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press clip

Ka pai at Kaponga Primary

KAPONGA Primary School is going from strength-to-strength, and its principal could not be more pleased with its progress.

It was a time of change in South Taranaki as 2004 headed into 2005 – Kapuni, Mahoe, Riverlea and Mangatoki Schools were to be closed and their students sent to Kaponga Primary. Suddenly, this quiet school in a country town was injected with fresh families and new ideas, and the school's development stepped up a gear or two to meet the demands of their changing local environment.

It was not long after this time that Shane Downs was appointed principal of Kaponga Primary and for two-and-a-half years, it has been his pleasure to watch the school blossom and bloom.

"The school was ticking over when I took over as principal," says Shane,

"But, like all things in education, Ministry-led priorities change over time.

"Like all schools, Kaponga has had to meet those changes and I believe we're doing a great job."

With the success of development work that has been undertaken in recent times, Shane

has every reason to feel confident about the school that he leads, – development work that is beginning to reach a positive plateau, given the completion of a few key projects at the school.

Techno-tastic

"One of our key priorities in recent years has been the building up of our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources.

"Probably the most significant achievement in this area has been the installation of Promethean Activboards (interactive whiteboards) in every classroom."

Interactive whiteboards such as these are used by teachers and students every day; and not simply for the teaching of the technology curriculum, but for every subject area.

"All teachers use the equipment and are continually receiving extra professional development to get even more out of these great resources."

As well as the high-end of things, the school also now boasts additional technology, such as digital microscopes, video cameras and still digital cameras – as well as a set of 'Activotes.'

"An Activote is a handheld device that allows

individual students to respond to questions. They're extremely useful and flexible tools and the children love using them."

ICT is definitely something that Shane is pushing as part of the school's overall commitment to respond to the changing world and he is extremely proud to be able to say Kaponga is up-to-date and technologically advanced.

Environmental excellence

And while the bright colours and futuristic sounds of a school full of technology are something to be pleased about, all the money spent on it would mean very little if the school didn't have an equally stimulating environment to match.

Just as well the school is now a-glow after months of building, painting, design and replanting in and around the school premises; the result of which has been a new sense of vibrancy and confidence.

"As well as installing the interactive whiteboards, we've upgraded a couple of withdrawal rooms, making them places where individual teachers and students can have quality learning time together in

an attractive environment."

With a new state-of-the-art sign, bedecked in modern design elements glinting in the sun (and shimmering in the rain), Shane is pleased that the school now has a distinctive sign that the entire student body can enjoy being associated with; set off rather nicely by a nearby replanted garden, a rock garden with alpine natives, a new car park and a neat new set of picnic benches at which students can lunch.

"These latest developments were only made possible by a \$10,000 grant from the TSB Community Trust, for which the school was immeasurably grateful."

Other improvements have added value to the school – including the ongoing development of the school's cutting-edge library, erected in 2006 before Shane took over.

"This won an NZIA Local Award for Architecture in 2006."

The architects' brief was to design a stimulating primary school library that would be the centrepiece of the school, providing spaces for senior and junior level reading and research and a teaching environment focussed around a nook.



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SHANE Downs is the pleased and proud principal of Kaponga Primary School.



BEST branding - Kaponga Primary School's new sign stands proudly at the front of the school.