



Birchville School
Upper Hutt

Confirmed

Education Review Report

Education Review Report

Birchville School

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?

Birchville School is located north of Upper Hutt, close to the Hutt and Akatarawa Rivers. The school has attractive grounds and age-appropriate playgrounds. Large and adaptable classrooms with modern furniture provide children with choices for their learning spaces. Close relationships with the kindergarten next door support transitions.

Since the 2012 ERO review, a new principal and deputy principal have been appointed and several trustees are in their first term on the board. Recently developed school charter values of growth, empathy, mana and self belief (GEMS) underpin school identity, priorities and expected outcomes for all learners.

Recent roll growth is concentrated in the junior school area which has four of the six classes. High rates of student mobility in and out of the school impact on continuity of learning for groups of children. Currently 29% of students identify as Māori.

School leaders and teachers are in the second year of involvement in Ministry of Education funded professional learning and development (PLD) programmes for improving teaching and raising achievement in mathematics. A schoolwide PLD programme to improve teaching, learning and assessment in literacy has commenced in 2015.

2 Learning

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

The school has recently made significant improvements in its approach to using achievement information to raise overall achievement and rates of progress across the school. Leaders have improved the collection, moderation and use of assessment information to more accurately ascertain all students' levels of achievement and rates of progress in relation to National Standards, benchmarks and school expectations.

Leaders identify a need to improve consistency of assessment judgements and to accelerate progress of a significant number of priority learners in literacy and mathematics. Māori boy have been identified in 2015 as a target for increasing engagement and accelerating their progress and

achievement. Improved schoolwide assessment schedules and guidelines for moderation provide a useful framework for leaders and teachers to track, monitor and report the progress of students.

Teachers use student information well to inform their planning to cater for learners' diverse needs and interests. They are increasing their efforts to involve students more in their own learning through the use of learning intentions, goal setting and students identifying their next steps. Explicit links to the school GEMS competencies foster students' personal responsibility for their learning.

School leaders are receptive and responsive to using external evaluation to set and share appropriate targets for accelerating progress of significant numbers of priority learners. They model robust assessment processes which lead to targets that are challenging and relevant to diverse learners' needs. A recently developed teaching as inquiry process to improve evaluation of effectiveness of teaching strategies in promoting student outcomes has been introduced in 2015.

Significant proportions of students enter the school with additional learning needs. Leaders of the junior classes particularly, plan responsive interventions and strategies to accelerate learning for these students. Some make good progress to achieve at expected levels over two years. Information about programmes and interventions for all learners with special needs is regularly reported to school leaders and trustees.

Priority should be given to developing measures to evaluate the effectiveness of all interventions and programmes used to accelerate the learning and progress of those entering school with identified needs. This should better inform decision making about school priorities, strategies and resourcing for raising achievement.

Surveys show that parents value the informative student reports and goal setting sheets shared in three way meetings twice each year. Planned actions for extending two-way learning partnerships with parents, particularly of targeted students, should be given high priority by leaders and teachers.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum statement is well aligned to its values, beliefs and expectations for learning and behaviour. These guidelines inform classroom expectations for successful learners. A recently developed behaviour management plan provides a useful framework for enacting school values and promoting student wellbeing for success.

Leaders have identified an appropriate range of initiatives and changes to promote improved teacher skills and performance. PLD provision is well informed by research and student achievement data. This is contributing to leaders and staff improving their curriculum knowledge and skills.

A school developed teacher toolkit sets professional expectations, promotes consistency in teaching programme planning, classroom practice and curriculum implementation. Next steps are to review and update teaching guidelines for each learning area across the school curriculum.

In most classes students are highly engaged in their learning. Teachers establish a positive tone by promoting, reinforcing and praising expected behaviours for learning. Students are encouraged to use the flexible modern learning environment to suit their needs and style. Student voice is welcomed and listened to through their participation in surveys and committees and input into programmes.

Successful transitions programmes support students to make expected progress in their first year. Older transitioning students are welcomed and supported to join the Birchville learning community.

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

Opportunities for Māori to achieve and improve their educational success as Māori are effectively promoted across the school. The school charter appropriately places high strategic priority on promoting cultural identity, language and achievement of all Māori learners.

Trustees and leaders actively support initiatives to strengthen partnerships with whānau and hapu. Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners have been well integrated into the school's values and expectations of teachers. Whanaungatanga and Tangata Whenuatanga values in particular underpin partnerships with whānau to promote pride and recognition of tikanga Māori. Leaders continue to strengthen relationships with hapū through the local marae.

The principal takes an active role in leading tikanga Māori programmes and initiatives in the school. Te reo Māori classes have been established to build the language capability of staff, students and whānau. Weekly timetabled kapa haka classes provide opportunities for success for Māori learners and pride in the school's bicultural perspectives for all students, staff and the community.

Leaders identify that these initiatives are an important component for promoting and responding to Māori wellbeing and lifting overall achievement to be similar or above that of their peers.

The schools' next steps are to:

- strengthen partnerships with whānau to establish shared aspirations for success of all Māori learners
- continue developing trustees' knowledge of national policies and expectations to develop their understanding of approaches for promoting higher levels of Māori achievement
- implement plans for pōwhiri to welcome new students and their whānau to the school.

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. This is evident in effective school leadership, increasing depth of self review, productive partnerships with the community and recent strategic initiatives to improve outcomes for all learners. The recently reviewed charter embraces a distinctive school philosophy, culture and priorities closely related to community aspirations.

A highly committed board represents the diverse community well. It has a close working relationship with the principal. Trustees' decisions place high importance on promoting students' safety, successful participation and enjoyment in the life of the school.

The principal and deputy principal have raised expectations for agreed teaching practices and responsibilities since the previous ERO review. They model and promote leadership accountability and shared responsibility amongst staff and the community.

Recently strengthened teacher appraisal and inquiry processes are used appropriately to improve performance through robust observation, feedback and support to improve teaching practice. Trustees invest additional resources to provide targeted and sustained PLD to improve educational outcomes for learners across the school.

Self review underpins schoolwide improvement. Robust inquiry and review by senior leaders against targets and the results of the annual plan appropriately inform measures and initiatives to improve school performance.

The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and tone. Regular use of digital communications promotes and extends learning partnerships with parents and whānau.

Next steps for the school are to:

- increase leaders' and teachers' use of evaluation to determine the effectiveness and impact of programmes and strategies to raise student achievement
- develop closer alignment and explicit links between school goals and targets and leaders' and teachers' appraisal goals
- track and monitor priority learners' rates of progress and achievement and regularly report these to trustees
- build trustees' capability and confidence in using student engagement, progress and achievement information to review charter goals and inform decision making.

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.

In order to improve current practice the principal should report analysed attendance information to the board to inform their planning and resourcing decisions.

Conclusion

The charter and curriculum framework provide clear direction for learners, teachers and trustees. Core values of growth, empathy, mana and self belief underpin the inclusive school culture for learning success. A collaborative leadership team sets high expectations. Robust evaluation of programmes and improvement initiatives are the next steps for trustees, leaders and teachers.

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



Joyce Gebbie
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central

20 March 2015

About the School

Location	Upper Hutt	
Ministry of Education profile number	2810	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	143	
Gender composition	Girls 57%, Boys 43%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	29%
	NZ European / Pākehā	57%
	Other ethnic groups	14%
Review team on site	February 2015	
Date of this report	20 March 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	June 2012
	Education Review	March 2009
	Education Review	March 2006