

ERO External Evaluation

Maitai School, Nelson

The purpose of ERO's external evaluations is to give parents, whānau and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education children and young people receive. ERO reports on the equity and excellence of learning outcomes for all students and for specific groups including Māori students, Pacific students and students with additional learning needs. This includes a focus on accelerating learning for students. ERO also reports on the quality and effectiveness of the school's processes and practices for continuing and sustaining improvement. The report gives evaluation findings that answer four key questions about the school's performance.

School Context

Maitai School is a special school for students with complex learning needs. Students range in age from five to 21 years and live throughout the Nelson-Tasman region. Of the current roll of 42, seven students are Māori.

The school provides several placement options for students. The base school is located in the centre of Nelson, with two satellite classes at local schools. Students learn in small multi-levelled classes with a high ratio of adults to students.

At the time of this review, the school was working with the Ministry of Education on plans to rebuild and restructure the school and its satellite classrooms, including the construction of new classrooms at additional schools in the Nelson region.

The school employs many of its own specialist staff, including therapists and a social educationalist, in a range of areas. The school also has an itinerant service that supports students under the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) in regular schools.

The school vision and mission are about to be reviewed. Strategic aims for 2019 to 2021 are focused on building inquiry and communication strategies, curriculum development, cohesive school culture, and further developing community, specialist and whānau partnerships.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board, schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
- achievement in other learning areas
- progression in relation to individual education plan (IEP) goals.

There have been significant changes at the school since the March 2015 ERO review, including the appointment of a new principal in 2018 and deputy principal in 2019. Several new staff have been appointed. Roll numbers have grown. The new leadership team has reviewed a range of systems and processes, in consultation with staff and whānau. The board has a number of new trustees.

The school is a member of Te Kāhui Ako o Omaio ki Tahunanui | Community of Learning.

Evaluation Findings

1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students

1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?

Achievement data from 2018, and midyear data from 2019, indicate that the majority of students meet or exceed school expectations in literacy, numeracy and across all other learning areas in relation to their individual learning targets.

Social learning and life skill goals are also set and most are achieved. These are well supported through a collaborative approach between specialists and staff. Progress is tracked and evaluated over time.

Māori students are achieving as well as, or better than, their peers.

1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?

Significant gains in learning and wellbeing are consistently evident for students. Assessment information clearly shows that most students achieve accelerated rates of progress against the goals set in their IEPs, and in relation to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC).

2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices

2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Student learning and wellbeing are very well supported by purposeful and highly respectful teaching interactions. Good use is made of sensory learning opportunities, assistive technology and communication tools to support students to learn and make connections. They enjoy warm relationships with staff who know them very well. Close attention is paid to verbal and nonverbal communication and cues. Visits with local schools, and community resources and excursions, extend the curriculum.

Students benefit from carefully considered transitions into and out of the school. Staff liaise closely with families, other education institutions and external agencies to tailor these processes to individual students. Staff skilfully build on student interests to promote their sense of belonging, warm relationships and an understanding of school expectations. Older students are offered meaningful leadership opportunities and benefit from thoughtful strategies to scaffold their social and life skills.

Careful thought and rigorous research has contributed to the development of differentiated assessment, planning and tracking tools. Staff are highly alert to students' progress. They work closely alongside specialists and external agencies to plan and promote next learning steps within individualised learning programmes. Staff share a positive view of students' strengths, abilities and learning potential. Students are very well supported to continuously extend their physical, social and communication skills, and make good progress across the breadth of the NZC.

Senior leaders are very effective in their roles. They model and maintain high expectations for teacher practice and student learning. A number of strategic and deliberate actions have been put in place to continue to build teachers' collective capacity, relational trust and collaboration.

Leaders and the board prioritise students in their decisions. They support improvements with a consultative approach and strategic resourcing. Newer trustees are actively engaging in professional learning to support them in their governance role.

2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Recent changes in school staff, leadership and board mean it is timely to refresh the vision and values of the school. ERO and leaders agree that these should better reflect the unique nature of the school, its valued outcomes for students, and expectations for teaching practice. The school should consult with students, families, staff and local iwi. Guiding principles should then be used to inform a review of curriculum documentation to better promote shared understandings. This work would align well with the school's current focus on building consistency of high quality practice across its sites.

Senior leaders are highly reflective, and regularly engage with data, research and feedback from a range of sources to inform decision-making. They are well placed to begin leading the school in regular, formalised internal evaluations of school conditions and practices. This would better support the school to measure and refine its positive impacts for students. Teacher inquiry processes would also benefit from an increased focus on student outcomes as the main indicator of success.

ERO and the school agree that a priority is to build culturally responsive knowledge and practices, and to better reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the school. Work in this area has begun, including: improving community and iwi partnerships; raising the profile of local pakiwaitara in the student programme; and professional learning around relational pedagogy. Leaders should ensure improvements continue and are sustained.

3 Board Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the board 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 the following:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management
- finance
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student safety and wellbeing:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration and certification
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the Children's Act 2014.

To improve practice, the school should develop a written policy relating to the surrender and retention of property.

Education Act 1989, sections 139AAA to 139AAF, Education (Surrender, Retention and Search) Rules 2013.

4 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of Maitai School's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Well placed

ERO's Framework: [*Overall Findings and Judgement Tool derived from School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success*](#) is available on ERO's website.

5 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on existing strengths in:

- highly effective senior leadership that has a clear, shared vision for improvements
- respectful and knowledgeable staff that prioritise student learning and wellbeing
- strong assessment and planning processes that promote continuous student progress
- high student achievement across all learning areas.

Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

- the review of the school's vision, values and curriculum document, to support increased cohesion and shared understandings
- building culturally responsive practices, to better reflect Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- implementing formalised internal evaluation at all levels, to monitor the effectiveness of school practices and inform decision making.



Dr Lesley Patterson

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Southern Region

22 November 2019

About the school

Location	Nelson
Ministry of Education profile number	3202
School type	Special School
School roll	42
Gender composition	Male 30, Female 12
Ethnic composition	Māori 7 NZ European/Pākehā 31 Other ethnic groups 4
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	September 2019
Date of this report	22 November 2019
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review March 2015 Education Review October 2010