

## Marlborough kids embrace Nature Connection

Council's environmental educators have been working alongside teachers and students from Springlands Kindergarten and Spring Creek School to set up Nature Connection Programmes.

Nature Connection is a programme that fosters a more intentional approach to being in the wider environment, encouraging participants to slow down, observe and interact with the physical space.

Environmental Educator Ramona Millen said Council's environmental education team hosted a professional Nature Connection educator last year to develop their skills in this area.

Two of the team were also involved in a Nature Connection Community of Practice with the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education (NZAAEE), where they gained further knowledge around practical ways to engage students.

"Nature Connection has some well researched benefits, including using our senses more, improving our wellbeing and building a better understanding of the natural world," Ramona said.

"If they connect with the natural world, research shows children will want to look after it more."

In term four of 2023, educators teamed up with Spring Creek

School and Springlands Kindergarten to help them establish their own Nature Connection Programmes.

The schools run the programmes slightly differently, but they use the same philosophy and teaching strategies.

Ten of the oldest children from Springlands Kindergarten are taken to Shep's Park for three hours once a fortnight, while Spring Creek School students use their own environment, with some extension into a neighbouring property. The whole school is involved for up to four hours on a Monday.

"Invitations to explore are set up in each session to support children in connecting with the environment. This could include magnifying glasses, tarps and ropes for hut building, clay or nature scavenger hunts. Children are empowered to lead their own exploration and engage with the environment in ways that interest them," Ramona said.

Both programmes have had multiple positive outcomes for all involved.

"Children's confidence has grown, relationships have developed and strengthened. They are more observational and take notice of what is around them and are active," Ramona said.



Mia Vienings from Springlands Kindergarten takes part in the Nature Connection Programme.

## Funding available to insulate Marlborough homes

If you are a Marlborough homeowner living in a home built before 2008, you may be eligible for home insulation funding.

The Warmer Healthier Homes Te Tau Ihu Charitable Trust (WHH) is providing top up funding to a Government-funded initiative that provides funding for ceiling and underfloor insulation, taking the entire cost away for some homeowners.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority's (EECA) Warmer Kiwi Homes programme provides up to 90 per cent of the cost of ceiling and underfloor insulation for homes that meet the criteria.

Thanks to WHH, people living in Marlborough Deprivation areas 8, 9 and 10, or Community Service Cardholders can have their homes insulated at no cost.

The initiative is designed to help make homes warmer, drier and healthier for residents.

Despite the recent hot weather, now is the time to start thinking about creating healthy homes for the winter, Economic, Community and Support Services Manager Dean Heiford said.

"This is a collaborative programme designed to help our communities keep warm, and most importantly healthy, throughout our cold Marlborough winters. We encourage



Funding is available to help eligible homeowners insulate their homes. Credit: Warmer Kiwi Homes

all homeowners to take the time to check their eligibility and apply for funding to help keep themselves and their families healthy, and their homes in good condition," he said.

"We know that when people are living in well-insulated homes, they have lower energy bills, are faced with fewer colds and flu, and are less likely to be taking extended time away from work or school due to illness."

Eligibility criteria includes:

- the homeowner must permanently occupy the home
- the home must have been built before 2008
- the home does not have adequate insulation

- the homeowner has a Community Services Card or SuperGold combo card, OR the home is in an area identified as low income.

As well as funding for ceiling and underfloor insulation, homeowners may also be eligible for a heating grant if they meet the above criteria and don't already have an efficient heater or fire in the main living area.

You can check your eligibility at: [www.eeca.govt.nz/co-funding-and-support/products/warmer-kiwi-homes-programme/check-eligibility/](http://www.eeca.govt.nz/co-funding-and-support/products/warmer-kiwi-homes-programme/check-eligibility/) or contact Marlborough contractor Absolute Energy on 0800 423 454 directly if you think you may be eligible.

## Mayor meets with Rural Communities Minister

Mayor Nadine Taylor met with Rural Communities Minister Mark Patterson during a visit to the province last week.

Mr Patterson, who is also Associate Minister of Agriculture and an Otago farmer with more than 30 years' farming

experience, was Chairperson for Otago Federated Farmers from 2021 to 2023.

He was here to meet with members of the Marlborough farming community to discuss the current drought situation and hear their concerns.



Marlborough

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