

Nelson Park School Education Review

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About the School

Location	Napier	
Ministry of Education profile number	2620	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	445	
Gender composition	Males 54%, Females 46%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	59%
	Māori	27%
	Asian	4%
	Other European	3%
	Pacific	2%
	Other ethnic groups	5%
Review team on site	November 2013	
Date of this report	18 February 2014	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2010
	Education Review	August 2007
	Education Review	December 2004

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

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1 Context

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

Nelson Park School is located in central Napier and provides education for students in Years 1 to 6. The community and roll are diverse. Nearly 30% of students identify as Māori and a further 14% is made up of students from many other cultures.

Since the November 2010 ERO report, the roll has increased considerably and is currently weighted in favour of boys. Two new classrooms have been built and an enrolment scheme has been put in place. The board, principal and staff have worked to develop teaching practice in written language, responsiveness to student and community needs and aspirations, and self review. In 2013 there were changes of personnel on the board of trustees and senior leadership team.

The curriculum supports transition from early childhood education for promoting enjoyable foundational learning. It emphasises creativity, social and physical development and wellbeing.

The school is well resourced to deliver its curriculum. Buildings are in good condition and there is a suitable range of materials and equipment. The grounds are spacious and allow for a wide variety of outdoor activities. Students are able to use the facilities offered in the adjacent Nelson Park for more boisterous play and sports practice. The library is open for those who prefer quieter pursuits. The overall impression is that students enjoy their school and are busy and active.

2 Learning

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

Achievement information is used well to plan for, and monitor, student learning, progress and achievement. Teachers use different forms of assessment to make best fit judgements about students' achievement in relation to the National Standards. They are strengthening their understanding of these benchmark expectations through moderation across the year groups and curriculum levels. Moderation with other schools could be worthwhile for enriching understanding and growing teachers' confidence.

Leaders break down data to identify schoolwide patterns of achievement and target particular groups for accelerated learning. From this analysis they know there are some small differences between the achievement for all students and that for boys in literacy, in particular Māori boys. Data also shows that a few students in two cohorts are tracking behind their peers in mathematics and writing. There are no concerns about the achievement of the small group of Pacific students on the roll.

Students' interests, talents and learning needs are known to their teachers, who use the information to pitch programmes appropriately. Teachers' monitoring processes help to maintain the learning momentum. Where achievement information indicates additional support or challenge is required, students receive teacher-aide assistance, specific programme or specialist intervention, and extension and enrichment programmes. These are suitably coordinated and managed.

Overall, students achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Final 2012 National Standards data reported, indicates that more Nelson Park students performed at and above the Standards than percentages shown for primary school students nationally. Forty-six percent of students were assessed as achieving above the Standard in reading and nearly a third in mathematics. A schoolwide development programme was begun in 2013 to bring writing performance into line with these two areas. Interim data for 2013 indicated a small upward shift in writing, sustained performance in mathematics and possibly higher overall achievement in reading.

The school needs to extend its use of data to:

- know how well student progress has been accelerated beyond the normally expected rate, to track performance from year to year, and identify significant matters or trends for students or in curriculum areas
- focus thinking about the effectiveness of teaching strategies and programmes,

particularly for targeted students

- make sharper comparisons of group performance.

Student progress and achievement is reported twice a year to the board, community and parents, and successes are celebrated in different ways. Parents are invited to attend conferences with their child and the teacher. Students are learning to take a lead in these by sharing their portfolios of assessments and work samples. These are attractively presented and show what the child can do and the next learning steps. The end-of-year report information would be improved by:

- including these next steps and suggestions of ways for parents to help at home
- reporting the learning gains in areas beyond reading, writing and mathematics.

Neither mid-year nor end-of-year reporting meets the requirement to be explicit about how well the student is achieving and progressing in relation to the National Standards.

3 Curriculum

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

Teachers form positive relationships with students to foster their wellbeing and learning. They plan programmes based on all elements of The New Zealand Curriculum, following the school's philosophy of child-centred curriculum provision.

Achievement data gathered over the first year shows how well programmes support students to transition from early childhood education to school and to make progress in literacy and mathematics. The impact of transition processes and the junior years programme is constantly reflected on and reviewed in the interests of students and their families.

Other informal information is available about overall student enjoyment and extent of engagement with school life. An evaluation of learning and effectiveness in curriculum is intended for 2014. This is timely and should be formally planned to guide the work of the relevant committees in identifying which aspects of programme design are effective for students and how provision could be improved.

ERO's evaluation found that teachers plan skilfully for integrated learning within interesting themes and contexts. The school virtues, key competencies and thinking skills are woven into teaching plans. Through these, they deliberately promote development of student:

- knowledge, skills and understanding across the learning areas
- self management
- cooperative and positive relationships.

Many learning activities involve practical tasks using a wide range of resources. New entrant and junior students experience programmes that allow them to explore learning materials and their environment. All students have a regularly timetabled discovery programme for working across class groups and revisiting learning through age-appropriate activities. Emphasis on creativity is evident in displays around the school, many featuring good quality artworks.

Teaching practice observed was very good overall. Classes are managed well and rooms are attractively presented. Student participation and individuality are visible in displays. The tone is positive and productive.

A key task in school development is to clarify the principles for implementing a child-centred curriculum. While evident in programmes for juniors, there is need to be clearer about what these mean for teacher practice further up the school.

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

The board of trustees, leaders and teachers have worked steadily over two years to be more culturally aware and responsive to Māori students and their whānau. Development for upholding their identity and promoting language learning has been led and facilitated by an external professional and a teacher with specifically designated responsibilities. The improvement strategy is planned to be completed by the end of 2014, but the external support ceases at the end of 2013. School personnel will need to know:

- how development will be sustained and strengthened so that the planned outcomes are achieved
- how they will show evidence of progress.

Te ao Māori is represented in classrooms. Māori students can identify with the content of learning themes, reading material available in the library and specific cultural games and activities. Links have been established with the Pukemokimoki marae and students have experienced learning in this environment. The kapa haka group provides opportunities for Māori students to lead performances and pōwhiri. Students in the lead teacher's room are able to use te reo Māori comfortably as a result of her input. This needs to be equally evident across other classes.

Māori students engage enthusiastically in school activities. Overall, they achieve well. As for all Nelson Park students, the percentage of Māori reported as being at and above the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national percentages. While students not meeting the Standards are targeted for acceleration, teaching plans should also aim to raise numbers achieving above the National Standards, particularly in writing.

4 Sustainable Performance

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

Many features of school operation support sustained and improved performance.

The school's reporting history with ERO indicates sustained good quality teaching, and improvement in knowing how well students are achieving and progressing and goals have been met. Over time leaders and teachers have developed their use of assessment tools and analysis of information for planning to meet students' learning needs – mainly in literacy and mathematics.

Teaching teams are capably led. Information is shared with members purposefully. Decisions made are in students' interests and in consultation with relevant personnel within and outside the school.

A growing collegiality and capacity for professional debate and investigation is indicated in school documents, such as records of self review, meetings, teacher reflections and appraisals. Leaders' and teachers' next steps are to refine their thinking about how well teaching is serving students by looking more closely into the reasons for difference made and drawing informed conclusions. This process has been used well to explore best practice for supporting children to transition to school and early learning through play-based discovery.

Improvement is needed in some areas of governance and management and guiding documentation.

The governance manual, while useful for inducting new members, would benefit from development to include guidance for carrying out responsibilities and being assured about matters of accountability. The principal should be appraised each year against the key objectives of his agreement with the board and in relation to the professional standards for principals.

Sharing of information with the board needs to be more timely for knowing outcomes for students and for use in planning. This includes student progress and achievement reports and information about the impact of programmes funded to accelerate learning or address specific needs.

Trustees need earlier involvement in charter development and annual planning. Priorities should be outcomes focused and measurable to support evaluation of effectiveness.

The board has sought comprehensive training through the Ministry of Education (MoE) to

increase its confidence in undertaking the governance role. The board has also asked for MoE assistance to access professional development for providing a culturally responsive curriculum and using data in evaluation and review.

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.

As a result of its review process, ERO identified that parents did not receive reports on their children's progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards or sufficient information about learning in the other curriculum areas. The appraisal of the principal had been delayed throughout 2013. Policy direction and procedures for managing appointments of staff, education outside the classroom, health and safety and the Treaty of Waitangi needed urgent attention.

The board of trustees must:

- through the principal and teaching staff, in alignment with requirements set in NAG 1,

use National Standards to report to parents on students' progress and achievement in plain language in writing at least twice a year.

[NAG 2A, National Administration Guidelines – amended October 2013]

- implement its policy and procedures for the annual appraisal of the principal for being informed about progress toward its priorities and for promoting high levels of performance.

[NAG 3, National Administration Guidelines – amended October 2013]

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should prioritise the review and development of guidelines for managing health and safety both on and off the school site, appointments of staff and commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Recommendation

ERO recommends that the board of trustees accepts Ministry of Education support for addressing the governance and management matters identified in this report.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

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