

Whānau Newsletter

Term One 2026



Welcome to Term One Whānau



Welcome back to those who have been with us previously and a warm welcome to all of the new families that are joining us this year. We are looking forward to introducing you to the extended McKenzie Centre whānau.

Dates for Term 1, 2026

27 January	Term 1 starts
6 February	Public holiday - Waitangi Day
9-13 February	Parent Focus week
16 February	Emergency Drills
18 February	Welcome BBQ
1 March	Hangout - details to follow
2 April	End of Term 1
20 April	Start of Term 2

Staff updates

We have lots of new staff starting this term! It has been quite a busy time during the summer holidays, and you will see several new faces during sessions here at McKenzie Centre.

Please give a warm **Welcome to:**
Speech and Language Therapists:

Ella Bryant:

Kia ora koutou, my name is Ella and I am a new speech and language therapist starting at McKenzie centre. I have recently finished studying at Canterbury University and am looking forward to working and learning with you all. I grew up in Wellington, where my family all live now, and moved to Christchurch to study. I loved living near the beaches and the ocean, so moving to Hamilton has been an adjustment! I love the outdoors, running, swimming, biking, and am always mid training for something. I also enjoy playing the guitar and listening to music. I'm a lyrics person so I will listen to anything as long as it makes me feel happy!



I am looking forward to getting to know you and can't wait to see what this term brings.

Staff updates continued

Welcome to: Laura van Amsterdam



I'm Laura and I'm a speech-language therapist. I grew up in Hamilton and now live just down the road from Hamilton with my husband, our three daughters, and our dog named Ted.

I have worked in early intervention on and off since graduating but have experience working with people of all ages and stages.

Outside of work we like to spend time as a family doing things outside. We spend lots of time at the beach and are lucky to have family on the west coast and the east coast.

Early Intervention Teachers:

Jess Pullan:

Kia ora, I'm Jess! I've been teaching for around 14 years, spending nine years in Taupō and the past five back in Hamilton, where I grew up, including time as an owner and manager of an early learning service. I'm really excited to be moving into early intervention and working alongside your child and whānau. I love working collaboratively with others and building strong relationships. Outside of work you'll usually find me travelling, reading, cooking, going to concerts, or planning my next adventure. I'm really looking forward to getting to know you and being part of the McKenzie Centre community.



Nikki Chong:

Kia ora. I am excited to be part of the whānau here at McKenzie Centre. I have been an ECE teacher for many years and feel privileged to get to know you all. I am a proud Mum to two adult children and one teen who is attending her last year of college this year. I am passionate about supporting young people to enjoy their best life and aim to be a positive and supportive person to all. In my spare time, I enjoy being near the water whether that's at a beach or a swimming pool, reading, and enjoying my two cats. My mum always said I was a magnet for children and animals, and I think she was right. I look forward to getting to know everyone in this incredible community. Ngaa mihi.

Music Specialist

Joanna McIlroy:

Kia ora! My name is Joanna and I'm a music specialist. Using music is all about connection and building on strengths (while having lots of fun) with whatever sounds we can find and make. I have the joy of sharing music-making-fun with you all. Looking forward to meeting you all soon



Staff updates continued

Welcome to: Missy Crawford - Teacher



Kia ora koutou, ko Missy Crawford ahau.

I'm a proud māmā to three tamariki and have worked in Early Childhood Education for over a decade. I'm passionate about supporting tamariki and creating inclusive, mana-enhancing environments where every child can thrive. Over the past couple of years, I've worked at the McKenzie Centre as an ESW, which has strengthened my skills and deepened my aroha for this mahi. I'm really looking forward to spending more time in the centre, working alongside you all, and being part of our shared kaupapa

Ngaa mihi

Missy

Psychologist Intern:

Journie Yee:

Kia ora!

Ko Mauao tōku maunga

Ko Tauranga tōku moana

Ko Mataatua tōku waka

Ko Ngaai Te Rangi tōku iwi

Ko Ngati Tauaiti tōku hapu

Ko Te Kutaroa tōku marae

No te Moutere o Matakana ahau

He hononga taku I Ngati Ranginui, Ngati Awa, me Ngati Haua hoki

Ko Journie ahau



I am an intern psychologist here at McKenzie Centre, having recently submitted my Master of Applied Psychology in Behaviour Analysis. My mahi is driven by a passion for helping tamariki and their whānau navigate the world with confidence and support. Outside of work, I am a wife and proud mama of two kōtiro who are being raised in Te Ao Māori. You'll usually find me at the gym by 5 a.m., staying active, hanging with my friends or at home recharging with my whānau cats.

Staff Role Changes:

Siobhan Patterson: Service Manager



Kia ora. I am delighted to have been appointed as the permanent service manager. My first priority, when starting this role, was to increase staffing and to offer improved support to more whānau. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our new staff: Jess, Ella, Nikki C, Journie, Laura, Joanna and Missy.

I will be taking more of a back-office support role, but I will still be onsite for daily sessions to answer questions regarding our growing service delivery and for speech and language support as needed.

I am looking forward to a great year supporting you and walking alongside you and your tamariki in your pre-school journey.



Staff updates continued

Muriel ESW Coordinator:



Kia ora McKenzie whānau,

My name is Muriel, and I am originally from Chile. I have been living in New Zealand for the past eight years with my husband, Matus, and our son, Maximiliano. I am an Early Intervention Teacher and hold a master's degree in early childhood education, with a specialisation in the didactics of mathematics and language.

I am very happy and grateful to be starting this new role as ESW team leader at McKenzie Centre. Education has been my passion for over twenty years, and I deeply value supporting the unique strengths and needs of each tamaiti and their whānau.

I also strongly believe in the importance of working alongside ESWs, who do an absolutely amazing job supporting tamariki in their educational settings. Their commitment, care, and presence make a meaningful difference every day, and I feel very privileged to support and work collaboratively with such dedicated professionals.

I love building authentic relationships, spending time with my family, and listening to all kinds of music, as it connects me deeply with my emotions. I feel very honoured to be part of the McKenzie whānau and truly look forward to getting to know you all.

Tēnā koutou katoa, Muriel

New fences and ramp thanks to Mitre 10 Mega Te Rapa and Ruakura!

Through their Helping Hands project they did a fantastic job of replacing our old fences and putting in a safe footpath to get to our new gates. They also moved the ramp to be closer to our building so we would get more playing space. All of this was for free! Many Mitre 10 staff volunteered their time as did many of the contractors. They worked hard over the holiday break, through the rain, to get everything finished for the start of the new term.

We are incredibly grateful to Mitre 10 Mega Te Rapa and Ruakura for generously supporting McKenzie Centre to create a safe and welcoming environment. The part of the fence by the sand pit needed to stay there to keep the sand in, but will get replaced when we're doing the playground later this year.



End of Year Party

Thank-you to everyone that attended the end of year party in 2025 and made it such a fabulous event. It is always special to see our families together, smiling and having fun to celebrate the end of a busy year.



Curriculum updates and areas of focus for term 1



As a team, we enjoy meeting the diverse learning needs of McKenzie Centre children. At the beginning of each term, we plan together as a team to formulate goals for each McKenzie Centre session. Please check our Te Whāriki Curriculum goals which are on display on the whiteboard beside the sign in sheet.

This term you will find a particular focus on group participation in Music/Circle time, increasing the variety of communication options and opportunities available in session times, and emotional regulation strategies for both whānau and tamariki. There will not be weekly workshops this term, and instead we will gather feedback from whānau to create a few, more targeted, workshops on requested topics as the year progresses.

Please bring kai and a water bottle for your child's morning tea, to be enjoyed at time that suits you during the session.



Sign IN and OUT every session

We encourage you to stay for the full session. There are a lot of important learning opportunities for you and your child. Please sign in on arrival, and out when you leave, as this is an early childhood licensing requirement from the Ministry of Education.



Group Participation

Within each session, we hold a group time for the whānau and children to gather and participate in some songs and games. This helps build connection between everyone in session and provides an opportunity to learn some new skills or supports to use at home or out in the community with your child.

Health and Safety at McKenzie Centre

Emergency drills:

We practice fire and earthquake drills in session and lockdown drills with the staff only. These drills are practised every three months. All drills will occur on February 16th this term. This is an early childhood licensing requirement so we are all prepared should an emergency event occur. If you are unsure what to do, please talk with the staff.

Medication:

If you are bringing any medication, including Paracetamol, Disprin etc. into McKenzie Centre, please leave it in the office for safe keeping. Little fingers can get into bags left unattended.

Allergies:

Please let us know if your child has any allergies (food and other) so that we can adjust our planning around safety. Many of you have done this as part of the enrolment procedure but let us know if there are any changes.

SunSmart:

Now that the UVI levels are rising again, please make sure to pack a hat for you and your tamariki and apply sunscreen. We have spare hats available and also sunblock if necessary. From the SunSmart guidelines: "All babies under 12 months should be kept out of direct sun when UVI levels are 3 or higher. They should be protected by shade, clothing and broad-brimmed hats. Sunscreen may be used on small areas of a baby's skin but do not rely on sunscreen as the primary method of protection".

Changes to attendance

If you have or would like to make changes to the day that you attend McKenzie Centre, please talk with your contact person and have a chat with Henny in the office. We also need to know if your child's enrolment days/hours at Early Childhood Education Centres have changed as this affects funding claims.

Loan Items

Please remember to bring back any toys or items that your whānau borrowed. If you're still using them, please touch base with your contact person.



Early Intervention Fees

Eftpos: We have an Eftpos machine at McKenzie Centre, so you can make payments when you are here. Please see Henny or Lillian who are happy to help you. Thank you for supporting McKenzie Centre with your payment of the Early Intervention Fees. They are essential to the running of our service. The WINZ Childcare Subsidy is available for many families and may cover the entire cost of the Early Intervention Fee. We can help you apply for this, or find another option for you, so that your financial burden is eased. Please see your contact person or the Admin team – we are happy to help. Some people pay us a smaller amount every week – talk to Henny or Lillian and they will help you with this.

If you're a MSD/Work and Income client, you can apply for Childcare Subsidy using RealMe on the SmartStart website. Or if you prefer, you can continue to apply through MyMSD or on paper.

Policies and Procedures

All policies and procedures are on a review cycle, so they always remain current and relevant. A full list is available in the yellow "Licence, Policies, ERO Report" folder in the Whānau Room.

Those under review will be shared during Parent Focus week or listed on the wall in the Whānau Room and families' opinions are an important part of this review process. If you want to know more about any policy, procedure or how they are reviewed feel free to ask Lillian.

Thanks So Much To All Our Volunteers & Sponsors

We are very grateful to the many people and organisations that support McKenzie Centre and the work we do.
We could not do what we do without you.



Waikato WDFF
Karamu
Rehabilitation
Welfare Trust

Gallagher Charitable Trust

Best wishes from: Siobhan, Rachael S, Henny, Lillian, Steph, Emma, Nikki A., Rachael F, Richard, Susie, Eram, Victoria, Joanna, Shanayd, Emma Gr, Liesl, Chrissy, Michael, Muriel, Maria, Nikki C, Jess, Ella, Laura, Journie, Nick and Missy.