

ERO External Evaluation

Kahutara School, Featherston

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

Kahutara School is a rural school located near Featherston that caters for students from Years 1 to 8. At the time of this ERO evaluation, the roll was 111 students, including 17 Māori. There is an annual turnover of some families as farm contracts are reviewed.

The school states that its vision for all children is: 'Opening the gates to the future. High achievement for every child while maintaining the warm, friendly environment.' Valued outcomes are, 'respect, to do ones best, open mindedness, acceptance of others, involvement, honesty and taking responsibility.' The school's values are to be revised, in consultation with the community in 2018, as part of the strategic plan review. A curriculum review and the development of a Year 8 student leaver profile is also planned as part of this work.

Since the June 2014 ERO report, the school has had changes of leadership and teachers. Three new teachers were employed in 2017 and two in February 2018, just prior to this ERO review. A new principal and deputy principal have recently been appointed from existing staff.

The teaching team has been undertaking professional learning and development (PLD) in mathematics for the past two years. A hub has been created in the senior school allowing two teachers to work collaboratively.

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

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to school expectations
- progress in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to school achievement targets
- progress in relation to the current mathematics PLD focus
- achievement in school and community events.

The school is part of the South Wairarapa 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?

Schoolwide achievement information, from the end of 2017, showed that almost all students were achieving at or above expectations in reading, with most achieving at or above expectations in writing and mathematics. High achievement levels have been sustained over time in reading and mathematics. However, some disparity between girls and boys, and Māori and non-Māori in writing is evident.

Those students achieving below expectations are identified and specific teaching strategies and interventions implemented to progress their learning. Outcomes over time are regularly monitored and tracked.

Children with additional learning needs benefit from the highly inclusive school culture and practices. Appropriate interventions, including external agency support, promote their participation in school programmes and progress their learning. Regular and effective monitoring shows some progress well. Those requiring extended learning opportunities are identified to participate in external community-based activities.

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

The school's end-of-year data for 2017 showed that all Māori students who achieved below school expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the beginning of the year, had made accelerated progress. For all students, more than half of those who were below expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the beginning of the year made accelerated progress.

The school's priority for 2018 is to strengthen the focus on students achieving below expectations, with an appropriate emphasis on the achievement of Māori, boys and in writing.

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?

The board actively represents and serves the community in its stewardship role. Trustees work supportively with the principal and teachers. They are proactive in seeking ways to increase learning opportunities for children. Trustees receive regular updates on the progress of target students and fund initiatives to improve student achievement.

School leadership is strengthening systems to promote increased organisational coherence, with focus on building a collaborative and supportive culture in the new team. Work is progressing in aligning key planning documents. Achievement priorities, teacher development and inquiry are clearly linked.

Student wellbeing is a high priority. Children benefit from being part of a close-knit, friendly and inclusive learning community. Supporting students' self-management, and understanding of their achievement, has led to improved learner engagement and agency.

Collaboration between families and the school enriches opportunities for learning. Families are well informed about their children's progress in relation to the national priorities of reading, writing and mathematics, and key learning competencies. Student/teacher/parent conferences and use of on-line platforms provide opportunities for sharing home and school information.

Purposeful links with early learning services and schools in the region are established. Students' transitions in, through and on to secondary school are supported. A range of information is sought to support older children as they move schools, to improve transitions and promote continuity of their learning. The school is an active member of the Kāhui Ako and through this collaboration such initiatives are likely to be strengthened.

The school, at all levels, has undertaken work to support understanding of bicultural partnership. This has promoted better understanding of ways of working, for trustees and staff that acknowledge the principles and intent of the Treaty of Waitangi. The curriculum includes both local and Māori perspectives.

The previous ERO report found that the school had a well-considered local curriculum, clearly aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The local curriculum, and breadth of learning opportunities provided for children continue to be a strength. An appropriate range of assessment tools is used to make judgements about student achievement and progress. The assessment schedule has been revised for 2018. Moderation is an important and regular part of the school's assessment process.

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

The principal and board are positive about ongoing development and have identified key steps that include reducing disparity and sustaining equitable outcomes in achievement between groups of learners. This development includes: reviewing the curriculum and guiding documents; improving written reports to parents by including achievement information in relation to all learning areas; and strengthening the teacher-inquiry process to support better student outcomes. Reviewing the charter and developing long-term plans to better reflect the needs of students and the values of the community is also a self-identified next step. ERO's evaluation confirms these priorities.

As part of curriculum review, the school should consider including clear articulation of the thinking that sits behind inquiry learning, discovery time and collaborative teaching to support shared understanding and consistency of practice across the school.

Trustees and leaders should continue to strengthen the coherence of planning systems and processes. The alignment of long-term planning and targets, with staff development, internal evaluation and reporting to the board should support sustained good practice and promote ongoing improvement.

As part of this coherency, and for sustainability of practice:

- expectations for the roles of trustees should be developed to support succession planning for ongoing, effective stewardship
- trustees, leaders and staff should identify and make plans to implement and sustain the dimensions of practice required for a culturally responsive school
- shared understanding and use of internal evaluation needs development at all levels to support decision making about change and improvement.

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.

ERO identified non-compliance in relation to health and safety and the curriculum.

In order to address this, the board of trustees must:

- ensure all the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 are met
- consult with the community at least once every two years about the delivery of the health curriculum.

[Section 60B Education Act 1989]

4 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- practices and a school climate that sustain high levels of student achievement over time
- school and community relationships that support children's learning.

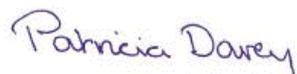
Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

- ongoing, sharper focus on equity
- identifying and making plans at all levels to implement and sustain the dimensions of practice required for a culturally responsive school
- strengthening the coherence of planning systems and processes
- understanding and use of internal evaluation.

ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

ERO is likely to carry out the next external evaluation in three years.



Patricia Davey
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central (Acting)
Te Tai Pokapū - Central Region

2 May 2018

About the school

Location	Featherston
Ministry of Education profile number	2868
School type	Full primary
School roll	111
Gender composition	Boys 56%, Girls 44%
Ethnic composition	Māori 15% Pākehā 83% Other ethnic groups 2%
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	February 2018
Date of this report	2 May 2018
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review June 2014 Education Review July 2011 Education Review June 2008