Kia ora, I’m Constable Kerry Fenton, School Community Officer based at Upper Hutt.

People often ask me why the Police work with schools? Well, the Police and schools have similar goals.

Police want people to be safe and feel safe, and schools want a safe environment where students can achieve.

Every school has its own unique issues. Our job is to work with you and, together, come up with solutions to issues such as bullying, child abuse, vandalism, road safety or drugs …

…so that our tamariki can live and learn free from harm caused by crime and crashes.

**Feeling safe at school**

Students who are safe and feel safe are better able to achieve.

***Child (Sian):*** *When I feel safe at school is when the road patrols are out every morning and afternoon making sure everyone is safe using the crossing, and also when the duty teachers are out and they’re walking round the school making sure everyone’s OK.*

***Child (Taylor):*** *But if there is any bullying, I’ll step up for my friend or whoever it is, and say. ‘No, that’s not OK, you’ve got to stop bullying this person.’*

***Child (Jet):*** *I feel safe at school when people help me.*

**Building relationships with schools**

Neither schools nor Police can do it alone – we need to share information and identify issues together.

Police can advise schools about crime and road safety concerns in their areas. And schools can share about behaviours that impact on students.

***Police officer (Keely):*** *As a Lead Police Contact it is my task to have contact with the school, the principal and the management team. This is to help build the positive relationship between the school and Police, and also to have an understanding of the role of Police if they were called into an incident or if anything was reported.*

***Principal (Bruce):*** *We also use the Police for special projects, and if we had identified an issue, we would often talk to the Police about how they can help, and we also have the Police involved in some of our curriculum delivery and … some of our life skills classes where police officers will assist with the material that has to be delivered in those classes. So it’s quite a multi-level of relationships that we hold.*

**Supporting programmes**

Most schools run Police programmes such as *Keeping Ourselves Safe* or our *Road Safe Series*.

School Community Officers can support the programmes with resources. Also deliver parts of the programme, and engage with staff, parents and the wider school community.

***Principal (Steve):*** *We found more children scooter to school than ride bikes, so we met the need with having a Wheels Day that the children came in and Constables Sue and Keely took them through some road safety skills with scooters. I think it definitely has had a positive impact on the children, and they are now a lot more aware of possible dangers and things they have to look out for, creating a bit more road awareness for them.*

***Student (Chelsea):***Loves-Me-Not *taught us about what different levels of consent was, how to recognise bad relationships or unhealthy relationships, and how to nurture relationships so that they can last. I didn’t know the official laws that went with … like saying no to certain things.*

**Students taking action**

We know that just gaining knowledge about safety is not in itself enough to change behaviours.

Students need the opportunity themselves to take action for a safe school and a safe community.

***Principal (Bruce):*** *It is probably one of the biggest things that I have learned in this role is that student-led change has much more impact than staff-led change.*

***Students:*** *‘Hi Room 4. Today we’re going to be talking to you about how to cross the road …’*

***Student (Lea):*** *Students Against Dangerous Driving is a completely student-run organisation. It’s also known as SADD. So the students organise events, promote safe driving to make people safer in the community.*

***Student (Chelsea):*** *The last activity that we did was where we all discussed what we could do as students to promote what in difficult situations when you’re in a relationship.*

**School-wide interventions**

Some safety issues need more than just classroom-based programmes.

So we partner with schools on school-wide interventions. This means using data to identify the issues. We then set goals aligned to the school charter, and work together for a whole school approach.

***Principal (Bruce):*** *We have used the whole school approach in a number of different cases this year, where we have identified a serious issue that we think is becoming more than an isolated issue, that it’s happened on a number of different occasions, and is at a level where we think we have to do something about in terms of educating our youth.*

**A safe environment at school**

There are also other ways to prevent crime in schools.

For example, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design reduces the opportunity for crime and makes people feel safer.

***Student (Chelsea):*** *The new buildings for our school are all very open. So, you can pretty much see what is going on in each wing. It feels more ‘homey’, more welcoming.*

***Student (Hayden):*** *Everyone’s talking to each other, everyone’s nice to each other. It’s a good vibe around the school.*

***Student (Chelsea):*** *The fact that you can see everything that’s going around you contributes to the feeling of safety.*

Students themselves can take action to make their school environments safer and more attractive.

***Student (Aaliyah):*** *It’s about everyone having fun, using this place as a family place. And having a free barbecue at our school would bring a lot of people in.*

***Student (Jayden):*** *We took all these ideas of different things that we could do, and then in the end we all decided that it should be a barbecue… So this is where we’re going to put the barbeque. In this area there’s tables, there’s shade, a drinking fountain, courts, easy access … yeah.*

**Benefits of Police in schools**

When police and school communities work together, they build an environment in which the kids care about each other and they care about their school.

***Child (Sian):*** *I like having a police officer at our school, because then we can keep safe. And sometimes they come into our classroom and teach us how to deal with bullies and stuff.*

***Principal (Steve):*** *The children gain an awful lot, I think, from having different faces coming in and talking about different things. And they look forward to their visits.*

And that’s a place where students feel safe, are safe, and are better able to achieve.

Learn more by visiting our School Portal.

Or you can contact your School Community Officer through your nearest police station.

***Children:*** *Lights! Camera! Action!*