

ERO External Evaluation

Ferndale School, Christchurch

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

Ferndale School is a special school located in Christchurch. It has a roll of 111 students (aged 5 years to 21 years) with significant, wide ranging learning and other needs. A new principal was appointed at the beginning of 2018.

All students receive additional funding and specialist or other support from the Ministry of Education. The school also provides specialist teacher outreach services to local schools, for students in regular classrooms.

The school has a base school and six satellite classes in mainstream schools across the city. These classes include primary, secondary and/or post-secondary age students.

The school's vision is for students to be engaged and empowered, with the confidence to fulfil their potential, and prepare them for the future and lifelong learning. The foundations for achieving this vision are the key values of communication (whakawhitiwhitinga), independence (tino rangatiratanga), respect (whakanui), enjoyment (painga) and excellence (hiranga). The school's motto, 'The Best I Can Be', encourages both students and staff to pursue the shared vision.

Current strategic priorities are informed by all students' unique identities and needs. The priorities are student voice, connectedness, curriculum, cultural responsiveness and wellbeing. These are the cornerstones of the school's work in setting, and working towards, identified targets for each student to progress and achieve.

Expansive pastoral care is provided for students and families. Extensive links with a range of external agencies enable the school to support students' learning and wellbeing.

The school has made good progress in areas identified for improvement in the 2013 ERO report, including review of assessment and the curriculum.

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

- outcomes for students with special/additional learning needs

- progress/achievement in relation to school and individual student targets
- outcomes related to engagement, wellbeing and safety for success.

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?

All students are effectively supported to achieve personal equity and excellence. Most students are achieving the school's valued equity and excellence outcomes.

School information for 2017 shows that most student target groups, including Māori students, met or exceeded targets in literacy and numeracy.

Mid-year 2018 individual progress and achievement data shows that there is no significant disparity for Māori students. School information from Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Transition Plans (ITPs), in relation to valued learning and wellbeing outcomes, shows that many students made expected progress over time.

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

The school is highly inclusive and interventions are personalised, specifically resourced and closely monitored.

For those students, including Māori students, whose learning, progress and achievement requires extra support, the school provides:

- extensive collaborative planning which includes parents/whānau and specialist service input
- increased resourcing
- targeted and regular professional reflection and review.

This support enables most students to engage meaningfully in their personalised learning in order to make expected or, for some, 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?

Strong leadership, relational trust and high levels of collaboration, within and beyond the school, have targeted and sustained high levels of support, care and learning for students. Very effective teaching and learning practices and the promotion of a reflective school culture are priorities which drive ongoing school improvement. Teachers and support staff take collective responsibility for all students' learning and wellbeing. Resourcing priorities encourage and support teacher capability and schoolwide capacity building to meet students' interests and needs.

School leaders have promoted and embedded very useful models of internal evaluation for school improvement. Regular, well analysed consultation and surveys inform actions and their impact for continuous school improvement. Intentional, strategic and distributed leadership opportunities are building the school's capacity to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all learners.

Effective, wide ranging communication practices with the school community and a philosophy of inclusion, from the board to community, ensure that decisions, programmes and innovations for continued success are valued. These communications are systematically focused on family aspirations for their children and are aligned to the school's vision and valued outcomes for students. Strong, enduring connections with all stakeholders, and the professional commitment of those in the school, ensure that students are at the centre of all strategic and operational decisions.

Cohesive and coherent schoolwide systems and processes have ensured consistency of practices. These provide very clear expectations and guidelines for delivering a culturally responsive curriculum which aligns student behaviour management and communication strategies with readiness to learn and engagement for success. Consistent practices foster and enhance students' wellbeing and safety.

The school's curriculum is very responsive to students' strengths, needs and interests. It is broad, and relevant to the school's specialist setting. It balances functional skills with academic learning and life experience opportunities. It is very responsive to all students' languages, cultures and identities, including Māori students. The curriculum provides an enriched learning and care environment for students to become active lifelong learners.

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

School leaders have identified, and ERO agrees, that the school needs to complete and implement its draft curriculum guidelines and improved assessment developments.

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.

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 and inclusive school culture that builds relational trust and places all students at the centre of reflection and action
- effective communication which strengthens the partnership with families/whānau and specialist agencies in realising shared valued outcomes for students
- coherent systems which support processes that enhance student safety and wellbeing
- an emerging curriculum that is responsive to students' strengths, needs and interests
- a reflective environment that promotes capability and capacity building for ongoing improvement.

Next steps

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

- completing and implementing the draft curriculum, including improved assessment developments.

ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

ERO is likely to carry out the next external evaluation in four-to-five years.



Director Review & Improvement Services
Te Waipounamu - Southern Region

13 December 2018

About the school

Location	Christchurch
Ministry of Education profile number	3339
School type	Special School
School roll	111
Gender composition	Boys 69% ; Girls 31%
Ethnic composition	Māori 22% Pākehā 60% Pacific 9% Other ethnicities 9%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	October 2018
Date of this report	13 December 2018
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review October 2013 Education Review April 2010 Education Review February 2007