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### **Awahi Tamariki - a comprehensive health check for children**

A new health assessment and education programme being introduced into five Waitemata schools will give public health nurses an holistic view of a child's health and a better chance at preventing common illnesses.

Awahi Tamariki is an early intervention health screening programme that will help detect illnesses such as Group A Streptococcal throat infections, ear infections and dental issues when children start primary school.

It builds on the previously established rheumatic fever screening programme and complements the current B4 School Checks which focus on meeting unidentified health need, behavioural and developmental progress.

Awahi Tamariki enables public health nurses to assess new entrant children for issues with ears, skin, oral health and respiratory systems. It also includes education to children, teachers and whānau helping them identify health concerns and equipping them with skills to prevent illness.

Waitemata District Health Board unit manager for Child Health, Catherine Wightman, says Awahi Tamariki gives nurses the opportunity to take an holistic approach to a child's health.

"This enables us to get a better picture of the situation in order to come up with a thorough plan to tackling some commonly seen health issues for our most vulnerable school children," she says.

"Through Awahi Tamariki, we're able to put parents and caregivers at ease knowing their child is in good health and physically ready to hit the ground running at school."

The five Waitemata schools piloting Awahi Tamariki include Henderson South School, Pomaria Primary School, Ranui Primary School and Birdwood School in west Auckland as well as Onepoto Primary School in Northcote.

A public health nurse will spend time in these schools providing health assessments for five-year-olds as they begin class. This nurse will also be available on-site at set times to see older pupils for health related issues accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

Waitemata DHB CEO Dr Dale Bramley says Awhi Tamariki aligns directly with the organisation's mission to deliver best care for everyone.

“Awhi Tamariki enables us to be a part of a child's health journey from very early on ensuring that we contribute to it being a positive one for them and their whānau.”

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**For further information contact**

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