

## CASE STUDY

# Creating legacies through the eyes of children

### Waitahuna School

Otago's Waitahuna School may be small, but it is mighty – teaching its 16 students lessons that link through the curriculum but also have an importance in everyday life and thinking for the future.

For a number of years, the school has worked closely with NZ Landcare Trust to teach its children the importance of good water quality and the sustainable land use measures needed to help achieve it.

Teacher Clare Blackmore says the school appreciates the work that NZ Landcare Trust's Otago Regional Coordinator Craig Simpson puts in for the school – teaching them how to undertake water monitoring of their local waterways, and riparian plantings in a few locations.

Clare says that teaching their students the local curriculum is essential.

***“It can create a sense of where they come from, and a sense of belonging for our kids. There is a big wide world out there, and when they are older, we don't know where they will go or what they will do, but we know that they will know where their home is and have that connection with their land and water.”***

“Through these connections, they are always going to be part of our community here and have that sense of belonging. The trees they plant now, they will be able to show their children in many years' time – and that has a sense of achievement attached to it,” Clare says.

“Farmers can get a bit of a hard time when it comes to land use and water quality, and for some of these kids, they hear the conversations at home about what their parents are doing to be proactive – and they can join in. They know their parents are working hard on it, and can see what their parents are doing, and that they are doing their best. That is really special.”

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***“We are lucky to be near a beautiful river and it is nice for our kids to be connecting with that.”***

NZ Landcare Trust Otago Regional Coordinator Craig Simpson says working with children to develop an interest in their surrounds, particularly learning about water quality and sustainable land use was really rewarding. For the past two years this work has been funded through Curious Mind's Participatory Science Platform.

Between water monitoring, riparian planting and restoration with the Department of Conservation, and stream health sessions, Craig says the kids are developing a strong curiosity that will hopefully form a lifelong interest.

Whilst the programme is all about the kids, Craig says there has been a bonus of the kids going home and spreading the word to their parents.

“As adults, you are always more aware of how you speak and what you say, and we obviously can't tell anyone to do anything on their land, we can only suggest whereas these kids go home with their learnings and have a good honest chat to their parents. Sometimes kids can say something more directly than we can, in their own way, which continues to help create positive action on the ground.”

