track, turf the second court and turf under the junior playground

"It has helped me move a lot because I want to play on the astroturf. I like riding bikes but I'm not allowed to do wheelies so that makes me play on the basketball courts more. I really enjoy the spinner because it makes me dizzy and it's fun to try to walk around afterwards." - Quade, 10, Yr 6

"I like playing on the big playground because I like to climb things. I enjoy riding bikes. I can ride on a BMX bike now." - Wolfe, 6, Yr 2

"Because I play on the bike heaps and I sometimes go on the basketball court. I really like the swings on the playground." Archie, 7, Yr 3

"I like playing on the basketball court. I sometimes go on the bikes but I run on the field too." Lorelle, 8, Y4

Teachers have enough bikes for a whole class session

Some kids who have not had bikes at home have learnt to ride at school

Students have lots of options to be active - there is something for everyone

Because they're a lot busier, there has been a reduction in behavioural issues

"Because the school's not fenced off, we do have lots of people coming through on the weekends and we're happy for that. The basketball courts are also very popular and with the turf even more so. So it's popular with our kids but even in the community, and when the weather's really good we have families having picnics while they're playing basketball. We love it, we just think it's pretty cool!

- Noa Tereu, Principal/Tumuaki

"When I am in the school now, I can see how students are physically engaging with their environment. There is laughter, social interaction and a love for moving in multiple ways that reinforces for me the reason why this play zones project was so important.

Anton Barr, Sport Waikato Professional Learning Partner

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