ERO External Evaluation

Hokowhitu School, Palmerston North

The purpose of ERO's external evaluations is to give parents, whānau and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education children and young people receive. ERO reports on the equity and excellence of learning outcomes for all students and for specific groups including Māori students, Pacific students and students with additional learning needs. This includes a focus on accelerating learning for students. ERO also reports on the quality and effectiveness of the school's processes and practices for continuing and sustaining improvement. The report gives evaluation findings that answer four key questions about the school's performance.

School Context

Hokowhitu School in central Palmerston North caters for students in Years 1 to 6. The school community is diverse with many cultures represented. The roll is steadily growing. At the time of this review the 388 children were enrolled, included 48 who are Māori and 16 are of Pacific heritage.

The school's mission is: 'Strive to be the best you can be - Torongia ki te tihi o te maunga'. This is underpinned by the STRIVE values that are linked to the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC).

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board, schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- reading, writing and mathematics in relation to the levels of NZC
- science
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Multi–Sensory Structured Language (MSL).

Since the May 2015 ERO report, the school has extended its Kete flexible learning space approach and organisation across all year level groupings. It has introduced play-based learning in the junior space, with a focus on the school 'being ready for the child'.

For leaders' and teachers' professional learning and development, major areas of focus in 2017 and 2018 include MSL and science. In 2018, curriculum review and development is also a focus.

The school is part of the Palmerston North East Kāhui Ako.

Evaluation Findings

1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students

1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?

The school's data about achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to the levels of NZC shows that, overall in the school, most students are achieving at and above expectation.

End of 2017 data shows that the majority of Māori students achieve at and above expectation in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in reading, the school is yet to achieve equitable in-school outcomes for Māori students in relation to their peers.

In mathematics, boys' and girls' achievement is equitable, but significant disparity remains in literacy with boys achieving less well than girls.

For students in Year 6, there are increasingly positive outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. Most leave the school achieving at or above their expected curriculum level.

1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?

Most students who were achieving below expectation at the beginning of 2017 made progress. For those Māori students who were identified as needing improved learning, nearly all made progress with some making accelerated progress.

2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices

2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Positive school conditions support learning. The school's learning communities are characterised by respect, empathy, cooperation and teamwork. The Kete structure and flexible learning spaces facilitate teachers to work and plan collaboratively, and support children's transitions through year levels within the school. Teaching and learning experiences promote students' participation, collaborative work, engagement, decision-making and ownership of learning. Students choose contexts, resources and the organisation of their work. Their leadership is promoted.

Leaders and teachers focus on supporting all learners to achieve well and be successful. They identify and respond to the needs and strengths of children through relevant interventions and a range of internal and external supports. Those students whose learning needs acceleration are identified and their needs known. Specific plans are developed for children with more complex, additional learning needs. Goals are linked to social, behavioural and learning areas. A well-targeted and resourced ESOL programme has contributed to significant progress in 2017 for these students.

Leaders value the diverse identities, languages and cultures of students and families, and their contributions. Leaders continue to strengthen these connections with families.

For stewardship and governance of the school by the board, experienced trustees continue to seek relevant advice and resources to support them and strengthen their understanding of roles through training and sharing responsibilities.

2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Refining processes for target setting and reporting to specifically focus on accelerating the progress of priority students, groups and cohorts is needed. This should enable leaders and trustees to better respond to the school's goal of achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all students, and subsequently to monitor, know in closer detail about, and evaluate progress toward the goal.

There are sound systems within Kete for tracking and monitoring students. On the basis of these, leaders and teachers are well placed to analyse resulting data and regularly report to the board evaluative information and commentary about how effectively achievement is being lifted, as a consequence of focused teaching and interventions.

The school's appraisal process has been revised and inquiries continue to develop teachers' ability to focus on learner outcomes. Continuing to strengthen the link to student outcomes is a key next step for further development of the process.

The ongoing development of the school's curriculum should continue to focus on the role of the learner in relation to the vision, values and key competencies of NZC and include:

- further development of student agency for learning
- continuing the internal review of how best to engage with digital technologies in teaching and learning.

These developments should be underpinned by ongoing internal evaluation to systematically determine what is working well to promote valued and equitable student outcomes, what is not and what needs to change to support improvement where it is needed. Provision and use of such evaluation information will assist and support decision making for the future by the board and others.

3 Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board and principal of the school completed the ERO board assurance statement and self-audit checklists. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to the following:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management
- finance
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student safety and wellbeing:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration and certification
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should develop additional procedures to support and guide implementation of key policies.

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code. At the time of this review there were five international students attending. All reside with their parents.

Sound systems and practices continue to be implemented by experienced and well-qualified staff. The learning and pastoral care of the students is a priority. Annual self review contributes to good provision for international students within an inclusive and ethnically diverse school community.

4 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on existing strengths in:

- a collaborative approach among trustees, leaders and teachers that promotes improved outcomes for students
- a positive and respectful learning environment and conditions that support students' engagement
- identifying individual students' learning needs and providing support to promote achievement of equitable outcomes.

Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priority for further development is in:

- strengthening inquiry and internal evaluation, to support leaders, trustees and teachers to know what is working well and what needs to change to improve outcomes for all students.

ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

ERO is likely to carry out the next external evaluation in three years.
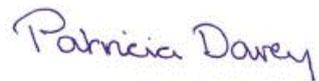
Patricia Davey
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Te Tai Pokapū - Central Region

26 June 2018

About the school

Location	Palmerston North
Ministry of Education profile number	2365
School type	Contributing Primary Years 1 to 6
School roll	388
Gender composition	Female 53%, Male 47%
Ethnic composition	Māori 13% Pākehā 58% Asian 12% Other ethnic groups 17%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	May 2018
Date of this report	26 June 2018
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review May 2015 Education Review April 2010 Education Review October 2007