

ERO External Evaluation

Otamatea High School, Maungaturoto, Northland

Summary

Otamatea High School is a co-educational school, catering for students in Years 7 to 15. Thirty-three percent of learners are Māori and nearly sixty percent are Pākehā.

Since ERO's 2014 evaluation, the school has revitalised its approach to lifting student achievement and responding to children whose learning and achievement need acceleration. The school has a holistic approach to raising student achievement and developing lifelong learners. This approach is well planned and is supported by the board, school leaders, staff and the community, including hapū and iwi.

The board and school leaders are justifiably proud of the significant improvement in the school's overall NCEA achievement levels over the last three years. This success is evident across all groups of students, including Māori.

How well is the school achieving equitable outcomes for all children?

The school's processes and actions effectively help to achieve excellence and equity for learners. This is mainly attributable to the school having built a positive school culture supported by powerful relationships and partnerships with parents, whānau and community, together with effective school leadership and governance.

As part of supporting the school's journey in raising achievement for all students, relevant priorities are likely to include expanding the school's strengths based curriculum and further developing the school's internal evaluation practices.

Children are achieving well. The school demonstrates strong progress toward achieving equity in education outcomes, supported by effective, sustainable processes and practices.

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

Equity and excellence

How effectively does this school respond to Māori and other children whose learning and achievement need acceleration?

The school responds effectively to Māori and other children whose learning and achievement need acceleration.

Achievement information shows a very positive upward trend in terms of students achieving success in the National Certificates of Education Achievement (NCEA) at Levels 1, 2 and 3. An increase in the number of endorsements is also significant. National Standards data show the school is effective at

accelerating students' progress in reading, writing and mathematics over their first two years in the school.

The NCEA data show that Māori students achieve at similar levels as the general school population at NCEA Level 1. The school's data for Level 2 and University Entrance (UE) shows some disparity in Māori achievement at these levels. However, Māori students are monitored individually and make good progress in their learning and achievement over their time at the school. Students who were achieving below the National Standards in Year 7 achieve very well in their chosen pathways by Year 12.

The school has good processes for ensuring teacher judgements about student achievement are robust. School leaders continue to evaluate assessment practices to ensure the school's publicly reported data is dependable.

Student engagement is monitored and this information shows that Māori students' participation is equitable across the curriculum in terms of attitudes and engagement as learners. Since the 2014 ERO review the school has been very successful in lifting retention and attendance rates and significantly lowering the number of stand downs and suspensions for all groups of students.

Individual students are responded to through a range of cultural initiatives. These responsive approaches value Māori language, culture and identity and are supporting students to make progress and achieve. A focus on broadening learning pathways in the senior school and these increasingly flexible responses to individuals are helping to lift the achievement levels of all learners.

Individual learning plans are regularly revisited to monitor and build on the progress of students with high learning needs.

The school has good systems for identifying students at risk of not achieving across year levels and curriculum areas. School leaders use this information to create opportunities for teacher professional discussions and to problem solve and devise strategies to support individual students. Leaders and teachers could make further use of this information to inform teaching inquiries and internal evaluation to ensure effective responses are identified and shared and contribute to school-wide curriculum developments.

School conditions supporting equity and excellence

What school processes are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence?

The school's processes and actions effectively help to achieve excellence and equity for learners. This is mostly attributable to:

- a very positive and respectful school culture and tone
- powerful connections, relationships and partnerships with parents, whānau, iwi and hapū
- effective school leadership
- sound governance and stewardship

Students benefit from systems that are strongly focussed on ensuring their wellbeing. A holistic, wrap around approach to pastoral care sits at the heart of the school's curriculum, setting the conditions for student wellbeing and achievement. The introduction of restorative practices has been deliberate and successful in supporting students to take responsibility for their actions. A high level of professional consideration and care around the development of the school's health

curriculum, including sexuality programmes, is increasing student awareness and self-advocacy. Classrooms are settled places for learning.

Older students are good role models for their younger peers. The Year 7 and 8 students have their own place and identity within the school. The school has good practices to support students transitioning into the school at Year 7. These practices involve getting to know the learner and their family and support early identification of children at risk of not achieving.

The school has multiple and effective ways of communicating, consulting and building partnerships with its community. Very strong partnerships with hapū and iwi give the school a wider range of resources that support the school's educational efforts. A variety of initiatives have come out of these partnerships including initiatives to do with meeting students' care and emotional needs, provision of relevant curriculum opportunities and future focussed pathways and connecting Māori students with their cultural identity. Having a strengthened sense of their cultural identity is providing a bridge for many Māori students in their learning.

Ongoing professional learning and development programmes give staff the appropriate strategies for culturally responsive practices. This enables them to take responsibility for Māori and other students achieving success. The Treaty of Waitangi principles of partnership, participation and protection are highly evident in the ways the school responds to all learners.

School leadership is very effectively building relational trust and collaboration at every level of the school community. The school's whakatauki *He Waka Eke Noa, All in the Waka Together*, supports a shared commitment to promoting equity. This shared commitment is evident in the strengthening of whānau classes. All teaching staff, including senior leaders, are responsible for a small whānau class of Year 7 to 13 students. The classes meet daily and focus on relationship building, goal setting, careers and academic counselling for senior students.

School leaders drive and model approaches for building the professional capability of staff. Senior leaders foster a culture of stepping forward and taking ownership. This approach is resulting in greater opportunities for all staff and students to contribute to school improvements.

The school has an experienced board that has a high awareness of good governance and stewardship. Trustees understand the changing needs of young people in the school's community and make appropriate resourcing decisions. These decisions support a range of initiatives for student wellbeing, health and learning. The school provides an environment and sense of place where all can feel proud of their contribution.

The school's inclusive and responsive practices provide good support for students with special learning needs. A well-resourced centre specifically caters for students with high learning needs. Teachers and learning assistants share a commitment to, and responsibility for all students' progress. This coordinated approach helps students with special learning needs participate fully in appropriate learning programmes and school life.

Sustainable development for equity and excellence

What further developments are needed in school processes to achieve equity and excellence?

School leaders are presently engaged in a strategic curriculum review across the school. The priority for the school is to keep a focus on creating a richer, integrated curriculum based on students' strengths, capabilities and interests. As part of shaping future curriculum developments it will be important to make good use of different teaching and learning approaches, learner competencies

and the outcomes from inquiries into the impact of teaching innovations. Student involvement in decision making and planning the curriculum will also help to create a meaningful curriculum for all learners. The school's health curriculum is a very good example of a student-led curriculum.

Strengthening the school's internal evaluation practices will help to sustain and build further school improvement. School leaders continue to refine approaches to deepen professional discussions with teachers around critiquing practice, and to strengthen evaluative reporting. These discussions and reports have further potential to support in-depth inquiries about what makes a positive difference to student progress. In addition, using research and indicators of effective practice in inquiries and documenting the evaluation process would strengthen the school's collective capacity to critically reflect and use evaluation for improvement and ongoing development.

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
- 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*.

The school has no designated bus bay and the road on the school's front boundary has a 70 kilometre speed zone. Trustees are continuing to work with the Ministry of Education and local council to address the board's concerns about the safety of students entering and exiting through the school's front entrance.

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.

No international students were enrolled at the time of the ERO review.

Going forward

How well placed is the school to accelerate the achievement of all children who need it?

The school is well placed to sustain its current good practices and make ongoing improvements that impact positively on all children's learning.

Children are achieving well. The school demonstrates strong progress toward achieving equity in educational outcomes, supported by effective, sustainable processes and practices.

Agreed next steps are to:

- develop a guiding document for a rich school curriculum
- continue strengthening the evaluative quality of teacher reflections and school reviews.

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



Violet Tu'uga Stevenson
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern (Acting)

22 September 2017

About the school

Location	Maungaturoto, Northland	
Ministry of Education profile number	21	
School type	Secondary (Years 7 to 15)	
School roll	389	
Gender composition	Boys 50% Girls 50%	
Ethnic composition	Māori Pākehā Pasifika other	33% 57% 2% 8%
Provision of Māori medium education	No	
Review team on site	July 2017	
Date of this report	22 September 2017	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	September 2014 May 2012 January 2009