



**Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu
Wellington**

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?

Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) provides distance education programmes for students from early childhood to Year 13, as well as adult learners. At any time there are approximately 12,500 students nationwide and overseas. Over the whole of 2014, 24,500 students were enrolled. Māori students comprise 30% of the roll and Pacific 4%.

Te Kura is based in Wellington with regional offices in Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch. There are staff working in communities where there are clusters of Te Kura students, such as Whangarei, Tauranga, Hastings, Whanganui and Nelson. Teaching staff are organised into four regional teams. Learning advisors and subject teachers work mainly with students associated with their region.

Enrolment is determined by the Ministry of Education's enrolment policy. Over time the roll has become more diverse. A large proportion is students who have complex social circumstances, psychological issues or have not been able to succeed at their local school. Many students have a history of low engagement with education prior to enrolment. A significant proportion are on the roll for a relatively short time. Approximately 40% are enrolled for the whole year.

At the time of this ERO review in August 2015 the roll comprised 12,360 enrolments. These included:

- 4% early childhood children, most of whom will go on to attend their local primary school
- 15% fulltime Years 1 to 13 students many of whom are geographically isolated, itinerant, living overseas or alienated from a face-to-face school
- 19% young adults aged from 16 to 19, not attending a face-to-face school, part-time and studying a small number of subjects to gain specific skills or qualifications
- 50% dual enrolled students from attached units (for example alternative education and teen parent units), or from primary and secondary schools to provide curriculum access, adaptation or extension
- 12% adults, largely accessing second chance education.

About 5% of full-time students have special education needs. They range from Year 1 to 13 and instruction is mostly at curriculum level 1 for all of the students' schooling.

To promote positive outcomes for its diverse students, Te Kura continues to progress the following strategic objectives, as identified in the Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018.

- Delivering a range of personalised and authentic learning experiences is the curriculum priority. Learning pathways for senior students have been extended through increased relationships with other education providers.
- There has been a refocus on Māori and Pacific student success. Building partnerships with iwi, whānau and aiga is enabling improved engagement in learning for some students.
- More face-to-face engagement with students occurs as a result of 80% of teachers being located in the regions their students live in.
- The school is in the process of moving to a future-oriented environment where technology is integrated into all aspects of teaching and learning to meet students' learning needs in a digital world.

Working with the Ministry of Education, in July 2014 Te Kura began implementation of an initiative for 80 at-risk students aimed at improving National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) results. The four year pilot programme aims to provide face-to-face support for these students through a learning advisor/kaiako with whom they and their whānau can build a continuous relationship. The initiative involves students being in an authentic learning programme based on students' interests, passions and goals. ERO is involved in an ongoing evaluation of this initiative, separate to this review.

Significant progress has been made in responding to the areas identified for improvement in the July 2013 ERO report. Implementing Te Kura's strategic priorities is contributing to improved outcomes for an increasing proportion of students. The school is continuing to strengthen these strategies to enable more students to be effectively engaged and to improve achievement.

2 Learning

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

Achievement information is increasingly used to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement.

Improvement in the availability of student engagement and achievement information is enabling teachers, leaders and trustees to more effectively respond to learners' needs. Improved functionality of the student management system has allowed more timely and accurate information to be available. Analysis of data from a range of sources informs strategic, regional and curriculum decision making.

Data is used to identify student learning needs, monitor progress and for reporting at various levels. Ways to identify and measure growth of social abilities required for learning are being considered. Te Kura is better positioned to identify appropriate indicators to allow outcomes from implementing strategic priorities to be meaningfully monitored and reviewed. School leaders should continue to develop key measures of student success.

Increasing percentages of Years 1 to 8 students are achieving the National Standards for their year level. As a group, the achievement of Māori is improving at a rate faster than the whole school. Continuing to improve these results is a priority identified by teachers and leaders.

A range of useful data is regularly considered to assist teachers to respond appropriately to the individual needs of students. Further considering the extent to which individual students' progress is accelerated as a result of targeted teaching, would strengthen review.

Most secondary and young adult students are involved in some NCEA assessments. Curriculum leaders undertake comprehensive reviews of student achievement and consider how programmes can be improved to promote greater success.

Since the previous ERO review, there has been some positive progress in overall senior student engagement and achievement, as indicated by:

- increased attendance at face-to-face learning opportunities
- greater involvement in authentic learning programmes
- improvement for some groups of students in NCEA Level 1 literacy, numeracy and certificate completion.

Many students are well served by Te Kura. They benefit from being able to work independently on a programme suited to their individual needs. Some students are not effectively engaged with the programmes of learning available. There is a determination and commitment by staff to find additional ways to successfully engage those learners.

3 Curriculum

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

Continued implementation of strategic priorities has enabled the curriculum to successfully promote and support the learning of most students. Ongoing development of the curriculum is providing choices and pathways for many students through their schooling and into further education and training.

Strengthened curriculum leadership is promoting the development of teaching practice and extending internal evaluation. Ongoing review of curriculum and professional development contributes positively to a shared understanding of effective teaching and learning in a distance learning environment.

The focus on personalising learning supports responsiveness to a wide range of student circumstances. There is a preparedness to be flexible to meet individual learning and wellbeing needs and aspirations.

Learning advisors work well with students, parents and supervisors to develop and monitor a unique programme for each student, based on the student's interests and abilities. In many cases, setting achievable goals, often related to literacy and numeracy development, is an initial priority. Specialist services are used to further support students if necessary.

Learner engagement with programmes would be increased by continuing to extend the:

- extent to which there is student ownership of their own learning pathway
- monitoring and evaluation of progress towards individual student goals.

The continuing increase in staff numbers in the regions is allowing improved learning and wellbeing support for students through:

- increased opportunities for face-to-face contact with teachers
- improved relationships with education and social service providers
- teachers being more adaptable to the emerging needs of students.

Greater opportunities to connect with teachers and other students are offered through increased numbers of event days, advisories and tutorials.

Regional and curriculum leaders ensure the curriculum continues to build the extent to which it engages all students. They promote community collaboration to enhance learning opportunities and student achievement.

All teachers are considered to be providers of career education information. Some review of careers education and guidance provision has recently occurred. A more extensive review, involving a range of stakeholders, should be carried out. Part of this should include consideration of how greater use of Vocational Pathways could contribute to ensuring that individual programmes provide clear pathways to future education and/or employment.

Te Kura has strengthened connections and links with community providers, often related to individually relevant real-life contexts. This has extended the range of options for students for ongoing learning. Increasing numbers are involved in courses that include secondary/tertiary links. ERO affirms Te Kura's continuing focus on extending learning partnerships with schools and other groups that have the potential to support positive learning and wellbeing outcomes for students.

Significant progress has been made in making online learning opportunities available to students. There is a determination to support students to develop a broad range of digital skills. All courses are planned to be purpose-designed for online learning by February 2019.

Schoolwide capacity to deliver teaching and learning online is increasing. Most existing programmes build skills and knowledge through linking to online resources. Automation of secondary dual enrolments has allowed students prompt access to programmes. All NCEA courses can be accessed digitally. Interactive online courses are provided in Years 9 and 10.

Teachers are being supported to develop their ability to deliver teaching and learning online. Provision is in place to support students to have the appropriate access to suitable devices and internet connectivity. Ongoing review (which includes student voice) of the implementation of the online learning strategy is allowing responsiveness to emerging issues.

Te Kura's Pasifika Strategy outlines a positive direction to better respond to Pacific learners. The strategy emphasises:

- building relationships with Pacific students and their families
- growing connections across communities and with schools
- developing purposeful professional development to grow staff capability in responding to Pacific learners.

ERO affirms the priorities identified in the Pasifika Strategy.

Students with highly complex needs are involved in personalised programmes that include goals related to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) key competencies. There is a focus on students' interests and real-life learning. Level 1 of NZC is carefully differentiated to provide students with increased opportunities to experience success.

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

The Māori Student Success Framework (MSSF) signals renewed emphasis on building staff capability to better respond to Māori learners and their families, whānau and supervisors. It prioritises Māori learners enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori. A recent external review of the implementation of MSSF has provided Te Kura with useful recommendations to support the enactment and review of the strategy.

There is schoolwide commitment to finding more ways to engage those Māori learners not currently connected to the school and its programmes. Examples of actions undertaken include more localised and regionalised responses, and ongoing professional learning programmes for staff.

Regional leaders and teams are actively exploring and implementing strategies that promote success for Māori learners. These strategies include:

- further extending opportunities for kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) relationships
- learning opportunities and use of resources that strongly reflect local Māori contexts
- use of Māori student and whānau voice to influence the nature of programmes
- wānanga that specifically target Māori students to support their academic success
- extending partnerships with whānau and iwi.

Te Kura should continue to actively build staff cultural competency and confidence, knowledge and appropriate teaching strategies that improve Māori student engagement and achievement.

How well placed is the Early Childhood provision at Te Kura to promote positive learning outcomes for children?

The Early Childhood (ECH) provision of Te Kura is well placed to promote positive outcomes for learners.

Te Kura provides an early childhood service for upwards of 600 children from three to five years of age. Since the 2013 ERO review, the ECH teachers have continued their work in Ministry of Education initiatives, such as the Engaging Priority Families project, and with certified playgroups. Recently, teachers have taken up a role of mentoring some adult students accessing other Te Kura programmes.

The ECH philosophy, collaboratively developed by teachers, emphasises holistic learning, positive, responsive relationships, promoting Aotearoa/New Zealand's dual heritage, and individual programmes of learning for children.

The curriculum successfully recognises and builds on the knowledge and expertise that parents, whānau and supervisors share with the ECH about their children. These partnerships and ongoing discussions are effectively used to plan relevant programmes of learning.

Programme of learning records show children's progress and development and include clear links with home and community settings. These records include useful ideas and prompts to build supervisor understanding and knowledge of children's learning. Transition to school is supported by a useful summary report showing the range of skills, knowledge and learning habits the child has developed.

Teachers understand the importance of continuity in education and care for children through the well-established team teaching approach. Maintaining positive, collaborative relationships with children, families and supervisors is a key priority for teachers.

The ECH's ongoing support and resourcing for playgroups is valued. Teachers make good use of community networks to help meet children's and families' needs. Regular event days provide face-to-face opportunities for teachers and supervisors to share information about children and their learning. Children's first language is encouraged and promoted.

Children with special needs are well supported in the programme. Access to support from specialist teachers in Te Kura assists with this.

The manager and leaders express a commitment to ongoing improvement. An annual plan, aligned to the Te Kura Strategy Map guides the ECH's direction. Extending the annual goal to more clearly focus on the quality of provision and outcomes for learners is a next step.

There is a range of leadership opportunities for staff. Their strengths are well used to enhance the ECH programme. Team leader monitoring provides useful oversight of aspects of the ECH programme.

The ECH Māori curriculum group provides useful resources and develops their own and each other's capability in kaupapa Māori. Ongoing work includes the development of exemplars to support teachers' understanding of Māori curriculum goals. More opportunities to share the group's work across the school is an agreed next step.

The process of self review is well established. Sound methods have been used to guide improvement and support decision-making in the use of an online assessment forum. Next steps for strengthening aspects of self review and evaluation to further guide improvement are to:

- continue to expand the use of high quality indicators of success
- widen the scope for review and inquiry to better focus on how well teachers are improving outcomes for students and growing their teaching practice.

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 alignment of a range of school processes and practices to the strategic priorities is allowing the school to more successfully respond to the diverse students it serves. The vision and strategic priorities are strongly promoted by the board of trustees, chief executive and other school leaders.

Self review is an established practice that is being strengthened as a useful process for school improvement. A culture of critical reflection is developing. The student management system provides access to meaningful and timely data that supports self review.

There is a growing emphasis by leaders to recognise what is working well, why and for whom. Leaders have identified the need to continue to build capability and collective capacity in evaluation and inquiry for sustained improvement. ERO affirms this direction.

The Minister of Education appointed board is now well established. The board is well led and cohesive. Continuity of some membership since the later part of 2012 has contributed to building a shared understanding across board roles and responsibilities. Recent appointees provide additional perspectives. Trustees bring a breadth of current educational knowledge and experience to their role.

Trustees have a strong sense of representing and serving the school community. Well-established and appropriate processes are in place for self review, direction setting and decision-making. Data is increasingly used to monitor progress towards annual performance objectives and targets. The board effectively meets statutory requirements and ensures it keeps well informed of legislative change as it may impact on Te Kura. External review assists evaluation of the work of trustees and other key board responsibilities.

The chief executive's appraisal is comprehensive, well documented and systematic. It includes ongoing reporting on progress in key performance areas. The board has made good use of the principal performance standards as part of the process.

A collaborative approach amongst teachers and regular reference to current best practice is promoted by the leadership team and board of trustees. Links with the wider education sector are extensive and fostered.

Improved performance management processes for teachers better enable Te Kura to sustain and improve outcomes for students. A comprehensive and well-documented appraisal process, clearly linked to school priorities, is in place. Many teachers make good use of a range of evidence to support reflection on effectiveness.

Leaders should continue to build consistency of good quality practices within teacher appraisal. This should include:

- robust feedback, particularly from team leaders
- regular reference to learner outcomes to assist consideration of the impact of teaching
- a greater evaluative focus to assist in determining next steps for teacher improvement.

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to *the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code)* established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989.

Eighty-two international fee-paying students access at least part of their academic programme through Te Kura. These students are subject to *the Code* as administered through the schools they regularly attend.

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

Raising levels of engagement and achievement for diverse distance learners is a strong focus schoolwide. Continued implementation of strategic priorities is contributing to improved outcomes for an increasing proportion of learners. Growing emphasis on knowing what is working well, why and for whom, and responding accordingly, should allow improvement to be sustained.

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



Graham Randell
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern

6 October 2015

About the School

Location	Wellington	
Ministry of Education profile number	498	
School type	Correspondence School	
School roll	12,357 (as at 2 August 2015)	
Gender composition	Female 55%, Male 45%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	30%
	Pākehā	59%
	Asian	5%
	Pacific	4%
	Other ethnic groups	2%
Special features	Distance education provider	
Review team on site	August 2015	
Date of this report	6 October 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Special Review	July 2013 November 2009 September 2008