



Kiwi Can Longitudinal Project

Year Two Insights

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Introduction

Kiwi Can is designed for tamariki aged 5-12 years. It teaches values and life skills and is delivered to a whole school by trained Kiwi Can Leaders. Ākonga participate in a weekly Kiwi Can lesson throughout the school year and learn about: Whanaungatanga / Positive Relationships; Pono / Integrity; Manawaroa / Resilience; and Manaakitanga / Respect.

The Graeme Dingle Foundation is conducting a qualitative longitudinal research project to examine the impact of Kiwi Can on its participants, and how these effects evolve as the tamariki progress through school. As part of this ongoing project, individual interviews are conducted annually with the same cohort of tamariki from two schools over four years. In 2023, baseline interviews were conducted with 15 tamariki from two schools, Forest Lake School (Waikato) and Fairhaven School (Western Bay of Plenty). These findings were presented in the August 2023 report – “Milestone Report: Social Emotional Learning” and the May 2024 report – “Kiwi Can Longitudinal Project: Year One Insights”.

Year Two interviews were conducted with the same group of tamariki between September and November 2024. Since the end of 2023, seven tamariki moved to new schools. See Table 1 for more details on the schools the tamariki participants attended in 2024. This Year Two report presents findings from interviews with the tamariki in the second year of the Kiwi Can Longitudinal project.

Methodology Overview

A qualitative longitudinal design is used to provide contextual information on tamariki’s experience of school and Kiwi Can over time. A progressive focusing approach will take into account any small and incremental changes to seek clarity on any inconsistencies or salient themes. The questions for Year Two of the study were refined based on the study’s findings from Year One. Additional questions were included for tamariki who moved to a new school in 2024 to gather insights on the potential impact of Kiwi Can on the school transition.

Interviews

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted in various settings, on-site at the original Kiwi Can schools or at tamariki’s new school, tamariki’s home or in a public location. In 2023, tamariki’s 2024 school details and secondary parent/caregiver details were obtained to make contact for the Year Two interviews. Principal and teacher consent forms were obtained from tamariki’s new schools when successful contact was made. Signed parent/caregiver consent forms were provided on request when interviews were conducted at the new schools.

The interviews were approximately 25 minutes. The interviews were conducted by one researcher and a \$20 gift voucher was given to each participant as koha for their time. (For more information on methodology and the selection criteria, see the August 2023 report).

Demographic

The original Kiwi Can primary schools are Fairhaven School (Bay of Plenty region) and Forest Lake School (Waikato region). Both are urban co-ed schools that cater for Years 1 – 6. They provide English and Māori medium education. Kiwi Can has been operating at Fairhaven School since 2009 and at Forest Lake School since 2010. See reports “Milestone Report: Social Emotional Learning” and “Kiwi Can Longitudinal Project: Year One Insights” for further background on the schools.

At the time the interviews took place, the tamariki participants were aged between 10 to 12 years old. There were seven males and eight females. 40% of tamariki identified as NZ European, 40% identified as Māori, 13% identified as Pasifika and 6% identified as Asian.

Seven out of the fifteen tamariki have since departed the Kiwi Can schools and are now dispersed across five new schools. The table below shows the number of tamariki participants in the new 2024 schools.

Table 1. Tamariki participants at the new school in 2024.

	Number of tamariki	
	Original Fairhaven Cohort	Original Forest Lake Cohort
Rangiuru School	1	
Aquinas School	1	
Te Puke Intermediate School	3	
Tirimoana School		1
Te Wharekura O Kirikirioa		1

The table below provides brief background information on each of the new schools:

Table 2. Information on the new schools.

School	Region	EQI	Urban/Rural	School type	Gender
Rangiuru School	Bay of Plenty	496	Rural Settlement	Full primary School (Year 1 to 8)	Co-ed
Aquinas College	Bay of Plenty	801	Major Urban	Secondary School (Year 7 to 15)	Co-ed
Te Puke Intermediate	Bay of Plenty	476	Small Urban	Intermediate School (Year 7 to 8)	Co-ed
Tirimoana School	Auckland	418	Major Urban	Contributing School (Year 1 to 6)	Co-ed
Te Wharekura O Kirikirioa	Waikato	521	Major Urban	Composite School (Two consecutive year groups in one class)	Co-ed

For more background information on the schools. Visit the [site](#).

Findings

Tamariki participants were asked questions about what they remembered from Kiwi Can and how they used what they learned outside of the programme. The research team transcribed the interviews and conducted a thematic analysis of the Year Two responses. Presented below are the identified themes with quotations used verbatim, to support understanding and to hear the participants' own words.

Understanding and application of Kiwi Can values

Most tamariki recalled the Kiwi Can values of respect, responsibility, resilience and integrity. The deep engagement with Kiwi Can and in-depth understanding of the concepts were visible through the tamariki's retention and application to real-life scenarios. Most were able to share a time when they demonstrated the Kiwi Can values.

Tamariki commonly associated the value of *resilience* with challenges encountered through sports or other activities. Sajit linked the concepts of resilience, good sportsmanship and emotional regulation together, explaining that resiliency means not getting upset when they lose a sports game. Amelia recalled a time when they were losing a sports game but showed resilience, allowing them to focus and score extra points. Ben highlighted how he showed resilience during the challenges he faced in sports and academics.

"So that one's being resilient, even if you've won or lost, they're still saying good game to each other. They're not upset or anything. No one is sulking about it."

"We were playing a game on the field and our team was losing. But even though we still carried on playing and tried to still score more points to win."

"Never giving up or never give up at work."

Hannah demonstrated resilience when she did not qualify for the Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools (AIMS) games, an annual junior sporting event held in Tauranga, where ākonga from across the country compete (Zespri AIMS Games, 2025). Despite their disappointment, Hannah did not give up and acknowledged these setbacks are part of the process and how Kiwi Can have helped them manage their emotions during this time.

"Well, I learned heaps of stuff in Kiwi Can about like just literally not giving up after something doesn't go your way. And I think at AIMS when I didn't get into the netball team because it was year 7s and 8s. So the years 8s got in and I think that Kiwi Can skills have helped me to deal with that and get over it."

Rawiri shared a time at a school camp where they faced a challenge. Although feeling fearful, they recalled Kiwi Can taught them to push themselves out of their comfort zone and demonstrate resilience.

"On camp, which was just like last week. I had to jump off this scary part of... the traversing triangle. And then there's a drop, and you have to drop down. Like it's really high off ground but you have this strap and you have to go down; it was really scary. And then in Kiwi Can they told us to push out of our limits. And our comfort zones."

Tamariki shared times when they acted as role models, demonstrating *integrity* in the classroom and during sports games. They understood integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. Zoe shared an example of remaining quiet during class when others were being disruptive, understanding they were “*doing the right thing*”. Mia did the right thing by role-modelling good behaviour to her peers, so they did not get into trouble with the teachers.

“Oh yeah I’ve been doing that a lot at my school now. And last year. Yeah I have to do the right thing a lot of the times. And like if the kids aren’t being quiet in class, and not listening and stuff, I would do the right thing and not talk and stuff. Just wait for all the kids to be quiet. And then yeah, not just that but, yeah I do.”

“Cause if you don’t do the right thing you’ll get told off. Or your friends wouldn’t like it. So you wouldn’t have friends.”

When speaking on the value of *respect*, tamariki emphasised its importance in relating to others and their environment. Neve said they learned to respect everyone and reflected on her growth, saying they show respect for people more than she did before. This value came up frequently when working in a team. Sajit tied their understanding of respect to good sportsmanship and emphasised the importance of showing respect to their opponent whether they win or lose.

“I feel like it’s helped me with my respect. Like when I was little, I didn’t have much respect. Now I think I’ve got a lot more respect for people”

“Probably... this one's respecting your opponent.”

Additionally, tamariki recognised that respect extends to the environment. Sajit said respect can be shown to the environment by “*helping it out*”.

“It’s being respectful to the people, no matter what they are and then having respectfulness to the environment by helping it out.”

Learning through activities

Tamariki reflected on how they enjoyed Kiwi Can’s interactive and fun teaching style. Noah noted the fun nature of Kiwi Can means that tamariki, “*don’t realise you’re learning*”. Activities such as dodgeball, rounders and general knowledge quizzes also provided tamariki with diverse ways of learning. Nathan said the diverse learning styles were beneficial for them due to their dyslexia, saying, “*It works pretty well*”. Lily added different people have different strengths, weaknesses and learning styles, with some who engage better in being hands-on and others who like to listen to stories.

“Some people might like playing games but not really listening to stories. So it's learning through play and learning through stories as well for people that like stories and people like play.”

“I like the way how they would explain it in fun ways. Like they wouldn't just tell us all of it. Instead, they would like teach it to us through games and fun. So like it was fun and we were also learning heaps of valuable skills.”

Many team-based activities pushed tamariki outside their comfort zone and contributed to learning important life lessons and for their personal development. Tamariki recognised the

value of the games and activities and their key takeaway messages. Manaia said the games provided opportunities to practice the values they learned.

"They're fun, but you also learn stuff from them because some games you have to use your integrity."

"I liked all the games that we did and how there was a reason for that game."

"I like the way how they would explain it in fun ways. Like they wouldn't just tell us all of it. Instead they would like teach it to us through games and fun. So like it was fun and we were also learning heaps of valuable skills."

Reflecting on Kiwi Can, Hannah mentioned that they had fun doing the games and activities but they now realise they also learned many valuable skills at the same time.

"I think back then I used to think it was just like fun like I would be excited for like the energisers just to play games, but now I'm like, thinking back about all the skills I've actually learned from it and valuable making them valuable instead of just thinking that they are games were the best part. I think the skills I learned were."

Teamwork and collaboration

Tamariki said the Kiwi Can activities helped them build teamwork skills and collaborate with others. They recalled feeling positive and a sense of accomplishment when they worked in teams, particularly, when they solved a problem together. For Hannah, working with others and staying focussed on their goal during a sports game resulted in a win. Tamariki also felt good about themselves when they role-modelled good behaviour.

"Well, sometimes in our teams would have fights and we'd have to sort out together without like without the Kiwi Can Leaders there. Sometimes we would have a fight and we'd have to compromise and sort out what's happening without a teacher or anything. Most times we sorted it out."

"Yesterday because I was playing rugby and in the finals we were losing and then they scored another try and it was 2 nils for them and someone from the other team, they were showing off. So I just had to ignore it and then we ended up winning."

Working in teams also helped with tamariki's personal development and relationship-building. Tamariki said interacting with others during team activities increased their confidence. Lily said they are not as "as shy" as they were before. Ben, Isabella and Lily said working with others strengthened their class bonds.

"Like I learnt you can do team work and trust people."

"The team activities help bond people together"

"With my all of my sports I trust my teammates and stuff like that. And yeah just be respectful to them."

Tamariki identified what it means to work successfully as a team. Sajit, Ben and Amelia said teamwork means everyone participates and provides input, they understand it requires coming together as a collective and collaborating. Isabella highlighted the importance of being respectful

and to “*respect what ideas they (others) have.*” Manaia understands that patience is essential when working with others, a sentiment shared by Amelia who said Kiwi Can has helped them be more patient when they play netball. Tamariki’s understanding of patience shows they can acknowledge differences in how people process information and respect these differences.

“I liked when everyone contributed and like it was all teamwork, not just one person saying this and that.”

“Yeah and then you had to try to work together because if they forgot it. Yeah, you could just you could tell him, “I can show you again.”

“Well one of the things we had to get a hoop around the whole circle, like, everyone had to do their part and help to get it around.”

“Like let everyone say one thing what they suggest and don’t let anyone else talk, you keep to yourself and but.”

Tamariki shared how they applied these skills outside of Kiwi Can in their extracurricular activities, on the playground and at home. Several tamariki play sports and have embraced the skills they have learned in Kiwi Can to be a better team player and enhanced their understanding of good sportsmanship.

“Maybe like whenever you lose, it’s not always about just losing. It’s about like how the game went and if it was a good game. It’s not always about winning or losing. It’s about the teamwork.”

Regulating emotions

Tamariki highlighted how Kiwi Can has helped them manage their emotions. At this age, tamariki can recognise their feelings and manage them appropriately. They shared experiences when they felt frustrated or conflicted and outlined the strategies they used such as walking away or taking deep breaths. Some reflected on the potential consequences if they cannot manage their emotions. Zoe recalled a time where they encountered an issue and identified two potential ways they could have reacted, an option to show aggression or the other option of walking away – choosing the latter option. These strategies have been applied to a range of scenarios, like facing a challenge during a sports game or conflict with others. Tamariki’s ability to control how they feel when they are losing a sports game is linked back to tamariki’s understanding of good sportsmanship.

“But when I get frustrated or something, I don’t, burst out yelling at the kids in my school. And yeah I don’t yell at them or anything. I just say sometimes, no that’s not right. Or just like, don’t, I just ignore them. Just like, don’t talk to them.”

“They teach us breathing exercises. Like box breathing when you have to go like, you have to breathe in like this, and then you have to breathe out. Like relax. And then you have to keep doing that. And there’s these ones where you have to go, breathe in...breathe out... breathe in...breathe out. And that helps me sometimes. Usually, when I’m upset at home I’ll just read my book though.”

“I would take deep breaths, and then walk away. Just be by myself for a little bit. And then come back and...I don’t know apologise to them or something.”

“When I get into fights with my siblings. Um yeah just like, stay calm. Walk away if you get mad.”

Not only can tamariki regulate their own emotions but they can also recognise their peers' emotions and respond appropriately. Mia utilised the breathing strategies she learnt to help a friend calm down. Their displays of empathy extend to peers they are not familiar with. Manaia shared a time when she noticed someone was upset and approached them to provide help. Lily acknowledged that being aware of how others feel tends to grow over time. Zoe recalled a time when they saw someone injured and used their problem-solving skills to assist them.

“They taught me to not get mad. Just take deep breaths and have water. Yeah. One time my friend was getting angry. So I took her over into the classroom. I told her to take deep breaths. I asked her if she wants her water bottle.”

“So today my, not my friend, but someone in my class. We were playing hangman and he spelt the word wrong and everyone was laughing at him and he went off and went over and stood behind the tow tray desk and three of us came and saw what was happening and then he was sad and then we saw him at lunch and he sad so we invited him to sit with us and he seemed happy after that.”

“Probably because as you get older you normally get more understanding of how the world works and how other people feel.”

“I think it was this year...when I went back to Fairhaven (school), when like this kid fell over, and hurt himself. So I went over and asked the kids around him do you know what happened? Cos he was crying and wouldn't answer. I asked him, are you ok? Do you need any help? He was like, I'm ok I'm ok. So then the other kids were like, we'll take him up to the sick bay. I was like ok yup. You guys go and do that and then just , yeah let me know.”

Positive relationships and culture

The stories shared by tamariki demonstrated their understanding of building positive relationships and a supportive school culture. From the way they collaborate in sports teams to ensuring everyone feels included, these interactions are the building blocks that foster this. Tamariki reinforced the key role that the Kiwi Can Leaders have in creating a safe and supportive environment.

Most tamariki were able to directly link Kiwi Can's impact on their ability to make friends, noting the games and activities were particularly helpful. Tamariki outlined the various traits and behaviours that make a “good friend”, such as being kind, respectful and supportive of one another.

“Like with friendship, all the games that we play to learn teamwork and how to make friends and like integrity and everything.”

Taking the first step to approach others can be challenging and it requires an empathetic individual who understands their own emotions and the needs of others (Rosset, El-Jor, Kotsou & Shankland, 2024). A handful of tamariki shared stories of befriending others, demonstrating

their grasp of social and emotional skills. Aroha recalls a time at netball camp when they took the initiative and invited others to sit with them. Tamariki gained practical skills from Kiwi Can on how to make friends, such as introducing themselves first and asking for the person's name.

"Yeah, like, talking even if you don't know them? Like, have a little chat with them."

"Yeah. But I came in and there was just this girl sitting on her own, my friend Rose [name changed]. And they just sat next to her, and we started talking, and now we're just, like, best friends now."

"I introduce myself to them. And then I ask what their name is."

Team-based activities serve as a catalyst for tamariki to build connections. Lily said working together in Kiwi Can *"help bond people together"*. Ryan said without Kiwi Can, they would not know many of their peers. Isabella shared that being part of a sports team at their new school allowed them to meet people and make new friends.

"And so I try to make new friends when I like, do try out for a new sport. I don't know anybody there so I just try to make new friends there..."

Tamariki's responses demonstrate they understand that they can provide support in different ways. Manaia shared an experience where they supported their friend by listening and checking up on them. Isabella understood that not everyone wants to be comforted in the same way and made sure to ask their friend if they wanted space when they were upset. Both ways demonstrate the behaviours of a *"good friend"*. Isabella recognised that how they want to be comforted may not be how the other person wants and to help them accordingly.

"A good friend listens in case, like if your friend is sad, you don't just like, if they are hurt you don't just continue playing... and check on them."

"Yeah. I like, went to her I asked if she wanted a bit of space. And she just said no. She wants to be with me for a little bit. And just talked for a little bit."

"And let them do what they want to do. It's not all just about me. Yeah and just helping them when they're stuck or something like that."

The relationship between the Kiwi Can Leaders and tamariki was explored in the Year Two interviews. Tamariki's responses mirrored what they said in Year One, that the Kiwi Can Leaders are positive role models who are caring, fun, and from whom they learn a lot. They have a positive impact on the school environment and help tamariki to feel safe, encouraged and supported. Lily also observed that the Kiwi Can Leaders are always nearby to help resolve conflict between tamariki at school. Manaia attributed the consistent involvement of the Kiwi Can Leaders outside of the Kiwi Can classes in other school activities to their sense of safety and support, emphasising the strong trust they have in them.

"Yeah because one time we were at swimming and like, at swimming stuff like swimming in Atu and Gemma always come. They come to like our sports and stuff... Good because if you, if there's not much adults you know you know there and you know you can trust those two."

"Yeah, because there's normally, like some days there's like fights with juniors out in the field. And Gemma is normally out on the field and she helps..."

Making the transition

In Year Two of the longitudinal study, seven tamariki participants started new schools. School transitions are a pivotal time in a young person's life and impact them in various ways. This includes their academic performance, interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being. Feelings surrounding these transitions can vary; young people can feel anxious or excited about the next steps (Evans, Borriello & Field, 2018). Implementing strategies to facilitate a smooth school transition for tamariki is essential. Youth programmes that effectively enhance young people's socio-emotional competencies and skills such as communication and problem-solving, tend to have a better school transition by making new friends and adjusting to the new environment (Donaldson, Moore & Hawkins 2023).

At the new schools, tamariki noticed that some of their peers do not have the same skills or knowledge as well – those gained from Kiwi Can. Amelia said moving to the new school, they were able to bring with them the skills they learned in Kiwi Can. Hannah noticed some of their peers were unfamiliar with the values of resilience, respect, integrity and positive relationships. Sajit echoed this, expressing that tamariki who did not do Kiwi Can may not know much about these values. Nathan acknowledged the role that their mother played in instilling the Kiwi Can values and knowledge in him, recognising that not all tamariki would have this and so Kiwi Can would serve as a vital source for acquiring these skills.

"Yeah, like I had all the skills that I learned from Kiwi Can and I noticed that some people just didn't know much about that."

"Yeah, I feel like they have actually given them lots of skills to many different people, but like people that have just joined from like a different country or something and they've got no, none of that life skills, I think they're like, they might learn like good sportsmanship at their own old schools and stuff, but they probably wouldn't know as much knowledge."

Participating in Kiwi Can has significantly contributed to tamariki's personal development. For Hannah, it has fostered greater confidence to stand up for themselves and others. Amelia said their resilience helped make the move to their new school easier, although they were initially afraid, Amelia now enjoys their new school. For Hannah, they found the skills to regulate their emotions and build relationships useful. Nathan said the relationship-building skills they learned from Kiwi Can be the most valuable when they started their new school, it equipped them with knowing what to do and what not to do. Zoe and Ryan also mirrored that Kiwi Can have made it easier for them to make friends at their new school.

"I liked integrity cause, not giving up because even though I'm moving to another school I can still bring all that stuff that I've learned with me."

"Yes...I think they helped with my resilience. Because, probably last year I wanted to stay there. I didn't want to move. But now, I'm really loving intermediate."

"Ohh. Just like the same thing before, I learnt heaps of skills about how to deal with my emotions and how to make better relationships with people, how to deal with things that ain't going my way."

Kiwi Can has helped tamariki develop their Leadership skills. Some shared stories of how they used their leadership skills in their new schools. Aroha disclosed that Kiwi Can gave them the

confidence to be a team captain at their new school. Nathan had taken on a leadership role in their new school and Kiwi Can's teachings on the ability to say "no" and being kind helped this. Sajit said taking on leadership roles in Kiwi Can has helped them become a better listener.

"How I was going to be the team captain, how I was that, it really gave me confidence."

"To be honest, the teamwork activities and how to say no, but also be nice, you know."

Tamariki moving schools in the following year were asked about what they plan to take with them from Kiwi Can. Although moving schools can be nerve-wracking, they expressed confidence that the skills they have gained will help make the transition easier. Tamariki mentioned that they will role model the values they learned in Kiwi Can at their new school to their peers.

Insights – Year Two

In the second year of interviews, most tamariki remained in the original Kiwi Can schools and several moved schools. This year's findings provide useful insights into the impact of Kiwi Can on navigating school transitions.

School and Kiwi Can help with tamariki's academic, social and emotional development. In Year One, the interviews discovered tamariki's enjoyment and enthusiasm for what they learn in Kiwi Can. Now with Year Two, the interviews provide deeper insights into what tamariki have learned from Kiwi Can and how they apply it to their everyday lives – sharing stories of how they overcame challenges, stand up for what is right, respect their surroundings and manage their emotions.

Kiwi Can teach tamariki socio-emotional skills through fun and effective games and activities. The delivery style of Kiwi Can ensures the diverse learning styles of tamariki are met. The group activities build tamariki's patience to work together respectfully and collaboratively. It teaches them effective communication and active listening skills, ensuring everyone can participate and share their ideas. Tamariki recognised that these skills are useful and will help them in areas where they work with others, such as in the classroom, playground or sports games.

At this age, tamariki are more in tune with their emotions and those around them. They can manage themselves when feeling frustrated or angry by using strategies such as breathing exercises and walking away. Their ability to support their peers to navigate emotional challenges demonstrates their increased social awareness and emotional intelligence. Displaying acts of kindness, inclusivity and empathy towards their peers fosters positive connections and helps build friendships.

Several tamariki have moved to new schools and the interviews demonstrate Kiwi Can's role in supporting school transitions. It showed Kiwi Can provides tamariki with valuable tools to support their school transition. They enter their new schools feeling more confident with skills to help them make friends and positively interact with others. Those who moved schools shared they have made new friends, joined sports teams, taken on leadership roles and feel settled at their new school. A handful of tamariki noticed that some of their new peers lacked such skills and emphasised the unique impact of Kiwi Can.

The interviews demonstrate the value of Kiwi Can on tamariki during these years of growth and change. Overall, Kiwi Can equip tamariki with the necessary skills for school life and navigating through challenges, emotions, and peer relations.

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