

ERO External Evaluation

Birchwood School, Nelson

Summary

Birchwood School has a roll of 275 children. This includes 40 Māori children and 12 Pacific children.

The school has experienced significant staff changes since the 2014 ERO review. Six new teachers started at the school in 2017. There have also been recent changes in the school leadership team. There is a mix of experienced and newer trustees on the board.

The school is an active member of Ngā Ākonga ki Whakatū Kāhui Ako | Community of Learning with other local schools. The school has been involved in Ministry of Education-funded professional learning and development.

The school still needs to make progress on some of the areas identified in the 2014 ERO review. This includes strengthening the use of achievement information and how teachers make overall judgements about children's achievement against the National Standards. Internal evaluation practices still require further development.

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

Birchwood School has variable practice in achieving equitable outcomes for all children.

The school has been effective in raising the achievement of Māori and some other children whose learning and achievement need acceleration. School-wide systems need to be consistently applied and monitored to ensure all children are progressing and achieving at an appropriate level.

At the time of this review, children experience a wide range of learning experiences that engage them in meaningful learning. Teachers share their professional learning to benefit all children.

The school now needs to review the effectiveness of school leadership and strengthen appraisal. The board needs to review and improve the school's policies and procedures.

The school has capacity and capability to accelerate learning for all learners. However, disparity in achievement for some learners, particularly boys, 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.

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.

Equity and excellence

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

The school has been effective in raising the achievement of Māori and some other children whose learning and achievement need acceleration. School-wide systems need to be consistently applied and monitored to ensure all children are progressing and achieving at an appropriate level.

Many children achieve well in National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

School achievement data shows:

- children's achievement in mathematics and writing has increased from 2013 to 2016
- Māori children achieve well, with considerable improvements in their achievement in mathematics and writing over time
- there is disparity for boys in literacy and mathematics achievement, which is most noticeable in writing and reading.

School information also shows some progress has been made in raising boys' achievement in mathematics and writing since 2013. Reading remains an area of concern.

Achievement information from some specific programmes designed to support children whose learning needs acceleration, particularly in mathematics, are showing high levels of acceleration for participating children.

Children with special needs are well responded to, with individual education plans showing they make good progress against their specific learning outcomes.

School-wide assessment and moderation processes need to be improved to ensure accuracy and consistency. The school recognises that it now needs to improve practices that support more effective use of assessment and the consistency of teachers' decisions about children's achievement in relation to the National Standards.

School leaders have recently introduced several useful processes for collecting assessment information, and identifying and tracking children's achievement. These include clearer processes for identifying how teachers will plan to meet the needs of children whose learning needs acceleration. It is too early for ERO to evaluate the effectiveness of these processes.

School conditions supporting equity and excellence

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

Some school programmes and practices have been effective in supporting equity and excellence.

A strong sense of ako in professional learning, where teachers share their knowledge and expertise with others, is building whole staff capacity to promote equity and excellence. With a number of recent staff changes, this is likely to help promote the consistency of practices across the school.

The school's involvement with Ministry of Education professional learning initiatives has made a significant difference to expectations for how teachers will teach and deliver the curriculum. A focus on using more practical strategies is building teacher capacity and supporting children's progress and achievement, particularly in mathematics.

The school curriculum provides many opportunities for children to experience success in areas that have been identified as significant by children, their whānau and the school community. Well-defined learner qualities are evident in curriculum documentation. The school's vision is well understood and known by the school community.

School capacity is being further developed through:

- expectations for teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and the impact on children's learning through individual inquiry
- teachers being provided with leadership opportunities that use their strengths to make a difference in outcomes for children.

The board is becoming increasingly specific about the information needed to make resourcing decisions to improve equity and excellence outcomes for children. They understand the importance of receiving clear, well-analysed achievement information to be proactive about meeting children's needs.

Sustainable development for equity and excellence

The school has some useful processes to achieve equity and excellence.

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

A range of school processes require further development to more effectively improve outcomes for children. These include:

- establishing robust internal evaluation guidelines, processes and practices that are well understood and used across the school
- reviewing the effectiveness of school leadership and collaborative ways of working
- establishing a shared understanding and robust use of information about children's progress and achievement
- updating the school's curriculum document to ensure it reflects current practices and supports school-wide consistency expectations for teaching practice across learning areas
- strengthening school appraisal processes to improve the quality and depth of individual appraisals.

The board and senior leaders must also ensure that robust processes are in place for staff and children to provide regular feedback about their wellbeing.

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.

The board has identified, through the board assurance statement, that the school's policy and procedures framework needs to be reviewed. ERO identified some policies and procedures, such as those that guide behaviour management and police vetting, are not sufficient. In addition, the board has identified, and ERO agrees, that improvements need to be made to the complaints policy and procedures.

To improve current practice, the board of trustees must:

- review and improve its policies and procedure framework.

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 learners remains.

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- 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

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.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that the school seek further support from the Ministry of Education and School Trustees Association to bring about sustainable improvements in:

- school leadership to promote a collaborative school-wide culture for equity and excellence
- understanding and use of assessment practices to support consistency
- policy and procedure development to support the board in the full enactment of its responsibilities for learner achievement, progress and wellbeing and good employer obligations.



Dr Lesley Patterson
Deputy Chief Review Officer - Southern (Te Waipounamu)

10 October 2017

About the school

Location	Nelson
Ministry of Education profile number	3182
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)
School roll	275
Gender composition	Boys 48% Girls 52%
Ethnic composition	Māori 14% Pākehā 76% Pacific 5% Other Ethnicities 5%
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	August 2017
Date of this report	10 October 2017
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review August 2014 Education Review March 2011 Education Review October 2007