

Waitohu School Education Review

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About the School

Location	Otaki	
Ministry of Education profile number	3065	
School type	Contributing Primary (Years 1 to 6)	
Decile [1]	4	
School roll	251	
Gender composition	Male 51% Female 49%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	47%
	Māori	36%
	Asian	8%
	Pacifica	6%
	Other ethnic groups	3%
Review team on site	August 2011	
Date of this report	3 November 2011	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	January 2007
	Education Review	September 2004
	Accountability Review	June 2001

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

[1]

School deciles range from 1 to 10. Decile 1 schools draw their students from low socio-economic communities and at the other end of the range, decile 10 schools draw their students from high socio-economic communities. Deciles are used to provide funding to state and state integrated schools. The lower the school's decile the more funding it receives. A school's decile is in no way linked to the quality of education it provides.

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1 Context

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

Students and staff, at Waitohu School in Otaki, are part and parcel of the community and the local environment. This is highly evident in the school's planned curriculum and students' participation in activities such as Year 5 students visiting Kapiti Island, the agricultural club, and whole school annual visits to marae and other places of local cultural significance. The cultures of those at the school are reflected within the environment. Students' backgrounds are celebrated. The history of the district is valued and highly visible an example of this being represented through the painted pillars at the centre of the school.

Teachers' and the senior leadership team's continuous, well-considered self review practices impact positively on students' learning. These practices have been strengthened since ERO's May 2007 review.

2 Learning

How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Students achieve well as assessed against the comprehensive, well understood, school-developed 'Schoolwide Assessment and Reporting Criteria'. The school reports that in 2010 students across all year levels were at or above 70% achievement in literacy and numeracy using its own criteria. At the time of this review, reports to parents about student progress and achievement while informed by criteria that align with National Standards do not explicitly use the words National Standards. The board is reviewing this aspect of its reporting procedures.

Teachers make clear judgements about students' progress and achievement based on a wide range of appropriate assessment tools in reading, writing and mathematics. Student achievement data is first and foremost used by teachers to identify students' next learning steps. It underpins teaching decisions. Schoolwide data is thoroughly analysed for groups of students, including Māori and Pacific students, to ensure their learning is showing progress and achievement.

Throughout the school students are highly motivated and engaged in their learning. They are friendly, courteous to each other and express an appreciation of being at school. A sense of pride in working together permeates the environment.

Students appropriately identified as needing further support or extension in learning are well catered for with a variety of suitable in-class and out-of-class strategies. Since the previous review, the special needs and abilities policy, with additional resourcing of experienced staff, has enhanced the learning opportunities for students.

Students are involved in frequent and regular discussion about their learning. They are appropriately knowledgeable about their progress and what the teacher thinks they need to learn next. Activities are well planned and structured to support students' independence. Students readily and skilfully participate in peer and self-assessment tasks. Teachers assist students to develop the language of learning. ERO and the school managers agree the next step for development is to further involve students in co-constructing their own learning goals. Some teachers are already modelling this effective practice.

How well does the school promote Māori student success and success as Māori?

Māori students are successful learners. They achieve well and make progress. The school reports that in all areas other than writing, Māori students are achieving at or above

schoolwide achievement levels as assessed against its own criteria. The school vision, 'to be our best' is clear to all students, including Māori. The integrated curriculum reflects tangata whenua. Teachers know students well. They support students to succeed as Māori.

3 Curriculum

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

The Waitohu School curriculum is a living document continually undergoing comprehensive review to even better meet the changing, learning needs of students. The implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum has been carefully and successfully managed. The curriculum principles are highly evident in classrooms.

The many, meaningful contexts for classroom and out-of-classroom programmes reflect the school's regional and local community. The environment is rich and stimulating. Classrooms are exciting places in which to learn. Students are proud of their displayed work. Throughout the school praise and mutually respectful relationships between adults and children are evident.

'Action learning' is a rigorous practice where teachers reflect on the effectiveness of their curriculum delivery and its impact on student achievement. These processes inform next steps for individuals and groups of students.

Teachers are well informed about teaching. Their planning is linked to student achievement, strategic priorities and syndicate decisions. The outcome of collaborative self review and evaluation impacts favourably on students' ongoing progress.

Teachers identify their ongoing enthusiasm for learning te reo Māori. ERO concurs with managers to prioritise this continuing development. As teacher confidence grows te reo Māori can be further integrated into classroom conversations.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

Waitohu School is very well placed to sustain and improve its performance through:

- school leaders articulating high expectations for student learning and achievement, and for teachers as professionals
- adults' and students' appreciation and understanding of the co-operatively developed school vision
- families' close involvement with their child's education
- managers' and teachers' pastoral care for significant adults in the child's life
- engagement with the extended school community
- collegiality between staff who share with students the concept to 'be our best'
- deliberate succession planning at board level
- a representative group of trustees involved in the life of the school which reflects the diversity of the community
- professional development opportunities for trustees and staff including exploring National Standards. Since this review in August 2012 the Ministry of Education has worked with the board to have a charter that is compliant with National Standards requirements
- robust, self-review practices embedded at all levels of school operation
- strong performance management resulting from self review
- shared understanding between students, managers, teachers, families and the community that progress and school improvement is ongoing.

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
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

At the time of this review, reports to parents about student progress and achievement while informed by criteria that align with National Standards do not explicitly use the words National Standards. The board is reviewing this aspect of its reporting procedures.

The school board, with the principal and teaching staff must report in writing to students and their parents on the students' progress and achievement in relation to National Standards.
[NAG 2 A(a)]

When is ERO likely to review the school again?
ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

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