



# Aroha Discovery SCHOOL

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to you to ask permission to release the named students to the Aroha Discovery One Day Nature Programme for the requested day per week during term time so they may benefit from our program.

The Ministry of Education policy is that our program falls under the [New Zealand Education Act section 71](#): *Courses, work experience, and visits outside school premises*

## *71 Courses, work experience, and visits outside school premises*

- 1. Except as provided in this section, a board may authorise any students to—*
  - a) undertake courses of education; or*
  - b) obtain work experience; or*
  - c) make visits;—*

*outside the school premises; and where the board has done so, a student shall be deemed to be attending the school while undertaking the course, obtaining the experience, or making the visit.*

The School Board may, if satisfied that a student will receive outside the school tuition with health and safety protocols acceptable to the board, release the student from attendance at the school, for a period or periods agreed with a parent of that student, to receive the tuition while still being marked as in attendance at the school.

Aroha Discovery recognises the importance of the five key competencies (Thinking, Relating to Others, Using language, Symbols, and Texts, Managing Self, Participating and Contributing) and aims to impart these in an outdoor environment, with low supervision ratios (max 8:1 but we aim for 6:1) while helping children learn these skills in an organic manner. The research coming out on brain development, that Nathan Wallis (Neuroscience Educator) has been sharing, shows that in fact, free play (play that is devoid of adult interruption and rules) is critically important for the development of children's bodies and brains in so many ways. And that growth of the frontal cortex is relationship driven. Reading, writing, emotional control, empathy, humour, logic is all controlled by the frontal cortex.

Learning outside allows kinaesthetic learners and those who struggle to manage their bodies in the confines of the classroom a chance to thrive and learn in an environment that suits them, something that is difficult to consistently provide in the classroom. It also provides real mental health benefits for some children for whom the school environment can be overwhelming. Even for children who love school, programmes like ours have seen an enhancement to their creativity, their stamina and their resilience. They have been able to show a huge amount of commitment to their learning - concentration and patience, to show their curiosity and follow through on their interests and have the time and space to reflect

in ways that are real to them. Following is a quote given to us by a parent who helps run [Nature Kids Co-op](#) in Auckland. It's feedback from a teacher concerning her son who was attending the [Conscious Kids](#) One Day Programme (a programme very similar to ours) at the time:

*"I believe that Conscious Kids helps children develop their problem solving skills and helps them to understand and control emotions in a safe, secure and fun environment. I am a primary school teacher and had a child attend Conscious Kids one day a week over the course of half the year. From their attendance I saw a change in how the child was able to function in the school environment, they were able to manage their emotions a lot better and were able to solve problems in the playground more effectively. They were able to remove themselves from situations and were able to calm themselves down and rejoin activities a lot quicker than before. I think that Conscious Kids has a great role to play for many students in today's world as "play" is an important part of a child's emotional and social development, which many children no longer experience in their lives outside of school or programmes like this."*

-Regards Melissa Arriagada

Our facilitator's are chosen by their previous relevant qualifications and experience. They also all hold current first aid certificates and follow child protection protocols. They have worked with children of various different learning abilities and are passionate about outdoor learning and the philosophies underpinning our programmes. You can see our facilitator's profiles at: [www.arohadiscovery.school.nz/about/#facilitators](http://www.arohadiscovery.school.nz/about/#facilitators)

### **A typical day at Aroha Discovery One Day Nature Programme...**

With [the Sanctuary at Fairfield house](#) as our home base/starting point, we will be exploring all the beauty the Nelson & Tasman forests, beaches and communities have to offer. The children will be outside 99% of the time, rain or shine.

We will start our day at the Sanctuary where the children have the freedom to play on the nearby field as soon as they arrive. When everyone has arrived, and the moment is right (we aim not to disturb established play unless we have to) we gather up, check in with everyone, go over our ground rules and discuss where we are going for the day.

After this short weekly catch up, we set out on our day's adventure. May it be into the woods, or to the beach, into the hills, there will be lots of opportunities to play and learn.

Within the group, our young people are seen as individuals with individual needs. We believe children are natural learners and when given time and space all manner of learning can be observed. Children are free to make their own choices and to follow their own curiosities and interest, within a framework of respect for those around them and the environment. Throughout the day planned activities will also be offered when appropriate, as will spontaneous activities as learning opportunities come up, or when children are showing a particular interest in something.

Examples of planned structured activities could be, building shelters, foraging, nature-based science experiments, nature inspired crafts, seasonal appropriate cooking & baking.

An example of spontaneous activity could be, a ball gets stuck up a tree, the branch is too thin to climb, we work together to figure out a way to get it down, with the materials we have available. (problem solving, creative thinking, teamwork etc).

From time to time we may have mentors come in who are skilled in areas relevant to our programme, who can provide insight and further avenues of exploration for the children. We

also encourage parents, family members and friends with an active interest/applicable skills to sign up as a volunteer to share their knowledge.

On our programmes we foster the development of care - for self, and for others. We support the children in their self-awareness by encouraging them to monitor how they are feeling e.g. are they too hot, too cold, are they hungry etc. On an emotional level, when conflicts arise children are coached to find solutions that are equitable and agreed upon by all - learning how to navigate emotions that arise in a safe space. We also encourage children to find their voice when group decisions are needing to be made. Conflict resolution and learning how to participate in a democratic process are important themes that underlie our programmes at Aroha Discovery. Evidence shows that when children are actively involved in the decision making process they are more accepting of the results, it increases their sense of belonging to the group, and they take more ownership in upholding any rules that have been made. Our day is underpinned by authentic learning in real world situations so that the children are invested in the outcomes they choose.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at:  
[admin@arohadiscovery.school.nz](mailto:admin@arohadiscovery.school.nz)

Ngā mihi nui

The Aroha Discovery School Team