

Former Kaiwharawhara School

7 Fore Street, Kaiwharawhara



RM VIII-2005

Summary of heritage significance

- The Kaiwharawhara School building is a good representative of the type of classroom built in the 1920s. It was likely built according to standard Department of Education plans.
- The former Kaiwharawhara School has had a relatively uneventful history that is typical and representative of many Wellington Schools. It does, however, have a historical association with the, now disestablished, railway settlement at Kaiwharawhara.

District Plan:	Map 15/21, reference 432
Legal Description:	Sec 170 SO Harbour District
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	No
Archaeological Site:	Unknown
Other Names:	Kaiwarra New School
Key physical dates:	1925: Construction
Architect / Builder:	Architect not known/builder: G.H. Newson
Former uses:	Education – Primary school
Current uses:	Education – Activities centre
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone (SR 197670)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

A substantial Maori village was situated at Kaiwharawhara when a group of Scottish emigrants landed there in December 1840. A school was opened in January 1866¹, although there may have been one in operation earlier. It was re-established under the Wellington Education Board in 1872.² This first school was located in what became School Road, on the banks of the Kaiwharawhara Stream.

Its location became less attractive as industry and the developing rail and road systems created hazards and nuisances.³ By the early 1900s the settlement was starting to be dominated by industrial development.

In the early 1920s the Railways Department built a railway settlement on the eastern side of the gorge. To meet new demand it was decided to close the school on the southern side of the stream and build a new school. The new site, purchased for £1,150⁴, was in Fore Street, elevated above the major part of the settlement and slightly removed from adjacent industrial activities. This site was not considered ideal, but was the only one available in the area.

The school was opened in December 1925. It was built for the Wellington Education Board by G.H. Newson, of Dransfield Street, Newtown.⁵ Although the architect is not known, the finished building is probably standard Public Works design adapted to suit the steep site. Additions to the building were made as early as 1927.⁶ The piers under the school were strengthened and an earthquake shelter shed was provided in 1935.⁷

The largest single source of pupils was the railway settlement, from which the majority of the school's students came until the 1960s, when the settlement was abandoned and the houses demolished or removed. By 1972, when most of the houses were gone, the roll stood at 20.⁸ The rapid suburbanisation of Wellington also contributed, with people choosing to move to the new suburbs. As the school population declined, closure was mooted. The school and local community resisted this proposal. By this period the school had a fairly even mix of Maori and Pakeha students and the size of the school allowed it to have something of a 'family' environment not common in an urban setting.⁹ However, the Wellington Education Board voted 6-5 to close the school in December 1977.¹⁰

In more recent years it has been rehabilitated for use as the Wellington Activity Centre, which caters for secondary school students at risk of dropping out of the mainstream education system. The property is still owned by the Department of Education.

¹ *History of Kaiwarra School*, (Kaiwharawhara School Centenary Committee, Wellington, 1973), p.6.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ABFI w3455 7/6 Box 35 pt.1. Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

⁵ WCC Permit 4188, WCC Archives.

⁶ WCC Permit B2523. WCC Archives.

⁷ ABFI w3455 7/6 Box 35 pt.1. ANZ.

⁸ Wellington Branch New Zealand Education Institute, 'Report on Kaiwharawhara School' 1977. Ms-papers-5541-083: John Joseph Mulheron Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library.

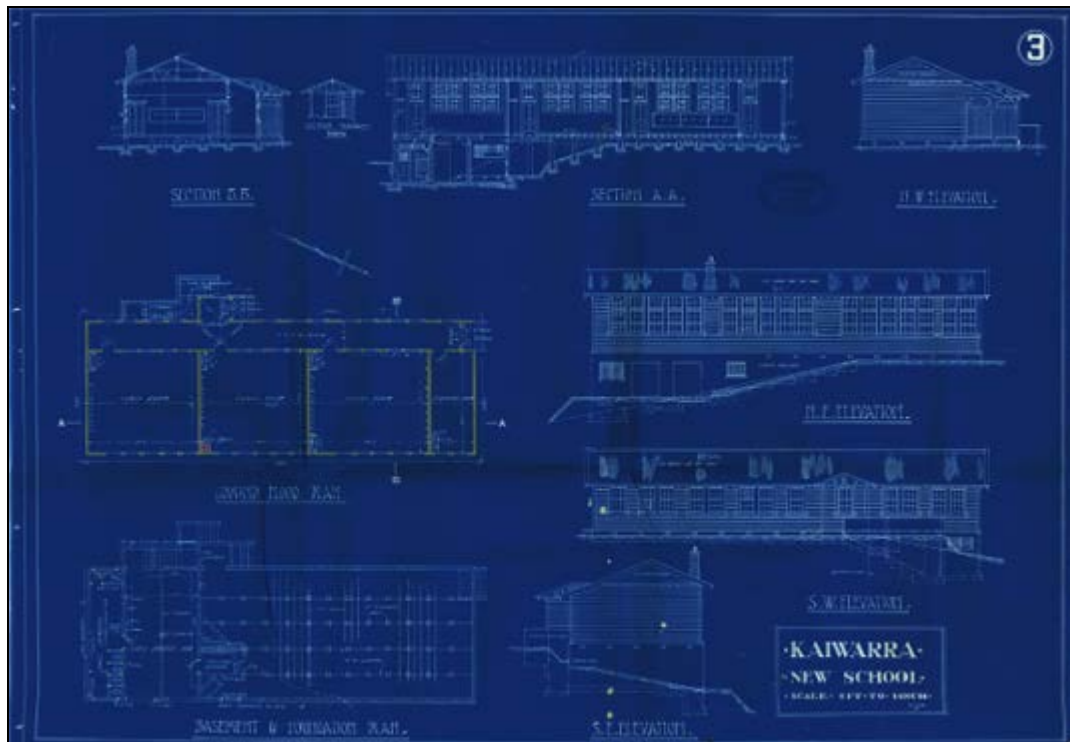
⁹ 'Save Kaiwharawhara School' c.1977. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Truth*, 13/12/1977.

Kaiwharawhara School is important from a heritage perspective predominantly due to its representative and rarity values. The school is representative of the type of educational building constructed in the 1920s. The school features stylistic touches typical of its time. The school has rarity value because it is one of the last remaining buildings from the original railway settlement at Kaiwharawhara, an area that has undergone considerable transformation since its establishment. Finally, Kaiwharawhara School has high value as an educational facility for the community for over eighty years.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1925 Construction



'Kaiwarra' School plans, as proposed. Wellington Archive File 00055:44:A4188

1.3 Occupation history

1925-1977	Kaiwharawhara School
Current	Wellington Activity Centre

1.4 Architect

Unknown

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building itself is representative of a typical primary school design of the 1920s, the classrooms arranged in a row with a high stud and a bank of high north-facing pivoting windows. The main entrance was at the west end with a corridor, cloakrooms etc, along the south side. Interior finishes remain, including tongue and groove lining, and a set of high folding doors that allow two classrooms to be opened to form one large space.

The structure is timber framing on a continuous concrete foundation, with rusticated weatherboard sheathing and coloursteel roof (this is a recent replacement for the original corrugated iron). As the site falls away to the east, the basement area, presumably once housing a heating system or storage, has been expanded into additional teaching facilities.

The level of authenticity is reasonably high, with the form, exterior cladding and joinery intact. Inside, some planning changes and alterations to finishes have been made, but the layout and shape of the original classrooms can be readily understood. The building and site is valuable as a reasonably intact example of a primary school of the 1920s, it being perhaps the most authentic example of this building type left in Wellington today. It provides evidence of teaching methods of the time and it continues, today, to serve an educational purpose.

2.2 Materials

Timber and corrugated mild steel cladding

2.3 Setting

The former Kaiwharawhara School, now the Wellington Activity Centre, is sited prominently on a ridge overlooking the industrial buildings of Kaiwharawhara, and the harbour. Its positioning and outlook give it modest townscape value. Access is from the steep and narrow Fore Street, and flat land is at a premium, but below and on the south side of the building, excavation and retaining walls have allowed the creation of two sealed playgrounds. Some mature trees complete the immediate setting. Despite the geographic prominence of the site, these trees tend to hide the school and somewhat reduce the inherent landmark quality of the building and site.

The school is surrounded by greenery above and below and is set against the green background of a ridge rising on the north side of Ngaio gorge. This setting contributes significantly to the sense of place of the school. To the north is a developing high-density contemporary residential neighbourhood (partly in place of the former railway settlement). Further down the hill is the industrial and commercial zone of Kaiwharawhara.

3.0 Sources

ABFI w3455 7/6 Box 35 pt.1. Archives New Zealand.

Truth. 13/12/1977.

WCC Permits 4188 and B2523. WCC Archives

Wellington Branch New Zealand Education Institute. 'Report on Kaiwharawhara School'. 1977. Ms-papers-5541-083: John Joseph Mulheron Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library.

'History of Kaiwarra School'. Kaiwharawhara School Centenary Committee: 1973

Murray, Russell. 'Kaiwharawhara School, 7 Fore Street, Khandallah.' Report written for Wellington City Council, 2005.

4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Kaiwharawhara School building is a good representative of the type of classroom built in the 1920s. It was likely built according to standard Department of Education plans.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

Kaiwharawhara School has modest townscape value, standing out in an area now occupied by almost entirely industrial buildings and crowded by modern high-density residential development on the adjoining hills.

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The former Kaiwharawhara School has had a relatively uneventful history that is typical and representative of many Wellington Schools. It does, however, have a historical association with the, now disestablished, railway settlement at Kaiwharawhara.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

Unknown risk – Note: the site is relatively close to Maori site of significance M52 (Kaiwharawhara Kainga) and the Kaiwharawhara Stream.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

Kaiwharawhara School is now one of the oldest buildings in Kaiwharawhara, a settlement that has undergone the most remarkable series of transformations since it was established in the city's earliest days. The school is now virtually the only building that survives from the railway settlement that it served, giving the area a sense of place and continuity.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

School years are a key memory for most adults, and schools tend to become the focus both for the children who attend them and for their wider source community. The Kaiwharawhara School has been open for over 80 years and is likely to be a focus for community sentiment and connection.

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Kaiwharawhara School has rarity value, as it is one of the few remaining buildings from the original Kaiwharawhara railway settlement.

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

Kaiwharawhara School is of great representative significance as an example of a 1920s school building.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

Kaiwharawhara School has retained a reasonable amount of original fabric from its construction and has authenticity value for this reason.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

Kaiwharawhara School is important at a local level.

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*