

St Mary's School (Blenheim) Education Review

- 1 Context
- 2 Learning
- 3 Curriculum
- 4 Sustainable Performance
- School Statistics

1 Context

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

St Mary's School (Blenheim) provides good quality education for students from Years 1 to 8. The student roll includes an increasing proportion of Māori and Pacific students and those from other cultures. Many of these students receive extra support to learn English. Students' identity, language and culture are valued and given recognition in learning programmes.

The Catholic faith and values are important to the learning community. The school enjoys close links with and support from the local church and parish.

Teachers have a sound knowledge of students and their learning strengths and needs.

The inclusion of students with special education needs is a strong feature of the school's programmes and practices.

The board and school leaders have addressed, or made good progress in addressing, all the areas for review and development identified in the 2011 ERO report. The use of technologies to support teaching and learning has been strengthened. Suitable steps have been taken to increase the consistent use of effective teaching practices. Reports now give parents useful information about students' achievement and progress against the National Standards. The many positive features of the school have been maintained and built on.

2 Learning

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

The school makes good use of a range of reliable achievement information to identify and respond appropriately to the diverse needs of students.

This is most evident in:

- the collaborative approach to raising student achievement in the school's charter, targets and professional development
- teachers' consistent use of achievement information to plan for and teach students at the appropriate level
- the focus given to increasing the accuracy of teacher judgements
- the setting of annual targets to lift the achievement of groups of students.

Student successes are recognised and celebrated in the wider curriculum beyond literacy and mathematics.

Students are developing a greater understanding and awareness of their own learning through setting goals, self assessment and the ongoing sharing by teachers of assessment information.

Well-analysed achievement information, in relation to the National Standards in 2012, showed that students achieved at similar levels to others in New Zealand in writing and below in reading and mathematics. Results in 2013 showed a similar pattern.

Māori students achieve very well in comparison to non-Māori. Results in 2013 showed that they were slightly better in reading and considerably better in mathematics than non-Māori. However, there was a decline in writing results for Māori students in 2013 compared to 2012.

Pacific students achieved at considerably lower levels than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Many of these students do not have English as their first language.

School leaders and teachers are taking well-considered actions to raise the achievement of all students.

Areas for review and development

School leaders and teachers should continue to strengthen their use of achievement information to promote students' learning by:

- making better use of entry data to help analyse trends and patterns over time
- evaluating the impact of learning support in more detail
- assessing and reporting achievement and progress in the wider curriculum.

Annual targets for raising achievement should make the desired rate of progress more explicit. The actions for achieving the targets could more clearly identify what teachers will do differently to help students make faster progress.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum provides students with wide-ranging learning experiences that build on their interests and promote their ongoing learning.

Teaching programmes take account of students' cultures, interests and strengths along with community priorities and the school's special character. Relevant contexts for learning, including the local history also feature in programmes.

A strong focus is given to teaching skills for learning, values and making meaningful links between different learning areas.

Attractive, purposeful classroom environments reflect the school's key areas of learning. Positive and supportive relationships are a strong aspect of the school's culture.

Curriculum guidelines, including useful school-wide annual and term planning, provide clear direction for teaching and learning.

Teachers regularly share good practice and focus on best ways to support individual students to succeed. They are increasingly making changes to their practice to respond more effectively to the needs of learners.

Senior students have many opportunities to develop leadership and contribute to school decision making.

Increasing opportunities are provided for students to share their views about their learning and support the learning of others.

Inclusive practices are actively promoted, well understood and widely used. Additional learning support is extensive, well targeted and organised.

Areas for review and development

School leaders need to make it clearer in the guidelines how the curriculum principles (important beliefs from the New Zealand Curriculum) will influence school programmes and practices.

Teachers should have a stronger focus on the expected outcomes for students when changing and reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching practices.

School leaders need to review the scope of the school's definition of giftedness and closely monitor how well teaching programmes provide sufficient challenge for those students identified as gifted and talented.

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

Māori students are well supported to experience success as Māori.

Some productive initiatives have been put in place for promoting this success. This includes:

- focused long-term and annual plans and targets
- a well-supported kapa haka group
- a trustee with Māori heritage advocating for Māori students/whānau
- Māori parents invited to share their expertise and learn alongside their children when learning te reo/tikanga Māori
- an emphasis on enviro-education that gives priority to Māori values
- the adoption of a whakatauki that stands for the school's culture and values.

A next step for the staff and wider school community is to gain a greater awareness of how the many positive practices that already exist relate to Māori values and concepts.

While there has been some progress in teachers' use of te reo Māori in class programmes, and some excellent examples of this, there is room to spread this practice so that more students may benefit.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Pacific students

Pacific students have good opportunities to achieve success.

Initiatives that support the learning of Pacific students include:

- strategic and annual goals and targets for raising achievement
- the appointment of teacher with responsibility who provides invaluable support for students and staff
- cultural performances and shared events with students, staff and fono
- a reading together programme that strengthens partnerships with parents

- ongoing training for staff and working with other schools to share ideas and practice
- the appointment of a Pacific trustee to the board
- establishing closer links with the Pacific community.

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 leadership of the principal and other school leaders promotes a collaborative, supportive school culture that is clearly improvement-focused.

Externally led and school-based professional training is targeted to meet the needs of priority learners and achieve the school goals. This support is extending teachers' understanding and use of a wider range of effective practices.

Effective board planning and agreed priorities provide clear direction for ongoing school improvement. A knowledgeable and well-informed board, fully representative of its community, maintains a focus on student achievement and progress towards the school's goals.

Reflective practices and a range of reviews are routinely undertaken.

Community views are regularly gathered and considered.

Area for review and development

School leaders and ERO have identified that the scope and quality of self review could be extended by:

- making the process for conducting reviews and responding to the findings clearer
- expanding the coverage of curriculum reviews to include all learning areas
- including a wider range of evidence to inform findings such as different perspectives and observations to complement teachers' self evaluations.

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.

To improve current practice the school should:

- conduct more formal hazard identification and property checks
- incorporate student surveys regarding their safety and wellbeing into the ongoing programme of self review.

Conclusion

Students are well supported to experience success in their learning. Inclusive practices are actively promoted, well understood and widely used. Additional learning support is extensive, well targeted and organised. School leaders promote a collaborative, supportive school culture that is improvement-focused. A knowledgeable and well-informed board, representative of its community, maintains a focus on student achievement and progress towards the school's goals.

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

Graham Randell
National Manager Review Services
Southern Region

5 August 2014

School Statistics

Location	Blenheim	
Ministry of Education profile number	3102	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	230	
Gender composition	Girls 45%; Boys 55%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	52%
	Māori	23%
	Pacific	13%
	Filipino	6%
	Asian	3%
	Other ethnicities	3%
Review team on site	June 2014	
Date of this report	5 August 2014	
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review	August 2011
	Education Review	July 2008
	Education Review	May 2005