

ERO External Evaluation

Little River School, Banks Peninsula

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

Little River School is a small rural, full primary school in Banks Peninsula, Canterbury. It has a roll of 102 students.

The school's vision is to provide quality learning experiences so that every child can reach his or her potential and 'Stand Tall' (Tu Toa). This vision is underpinned by the value of respect for self, others, the environment and property. Together, the vision and values provide clear expectations of the outcomes trustees and staff have for children.

The school states that the current strategic goals are to:

- improve children's progress and achievement in writing
- promote student agency
- develop better systems and processes to evaluate learning and identify next steps
- distribute responsibilities and improve systems to improve student outcomes.

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

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
- achievement in other curriculum areas
- outcomes related to children's competencies and wellbeing.

The school has been engaged in a building renewal programme, which includes new teaching spaces, as part of ongoing site improvements.

Since the last ERO review in 2015 the school has been involved in a Ministry of Education initiative to support priority learners. The school is part of the Banks Peninsula cluster of schools.

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 making progress towards achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all students. School achievement information for 2016 - 2017 shows that most children achieve at or above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. A small, gradual downward trend in achievement has been halted during this time, except in writing.

The school has identified the need to improve outcomes in writing for boys and some Māori children. Outcomes for Māori children in mathematics also need to be improved.

The school monitors and assesses children with regard to the NZ Curriculum Competencies. School data shows an improved understanding and demonstration of the competencies over time.

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

School information shows that some children whose learning requires additional support make progress and some achieve acceleration. Children with additional learning needs are well supported and their progress is monitored and tracked by their teachers. Outside agencies are accessed when required to provide additional learning assistance.

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?

Little River School has a stable and skilled staff with a clear focus on outcomes for children. The quality of teaching across the school is high. Strong collaborative planning ensures that children benefit from:

- a carefully considered range of teacher and child led activities
- learning environments that meet individual and group needs
- authentic learning contexts that build on children's knowledge and interests, and on the local environment
- encouragement and support for children to take responsibility for, manage and reflect on, their learning
- access to a broad range of learning opportunities and having some choice in what and how they learn.

Teachers and children enjoy respectful relationships built on a shared understanding of the school's values and expectations. These values are clearly reflected in the positive, well organised and inclusive learning environment. Children's learning, abilities and participation are supported and celebrated. The strong focus on developing children's key competencies is embedded in the curriculum and reflected throughout the school. A significant component of the school's commitment to developing and maintaining positive relationships is the well developed and implemented restorative justice system.

The school and its local community have a very positive relationship. There is strong community involvement in, and support for, the school. This includes:

- close links with the local playcentre, facilitating children's transition to school
- curricular and co-curricular support from parents and the wider community that provides additional learning opportunities
- useful teacher involvement in a cluster of schools
- children having opportunities to be involved in community events.

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

There is an urgent need for trustees and leaders to ensure that the school has an efficient, effective and transparent infrastructure that enables teachers to track, report and evaluate student wellbeing and learning progress and achievement. This needs to be based on a thorough, shared understanding of what constitutes sufficiency of progress and acceleration.

In order to achieve planned strategic priorities in a timely and sustainable manner and ensure continued positive outcomes for children, leaders must build and utilise the leadership capabilities and capacity of the teachers. This should involve a consideration of how roles and responsibilities are best distributed and the provision of appropriate professional support.

Leaders and teachers need to develop and implement a plan to strengthen bicultural understandings and practices so that the school more strongly reflects the bicultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand. This plan needs to be supported by relevant professional learning and the continued building of reciprocal relationships with whānau.

Leaders need to implement the curriculum review signalled in the previous ERO report. Careers education continues to be an area to be addressed.

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 Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Appraisal audit

The school has begun to establish a sound appraisal process. More rigorous documenting of professional conversations is required.

Actions for compliance

ERO identified non-compliance in relation to policy renewal processes

In order to address this, the board of trustees must:

- ensure there is a planned and implemented schedule of policy review and renewal.
(*Education Act 1989, National Administration Guidelines*)

Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

- improve documentation of some compliance and health and safety procedures
- ensure documentation of meetings meets good practice requirements.

4 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- improvement-focussed teaching and learning
- a positive culture based on respect
- strong and supportive community relationships.

Next steps

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

- trustees' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and ensuring all governance obligations are met
- leaders ensuring school priorities are implemented, reported and evaluated in a timely and effective manner
- developing internal evaluation practices and processes at all levels of the school to identify what is working well and where improvement is needed (as recommended in the 2015 ERO report)
- ensuring the school reflects the bicultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand.

ERO will continue to work with the school to receive progress information in regard to the key next steps identified for improvement in this report.

ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deputy Chief Review Officer
Te Waipounamu - Southern Region

19 July 2018

About the school

Location	Banks Peninsula
Ministry of Education profile number	3418
School type	Full Co-educational Primary
School roll	102
Gender composition	Boys 51% : Girls 49%
Ethnic composition	Māori 17% Pākehā 77% Other ethnicities 6%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	May 2018
Date of this report	19 July 2018
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review October 2015 Education Review May 2012 Education Review December 2008