

ERO External Evaluation

Taupō School, Taupō

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

Taupō School is a large Year 1 to 6 school located in the Taupō central business district. At the time of this ERO review, approximately 40% of the roll of 446 students identified as Māori. The roll also includes small numbers of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Since the November 2016 ERO report, an enrolment scheme has been introduced to manage the growing roll.

Since the long-serving principal's retirement, the deputy principal has been acting in the role, working alongside a team of experienced school leaders. A new principal has been appointed and begins duties in Term 4, 2019. Most of the board of trustees are new since the 2019 elections and contribute a range of relevant skills and abilities to their governance roles.

Key focus areas for teachers' professional learning during 2017 to 2019 have included: external development about teaching and learning in writing; mathematics; local curriculum development; and the learning through play initiative for students in Years 1 to 3.

The school's achievement focus is on all students at risk of not achieving in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

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

- reading, writing and mathematics.

The school is a member of the Taupō Kāhui Ako and is in process of strengthening links with Ngāti Tūwharetoa.

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?

The school is working towards achieving excellent and equitable outcomes for all students. Schoolwide data for 2018 shows that in mathematics and writing the majority of students achieved expected curriculum levels. The same data shows that a larger majority of students achieved these levels in reading. School data gathered over a longer period of time shows that levels of achievement over the past two years have been consistent.

School data about gender and ethnic achievement comparisons shows that:

- Māori students achieved at significantly lower levels than other groups of students in reading, writing and mathematics
- girls are significantly outperforming boys in writing and to lesser extent in reading
- boys and girls achieved at similar levels in mathematics.

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

The school is accelerating learning for some Māori and other students who need this. School data about rates of acceleration for those Māori students whose learning was at risk, shows that during 2018, almost half experienced accelerated progress in reading and approximately a third in writing and mathematics. The data shows that for other students whose learning was at risk, acceleration was effective in reading and mathematics and slightly less so in writing.

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?

A well-managed, well-informed and responsive approach is evident, to provide for and support students with identified higher learning and wellbeing needs. There is a variety of support programmes specifically designed to accelerate learning outcomes for these learners and thorough processes in place to track and monitor their progress. Outcomes for students with additional needs are regularly reviewed, reported to trustees and used to make ongoing responsive decisions about programme provision. This ongoing review is contributing to positive outcomes for these learners and whānau.

Partnerships with parents and whānau effectively support outcomes for students whose learning is at risk. Parents feel well informed about student achievement and progress and are engaged in genuine learning partnerships. The language, culture and identity of Māori whānau and students is recognised and affirmed across the school. Multiple strategies are used to gather parent voice, including the perspective of Māori whānau. These strategies enable the school to make inclusive and responsive decisions, such as the focus on building cultural competence in the school. Specific events are held to support the partnership in learning and build whānau knowledge of curriculum initiatives.

Teachers and leaders use many evidence-based strategies to plan and deliver teaching programmes. They know their students well, particularly those whose progress needs to be accelerated. Targeted in-class interventions reflect schoolwide teacher professional learning initiatives that are designed to accelerate progress for target learners. Examples of detailed planning to inform teaching and learning for priority learners are evident across the school. Student learning is well supported by respectful and affirming relationships and interactions between teachers and students. Leadership has significantly strengthened the way schoolwide achievement data is gathered and used. This has provided teachers with useful information to target student learning needs. It has also enabled responsive decisions at leadership and governance level. Collegial relationships among teachers and within teams are supporting other initiatives to accelerate progress and reduce disparity across the school.

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

There is a need to develop a more strategic approach to building leadership capacity across the school, with a focus on team leadership. Priority should be placed on:

- establishing consistency of leadership practice within and between teams
- consistency of practice in terms of formative assessment
- mentoring emerging leadership
- ongoing observations, modelling of practice, team and individual reflection focusing on improving practice
- driving the implementation of schoolwide improvement initiatives consistently across the school.

Attention to these priorities should enable a more consistent approach to addressing in-school inequity in a schoolwide environment of building teacher capability.

Leaders and teachers need to review assessment practices to ensure tools and strategies support robust judgements about student learning in relation to the levels of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This should involve the introduction of additional standardised assessment tools, along with building teacher knowledge about learning progression frameworks.

A useful start has been made to reviewing and developing a local school curriculum. There is a need to continue this work to establish and embed a local curriculum that shows coherent learning pathways across *The New Zealand Curriculum* and shared expectations for teaching and learning across the school.

It is timely to ensure that trustees engage in a sustained programme of training about school governance and management. This is necessary to make the best use of the many skills that are evident within the trustee team. A particular aspect of governance that needs to be addressed is establishing targets in the annual plan about accelerating progress for specific groups of learners, such as boys and Māori. These targets should provide a focus for ongoing review and reporting about how well school is addressing in-school disparity and equity for all learners.

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.

4 ERO's Overall Judgement

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

Developing

5 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- support for students with identified needs that contributes to working towards equity and excellence in outcomes
- parent-school partnerships for learning that are positively contributing to acceleration of progress for at-risk learners
- aspects of teaching, learning and senior leadership that contribute to acceleration of outcomes.

Next steps

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

- empowering school leaders to build teacher capability consistently across the school
- reviewing schoolwide assessment information to make robust judgements about student achievement
- developing a local curriculum to show a coherent approach to teaching and learning across the school
- building trustees' knowledge about school governance and management, and the use of achievement information.

Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

- fully and consistently implement the Ministry of Education Guidelines about the use of physical restraint
- continue to review school policy and procedures to cover all necessary aspects of school operation.



Phillip Cowie
Director Review and Improvement Services Central
Select Region

23 October 2019

About the school

Location	Taupō	
Ministry of Education profile number	1989	
School type	Primary (Year 1 to 6)	
School roll	440	
Gender composition	Male 55%, Female 45%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	42%
	NZ European/Pākehā	44%
	Other ethnic groups	14%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes	
Provision of Māori medium education	No	
Review team on site	August 2019	
Date of this report	23 October 2019	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2016
	Education Review	September 2013
	Education Review	October 2010