

Local Teacher wins environment award



Taking a walk around Maungaraki School with teacher Jackie Sutherland, it's not hard to see why she was granted The Meridian School Environment Leadership Award.

"We are just trying to make the school as sustainable as possible and teaching the children how to look after the planet so there is a nice environment for their own children to grow up in."

Ms Sutherland was chosen for the award due to her efforts in inspiring students to advocate on environmental issues and take the reins in making the school more sustainable.

Since the beginning of the school year Ms Sutherland and her Environment team of have taken on a number of projects to increase the school's sustainability and to encourage the children to learn more about the surrounding environment.

From germinating seedlings, building vegetable gardens, establishing worm farms and upgrading the school's compost system, right through to monitoring the NIWA weather station, it's all about making the school sustainable.

So far the students have grown celery, potatoes, cabbage, lettuce, parsley and broad beans since the school started the vegetable garden many of the children have now started one in their gardens at

home, Ms Sutherland says.

Once the vegetables are ready they are passed on to Home and School committee, who make use of them in the school's ordered lunches.

"The year started off looking into recycling and just grew from there really. What's good is this year the school's focus has been around sustainability and the school are also doing a beautification project, so everything sort of ties in," Ms Sutherland says.

"It's all really hands on, but it's also about research. It's all the children's energy that has got us here, really I just follow them and facilitate it. They have learnt so much."

And there is still projects in the midst, with Ms Sutherland looking at beautifying a section of the school with ideas for a sandpit and shaded seating area.

"The kids at this school are just fantastic. They lap everything up, they are like sponges," Ms Sutherland says.

The Meridian School Environment Leadership Award is a part of Wellington's inaugural Encore Awards, aimed at giving recognition to groups, businesses, schools and individuals who go the extra mile for environmental restoration and conversation in the Wellington region.