

ERO External Evaluation

Mercury Bay Area School, Whitianga

Summary

Mercury Bay Area School 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. At the time of this review in September 2017 there were 956 students, 234 of whom identified as Māori and 27 international students on the roll.

The school's KAURI expectations (Kindness, Achievement, Unity, Respect, and Identity) underpin the school's culture. Key priorities for the school are to enhance the culture for learning to be transformational in supporting ongoing school improvement.

Mercury Bay Area School operates two offsite education provisions. A marine academy and a plane build extends curriculum opportunities for learners.

Current professional learning and development initiatives include Kia Eke Panuku (Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy), Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), and Restorative Practices. The school was successful in gaining a Teacher Led Innovation Funds (TLIF) project to explore and embed *Student Profiles for Change Philosophy in the Middle Years* area of the school.

Since the 2014 ERO report:

- rōpu classes have been extended and now include opportunities for learners in Years 4 to 8 to learn te reo and tikanga Māori
- innovative learning environments have been established
- primary, middle and senior areas of the school have established their own philosophy for learning aligned to the school-wide KAURI expectations, and *The New Zealand Curriculum* to guide learning for students and staff
- a play-based learning approach has been introduced to better facilitate and support transition of new entrant learners into school.

Some progress has been made in addressing the areas identified for improvement in the 2014 ERO report. These relate to improving moderation and decision making processes for National Standards, reporting overall achievement to the board of trustees, and improving clarity about the school curriculum. Areas of concern remaining are the ongoing disparity between Māori and non-Māori at all levels across the school and the quality of target setting to support learners at risk of not achieving at the expected level.

How well is the school achieving equitable outcomes for all children?

The school is improving its response to Māori and other students whose learning and achievement need acceleration. The strategic direction, supported by a considered approach, is contributing to equity and excellence.

The school has capacity and capability to accelerate learning for all learners. However, disparity in achievement for Māori and/or other learners remains.

The school agrees that building and embedding culturally responsive pedagogy, developing a coherent, progressive local curriculum for their rōpu classes, implementing effective schoolwide target setting and further developing internal evaluation is needed to sustain ongoing improvement of student learning outcomes.

ERO will provide an internal evaluation workshop to support the school to develop effective planning and monitoring processes to support equity and excellence for all children.

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

Equity and excellence

How effectively does this school respond to Māori and other children whose learning and achievement need acceleration?

The school is improving its response to Māori and other students whose learning and achievement need acceleration.

Rates of attainment in the National Certification of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1 and 2 have steadily improved overtime and are comparable to all schools nationally. NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance (UE) remain lower than national averages.

Disparity remains between Māori and other learners at NCEA Level 2 and 3, UE and between boys and girls at NCEA Level 1 and 3 and UE. There has been some improvement in reducing the disparity between Māori and non-Māori leaving with NCEA Level 2 and above. The school has identified this and is exploring ways to enhance school leaver outcomes for Māori learners and boys.

The school has established a wide range of opportunities to strengthen students' meaningful learning pathways through and beyond school. Destination data is gathered on students' involvement with further education, training and employment. This is being used well to better support future learners' purposeful engagement in school and successful transition beyond school.

Many students achieve well in relation to the expected levels across *The New Zealand Curriculum*. A range of data is gathered for learners in Years 9 and 10. This information is used within departments and shared with the board. Learners who require further support are identified and their progress is monitored. Extending this approach for at-risk learners should support deeper collaborative conversations about effective strategies that support the ongoing progress and acceleration of achievement, of individual students.

Most students achieve well in relation to National Standards. Since the 2014 ERO evaluation there has been a downward trend in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of learners. Disparity for Māori and boys in all areas has remained. In 2016, the disparity had narrowed significantly for Māori learners in mathematics and writing, relative to their peers. A wide range of strategies and

interventions are being used well to better support outcomes for students whose learning and achievement need acceleration.

Extensive professional learning and development has supported teachers to make dependable judgements in relation to National Standards. Clear decision-making frameworks and school-developed exemplars now guide assessment practices. School-wide moderation of overall teacher judgements is being extended to include more robust conversations across the school.

School conditions supporting equity and excellence

What school processes are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence?

The school's strategic direction, supported by a considered approach, is contributing equity and excellence.

Trustees actively seek the voice of their community. A high level of trust is evident between parents and whānau, school leadership and trustees. An improvement-focused approach is supporting learners' wellbeing and achievement outcomes.

Leaders are highly reflective. This ensures the school's development of teaching and learning is informed by relevant research and experts. The clearly defined future-focused philosophy of the school is driving school-wide improvement. Increasing collaborative practice across the teaching teams is fostering deeper conversations to improve equitable and excellent outcomes.

A flexible curriculum is increasingly responsive to students. A considered approach to building a localised school-wide curriculum is evident. Opportunities for students to take responsibility for leading their own learning are providing personalised and meaningful learning pathways. Learning-focused environments support student engagement and participation in the depth and breadth of the curriculum.

A well-considered process has been established to support students with additional learning needs to transition meaningfully into, through and beyond the school. A collaborative and inclusive approach ensures learners experience successful and personalised learning programmes tailored to their individual needs, strengths and interests.

The school effectively responds to learners' wellbeing. The principal leads and facilitates a strong culture of care for students. A successful focus on promoting learners' wellbeing underpins the school's positive atmosphere for learning.

Sustainable development for equity and excellence

What further developments are needed in school processes to achieve equity and excellence?

Areas for further development needed to achieve equity and excellence are:

- extending the capacity and capability of leaders and teachers to effectively integrate and embed culturally responsive relational pedagogy
- fully documenting an authentic curriculum that is aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and which supports learners' progression through the rōpu classes
- implementing effective target setting schoolwide to support improving teacher practice and enhance the response to students whose learning and achievement need acceleration
- building leaders and teachers understanding and implementation of effective evaluation for ongoing improvement and innovation.

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
- 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 Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

At the time of this review there were 27 international students attending the school.

Learners are well supported to maximise their learning experiences and opportunities in the depth and breadth of the New Zealand Curriculum. Support for International students' wellbeing is highly evident. They are encouraged and empowered to be active participants in the life of the school and community.

Actions required

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

- ensure leaders and teachers strengthen their understanding of effective appraisal for building teaching and learning capability schoolwide. This should support a more robust endorsement process for the issue and renewal of teachers' practising certificates.

Going forward

How well placed is the school to accelerate the achievement of all children who need it?

The school has capacity and capability to accelerate learning for all learners. However, disparity in achievement for Māori and/or other learners remains.

Leaders and teachers:

- know the learners whose progress and achievement need to be accelerated
- need to develop and implement approaches that effectively meet the needs of each learner
- need to improve the school conditions that support the acceleration of learners' progress and achievement
- need to build teacher capability to accelerate learners' progress and achievement

The school agrees to:

- develop more targeted planning to accelerate progress for learners
- monitor targeted planning, improved teaching, and learners' progress
- discuss the school's progress with ERO

ERO will provide an internal evaluation workshop to support the school to develop effective planning and monitoring processes to support equity and excellence for all children.

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



Lynda Pura-Watson
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Te Tai Miringa - Waikato / Bay of Plenty Region

17 November 2017

About the school

Location	Whitianga
Ministry of Education profile number	110
School type	Composite (Years 1-13)
School roll	956
Gender composition	Girls 51% Boys 49%
Ethnic composition	Pākehā 68% Māori 24% Other 8%
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	September 2017
Date of this report	17 November 2017
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review October 2014 Education Review November 2011 Education Review April 2009

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