

# Rotorua Boys' High School

## Responsive programmes open doors to a range of careers

Rotorua Boys' High School (RBHS) has expanded its education and training programmes, empowering students with the skills they need to pursue a range of careers.



Students help build a home for the government's housing agency Kāinga Ora. Photo credit: Rotorua Boys' High School

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**CHEVEZ MAKAN, HEAD OF THE PATHWAYS PROGRAMME AT ROTORUA BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL.**

With more than 50 per cent of its students opting for vocational pathways after leaving school, it is important that they have a range of high-quality options to choose from, said Chevez Makan, Head of the Pathways programme at RBHS.

Through the Gateway programme, which integrates structured workplace learning with school-based learning, around 85 of the school's Year 12 and Year 13 students gain valuable exposure each year to various industries, including construction and infrastructure, manufacturing and technology, primary industries, service industries, social and community industries, and creative industries.

Training in whakairo (Māori carving), automotive technology, and food technology is also available. The school's Rugby and Basketball Academies have opened doors to professional careers for several of its old boys, who include Olympians, All Whites players, rugby union players and All Blacks players.

In 2022, RBHS expanded its offerings by establishing a Building Academy and an Engineering Academy.

The Building Academy, which is supported by the government's housing agency Kāinga Ora, is a full-time programme where around 20 Year 12 and Year 13 students gain hands-on experience in carpentry, plumbing and electrical work under the guidance of teachers who are registered builders. The main class project is building homes for Kāinga Ora.

Twenty other students learn skills in product design and manufacturing engineering at the Engineering Academy, a double-period subject. To showcase their skills, students are tasked to construct a barbecue smoker. Funding from the Rotorua-based charity One Foundation enabled the school to acquire cutting-edge machinery for the course.

Through the school's partnership with local businesses, students are able to gain exposure to workplace environments and learn directly from professionals.

"The hands-on, practical approach in these programmes has been effective in engaging students and enhancing their learning experience," Mr Makan said.

"Students appreciate the real-world relevance of what they're learning and the opportunity to apply their knowledge in meaningful projects."

To ensure high-quality teaching is provided, RBHS has hired qualified professionals, including two builders, two painters, an electrician and an engineer.

Unsurprisingly, all these courses are oversubscribed, with the Building Academy, Engineering Academy, and automotive technology course receiving the most applications.

Mr Makan said the school was conscious of providing a well-rounded education to all of its students and that entailed aligning their programmes with what employers want and need.

Students learn industry-relevant skills, including critical thinking, creative problem-solving, planning, and how to communicate effectively. Literacy and numeracy are also a big focus.

The school's NCEA attainment rates bear out this approach. In 2022, 95.1 per cent of RBHS students achieved NCEA Level 3, compared to 65.6 per cent for boys' schools nationally. The RBHS attainment rates of 85.9 per cent for NCEA Level 1 and 82.5 per cent for NCEA



A student at work at the Engineering Academy.  
Photo credit: Rotorua Boys' High School

Level 2 are also higher compared to national statistics.

"Our programmes have encouraged students to follow their interests and pursue meaningful career paths. By having tangible outcomes and projects, students can take pride in what they have achieved," Mr Makan said.

"As word has spread about the success and effectiveness of our vocational programmes, we have had businesses approaching us with interest in collaborating and offering opportunities, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training, to our students."

The broadening of its programme offerings has also given a big fillip to engagement and attendance rates at RBHS, which has a roll of around 1200 students.

"In the past, students who chose not to go to university left school before completing Year 13. But since we introduced and expanded our vocational programmes, we have reversed this trend, resulting in more students completing high school," Mr Makan said.

For more  
information

<https://ncea.education.govt.nz/pathways>

