



# ERO Early Childhood Service Akarangi | Quality Evaluation Report

Early Childhood Service Name: Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool

Profile Number: 48104

Location: Manurewa, Auckland

1 ERO's judgement of Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool is as follows:

Domains: Ngā Akatoro	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
The learner and their learning He Whāriki Motuhake	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability Whakangungu Ngaio	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement Kaihautū	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Stewardship through effective governance and management Te Whakaruruhau	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling

For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation.

Children's health and safety

Improvement required

Taking reasonable steps

## 2 ERO's Judgements

[Akarangi | Quality Evaluations](#) evaluate the extent to which early childhood services have the learning and organisational conditions to support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. [Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most](#) and [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Improvement Framework \(teacher led services\)](#) are the basis for making judgements about the quality of the service in achieving equity and excellence for all learners. Evaluations for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above domains.

## 3 About the Service

Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool is one of four early childhood services within the Chrysalis Group. Two directors, a curriculum manager, and an operations manager provide governance and stewardship for the services. The Gaia (Earth) based education philosophy aims to deliver environments, values, teaching and learning that support outcomes for children. Each of the four services has its own philosophy, reflecting its individual values, curriculum, and community.

At Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool, children play and learn in four age-based rooms and outdoor spaces that reflect and make use of the surrounding natural environment. A centre manager leads a team of individual room leaders and teachers. The service philosophy highlights a play and nature-based approach, with children, their families, and whānau viewed as unique.

## 4 Progress since the previous ERO report

This is the first ERO evaluation since the service opened in 2022, and as such, there are no previous improvement actions to progress. Since its opening, there have been significant changes in staffing and leadership. The focus for governance and leadership has been on building stability and relational trust among the team during the early years of operation.

## 5 Learning Conditions

### The learner and their learning | He Whāriki Motuhake

Children across the service benefit from a learning environment and teaching practices that promote the development of their communication skills.

- The service philosophy is clearly enacted and appropriately links to the Chrysalis Group's overarching philosophy. Children's engagement in the outdoor learning spaces provides opportunities for them to take an active role as kaitiaki, or guardians, of their wider environment.
- Most children's engagement in play is well supported by teachers who integrate intentional teaching strategies into their practice, though these are not included in planning processes. Strategies supporting the quality of the curriculum include open-ended questioning to prompt thought, listening and observation, and a range of ways to embed both verbal and non-verbal language.
- Teachers work collaboratively with parents, whānau and external agencies to plan for the learning of children with additional needs and children aged under two. As children transition through the service, there is wide variability in how teachers respond to them as individuals in curriculum design and planning for learning.

## Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability | Whakangungu Ngaio

Teachers and leaders collaborate to build a culture of trust that supports collective inquiry and knowledge-building.

- There is a framework for teachers to undertake reflection and review as part of their professional growth. However, they are yet to apply an evaluative lens to this work to understand the impact of their learning on improvements in practice and outcomes for learners.
- Teachers are taking steps to increase their use of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori as part of the daily curriculum, supported by whānau Māori. They are also active in reflecting the cultures of children and their families in the service, along with the cultures of children from other backgrounds, through centre celebrations and events.
- Children under two are well supported to learn in a calm, slow-paced environment that responds to their individual needs. There is variability in how teaching practice and curriculum design positively promotes agency and creativity for children aged over two, and the service has not yet established clear priorities for all children's learning, aligned with *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum.

## 6 Organisational conditions

### Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement | Kaihautū

Leaders across the group have established strong relational trust by modelling and promoting a focus on building capability in improvement practices.

- Senior Chrysalis Group leaders and service leaders implement a differentiated approach to foster growth in teachers' professional knowledge. They offer a range of learning opportunities, drawing on both internal and external expertise.
- Leaders monitor and review improvement practices, including internal evaluation, strategic planning at service level, and teachers' professional growth cycles. These processes involve a range of inquiry, review, and reflection; however, they have not been fully evaluated to clarify the impact of changes in practice on outcomes for learners.
- The centre manager, assisted by Chrysalis Group support systems, is focused on improvement. There has been a strong emphasis on ensuring that systems across the service are understood and effectively used.

Those responsible for governance across the Chrysalis Group create positive conditions to identify and nurture future leaders, supporting continuity and succession planning across their services.

- Governance and the senior leadership team empower centre managers and their teams to make decisions that support their learners and communities. This helps promote the individual identity of each service, while aligning with the overarching Gaia (Earth) philosophy.
- An overarching strategic plan guides those in governance to make decisions based on the wellbeing of children, their families, and teachers. The alignment between this strategic plan and the outcomes of improvement practices at the service level is not sufficiently clear to enable governance to fully understand the impact and quality of interventions at their level.
- Cohesive policies and practices are well-established by governance and senior leaders to enable service leaders to be autonomous in their centre operations. However, some variability exists across the services in how these policies and practices are understood and implemented.

## 7 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff and management of Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management and administration.

During the review, ERO looked at the service's system for managing the following areas that have a potentially high impact on children's health and safety:

- emotional safety (including positive guidance and child protection)
- physical safety (including supervision; sleep procedures; accidents; medication; excursion policies and procedures)
- suitable staffing (safety checking of staff, ratios)
- relevant evacuation procedures and practices.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

## 8 Where to next for improvement?

Gaia (Earth) Forest Preschool will include the following actions in its quality improvement planning:

- Work with the centre community to determine priorities for children's learning, ensuring they clearly underpin curriculum design, delivery, and improvement practices.
- Develop planning processes to ensure a consistent approach for planning individual children's learning, based on their dispositions and strengths.

For those responsible for governance to:

- Refine monitoring and evaluative reporting systems to ensure decisions at this level take account of the quality of curriculum provision and improvement practices at each service.
- Identify key strategic priorities and plans at group level to align and advance these alongside service-level strategic priorities.
- Define roles and responsibilities for developing capability across the services in conducting and using evaluation to support a range of improvement practices.

**Activities undertaken by the evaluation team**

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/manager.
- Reading documentation and records of children's learning and development.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

[\*Further information about how ERO evaluates early childhood services is available here.\*](#)

*Lisa Oldridge*

Lisa Oldridge  
Director of Early Childhood Education (Acting)

7 May 2025

## 9 Information About the Service

Service Type	Education and care service
Number licenced for	125 children, including up to 35 aged under 2
Percentage of qualified teachers	100%
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 20%, NZ European/Pākehā 50%, Indian 24%, Samoan 10%, Tongan 5%, other Pacific groups 4%
Service roll	117
Review team on site	February 2025
Date of this report	7 May 2025
Most recent ERO report (s) These are available at <a href="http://www.ero.govt.nz">www.ero.govt.nz</a>	First ERO report of the service.

### Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	<b>Above the threshold for quality</b>
Excelling	The service is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The service has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement to the quality of education and care for children.
	<b>Below the threshold for quality</b>
Working towards	The service is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the quality of education and care for children.
Improvement required	The service has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support quality education and care for children.