

**Mercury Bay Area School  
Whitianga**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Mercury Bay Area 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?**

Mercury Bay Area School is a focal point for the local community and is located in the township of Whitianga on the north eastern coast of the Coromandel peninsula. It is a large area school, which provides education for students in Years 1 to 13. The roll has steadily increased over recent years to 884 students. Of these students 22% are of Māori descent. There are currently 22 international students, who add further diversity to the school's community.

Students enjoy a safe and inclusive environment for learning in well-maintained and highly functional facilities. The school's KAURI expectations (Kindness, Achievement, Unity, Respect, Identity) underpin the school's culture. Student achievements and successes are recognised and celebrated. Relationships among students and teachers are positive and mutually respectful.

The experienced and long standing principal continues to effectively lead the school and its community. He continues to promote a vision for teaching and learning that is based on current research for education in the 21st century. The deputy and assistant principals provide leadership and are respectively assigned to primary, middle and senior areas of the school. They work closely with the principal to provide school-wide professional leadership for staff.

The board of trustees includes a combination of newly elected and experienced members. The chairperson is new to this position and was elected in 2013. Trustees bring a range of appropriate skills to their governance roles. Parents, whānau and community groups contribute to a range of learning opportunities, which enhance the school's curriculum.

The school has a positive reporting history with ERO. Good progress has been made in areas for development identified in the 2011 ERO report about leadership, professional development and the school's relationship with te iwi o Ngāti Hei.

## 2 Learning

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

The school has sound systems for the management and use of achievement information for promoting positive educational outcomes for students.

Students have a good understanding of their achievement results and use this information to guide their next learning steps. They are increasingly learning with greater independence and confidence. Their engagement in learning, motivation to succeed and contribution to the school's success across a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities is commendable.

Student assessment data is gathered from an appropriate range of nationally referenced and school-developed assessment tools. School leaders collate and analyse this information to identify achievement patterns and trends for groups of learners, which they report to trustees and curriculum teams. Trustees use school-wide achievement data to inform strategic and annual planning, and assist resource allocation for buildings and educational initiatives that support student learning. Curriculum teams use achievement data to reflect on student progress and achievement.

Primary and middle school team leaders and teachers collate student assessment data to monitor the progress and achievement of students in relation to National Standards. Teachers, together with students, report formally to parents in the middle and at the end of year, on students' progress and achievement. School leaders should continue to strengthen moderation processes in reading, writing and mathematics to assist teachers to report with greater accuracy in relation to National Standards.

Most students in Years 1 to 8 are achieving at and above National Standards (NS) in reading, writing and mathematics. School NS data shows that Māori boys are not achieving at levels comparable to non Māori boys. The proportion of students achieving below NS is greater in writing and most of these students are Māori boys.

At Years 9 and 10 teachers assess student achievement against national comparisons and curriculum levels in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (TNZC). They gather, collate and analyse student assessment data across the curriculum. There is good information on students' progress and achievement in each curriculum area. It would be beneficial for senior leaders to clearly report overall student achievement information at these year levels to the board of trustees. This information would provide a sound basis for future resourcing.

In Years 11 to 13 results for National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1, 2 and 3 is above national comparisons. Level 2 NCEA leaving data indicates that the school is tracking well towards the Ministry of Education goal of 85% of students achieving this target by 2017. The school has identified that the proportion of Māori students achieving NCEA qualifications is lower than other students. Specific targets for Māori students should assist teachers and whānau to work together to improve student achievement levels in NCEA.

The number of students staying at school to gain appropriate qualifications that are aligned to their career pathways has increased. The school has a robust attendance monitoring system and overall student attendance has significantly improved.

School leaders need to continue to use school-wide data to identify achievement trends and patterns, as well as priority groups of learners (those students who are at risk of not achieving at the expected level). This should enable the board to document specific and annual targets in the school's annual plan.

### **3 Curriculum**

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

The school provides a broad and flexible curriculum to promote and support student learning.

Student's interests and aspirations are a significant part of the school's curriculum. Student participation in the development and ownership of the curriculum is evident. They have many opportunities to monitor their learning and self-assess their performance against known criteria for learning. Senior students monitor their progress and achievement in NCEA and effectively manage their learning.

Curriculum leaders of subject areas work with teachers across all year levels to develop a cohesive school-wide curriculum. This approach strengthens the continuity of curriculum programmes across the school and assists teachers understanding of the curriculum progressions.

Features of the school's curriculum are:

- the integration of learning areas to assist students to make links between subjects
- the use of the local environment to provide purposeful contexts for learning
- promotion of positive relationships to support learning
- transition processes between year levels and the implementation of home room initiatives in Years 9 and 10
- the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as tools for learning
- responsiveness to students' learning interests.

A range of effective teaching strategies engage students in purposeful learning. Teachers talk with students about their learning and use their prior knowledge of students to guide their next learning steps. Classroom environments are settled, well organised and supportive of students learning.

A strong pastoral care network supports students learning and wellbeing. Designated teachers in Years 7 to 13 mentor and guide students to reflect on their progress and achieve success. School leaders recognise that there would be value in developing and implementing clear and agreed expectations for these teachers.

Many innovative vocational opportunities such as marine and industry-based programmes, support student retention, interests and career planning.

The principal promotes the development of learning and teaching practice to enhance the school's curriculum. It would be timely for school leaders to develop an action plan that will give teachers, trustees and the parent/whānau community greater clarity and ownership of this curriculum direction. This process is integral to the school's ongoing self review.

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

The school has developed and is making good progress in the implementation of a plan to strengthen te reo and tikanga Māori for Māori students. Recent developments and initiatives established to support Māori success as Māori are:

- a closer partnership with te iwi o Ngāti Hei
- the relocation of the whare to raise its status and make more visible
- the establishment of a Year 7 to 13 whānau class based on ngā matapono whanaungatanga me manaakitanga
- the formalisation of a stronger relationship with the Hauraki Education Trust
- a whānau group working alongside the Māori trustee on the school board.

In response to a whānau hui in 2013 a competent teacher of Māori has been appointed to teach Māori in Years 7 to 12 and teach a Year 7 to 9 Roopu class. Te reo and tikanga Māori continues to be promoted in the Year 4, 5 and 6 bilingual class. Te iwi o Ngāti Hei is able to influence and support a clear definition for Māori to succeed as Māori. It also encourages Māori students to be confident to celebrate their culture, identity and learning across all school subjects.

## **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. There is a strong focus on student achievement and learning. A school culture built on positive relationships is evident.

The principal and senior leaders are providing effective professional leadership. A learning culture that supports teachers to reflect on their practice, and which provides them with leadership opportunities is developing.

Trustees bring a useful range of skills and knowledge to their roles and have a clear understanding about school governance. They have well-established systems in place to sustain good governance practices.

Building partnerships with parents, whānau and the community continues to be a school priority and contributes to an holistic approach to the education of young people.

The school has an ongoing self review process that is aligned to student achievement and school developments.

### **Provision for international students**

The school is a signatory to the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code. ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's self-review process for international learners is thorough.

At the time of this ERO review there were 22 international fee-paying students in the school. These students are well supported by an experienced Director of International Students who is also the Home-stay Coordinator. Policies and procedures are clearly documented and regularly reviewed.

Students have access to good quality education programmes that includes English language support based on students' individual needs. Students are encouraged to participate in school activities. There is a strong focus on ensuring students' wellbeing and pastoral care. Student progress is well monitored and appropriate support in planning their learning pathways is provided.

### **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.

### **Conclusion**

Mercury Bay Area School is situated in Whitianga. It offers students a wide range of learning opportunities. Students enjoy a safe and inclusive environment for learning in well-maintained and highly functional facilities. Student achievements are recognised and celebrated. Relationships among students and teachers are positive and mutually respectful.

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



Dale Bailey  
National Manager Review Services  
Northern Region

28 October 2014

## About the School

Location	Whitianga	
Ministry of Education profile number	110	
School type	Composite (Years 1 to 13)	
School roll	884	
Number of international students	22	
Gender composition	Girls 52% Boys 48%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā Māori Asian European Other	70% 22% 3% 4% 1%
Special Features	Bilingual class (Years 4 to 6) Roopu Class (Years 7 to 9)	
Review team on site	August 2014	
Date of this report	28 October 2014	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	November 2011 April 2009 December 2005