

St Mary's School (Hokitika)
Hokitika

Confirmed

Education Review Report

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The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school report answers the question "How effectively is this school's curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?" Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school's systems for sustaining and continuing improvements. The report answers four key questions about the school.

Findings

1 Context

What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?

St Mary's School (Hokitika) is an integrated Roman Catholic School. Its special character is clearly evident in the supportive, family-like environment in which children learn and staff work.

The school is actively involved with local schools and also takes part in activities with many other West Coast schools. These links extend learning experiences for students and professional development and support for staff.

The principal makes good use of external agencies to provide additional support for selected students. Specialist teachers are employed to help students extend their interests and enrich their learning.

The board and school leaders have effectively addressed most of the areas for review and development in the school's July 2011 ERO report. Improvements are most evident in the use and reporting of student achievement information and in self review.

2 Learning

How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement?

The school is making increasingly effective use of student achievement information to enhance students' engagement, progress and achievement.

Teachers use a good variety of assessments to make well-informed judgements about student progress and achievement. They make appropriate use of this information to identify strengths and needs, focus their teaching, adjust groupings and provide additional support for some students.

School leaders make effective use of achievement information to analyse and report about trends and patterns and to set annual targets to raise student achievement. Reaching these targets is given suitable importance in class teaching plans and programmes as well as teachers' appraisals.

Parents and the board are kept well informed about student achievement. Student-led interviews and ongoing sharing of information help parents, students and teachers to work towards agreed learning goals. Regular reports to the board by the principal help to ensure that trustees are well placed to consider how to further support student learning.

Teachers also make good use of achievement information to identify those students needing additional support and extension. These provisions are well targeted, organised and student outcomes well evaluated and reported. Most students have shown clear benefits from receiving additional learning support.

Areas for review and development

Making refinements to practices for setting annual achievement targets and the development of plans to meet these targets could increase their usefulness.

3 Curriculum

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?

The school's curriculum effectively promotes and supports student learning. This effectiveness is most evident in the very good levels of National Standards achievement in reading and the good levels of achievement in mathematics. Achievement in written language is lower and appropriate emphasis is being given to lifting student achievement in this area.

Students take part in a well-balanced and varied range of learning experiences, both within and beyond the school. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on helping students to become capable lifelong learners. Older students are being effectively supported to become independent learners.

Teachers consistently use a variety of teaching strategies that are known to promote student engagement and learning. For example, they make clear what students are expected to learn, support them well to achieve these expectations and provide good opportunities for students to learn from each other. They are making increasing use of technologies to effectively support teaching and learning.

School leaders and teachers are systematically reflecting upon and trying new ways of improving their teaching and student learning.

Possible areas for review and development

There is a risk that the school's curriculum could become overcrowded. Leaders and teachers should continue to explore ways of streamlining aspects of this. For example:

- building on the school's Year 8 leavers' profile in ways that help to clarify learning priorities at each level of the school could help to give added focus to teaching programmes
- there is scope to further integrate aspects of the curriculum in ways that help to link students' learning in a variety of curriculum areas and make learning more meaningful.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?

A number of recent initiatives are helping to create an environment where Māori students are more likely to achieve success as Māori.

Along with a learning environment that values all students and fosters positive, supportive relationships, current leaders:

- are promoting the more active integration of te reo and tikanga Māori into teaching programmes and exploring ways of supporting teachers to do this
- have re-established the school's kapa haka group that currently involves all students
- have undertaken an initial review of the school's Māori curriculum plan and established some well-considered priorities.

The active promotion of biculturalism is most evident in the school's religious education, in classroom displays and the weekly learning by students and staff of a new word in te reo Māori.

Māori students achieve at levels similar to their peers in mathematics but below them in literacy. Suitable targets and support are in place to improve Māori student achievement.

Areas for review and development

School leaders should now build on recent initiatives and develop a more focused school plan for fostering success for Māori as Māori. This plan should include:

- looking at further ways of incorporating biculturalism into the curriculum, including local Māori history
- fostering closer links with the parents of Maori students and local iwi.

4 Sustainable Performance

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The principal, with the support of other school leaders, provides effective leadership that promotes:

- a positive and supportive school culture ,teamwork and an ongoing commitment to school improvement
- the sharing of leadership responsibilities through a range of staff delegations and good management structures and systems
- ongoing professional development and support, including increasingly strong staff appraisal practices
- useful self-review practices and informative reporting to the board.

A good working relationship exists between the board, principal and staff, as well as between the school and parish. The board and school leaders work together in ways that help them to meet the goals and priorities outlined in the school's strategic plan. The board is supportive of staff and responsive to their requests for resources and support. Recent board training has helped trustees to perform their roles well.

Areas for review and development

The school's strategic plan is quite lengthy and includes a mixture of new initiatives as well as things that routinely happen. There is scope to:

- make this a more useful document by reducing its size and "sharpening the focus" on the most critical areas for development and improvement
- involve parents more in clarifying areas for development and the trustees more in evaluating their implementation.

Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees 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:

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

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

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

Conclusion

The school's special Catholic character is clearly evident in the supportive, family-like environment.

The curriculum is effective in promoting and supporting student learning. This effectiveness is most evident in the levels of National Standards achievement in reading, and the good levels of achievement in mathematics.

A good working relationship exists between the board, principal and staff, as well as between the school and parish.

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Next ERO Review

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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



Graham Randell
National Manager Review Services
Southern Region

10 October 2014

About the School

Location	Hokitika	
Ministry of Education profile number	3536	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	165	
Gender composition	Boys 53% Girls 47%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā Māori Asian Other Ethnicities	68% 26% 4% 2%
Special Features	Catholic Integrated	
Review team on site	August 2014	
Date of this report	10 October 2014	
Most recent ERO reports)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	July 2011 May 2008 February 2005