



POLYHIGH STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-19

*Ko te tamaiti te putake o te kaupapa*

Putting the child at the heart of all you do.

## Our Goal

**Polyhigh is a place and a community in which staff and parents work together to fulfil each child's development potential by providing quality early childhood learning in a safe, happy, engaging, and sustainable environment.**

## Our Philosophy

*The following bullets summarise the core principles that make up the Polyhigh philosophy, or 'how we work'. These are 'bottom lines', which stay the same regardless of the specific goals we set later in this plan.*

We:

- are a not-for-profit, community-focused Childcare Centre;
- strive for quality in the services we provide, with a commitment to evidence based learning practices and high teacher-child ratios;
- provide a stimulating, inclusive, and multi-cultural learning environment, acting in a way that is respectful of ourselves, other people, and our wider community;
- encourage and value the input of families and the community, and promote collaboration with others who share similar aims to ours;
- incorporate the following virtues into our learning programme:
  - Relationships/Nga Hononga – We work collaboratively (mahi ngatahi), and establish reciprocal relationships and partnerships with whānau. We acknowledge that culture, home practices, and whānau aspirations for their children/tamariki are pertinent to children's identity and mana and incorporate these into teaching and learning (ako);
  - Quality/Tikanga rangatira – We believe quality is about creating and maintaining high standards across all educational contexts;
  - Love/Aroha: We believe love is fundamental to early childhood learning and development. If adults work from a place of love, children and whanau will feel cherished and a strong sense of belonging (manawhenua);

- Respect /Manaaki – We nurture and respect differences and aim to install within each person a strong sense of identity and belonging;
- acknowledge Te Tiriti O Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand, embracing Te Ao Māori, Tikanga Māori and Te Reo Māori as an integral part of Polyhigh’s policies and practices;
- are committed to environmental sustainability and place a strong focus on health and well-being;
- are committed to place based learning, and celebrate aspects of the RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) and Reggio Emilia philosophies.

## How are we going?

Our most recent ERO report (April 2015) rated Polyhigh as “very well placed” (the highest possible rating) to deliver positive learning outcomes for children, building on a long history of positive ERO reports.

In particular, the report placed positive emphasis on:

- our “very well planned and implemented” learning programme that “supports children to develop at their own pace”;
- the high ratios of teachers to children and the collaboration and communication between our teachers;
- the respectful relationships between staff and children and positive interactions among children;
- the close involvement of whanau in their children’s learning;
- the ethnic diversity of staff and children;
- our “highly evident” bicultural approach, supported by our relationship with Kuratini (the on-campus Marae);
- the sound governance and leadership of the centre.

This means we’re starting from a strong base, and the priorities set out in this Plan are focused on continuous improvement and responding to our changing environment.

## Environmental Scan: What's happening in Early Childhood Education in New Zealand?<sup>1</sup>

- Total ECE enrolments increased by a steady three per-cent over the period 2011-2014, (from approximately 194,000 – 200,000), although the average number of hours/child remained relatively static
- Of all services, 'Education and Care' services (being all those ECE services other than Kindergarten, Home based, Play-Centre and Kohanga Reo) such as Polyhigh have seen the fastest growth in enrolments (rising 11% from 113,000 – 126,000 over 2011-2014)
- Although the overall number of E & C centres remained relatively static, over 60% of ECE services are now privately owned, challenging market share held by community based services<sup>2</sup>
- Average teacher to child ratios have remained static across 'Education and Care' services (5.2), but have decreased significantly in Kindergartens (from 9.5 – 7.9)
- The percentage of qualified teaching staff across all services has steadily increased, from 71.6 to 74.6 between 2011 – 2014 (being up from 50% since 2004), with the greatest increases seen in 'Education and Care' services like Polyhigh
- When considered alongside the relative growth rates for different services, the distribution of qualified teachers across services over the last 5 years suggests active competition for those teachers
- The collective employment agreement with the New Zealand Educational Institute is currently under review, and may have implications for Polyhigh
- Although Maori and Pasifika children are the fastest growing source of enrolments, the percentage of Maori (93% of population) and Pasifika (91%) children who have attended ECE before starting school remains significantly lower than that for the European population (98%)
- At the same time, there has been no increase in public funding of ECE since 2013, and the current Government's fiscal strategy is to maintain increasing

---

<sup>1</sup> Note – unless separately referenced, all statistics sourced from the Annual ECE Census Summary Report 2014, Ministry of Education: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/early-childhood-education/annual-ece-summary-reports>

<sup>2</sup> Dunedin Community Childcare Association Strategic Plan 2012-2015

operating surpluses until net government debt returns to 20 percent of GDP, placing continued pressure on funding for public/social services

- A 2015 report by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Early Learning focused heavily on the need for more proactive professional development of ECE Teachers, and the need to improve the awareness and capability within centres with respect to Maori and Pasifika children
- The same report also recommended that the Government review Te Whariki (the Early Childhood Education Curriculum policy statement)

## **Where we want to be in 2019: Our strategic vision for the next 3 years**

- We continue to be recognised as a provider of high quality ECE services that are inclusive, culturally competent, flexible and responsive to the different needs of our children and community
- We continue to develop, attract, and retain high quality staff and teachers, with Polyhigh seen as an employer of choice within the sector
- Polyhigh is an extension of the family – Our communication is clear, relevant, and timely, so that parents and whanau feel a sense of belonging and a willingness to contribute their knowledge and skills to the Centre
- We celebrate our community (place based education) and value our environment, educating our children/tamariki on the value and practice of sustainability
- We continue to foster and make the most of our cultural diversity to facilitate multi-cultural learning
- Our business is strong and resilient, and we have clear goals in place that balance the highest possible level of care with affordability
- We have maintained and future proofed the quality of our governance and institutional systems
- We utilise technology to help us work smarter, to optimise operational management, and minimise duplication (business focus rather than teaching focus)

## How we'll get there: Our strategic priorities for 2017 - 2019

*Taking into account where we're at, our changing environment, and the three-year vision set out above, we intend to focus on a number of strategic priorities for 2017-2020, grouped under the following 'Pou':*

1. Curriculum: 'A high quality and responsive learning programme'
2. Staffing: 'Develop, attract, and retain high quality staff'
3. Partnership with Whanau and Community: 'Being an extension of the family'
4. Physical Environment and Wellbeing: 'Caring for and learning from our environment'
5. Governance, Financial Sustainability, and Regulatory Requirements: 'A sustainable centre'

*The specific priorities under these Pou, the actions we will take to achieve them, and the measures of success we will use are set out in more detail on the following pages.*

## 1. Curriculum – ‘A high quality and responsive learning programme’

Our curriculum is based on ‘Te Whaariki’ (the Ministry of Education’s early childhood curriculum policy statement). Our learning programme gives effect to this framework by responding to the interests, strengths, and abilities of our individual children, allowing them to learn at their level and pace. The Polyhigh philosophy is embraced in the delivery of teaching and learning outcomes for all children.

Our priorities for 2017-2019	Actions (What we’ll do to achieve these priorities)	Indicators / Measures of success
A. Maintain currency and responsiveness of our learning programme to reflect changes in the NZ teaching curriculum and learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate time in professional learning and development plans for particular research, community engagement and training, with an initial focus on sustainability and biculturalism</li> <li>• Understand and embed ‘Ka Hikitia’ principles throughout our teaching and learning programme and documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning programme is positively endorsed in 2019 ERO report</li> <li>• Annual parent survey feedback and conversations between teachers &amp; parents demonstrates our families’ approval of the learning programme</li> <li>• School and whanau feedback post transition to school is positive</li> <li>• Enviroschool has endorsed Polyhigh’s approach to environmental sustainability</li> </ul>
B. Further build our bicultural capability/focus on Maori & Pasifika children and whanau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage a professional to workshop bicultural best practice in ECE environment with teachers</li> <li>• Incorporate the children’s pepeha into the Transition to School programme. Children can learn and share their whakapapa and knowledge with the younger children fostering the tuakana teina approach to learning, where a buddy system is developed and information can be shared and assimilated</li> <li>• Respond promptly to any review of Te Whaariki - new draft under consultation/review</li> </ul>	
C. Build our focus on environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve the community to share understanding of sustainable practices and develop a Sustainability Plan for the Centre</li> <li>• Implement a recycling system and educate children about composting</li> <li>• Befriend Enviroschools initiative to support our sustainability goal</li> </ul>	
D. Continue to strengthen the transition to school programme making it available to all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and communicate the transition programme, by building links with schools, and interacting with whanau in relation to transition needs</li> </ul>	

## 2. Staffing: ‘Develop, attract, and retain high quality staff’

Our staff and management are our greatest assets, and the primary means by which we achieve our vision. A focus on continuous improvement and professional learning and development are critical elements of the Centre’s ability to attract, grow and retain excellent teachers. Supporting individual strengths at work means everyone can contribute their best at work. Maintaining teacher to child ratios well above statutory requirements is a core part of our operating model.

Our priorities for 2017-2019	Actions (What we’ll do to achieve these priorities)	Indicators / Measures of Success
<p>A. Maintain teacher to child ratios at 1:3 (under 2s) and 1:8 (over 2s) compared with the statutory requirement of 1:5 and 1:10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a succession plan to support internal staff readiness and progression and provide continuity of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 ERO report retains positive findings about the relationships and interactions between staff and children</li> </ul>
<p>B. Strengthen performance management and professional learning and development mechanisms to maintain the relevance of our teaching practice and empower our staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strengths-based approach to performance management and professional learning and development by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ reviewing the current performance management system for strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>➢ reviewing position descriptions so they align with the vision of the Centre;</li> <li>➢ developing a peer review/ informal feedback process to support performance discussions; and</li> <li>➢ agreeing and implementing annual development plans that ensure every staff member understands their strengths, what they uniquely contribute to the team, and what their individual development goals are.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teachers will have up to date teaching portfolio’s that align with the Practising Teacher Criteria set out by the Education Council</li> <li>• Review teacher only days to maximize learning and centre improvements and develop a plan to submit to the committee i.e. develop an in house service week where teachers can plan for the environment and relevant professional learning and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% of our centre teaching staff are qualified compared with the statutory minimum 50%</li> <li>• At least two staff have increased their qualifications over the period of this plan</li> <li>• Staff attrition has been less than 20% per annum on average over the period of this plan</li> <li>• Self-reviews and peer reviews provide positive evidence of staff development</li> <li>• Staff are receiving regular informal and formal feedback from peers, supervisors and centre manager</li> <li>• Feedback from cluster meetings with staff from other providers is positive</li> <li>• Annual parent survey feedback suggests that parents consider staff to be of high quality</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team leaders in line with individual teaching goals of staff will source and organise professional development opportunities</li> <li>• Establish cluster meetings with staff from other ECE providers in order to exchange and obtain knowledge and promote Polyhigh as a desirable place to work.</li> <li>• Engage a professional to workshop bicultural best practice in ECE environment with teachers</li> <li>• Actively encourage male applicants in recruiting processes</li> <li>• Make basic computing skills 'refresh' training available for teachers</li> <li>• Explore the potential and value of a staff study grant over and above NZEI commitments</li> <li>• Add agenda item to monthly staff meetings focused on sharing learning experiences from professional development</li> </ul>	
<p>C. Strengthen teachers' collective understanding of our philosophy to support continuity of learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each teaching room to select an element of the RIE, Reggio Emilia, or place-based learning in New Zealand philosophies to research, develop a learning pack and present to full staff meeting</li> </ul>	

### 3. Partnership with Whanau and Community: 'Being an extension of the family'

Whanaungatanga provides the foundation for positive learning experiences and we actively seek strong, responsive and respectful relationships with each family to support our children's sense of well-being and belonging. Over the last three years, the PolyHigh Educa platform has become a thriving online learning community, and supports the face to face engagement between staff and whanau.

Individual teaching and learning programmes are developed and regularly reviewed, and achievements communicated to parents through learning stories.

Our priorities for 2017-2019	Actions (What we'll do to achieve these priorities)	Indicators / Measures of Success
<p>A. Continue to strengthen communication to parents/whanau about our teaching and learning programme and our assessment and recognition of children's learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain regular updates on EDUCA about the learning focuses across the centre and upcoming activities/events</li> <li>• Make a point of sharing activities, events, or features of daily life at the centre that whanau can reinforce/interact with their children about [eg – Waiata lyrics, favourite lunchtime recipes]</li> <li>• Team leaders ensure comprehensive coverage of individual learning stories by reviewing at staff meetings to assist profile teachers</li> <li>• Implement specific communication pre &amp; post transition to school to understand whanau aspirations and inform development of transition programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% of parents and families are regularly using Educa.</li> <li>• All children have been the subject of at least 12 online learning stories per year</li> <li>• 2019 ERO report makes positive finding about the centre's relationships with whanau</li> <li>• Annual parent survey has become a rich source of feedback about the operation of the centre</li> </ul>
<p>B. Solicit more comprehensive and informative feedback from whanau</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and embed a more regular, effective online parent survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whanau and community events are well attended and generate positive feedback from parents</li> </ul>
<p>C. Strengthen interaction between the centre, our whanau, and our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold three events/year that bring our whanau and community organisations together</li> <li>• Disseminate information to parents about changes in child-related practice &amp; policy</li> </ul>	

## 4. Physical Environment and Wellbeing: 'Caring for and learning from our environment'

We view our environment as a 'third teacher', and have invested significantly in this area over the last three years, with the roof being replaced, a covered outside play area added to the infant room, an expanded indoor area in the pre-school, and an upgraded outside play area that flows out of the pre-school room. We have also updated our staff workspace.

Similarly, meals at Polyhigh are not just about sustenance and nutrition but are an important way for the children to learn about their health and wellbeing.

Our priorities for 2017-2019	Actions (What we'll do to achieve these priorities)	Indicators / Measures of Success
<p>A. Maintain our physical environment to regulatory standards and continue to explore options for further development and funding sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Asset Management Plan to identify and prioritise capital spend over the next 5-10 years</li> <li>• Complete Tui group verandah area (flooring)</li> <li>• Investigate the potential to convert outside alcove into new bathroom for pre-school and redevelop current bathroom into shared resource room, subject to this being funded primarily through grants/fundraising</li> <li>• Investigate the potential to extend the space available to our Tuatara's creating greater learning experiences for children and minimising blind spots, with the potential to have more children in this space i.e. extend the front area out (similar to kiwi indoor/ outdoor space)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 ERO report makes positive findings about our physical environment and focus on health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Annual parent survey and informal conversations with teachers/ Centre manager provide positive feedback about our environment</li> <li>• Gold Healthy Heart Award achieved</li> </ul>
<p>B. Explore options to improve utilisation of the physical environment and its contribution to children's physical development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase mobile climbing equipment that challenges the Tui children's physical development (eg large scale climbing boxes)</li> </ul>	
<p>C. Continue to promote healthy nutrition and movement as part of looking after our hinengaro (mind), tinana (body), &amp; wairua (spirit).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote healthy eating by highlighting and sharing centre recipes/menus in EDUCA notices, holding a parents' evening</li> <li>• Run twice yearly extra-curricular activities such as Little Dribblers, Yoga, and Kapa Haka. These activities will be special and a great opportunity for the children to challenge their physical and cognitive development</li> <li>• Achieve 'Gold' level in New Zealand Healthy Heart Award</li> <li>• Continue to encourage coordinated movement and utilise parent involvement in activities and outings.</li> </ul>	

## 5. Governance, Financial Sustainability, and Regulatory Requirements: 'A sustainable centre'

The parent committee, centre manager and staff are strong, connected and focussed on being the best not for profit early childcare and education centre in Wellington. At the heart of this partnership is smart, effective and caring leadership and a strong sense of shared responsibility by all.

Our priorities for 2017-2019	Actions (What we'll do to achieve these priorities)	Indicators / Measures of Success
<p><b><u>Governance</u></b></p> <p>A. Strengthen planning and governance systems to future proof good quality governance and mitigate loss of institutional knowledge</p> <p>B. Utilise marketing and effective communication to attract new families, improve committee visibility, and continue to build positive relations with existing families and the community</p> <p>C. Strengthen our understanding of the changing political, social and economic environment in which we work, and the potential impacts or risks this presents for the centre</p> <p>D. Better utilise data about ECE in New Zealand to inform committee discussion, decision making and reporting</p>	<p><b><u>Governance</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen and align Annual Management Plan with the 2017 – 2019 strategic plan to provide greater clarity for Centre Manager and ease of reporting/decision making at Committee</li> <li>• Establish and implement permanent, electronic storage of key Governance/Management documents including constitution. Financial documents, Employment agreement/contracts, and Planning/Management documents</li> <li>• Key position holders to create a desk file outlining all key duties and responsibilities and a 'how to guide' to ensure continuity of service and to mitigate loss of institutional knowledge</li> <li>• Develop a marketing and communication strategy including key message/ materials that can be used in multiple settings e.g. Parent induction pack, Transitions info, Staff induction, Recruitment processes and advertising</li> <li>• Continue to promote the purpose and work of the committee by regularly sharing information and talking with parents e.g. working bees, meeting minutes, special notices, parent evenings, member profiles</li> <li>• Hold an annual Committee discussion on the Ministry's ECE census publication and any other key policy statements</li> <li>• Meet and exchange views with at least two other organisations who have an understanding of the political, social and economic environment for community based child care in New Zealand</li> <li>• Review our performance against this plan annually, and allocate time and resources to refreshing this Strategic Plan early in 2019 (<i>ahead of ERO visit</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 ERO report retains 'very well placed' rating and strongly positive qualitative findings</li> <li>• Overall feedback from the annual parent survey and staff is positive and constructive</li> <li>• We have maintained our roll at an average of 45 fte of our capacity over the life of this plan</li> <li>• Staff attrition has been less than 20% per annum on average over the period of this plan</li> <li>• We have maintained and improved our net worth while keeping fee increases to a minimum</li> <li>• We have increased the number of successful grant applications or level of third party funding by 20% over the life of this plan</li> <li>• Invested funds have shown a positive 3-5% return on investment</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Financial</u></b></p> <p>E. Continue to operate the centre as cost-effectively as possible, setting fees at a level that maximises affordability while maintaining the highest standard of care and the financial sustainability of the centre</p> <p>F. Maintain strong audit, risk management, transparency, accountability and compliance systems</p> <p>G. Strengthen our efforts to obtain grant/third party funding, and consider fundraising options to support centre development and involve our community</p>	<p><b><u>Financial</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually review fees in light of our objectives and market position to inform our budget</li> <li>• Maintain our children to teacher ratios to ensure we receive maximum funding each month</li> <li>• Maintain annual budgeting (approved by Committee) and audited reporting to AGM, with financial accounts submitted to the Charities Commission and MoE</li> <li>• Treasurer to complete an annual line by line expenditure review</li> <li>• Appoint a Committee member as 'portfolio lead' for grant funding &amp; fundraising, collate all information for grant applications in a single electronic storage location, and develop and implement an informal strategy for boosting this revenue source to help achieve our physical environment targets</li> <li>• Review the holding/investment strategy for our financial reserves</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Regulatory</u></b></p> <p>H. Continue to comply with the constitution and rules of the Society, comply with all regulatory requirements and maintain other policies needed to promote certainty, safety, and effectiveness.</p>	<p><b><u>Regulatory</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update policy review programme, and review policies as they become due during the term of this plan</li> <li>• Register and comply with the requirements of the "Food Act" by March 2017. Source a verifier to evaluate the status of the kitchen as part of developing a plan to meet all Act requirements.</li> <li>• Update risk profile for Centre including our health and safety obligations</li> <li>• Centre Manager to report quarterly on regulatory obligations to the management committee</li> </ul>	

Note of thanks – the 2017-2019 strategic plan was developed in collaboration with Polyhigh's parent committee, centre management, teachers, and an external reviewer.