Media Release
Monday, 16 May 2011

New Era of Oral Healthcare Delivery for North Otago

Oamaru’s new community dental clinic will be officially opened on 18 May at Oamaru North School, heralding a new era of oral healthcare delivery in North Otago. A major benefit of this new delivery will be the opportunity for parents to be involved with their child’s oral health care and it will be easier for them to access urgent relief of pain if their child ever needs this.

The new purpose-built two-chair clinic will provide free dental care for all children from pre-school age up to 12 years old who live in Oamaru and surrounding areas. It will be staffed by four full-time staff; two Dental Therapists and two Dental Assistants, the same size workforce that has served the community in the past. The clinic is equipped with modern facilities and digital X-raying technology which will allow for a wider range of treatments.

Taking a child to the dental clinic will be on a par with taking a child to the Doctor. Just as the Doctor discusses a child’s health with their accompanying parent, the Dental Therapist will discuss a child’s oral health with their parent. Any required treatment cannot take place without parental consent so if a child were to attend without a parent and needed treatment, another appointment would be required once parental consent had been given.

The Dental Therapist will also talk to parents and carers about risk factors for poor oral health and what can be done to prevent oral decay. This emphasis on prevention and education is at the core of the new service that parents and their children will receive.

The clinic has flexible opening hours, 8am - 4.30pm, to fit in with working and non-working parents. Parents will be able to pre-book or change appointment times to suit their family’s schedule.

In the outlying district a mobile oral health clinic will continue to serve Kurow, but children from Hampden, Maheno, Papakio, Pembroke and Totara areas will now be seen at the new clinic at Oamaru North School.

Now that Oamaru will be served by a permanent community dental clinic, offering care from a fixed location, there is no longer a need to maintain the upkeep and former part-time operation of the school dental clinics at Fenwick Primary, Oamaru Intermediate, Weston Primary and Oamaru North Primary. The old clinic buildings themselves are owned by the Ministry of Education and it will be up to each school to decide their future use.

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Photo Opportunity: Media are welcome to attend the official opening of the Oamaru Dental Clinic, Oamaru North Primary School, Torridge St, Oamaru on Wednesday 18 May at 1pm.
Schedule of events
1pm – Karakia

1.05pm - Speech by Pip Stewart, Southern DHB Women and Children’s and Public Health General Manager

1.10pm - Angela Benn, Southern DHB Principal Dental Officer, to cut the ribbon, along with two Oamaru North School pupils (youngest and oldest) and officially open the dental clinic.

1.15pm - Whakapaingia te Whare Niho – Blessing of the Dental Clinic

1.20pm - Oamaru North School pupils to perform a waiata, followed by afternoon tea.

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Media Queries: Please contact Southern DHB Communications Officer Jo Harvey on 027 674 1758.