

Education Review Report: Arotake Paerewa Mahana 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.

Findings

1 Context

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

Mahana School caters for students from Years 1 to 8. It is a small rural primary school located in the Moutere Hills between Nelson and Motueka. A teaching principal and three teachers are responsible for three multi level classrooms. Older students are leaders and act as helpers and role models for younger class members. They take on class and school-wide responsibilities. The school vision of "strong, positive, brilliant, responsible contributors" is highly evident in daily interactions.

A strong family atmosphere and high levels of community involvement are apparent. Students, parents and trustees all know each other well.

Since the July 2010 ERO report one classroom has been extensively refurbished and a hard surface play area extended. The removal of some fencing has improved access to the outdoor areas where extensive grounds provide for students' gardens, recreation and sports.

Trustees and staff are working to promote the school in early childhood services and the wider community, using a variety of media, with intent to grow the school roll.

✓ All areas identified as agreed priorities in the previous ERO report have been actioned. Mahana School has a positive reviewing history with ERO.

2 Learning

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

This school makes very good use of achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement.

National Standards data is well analysed and clearly reported to trustees. They use this information to develop strategic learning goals and targets. Teachers clearly identify key actions to support targeted students to achieve. These students are carefully tracked and monitored. Target student information is reported to trustees.

Student achievement is high. The school reports that in 2012, most students were achieving at and above the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Students show improvements in achievement over time.

Well-analysed results from a range of formal assessments provide teachers with information about each student's levels of achievement. Assessment results are used to identify gaps in students' understanding which become specific teaching areas. Data is used to plan programmes for groups and individuals. Ongoing discussions among teachers identify student progress and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Clear guidelines for making overall teacher judgements in relation to National Standards has increased consistency in making such judgements.

Students identified as having gifts and talents are provided with many opportunities to extend their abilities. A review is planned for evaluating provision for these students, to strengthen inquiry learning. ERO affirms this decision.

Students are actively engaged in classroom activities. Positive respectful interactions are a feature. Students seek clarification, ask questions and problem solve. An environment where students' voice and opinions are highly valued, where risk taking is encouraged and individuals are treated as competent, confident learners is highly evident. It is apparent that students enjoy their learning.

As a result of established restorative practices, students take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour. Teachers promote, and students talk about, goal setting and participation in self and peer assessment.

Informative reports to parents identify each student's achievements, and next steps for development are clearly shared. In these reports, students self assess against the school's vision.

3 Curriculum

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

This school's curriculum effectively promotes and supports student learning.

The broad-based curriculum is clearly aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the school's charter vision, values and key competencies. Education outside the classroom and co-curricular activities within the school, allow children to become involved in a wide range of projects.

The theme approach is responsive to student needs, interests and knowledge. It incorporates Māori perspectives and local relevant features. The principal plans a review to refine and strengthen the thematic approach to inquiry learning and more fully integrate curriculum areas, key competencies and skills. ERO affirms that the planned review is likely to provide a structured and considered approach to promoting students' decision making and foster increased responsibility for their own learning.

A range of effective strategies are used by all teachers. These include:

- clearly sharing the purpose of learning activities and explaining to students what they must do to be successful in their work
- effectively using open ended questions to promote thinking
- using and building on students' prior learning and personal knowledge
- including authentic contexts for learning activities.

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

Educational success for Māori, as Māori is very well promoted at this school. Māori students achieve well as a group, particularly in reading and mathematics.

The Mahana School Charter has clear reference to improving learning outcomes for Māori students. Teachers and school personnel consult regularly with the Māori community, gathering and responding to the aspirations whānau have for their children to succeed. Relationships are a key priority.

Staff willingly embrace te reo me nā tikanga Māori and acknowledge that Māori students strengths, interests and needs are unique and different. They ensure that students are able to lead and contribute. As a result, students are proud to be Māori and are well engaged in their learning.

Management have decided to continue developing teachers' confidence and competence in their knowledge and use of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori using *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* in the appraisal process.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is very well placed to sustain and improve its performance. There is a strong schoolwide culture of critical reflection. Frequent staff discussions identify areas that can be improved.

A cohesive board uses the individual strengths of trustees who work together collaboratively. They are proactive and future focused, for example, in funding a teacher aide to work with target students.

A strong understanding of self review processes is evident. Trustees regularly review their own effectiveness and succession planning is well considered. Self review is highly valued as a tool for continuous improvement. A good framework for self review is established. There is evidence of using data and considerable consultation with key stakeholders to inform strategic planning and decision making. Strengthening evaluative questions and specific indicators will help support ongoing evaluation of changes to practice.

A strong collegial team who share a strategic vision is ably led by the principal. The board is well informed about student achievement and review outcomes. Well-defined systems ensure the school operates smoothly. The team are improvement focused. Strong relationships between staff, trustees, parents and the wider community are evident and effectively fostered. A wide range of well-established communication strategies engage families in their children's learning and promote partnerships with families.

Managing staff change is identified by the principal as an area for continued refinement and development. Documentation that supports staff roles, induction of new staff and implementation of administrative changes will be developed. ERO affirms this intention.

Appraisal processes are robust. Meetings, formal observations and coaching discussions are the basis for teachers to be affirmed in their practice, developmental steps identified and plans for improvement implemented.