

ERO External Evaluation

Tahakopa School, Owaka

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

Tahakopa School is a very small and isolated Years 1 to 8 school in the Catlins, South Otago. At the time of this review six children attended.

The school's vision is: 'From small seeds grow forest giants'. The school states it is committed to representing the values and beliefs of the school community. The valued outcomes for students are for them to show respect for themselves, others and the environment, to learn how to learn, and to be literate and numerate.

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

- reading, writing and mathematics
- other curriculum areas.

A teaching principal is supported by a teacher aide and part-time teacher.

The school is part of the Big River Kāhui Ako | Community of Learning.

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?

In reading and mathematics the school achieves equitable and excellent outcomes for almost all students.

School achievement information shows that in the last three years there have been greater proportions of students reading at or above expectations in relation to the levels in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC). In writing, student achievement levels have dropped with a number of students not maintaining or making expected levels of progress. At the time of this review, few of the students were at expected levels for writing.

Achievement reports to the board show that most students are achieving at expected levels in other curriculum areas.

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

Over the last three years, the school has had variable success in accelerating and/or maintaining the rates of progress for some students. In the last three years, six of thirteen students made accelerated progress in one or more identified areas to reach expected levels. In 2018, none of the targeted students made sufficient progress to reach expected levels 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?

Caring relationships and relational trust between the students and their teachers and the community have created a supportive environment for learning. A recently introduced child-led, play-based approach to curriculum delivery has increased student motivation and engagement in their learning.

The children's strengths, interests and capabilities are very well known and used as a basis for individualised planning. Their learning is carefully tracked and monitored. Education outside the classroom (EOTC) is a feature of the localised curriculum that is well used to broaden children's knowledge of the wider world and provide hands-on experiential learning.

Trustees, in consultation with the community, have set a clear direction for the school. Raising student achievement and implementing the school's values are key priorities. This direction is supported by the alignment of strategic priorities with achievement targets and related systems such as, appraisal goals and provision for professional development for the teaching staff. The trustees have taken steps to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. This includes, significant investment in a teacher aide, and fully funding all students to participate in EOTC experiences.

There is very strong ownership of the school by the local community and a desire for the school to be viable. Parents are regularly informed about life and learning in the school. Almost all parents are members of the board and are well informed about students' overall levels of achievement.

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

A number of developments are needed in school processes and practices to achieve equity and excellence and accelerate learning.

To improve processes and practices, teachers need to build their knowledge and use of effective internal evaluation. Outcomes of internal evaluation need to be shared with trustees to provide them with evidence-based information about what is working or not, and why. This includes ensuring that reports to the board are evaluative and that impacts of initiatives such as the oral language programme are reported. Clear information needs to be provided to inform trustees if students have made sufficient progress in their learning.

The teachers need to evaluate the play-based learning approach to know how well the approach:

- contributes to raising student achievement, especially in writing
- supports full coverage of the NZC
- provides sufficient opportunities for targeted teaching and learning for children to improve in areas that require focussed attention.

Students need to know more about their learning. Teachers need to set challenging but realistic learning goals with the students and develop shared understanding about the kind and quality of work required to achieve the desired outcomes. Teachers need to better analyse and use assessment information to inform intentional teaching to accelerate progress.

The principal needs to ensure that the teacher aide has an annual appraisal.

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 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of Tahakopa School's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Developing

[ERO's Framework: Overall School Performance is available on ERO's website.](#)

5 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- a culture of relational trust that creates a positive environment for children's wellbeing and learning
- the localised curriculum that broadens students' range of experiences and knowledge of the wider world
- clear direction setting by the board of trustees that has a focus on raising student achievement and the valued outcomes of the school community.

Next steps

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

- building internal evaluation capability to know what is working well for students' learning and where improvements are needed
- developing students' assessment and learning-to-learn capabilities so they have greater ownership of their learning
- effective teaching practice, to address variability across the school and improve use of learning information to inform decisions about student learning.

Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should strengthen risk-management procedures for education outside the classroom.



Alan Wynyard
Director Review and Improvement Services Southern
Southern Region
24 June 2019

About the school

Location	Owaka
Ministry of Education profile number	3838
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)
School roll	6
Gender composition	Boys 4, Girls 2
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 6
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	No
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	April 2019
Date of this report	24 June 2019
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review February 2016 Education Review August 2012 Education Review August 2010