

# NEWTON CENTRAL SCHOOL: SPECIAL CHARACTER DESIGNATION

## Special Character

We have a lovely culture at our kura and our community, team, environment and values are a big part of what makes Newton, Newton.

We want to do what we can to care for and nurture our unique characteristics and are looking at whether applying for 'special' or designated character, offers a useful way to do just that.

## The Process

Following this communication we'll give you the opportunity to provide your feedback to the Working Group. There'll be another opportunity to do so before the Board makes its decision.

## Current Thinking – Special Character

If we are granted Special Character designation then one consequence will be that that we don't have a zone, students would apply to come to Newton. Parents or caregivers would need to accept that the kura does operate consistently in accordance to its different character. The process for entry would be covered by the Constitution.

There are lots of Special Character schools in New Zealand. Kura kaupapa are one specific type and many religious schools are also designated as having a Special Character.

Our Tiriti-based relationships give us the framework to deliver the best outcomes for all our tamariki. It's also the foundation for our inclusiveness and diversity, our commitment to renormalising the use of te reo me ona tikanga and our promotion of equity. Our Tiriti relationships, co-governance model and bi-cultural curriculum are some key ways in which Newton operates differently from other schools.

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## Q & A

1. Why is the school applying for special character recognition?  
*Newton has a number of unique characteristics. Special character designation provides protection for those aspects.*
2. Do whānau already in the special programmes have to go through the tono process again?  
*No, whānau already in the Māori-Medium pathways would not need to have another tono. They may however be asked to confirm their commitment to their pathway if Alternative Constitution or Special Character are pursued and granted..*
3. Will these changes affect the running of the school or how the children's education is organised in any way?  
*No, not that we anticipate. Both changes are aimed at embedding what we already have or doing what we're doing in a better way at the governance level. There aren't any curriculum or teaching changes included in this process.*

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4. Will we become a special character school? How is this different to a public school?  
*Possibly. We'll do some more research and hear from the wider community before the Board makes its decision on whether or not to apply for special character designation. One key difference between a state school (i.e. 'public') and a designated character school (which do remain state schools) is the ability for character schools to have an 'application' type of process for entry into the school. Otherwise, a zone imposes a requirement on the school to enrol any child within that zone even if the family doesn't subscribe to its 'special character', curriculum or culture.*
5. If we are a special character school, how will we serve and attract the local community?  
*We don't anticipate it being much different to now. Families are attracted to Newton's offerings and most come because of these things. Our valuing of diversity, of te ao Māori, our environment, our focus on sustainability, our bi-cultural histories curriculum and so on won't change. We think applying for Alternative Constitution and special Character Designation and protecting these things is part of our responsibility to our community.*
6. What are the implications and advantages or disadvantages for staff or pupils?  
*None that we've discovered to date. But these are areas we are taking particular care around in our research.*
7. Are there financial implications for the school of being special character?  
*There are none in relation to Ministry of Education funding. Because it would distinguish us from other schools it might, or might not, make it easier to get some other funding.*