

ERO External Evaluation

Whītau School, Christchurch

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

Whītau School is a contributing primary school in Christchurch catering for students in Years 1 to 6. It has a roll of 312 students, 36% of whom identify as Māori and 19% of who have Pacific heritage.

The school's mission statement is 'Focused Learning Achieving eXcellence' (FLAX) and connects to the recent name change and cultural narrative that were gifted by iwi. The name Whītau relates to the local harakeke (flax) which was processed by Māori to produce the muka fibres used in making kākahu (cloaks).

The school's vision 'learning to take us places' underpin the school's values of 'be respectful, be responsible and be a learner'. Through respect and responsibility for ourselves, others and the environment, we will develop as learners with wellbeing, pride and citizenship. The school's valued outcomes are that motivated Whītau learners become planners and inquirers who are creative and reflective.

The school's current strategic priorities are to promote: student achievement, community partnerships with cultural responsiveness, community engagement, resilience and wellbeing, effective resourcing, e-Learning.

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

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
- progress, including accelerated progress, in reading, writing and mathematics
- those with additional learning needs
- attendance, engagement and wellbeing for success.

The school has undergone major rebuilding work and is still awaiting the completion of four further classrooms.

Since the 2015 ERO review, there have been significant changes to the staff and school leadership team. The school has a newly elected board of trustees.

The school is part of the Tamai Kāhui Ako | 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?

The school is working towards supporting students to achieve equitable outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to the New Zealand Curriculum levels.

Achievement data for 2016-2018 show that:

- fewer than half of students achieved at or above expected levels in reading and writing
- a small majority achieved at or above expected levels in mathematics
- boys were achieving less well than girls in reading and writing
- there is disparity for Pacific students in relation to all other students in mathematics.

However, interim mid-year data for 2019, shows improved achievement in writing and mathematics for all students overall.

There is no disparity for students identifying as Māori in relation to all other students in reading, writing and mathematics over time.

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

The school is developing robust systems to identify, monitor and provide appropriate programmes and support for children whose learning requires additional support.

School data shows that some students who are working below their expected level make accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2018 and 2019 over half of all priority learners made accelerated progress to achieve at or above expectations in writing and mathematics. Progress for learners who identify as Māori has increased to a majority achieving at expectations in writing and mathematics.

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?

The leadership team effectively promotes its vision for equity and excellence through a collaborative approach to support student wellbeing, learning and to meet community needs. Leaders are strategically planning to ensure appropriate support systems and processes meet the learning and other needs of individual students. High levels of relational trust, modelled by leaders, have a positive impact on the quality of the learning environment for students and the wider community.

The school is proactive in accessing a wide range of partnerships that enrich learning opportunities for students. Partnerships result in:

- culturally responsive practice supported by an authentic school-wide narrative, that gives students a clear sense of school and individual cultural identity
- the development of effective methods to engage parents and whānau in inclusive learning centred conversations
- a broad, localised curriculum that promotes equity and excellence and is responsive to student needs and interests
- research-based professional learning and development for teachers and staff.

A collaborative and flexible approach to teaching and learning is building school wide capability and capacity to meet valued outcomes for students. Ongoing developments to systems and processes are supporting tracking of assessment, moderation and acceleration of learning progress. This work is reinforced by targeted professional development to further develop teaching and leadership practices to meet the needs of students. Intentional teaching and respectful relationships underpin a climate of engagement and a settled learning environment for all.

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

The school identifies, and ERO agrees, that it needs to further develop whole school use and understanding of internal evaluation to know:

- the impact of programmes and interventions to improve outcomes for learning
- how to reduce the ongoing disparities in reading, writing, mathematics and improve achievement for a number of learners.

Leaders recognise the need to further develop schoolwide consistency in data, moderation and assessment practices.

In addition, the new board needs to build capability in internal evaluation to know:

- how to scrutinise school wide information to improve student outcomes
- how effective it is in supporting ongoing school improvement.

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 Whītau School’s performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Well placed

[Overall Findings and Judgement Tool derived from School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.](#)

5 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- leadership that is strongly committed to enacting the vision and values of the school towards achieving equity and excellence for all
- effective partnerships which support a localised and appropriate curriculum that is responsive to student needs
- systems and processes that are supporting teachers to meet the needs of learners.

Next steps

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

- the ongoing development of internal evaluation practices to better understand what programmes, interventions and strategies are working effectively at both school and board level
- strengthening schoolwide consistency in data, moderation and assessment practices
- improve the effectiveness of targeted actions to raise achievement outcomes for groups of learners.



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Southern Region
6 November 2019

About the school

Location	Christchurch
Ministry of Education profile number	3415
School type	Contributing Primary (Years 1 to 6)
School roll	312
Gender composition	Girls 52%, Boys 48%
Ethnic composition	Māori 36% NZ European/ Pākehā 39% Pacific 19% Other ethnic groups 6%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	September 2019
Date of this report	6 November 2019
Most recent ERO report(s) Previously Linwood North School	Education Review December 2015 Education Review August 2012 Education Review March 2007