

# PROSPECTUS

YEARS 7 - 13

**AOTAWHI** UNLIMITED  
DISCOVERY







**KIA ORA KOUTOU**

**AO TAWHITI UNLIMITED  
DISCOVERY IS HERE TO ENSURE  
THAT YOU, OUR STUDENTS,  
ARE CENTRAL IN DIRECTING  
YOUR OWN LEARNING SO THAT  
YOUR ENTHUSIASM AND LOVE  
OF LEARNING IS RETAINED.**

Our sole reason for existence is to provide a place and the resources for our students to learn what they want,

the way that they want, in their own time, and in the right place for the learning to occur.

We don't make you an Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery student, you do.

You can do this by learning through your passions, investing in your interests and undertaking learning that meets your needs. Many of the students and families who take the time to tour our school ask us what could that look like? It's such a difficult question to answer because it shouldn't look quite the same to each student. For some students, it looks like choice. Our students have the freedom to select courses and learning programmes that will meet their needs and interests. For example, if you're a Year 9 and great at science, you could look at taking a NCEA Level 1 course. If you wanted to be a musician, we could create a programme that lets you play music all day and work towards those individual learning goals. Your curriculum is as flexible and tailored as you, your whanau and your learning advisor make it.

What else makes us special? We bring your family into the school. I know that many of the students reading this, probably can't think of anything worse ... "more time with my parents!", I hear you say. But it's actually a really good thing. Regular meetings between your learning advisor, yourself and your parents, mean that everyone is aware of what your goals and desires are.

We are a high trust community. That's a big risk when you're first starting out as a student or a parent at this community. It's a difficult process to take ownership of your learning yourself, to wrest some control back from your school. It's not that one way is better than the other, it's just that here we expect you to have things you want to do or to learn, and we trust you to do it.

We genuinely want your experience here to be fun and I know that my learning advisors and my fabulous students will create an environment for you that suits your needs. We do this because we create strong, open and positive relationships throughout the school and community. This is our hallmark and I truly believe that the relationships we build into our practice are unparalleled in any school, and one of the achievements I am most proud of when I talk about our school.

So my challenge to you as a prospective student, is to think about what you want from your schooling. How much of that future are you willing to hand over to a school. How much of that future are you willing to lead. Finally, I want you to remember that **we are a school that is willing to adapt to meet your needs ... rather than you having to adapt to ours.**

Steven Mustor - Director

Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery

# OUR SPECIAL CHARACTER...

# INNOVATIVE, HOLISTIC, INDIVIDUAL

The 21st century is demanding so-called 'higher-order' skills such as analysing, evaluating and synthesising information, problem solving and social and emotional skills. This will become even more pressing in the future – not only for businesses, but for entire societies.

At Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery we believe that we rise to this challenge. We are a special character school with a fundamental tenet that the student is central in directing his or her own learning so that the enthusiasm and love of learning is retained. Active learning happens when students are self-directed to learn for themselves through their demands to solve authentic or personally meaningful problems.

Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery is a special character, co-educational, state integrated school for students from Years 1 to 13. We have five guiding principles and five core values that define our special character.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Students are at the centre of their learning.
- ▶ Learners are encouraged to be creative, innovative and take risks.
- ▶ Diverse and flexible individual learning pathways are supported.
- ▶ Learning is a partnership.
- ▶ Everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher.

## CORE VALUES

- ▶ We develop relationships and a sense of belonging that strengthens each member of our learning community.
- ▶ We commit to honouring the individual while celebrating our diversity. We respect ourselves and each other as we aspire to build an empowering learning community.
- ▶ We encourage energetic and powerful learning. Our students are courageous as they push the boundaries of their own learning by taking risks and developing their own path.
- ▶ Building your own learning path requires that our students live up to their commitments and responsibilities. They are trusted to make decisions and follow them through with integrity.
- ▶ We actively strive to celebrate the uniqueness of individuals, while unifying the community. We share our successes and work through our difficulties with compassion, caring and tolerance.

With this prospectus we intend to demonstrate how our Guiding Principles and Core Values are lived every day by our school community, so let our students, teachers and parents tell our story.



**“We have to learn to make our own way through a complex world without the benefit of an accepted trustworthy route map.”**

(Guy Claxton)



The core aim of our school is for our students to play an active role in the design of their learning programmes. We encourage young learners to keep their inquisitive passions alive, to cultivate a spirit of lifelong curiosity, and to subsequently challenge themselves personally, academically and socially.

Our approach to learning accommodates New Zealand's national curriculum but gives students the freedom to forge their own paths through it.

From year 1 to year 13 we offer a number of structured courses facilitated by teachers, and many of the courses contribute to achievement on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework such as NCEA. However, classes are open to students of any age and students can work at whichever level of the curriculum that best serves their needs. Many students achieve well, with some gaining NCEA qualifications ahead of their usual year level or passing university papers. All of our courses run in 5 week (half term) blocks. This differs significantly from the more traditional locked in age-based classes that run for a whole year in other New Zealand secondary schools.

In addition to teacher facilitated courses, our students are encouraged to develop and engage with their own learning programmes, following personal interests and enthusiasms while making sure their programme provides the key skills and competencies right for them. Each day, students have time for self-directed learning to pursue their own interests or catch up on work at their own pace. They can opt to work outside of classes and courses, drawing on resources and experts as needed.

Mentoring is offered on some days in the morning and again in the afternoon. This time allows students to meet with subject teachers to get support on course based learning, independent based learning, and other curriculum opportunities not currently available in classes.

There are no limits to what students can achieve at Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery.

## **BRENT, Learning Advisor**

“Despite Philosophy being a recognised school subject there are no NCEA standards, so teachers usually borrow standards from other domains such as English or History. This is not ideal, so I came to an arrangement with the Philosophy Department at the University of Canterbury in which we would offer a distance course for our students. The course would run at our school, and we would provide the academic support, such as tutoring time and materials that would normally be delivered at university.

We now offer two university level Philosophy courses: our students complete all the assignments at school, however, the marking is done by the university and our students end up with points that count towards their first year of a university degree. The course is STAR funded with no cost to our students. Since we teach smaller groups the course is highly discussion based, so there is a lot of depth. I believe that's why our students perform better on average than the students who attend university lectures.”



## **PATRICE, Year 13**

“I have been involved in a number of individual projects. For about eight months I invented and developed a board game that consisted of three interlocking chess boards, and I did some market research to investigate whether I should market it. After that I ran a comedy podcast with my friends; we ran 3 episodes of 15 minutes each and we are looking at producing more episodes soon.

I really care about student representation across the school and that's why I ran for student trustee in September. As a trustee at our school I seem to have a lot more voice in terms of decision making compared to other schools.”

**JOSHUA, graduated 2014**

"I really liked the individual pathways that the school provides. When I was in year 12 I completed all of my assessments necessary to obtain UE. In year 13 I was then able to focus exclusively on painting and print making. My work was fully self-directed and facilitated by my art teacher through frequent meetings. Every day I worked until the work was done, which often involved long hours. I stayed for another year (year 14) to establish a sculpture portfolio. I am currently in my second year of studying at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland.

During my time at school I developed an interest in croquet as I wanted to get out of the art room occasionally, so I joined the croquet school team. I never really had any ambitions to do well academically, but the environment of the school and all the great relationships with Learning Advisors and students helped me to achieve and to become successful." (NB: Josh has been awarded the Denise Gerard Scholarship for Fine Arts at Auckland University. He also won the Under 21 World Championships in croquet in 2015!!).



**NATHAN, Learning Advisor**

"We have been able to design a course to support a number of full time ballet dancers. The course allows them to combine their ballet training and academic learning. We work closely with the ballet school so the dancing can be assessed for NCEA, but we help those students to utilise their learning in many other ways, too. I created assessment opportunities where, for example, they can describe an aspect of their training or a performance, they then explore a number of psychological theories and apply them to their dance and explore their own action plan. When they go on tours there are opportunities to develop posters, write an essay, or produce a film for example, and this work could count towards a range of NCEA subjects, including English, Media Studies, History, and Psychology. These are all authentic tasks that give the students good critical knowledge of the theories, and a deeper understanding of what they are doing and what they are really passionate about."



At Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery we want our graduates to be as diverse as they choose to be. Our students are central to every decision made about their education. Students control which areas of the NZ Curriculum they would like to pursue and are not restricted to doing something just because of their year level. Every day, our entire community encourages our students to be creative, innovative and take risks with their learning. If you have a commitment to learning, our community will work hard to try and make that a reality for you. We deliver NZ secondary school qualifications in a personalised way that fits you first rather than the school.

Every student at Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery develops an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This plan forms the basis of how and what they will learn. The IEP is set and reviewed at an Individual Education Meeting. This meeting allows the student, their family, and their Homebase Learning Advisor, to share their thoughts, challenges and goals. The meeting takes a holistic approach to finding the best way to let students follow their passions, interests and needs.

## EIKO, Year 10

“I have been involved in a business project called Developster for about a year now. It is an online platform that helps teen entrepreneurs to connect, share, and collaborate, with like-minded teenagers, such as graphic designers, photographers, filmmakers, game designers and more. Most kids have little access to Computer Science and Developster intends to change that. We have a really cool classroom for learning, it's called Kohknowco Lab and we have mentors at Silicon Valley who support our project. We are planning to go to Redmond (USA) in October to build affiliate partnerships for the business and to hopefully launch Developster officially.”



## TOBY, graduated 2015

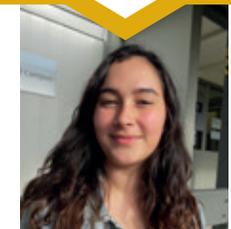
“I am currently training to become a pilot at the International Aviation Academy of New Zealand. I wanted to become a pilot ever since I was six years old. My teachers always helped me to follow my dream and to make it happen. A number of school projects supported my goal along the way, such as the EVelocity Project (a CPIT programme for high school students) where I built an electronic car as a team leader. The Gateway coordinators at school were also extremely helpful.

Recently, I met a flight instructor who also attended Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery and there are a couple of other pilots in training who also went to our school. I wonder if the school attracts the kinds of people who want to become pilots?”

## MADISON, Year 12

“I have a passion for dance, art, music, and singing. I really enjoyed running Stage Challenge this year, together with another student. It was quite a challenge as the two of us were in charge of the whole project, such as finding a theme, choreography, music, lighting, and costumes. We had a bit over a term to get it up and running, and we practiced during school time, at lunch times and weekends.

I am happy that we finally have a hip hop teacher at our school, as hip hop is another passion of mine. We are even able to do assessments and work towards NCEA levels 1, 2, and 3. Next year I want to apply to attend a Maori dance course in Otago and I have recently started learning Te Reo in preparation for that.”





**JOSIAH,  
Year 11**

“My original goal for this year was to get NCEA level 2 but I have already achieved that, so I am now working towards level 3. I am currently studying dance, drama, English, physics, chemistry and maths. In addition to that I have taken up media studies this year. I am also going to do a film studies course at university, it starts in the school holidays and runs all the way through semester 2; it is a STAR course.

The biggest thing I have done with drama last year was that I wrote and directed a short play with three people, and I ended up acting in it as well. We performed it at school and we were then invited to play it at TheatreFest. I have also made a few short films – they are quite experimental, idea based. The school helps me a lot with my passion for filming by providing equipment, support, and flexibility.”



**ELLA, Year 8**

“In my self-directed learning time I am currently designing a poster for my rowing club. I love Greek and Roman mythology and I noticed that many of the rowing boats are named after a Greek god or hero. A lot of people don't know what's behind those names, so I am making a poster to explain that.

A while ago I was involved in the 'Festival of Flowers' that took place at Cathedral Square, I guess this was one of my favourite school projects. You were able to set up your own little garden, and I decided to make a waterfall. A family friend had a trailer and we managed to build a waterfall on top of his trailer, it worked really well!

I love gardening and in the past I have been involved in a number of gardening workshops. I have also organised a disco for the school.”



At Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery teachers are called **Learning Advisors**. This term deliberately emphasises a role comprised of facilitation, mentorship and coaching. Teachers function both as curriculum experts and as advisors who help our students make the right decisions, give regular feedback on progress and monitor whether the students' planning needs modifying.

In their role as curriculum experts, our Learning Advisors have a strong willingness to adapt their courses to the needs and desires of our students.

**“Teachers have a ‘can do’ attitude in assisting students to follow their goals.”**

ERO NEW SCHOOL ASSURANCE REVIEW REPORT, June 2016

align with the most recent discoveries in education and to personalise the curriculum for individual students and their classes as a whole.

Learning Advisors do more than just teach, they are responsive to individual student voice, while ensuring that the curriculum is delivered in a relevant, challenging and interesting way.

Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery empowers Learning Advisors to be their best. Learning Advisors are encouraged to continually improve and



**RICHARD, Learning Advisor**

“The autonomy that you have as a Learning Advisor at this school is fantastic: teachers have the flexibility to follow their interests rather than being confined to a narrow curriculum. I teach Media Studies and English at the moment, but my classes here can always be a bit of a mix, as I am able to combine those subjects with Psychology, Digital Technology, Science, or any other subject in which I’m confident (or in which the students show an interest).

When teachers are sharing their passion for the things they love, learning standards are usually so much higher.

I also think that the school prepares our students exceptionally well for uni life, as it is almost run like a university within a high school. During their time here, our school leavers would have been continually asked to justify which learning experiences they were engaged in, whereas at other schools you often just take what’s been given to you.”



**KAY, Learning Advisor**

“Every teacher has a responsibility to ensure good coverage of a subject but at our school I can individualise my teaching. I have the freedom to try out new, modern methods of teaching or anything that might have a positive effect on the children that I have in front of me.

This year I am trying to give my English class a different perspective on writing. The method we are using is ‘Talk to Write’ and is based on learning literacy through stories. I became a story teller, repeating a story over and over, and it took us three weeks before the children wrote anything. When they did, they were much better able to focus on spelling and grammar. This term I am following Ian Hunter’s work on sentence and paragraph structures. It’s called ‘Write that Essay’ and it teaches children really powerful essay writing tools.

We created different Communities after we merged and the school increased in size, although we have always had a strong community focus generally from day one. I run a

Community of Year 7s to 10s that comprises of around 80 students. We come together regularly, we have common systems in place, and while every child can be a total individual within that I think it gives them a sense of security, belonging and understanding. Every term we run an event as a community: we take the children out for the day or have a one-night camp, plus once a term we celebrate the children's learning with their parents. Arts performances, exhibitions, pop up restaurants and quiz nights are recent examples. In addition to that the children offer and sign up to workshops that they then run within our Community, and finally we, the Learning Advisors, run some workshops for them. Our sense of community means a lot to us and we work on it every day."



**FLORIAN, Learning Advisor**

"For NCEA, schools normally choose one internal exam topic for the whole class. In my Physics and Science Level 1 course we are currently doing an internal on genetics, with 25 different genetics related topics. Each student takes ownership of their work and

conducts their own research.

I also run a junior astronomy class, but rather than teaching a standardised course that is derived from the NZ curriculum, my programme is different each year, as it evolves from my students' interests. At the beginning of the course each student is encouraged to write their questions down and we discuss a few of them in each class. This approach helps me cover everything about astronomy, including the NZ curriculum, but so much more."



**SARAH, Learning Advisor**

"From Year 7, children at our school can choose their courses, based on their interests and their needs. In addition to this, each student has their allocated weekly one-to-one time with their Learning Advisor, and we spend time as a group in the morning and once again at the end of the day on their self-directed learning. This way they

can develop a strong sense of belonging to the group of students in their community.

I believe that our children are not only given a lot of choice but also a high degree of responsibility. They are given options rather than being told, and often they are challenged to step up and take responsibility. For example, last year we had students plan a movie night as a fund raiser. They came up with the idea and the initiative for it, and of course they

had adult support along the way. I guess they are not limited by what's expected for their age - if they have the inspiration and commitment to do something, we support them to make it happen.

Some of my students follow unique pathways of learning. I teach a girl who attends school only part time so she can follow her passion, which is dancing, at the same time. In addition to getting lots of support from her Learning Advisors she uses Google Classroom, so she can digitally see what she missed that day which is another way for her to catch up. We also operate an effective Learning Management System (LMS): As Learning Advisors we can link learning programmes and courses, and the children can view learning material and add their own notes. I believe that the school's use of technology to provide online learning opportunities in addition to personal learning support is a great strength of ours."

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**“The current  
New Zealand  
Curriculum  
requires a shift  
in perspective:  
from a teacher  
of the subject  
to a teacher of  
the person”**

(Dr Julia Atkin)

## OUR PARENTS...

## ENGAGED, ACTIVE PARTNERS, TEACHERS & LEARNERS

Our learning community is very well supported by parents. Parents commit to the special character of the school by forming a strong partnership with their child and his/her Learning Advisor. They play an active role in the goal setting for their child and for the support and achievement of those goals.

Beyond this, many parents offer learning opportunities that reflect their own passions or skills. You may see parents at our school working alongside students as mentors, tutors, instructors or coaches, as they run a workshop, support an event or project, or assist a group of students. We encourage all parents to share their time and resources in the ways that are most meaningful to them.



### **JENEANE, Mother of Kitty, Year 12, and Bryony, graduated 2013**

“To me the most memorable experience that my daughters were involved in was Project Iva. The goal was to deliver school equipment to a primary school in the village of Iva, Samoa. For about a year and a half it consumed the life of everyone in our family, with my eldest daughter being one of the group leaders. In addition to gathering the equipment we did an extensive amount of fundraising. An example was an educational programme that the students devised around Samoan games and crafts, and that they offered to various primary schools in North Canterbury in exchange for small donations. We also busked regularly to raise funds.

The handover of the equipment in Samoa was both a cultural and an emotional experience, as it involved formal ceremonies as well as sharing, and exchanges of goodwill. Project Iva was the epitome of the school’s way of doing things.”





At Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery there are few age boundaries. Older students engage with and work alongside younger students in natural and supportive ways, treating everyone as an individual and with respect. Students are vertically grouped in **Homebases** (similar to form classes) which they are free to select each year, and where they are supported by their designated Learning Advisor.

We believe that learning does not necessarily need to take

## KANE, Year 10

“I enjoy school, it’s really fun. I go here because at my old school there was a lot of bullying going on, even if it was about stuff like a hip problem. My old teachers didn’t really care, so the kids kept on doing it. At this school it is a lot better, here they would do something about it, they wouldn’t let it slide.

I do the traditional subjects, but I am also doing architecture, as I want to be an architect when I am older. There are only six people in that class and I am really enjoying it.”



## RORIE, Year 13

“I became a Student Support Advisor, as I really wanted to give back to the school. This year I decided to run a PE class with the year 7s to 10s, to improve personal relationships with younger kids and to support friendship. We played fun games together on the nearby tennis and basketball courts, and we also got involved in volleyball, dodgeball, cricket and football. We met Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings for one hour each.

I look forward to going to Broadcasting School next year. Our school really helped me identify my passions and capabilities.”



## ELLA, Year 12

“Last year I attended our school’s outdoor education programme. It started off with an eight-day camp and sea kayaking trip to Abel Tasman. Other trips involved river crossings, snow skills such as making your house out of snow, and survival skills: you go out into the bush and sleep under a tarp, sometimes in pouring rain. The idea is that you pretend you are trapped outside and you find huts where food has been left behind for you. This can be really disgusting stuff like lamb tongue, but you have to prepare it as best as you can. It was really fun, freezing cold, but well worth it!

Last year I went on an Aspiring Young Leaders trip to Blumine Island. The course is all based around conservation and leadership. Only seven schools attend, and a boy and a girl from each school get selected. We set up stoat traps, they teach you values and everyone gets a turn at leading the group where you set out the plan for the day, split people into groups and send them off. It was the coolest thing ever and we are so lucky that our school gets to take part in that. It was such an experience.

The most special thing about our school is the interaction and the strong relationships between the teachers and the students. When I was in Year 9 my Learning Advisor encouraged me to start my NCEA courses early, so next year I am planning to enrol at the STAR programme at the university.”



**“Interactions between students and staff are supportive and respectful. Student choice is the basis for these relationships and decision making.”**

place in the classroom but can occur anywhere, anytime. Students can choose to engage in ‘off site learning’ in the community instead of coming into school every day and we encourage students to use local resources as part of their learning. Real-world inquiry brings learning to life and connects learners with the wider community.

There are no uniforms, school bells or detentions, and Learning Advisors are on a first name basis with their learners. These are only a few distinctive elements of our school that create strong and trustful relationships and a sense of belonging for all.

## OUR LOCATION...

## BACK TO THE CITY CENTRE OF CHRISTCHURCH

Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery was formed in 2014 as a result of the merger of Discovery 1 and Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti. These schools had world class modern learning environments in the central city. Following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes both schools were forced to relocate. We are currently located on two campuses. Our year 1-6 students are based in Halswell, while our year 7-13 students are at the University of Canterbury.

We are excited about moving back into brand new, purpose built facilities in 2019. The construction of our new, innovative campus at **177 St Asaph Street** is well underway and will provide us with spaces specifically

designed for how we deliver personalised student driven learning. The new location will also enable us to once again being a truly city based school that can easily access all of the amenities, resources, and learning opportunities that Christchurch has to offer.



### **LUCY, graduated 2007**

“Looking back, I think what really stood out about my schooling was the degree of respect and trust that we received as students. I believe that this makes our students generally more confident and more mature. If you are treated like an adult, it is much easier to behave like an adult.

I was lucky to attend high school when the school was still located in the city centre. The bus exchange would take us pretty much anywhere we wanted to go. If we had a question, it was really encouraged to go out and find the answers. Being in the city inspired our curiosity and the environment enabled us to develop some really strong interpersonal skills as we were constantly interacting with lots of ‘real life’ people. This made the school very special.

In my final year I was involved in a production when the stage director suddenly had to quit her job right in the middle of rehearsals. We as students were then encouraged to pull it together and to bring the play to the stage, with lots of support from our Learning Advisors. That’s when I found out that drama was my passion. Today, I work in Media and TV.”



# ENROLMENT

# YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE!



Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery is open to any student seeking enrolment. Commitment to, or empathy with, the 'special character' is the only entry requirement.

We expect all of our applicants to have attended a school tour.

Please visit our website [aotawhiti.school.nz](http://aotawhiti.school.nz) for tour dates or contact [tours@aotawhiti.school.nz](mailto:tours@aotawhiti.school.nz) to arrange a tour.

Entry to our school requires an enrolment application and an interview with families by senior staff.

Welcome to Ao Tawhiti Unlimited Discovery – your journey starts here!

## **For further information, please contact:**

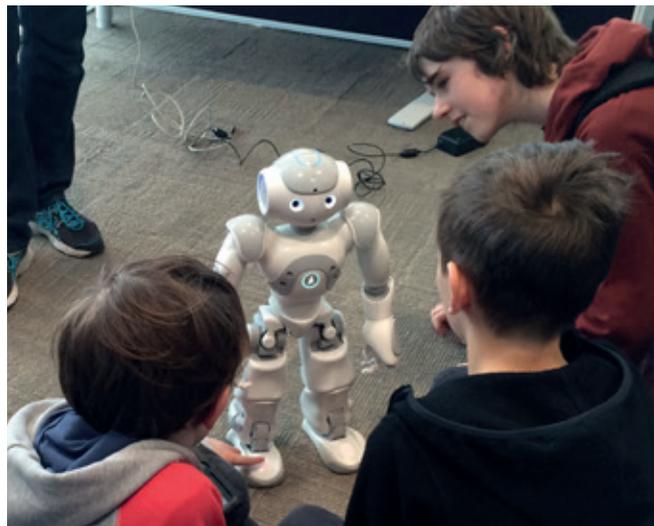
Postal address: PO Box 4666, Christchurch 8140

## **YEARS 0 TO 6 – DISCOVERY CAMPUS**

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(03) 365 4678 | [discovery@aotawhiti.school.nz](mailto:discovery@aotawhiti.school.nz)

## **YEARS 7 TO 13 – UNLIMITED CAMPUS**

Wairarapa Block, University of Canterbury, Cnr Parkstone Ave & Oak Drive, Christchurch 8041  
(03) 377 7773 | [unlimited@aotawhiti.school.nz](mailto:unlimited@aotawhiti.school.nz)





[aotawhiti.school.nz](http://aotawhiti.school.nz)