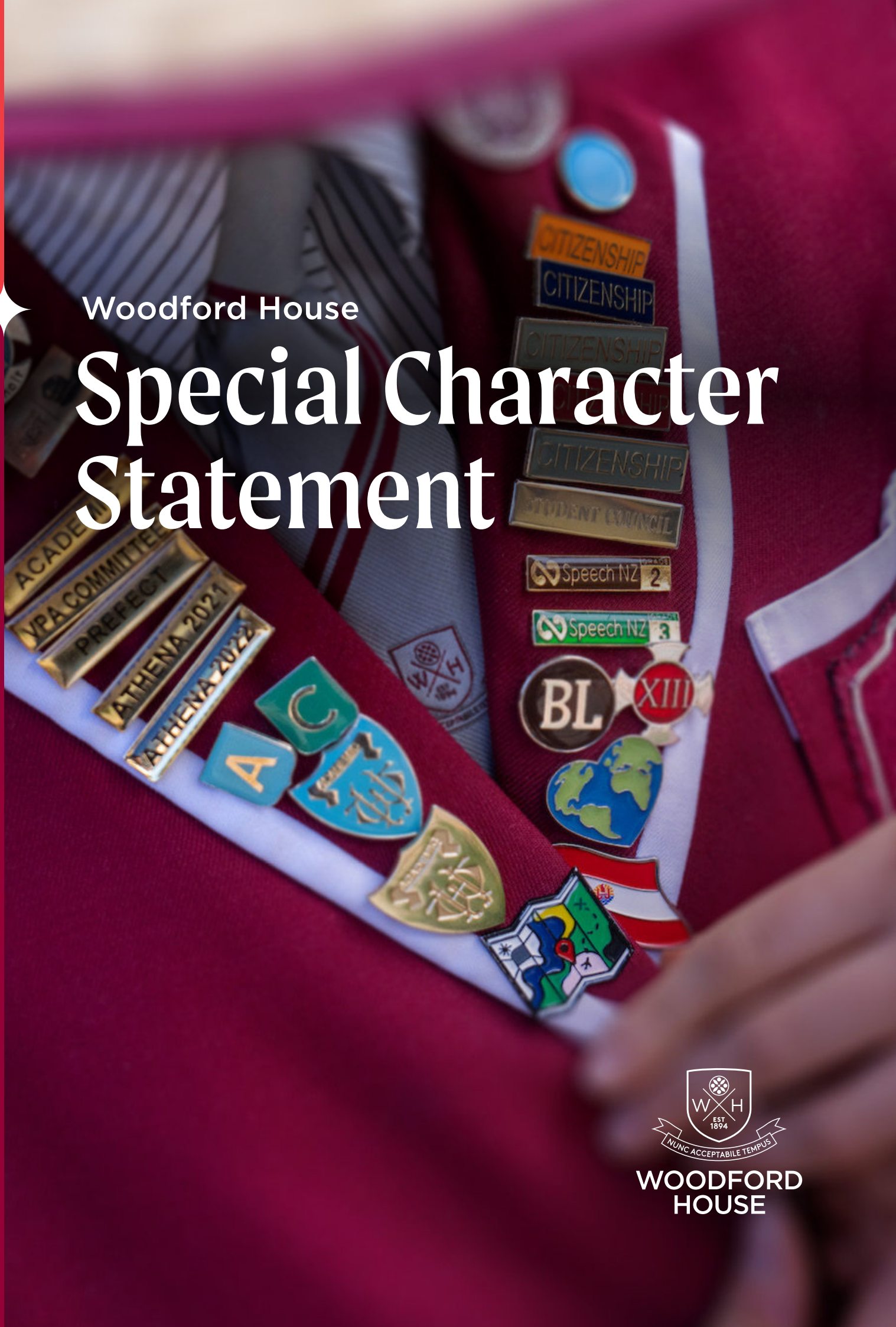
Woodford House

Special Character Statement



WOODFORD HOUSE

Our Special Character

At the heart of Woodford House is our Special Character. It shapes the culture of our school, the opportunities offered to our girls, and the way we care for and challenge each student to grow, lead and shine in her own unique way.

Woodford House is a State Integrated school, and our Special Character is formally defined and protected through an Integration Agreement between the Woodford House Board of Proprietors and the Crown. The Board of Proprietors has an ongoing responsibility to preserve and nurture this Special Character, ensuring it remains active, authentic and meaningful for every generation of Woodford House girls.

Special Character is sometimes mistaken for simply religious education. In reality, it is much broader and far more powerful. At Woodford House it means providing a warm, values based, protective and stimulating learning environment for girls of all abilities. It means educating the whole person – creating space for academic excellence, personal growth, compassion, wellbeing, faith, service, leadership and connection. Every girl takes part in religious, cultural and recreational programmes that help her discover who she is and who she might become.

This philosophy is grounded in the vision of our founder, Mabel Annie Hodge, who believed deeply in educating girls through the Head (Academic Excellence), the Heart (Special Character), and the Hands (Cultural and Recreational Pursuits). That vision continues to guide everything we do.

Woodford House continues to be guided by Christian principles and Anglican traditions that are woven throughout every aspect of school life. The School has a historical and continuing relationship with the Anglican Church of New Zealand through the Bishop of Waiapu and through the School Chaplain. These values are lived through our relationships, our service to others, our regular worship, celebrations and ceremonies, and the care we show one another each day. At the heart of this is the Chapel of Saint Francis of Assisi, the spiritual centre of our school, which has long been a place of reflection, worship, celebration and community for generations of Woodford House girls.

The delivery and preservation of our Special Character is a shared responsibility. It sits not only with the Boards and school leadership, but with staff, students and families working together to sustain and enhance the environment that makes Woodford House distinctive. The Special Character of Woodford House is the foundation for the overall depth and quality of experience that is valued by the Woodford House community, and which sets it apart from a State school.

Put simply, while Woodford House is a State-integrated school, the baseline funding received through the Ministry of Education (MOE) provides only a part of what is required to deliver the Woodford House education that families want and expect for their girls.

To support this, the Board of Proprietors expects all families to contribute to the Special Character Contribution when a student is accepted on enrolment. While this contribution is technically a donation, it is an essential part of delivering the education and opportunities we provide, as well as enabling ongoing enhancements to both opportunities for the girls and the facilities that support their experiences. These contributions are GST exempt and are claimable as a charitable donation for tax purposes. The contribution allows us to go significantly beyond baseline government funding and provide the distinctive experiences, pastoral care, wellbeing support, spiritual life, programmes, exchanges, service opportunities, arts, sport, leadership development, and facilities that make Woodford House the exceptional school it is.

Your contribution directly enables the experiences and support that benefit your daughter every day, including:

- Additional teaching staff beyond MOE allocations, allowing for smaller classes, specialist support and broader curriculum offerings. By way of example in 2025 the MOE funded circa 30 teachers per annum, with the Board of Proprietors funding an additional nine teachers per annum.
- Specialist tutors and coaches in music, dance and sport, enabling girls to perform and compete at regional, national and international levels. In the arts alone we have five teachers who are funded by the Board of Proprietors.
- The implementation and delivery of our Year 11 Diploma to more deeply prepare students for Year 12 and beyond.
- Strong pastoral and wellbeing care, including dedicated leadership roles focused on student wellbeing and care.
- Our unique Shine programme where every girl in Years 7-13 benefits from a vast range of pop-ups, workshops, events and programmes. It is unparalleled in what it delivers and offers and doesn't happen without dedicated staff solely focused on delivering this programme.
- Leadership pathways, Duke of Edinburgh support and personal development opportunities that set Woodford House apart nationally and internationally.
- Learning beyond the classroom through camps, service opportunities, exchanges, tournaments, leadership experiences and international partnerships.
- The care and upkeep of our Chapel and funding of a full-time Chaplain, both of which sit at the spiritual heart of our school.
- Access to our on site nurse and other health and wellbeing professionals through our Health Centre.
- Enhanced security, high quality food services and a safe, nurturing boarding and day school environment.
- Investment in innovation, archives, scholarships, cultural traditions and the small but meaningful touches that create a genuine sense of belonging.

In recent years, using funds from Special Character donations, the Board of Proprietors provides around $2m annually to the Woodford House Board of Trustees over and above MOE funding to enable many of the opportunities identified above to occur. This commitment is not a one-off, with activities and programmes offered to our students which have been built up over time and responding to student needs. The Board of Proprietors consider the ongoing funding of these Special Character activities as being critical into the future.

The strength of the school and its offering is directly related to all families understanding the importance and value of these contributions, and for the significant benefits for every girl to be supported by families on a fair and consistent basis. The Board of Proprietors appreciates that families will make these important contributions and, in doing so, invest not only in their own daughter's education, but in the strength and future of the Woodford House community as a whole.

Thank you for your partnership, your support and the trust you place in us to educate your daughter in a school where she is known, valued and encouraged to shine her own light.

Ngā mihi nui,

Vicki Lawson

Chair, Woodford House Board of Proprietors