

Western Heights High School Education Review

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This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

About The School

Location	Rotorua
Ministry of Education profile number	151
School type	Secondary School (Years 9 to 13)
Decile rating[1]	4
Teaching staff: Roll generated entitlement Number of teachers	90.49 95
School roll	1410
Number of international students	13 (Fee paying) 5 (Exchange)
Gender composition	Girls 47% Boys 53%
Ethnic composition	New Zealand Māori 51%, New Zealand European/Pākehā 40%, Other European 4%, Asian 3%, Pacific 2%
Special features	Bilingual Unit Partial Immersion classes (2) Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (1)
Review team on site	July 2009
Date of this report	6 September 2009
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, September 2006 Education Review, April 2003

Effectiveness Review, August 1994
Assurance Audit, September 1997
Assurance Audit, October 1992

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Western Heights High School is a large co-educational secondary school located in Rotorua. At the time of this review in July 2009 the roll had increased significantly since the last review to 1410 students, of whom 51% are Māori. New classrooms and facilities are in planning stages. The school has a bilingual unit, Te Akoranga Reo Rua, and offers a wide range of specialist facilities to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.

Students receive high quality educational opportunities at all year and curriculum levels, and learn in a safe physical and emotional environment.

The unique culture of this school is characterised by the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, which embrace all facets of school life. The principal has an inclusive and caring leadership style. She respects and values people and their contributions, and empowers her staff, students and community to work together in a climate of cooperation, empathy and success. She is fully supported by her leadership team and staff, who are focused on all students achieving success.

Students are highly respected, valued and well supported within a school climate where success is promoted and celebrated through academic, social, cultural and sporting activities. This culture of success for students is reflected by the very positive National Certificate Educational Achievement (NCEA) results which have shown continuous improvement since 2005. In 2008, success rates in NCEA qualifications in Years 11 to 13 exceeded the national averages. The high success rate of Māori students is of particular note. The school's academic results are accompanied by high participation and success rates of students across a wide range of extra-curricular activities, responsive pastoral care programmes and initiatives to meet student needs.

Relationships between teachers and students are mutually respectful, expectations for learning and behaviour well understood, and high levels of student engagement are evident. The learning environments are attractive and well resourced. Teachers are enthusiastic and have a strong sense of care for and commitment to students. They are focused on enhancing their teaching practice to enable them to better meet the diverse learning needs of students.

The board of trustees is led by a knowledgeable and highly experienced chairperson. Trustees effectively and efficiently manage their governance roles and responsibilities and provide strong support to the principal, staff and students. The board and senior leaders are establishing a strong culture of self review. To build on this good practice, senior leadership now needs to refine some current procedures to ensure that all programmes, practices and systems are reflected upon and have clearly defined and relevant outcomes.

Trustees, along with staff, continue to place high priority on the partnership that the school has with its community, including Te Arawa iwi and especially Ngāti Whakaue hapū.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code of Compliance for International Students.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four to five years.

The Focus Of The Review

Student Achievement Overall

ERO's education reviews focus on student achievement. What follows is a statement about what the school knows about student achievement overall.

Years 9 and 10

The school uses a range of external and school-based assessment tools to monitor achievement and progress in Years 9 and 10. Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTLe) results show that:

- on entry at Year 9, students overall are achieving at low levels in reading and mathematics;
- during 2008, Year 9 students made progress in mathematics and Year 10 students made significant progress in algebra;
- in 2008, at the end of Year 10, students overall achieved slightly above national results for reading; and
- in 2008, at the end of Year 10, Māori student achievement in reading was better than the national results for Māori.

Years 11 to 13

Notable progress in NCEA assessments include:

- significant improvements in results overall since 2005;
- significant improvement in the results of Māori students since 2005; and
- a large number of National Scholarships attained between 2005 and 2008.

In 2008, students achieved significant success in NCEA including:

- high levels of performance compared with decile and national levels at Levels 1, 2, and 3;
- the percentage of the roll achieving Level 1 to 3 credits and Level 1 literacy and numeracy credits was significantly above decile type and well above national levels;

- the percentage of the roll achieving entry to university was significantly above the average for the decile;
- Māori students performed well above national averages for Māori;
- the gap between the achievement of Māori students and their non-Māori peers is significantly lower than in schools nationally.

The school also offers Cambridge International Exams at Years 11 to 13 in conjunction with NCEA.

Other achievements

The school's academic achievement results are complemented by the high participation rates across a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These successes reflect the strong support that teachers and parents provide so that students can have opportunities to develop their diverse talents, skills, interests and abilities. Senior student leaders provide appropriate role models for other students and organise a range of in-school activities and a national sporting tournament.

School Specific Priorities

Before the review, the board of Western Heights High School was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the school to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the board of trustees. This discussion focused on existing information held by the school (including student achievement and selfreview information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students at Western Heights High School.

ERO and the board have agreed on the following focus area for the review:

- school-wide initiatives, systems and practices that enable students to achieve success.

ERO's findings in this area are set out below.

School-wide Initiatives, Systems, and Practices that Enable Students to Achieve Success

Background

The vision of Western Heights High School is that all students will be supported to achieve success and equipped to be positive contributors to society. Since the last ERO review there has been ongoing professional learning and development for staff aimed at improving the quality of learning and success. There is also an emphasis on supporting individual student learning and wellbeing. This report evaluates the effectiveness of school-wide initiatives, systems and practices in supporting students to achieve success.

Areas of good performance

Leadership: Strong and cohesive leadership underpins the vision of the school's community working together towards excellence and achievement. Key elements include:

- the principal's inclusive and caring leadership style. She respects and values people and their contributions and empowers her staff, students and community to work together in a climate of cooperation, empathy and success;
- the diverse and complementary skills of the senior leadership team, which is focused on enhancing school performance and improving outcomes for all students;
- knowledgeable middle management personnel, who work with their staff to promote student achievement; and
- efficient governance practices by well-informed trustees, who develop and promote the school's strategic direction.

Highly effective leadership, governance and management of the school are contributing to positive outcomes for students.

Self review: The board and senior leaders are establishing a strong culture of self review to help ensure that school-wide systems, initiatives and practices operate in an effective and efficient manner. Examples of good practice include:

- the board regularly undertaking self review of its governance policies and practices;
- senior leaders gathering a wide range of achievement information and using it to improve school operations;
- heads of essential learning areas, middle managers and teachers using self review to enhance curriculum teaching and learning practices; and

- the use of both formal and informal processes of self review.

Current systems of self review result in a culture of continuous improvement.

Culture of success: The school culture is one of success for all students. Aspects of this culture include:

- high expectations for success in academic, social, cultural and sporting activities;
- caring, inclusive and mutually respectful relationships between all sections of the school community;
- Māori values such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga which underpin all areas of the school;
- Teachers' commitment to continuous reflection about, and improvement of, their professional practice; and
- a strong belief that students can achieve success within a nurturing environment.

This inclusive and caring culture effectively fosters students' success.

Catering for students' needs: The school responds effectively to student needs using a range of well considered support structures, initiatives and programme provisions. Examples include:

- an extensive guidance and pastoral care network and support services to ensure that students' health and wellbeing needs are met;
- purposeful initiatives and suitable programmes, which are effective in meeting the requirements of students with identified needs and abilities;
- a wide range of subject choices and learning pathways catering for students' diverse interests, abilities and future career directions; and
- many opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills in sports, and in cultural, peer support and prefect roles.

Focused programmes and practices promote the holistic development of all students.

Focus on learning: Students are focused and enthusiastic learners. Their motivation to learn is fostered through:

- mutually respectful teacher and student relationships underpinned by the key principles of Te Kotahitanga;
- a belief by staff and students that all learners can be successful;
- clear expectations for student learning and behaviour that are known and understood;
- attractive and well resourced learning environments; and
- relevant lesson contents which are meaningful to students.

These factors are contributing to high levels of engagement in learning and the strong sense of pride that students and staff display in belonging to this school community.

Professional learning: A planned and structured whole-school approach to professional development is building an effective and collegial professional learning community. Aspects of this approach include:

- a strong teacher commitment to continually reviewing and improving professional practice;
- the commitment by the principal and board of trustees to resourcing ongoing professional development;
- numerous opportunities for staff to engage in discussion, reflection, and professional reading;
- the use of external and internal expertise to guide ongoing learning and development;
- opportunities for staff to undertake individual subject-related courses as well as whole-school professional development; and
- clear links between staff appraisal and teachers' identified development objectives.

Professional learning is supporting improved teacher practice and enhanced outcomes for students.

Area for improvement

Refining reflective practices: As the basis for ongoing improvement, senior leaders and teachers should refine current procedures to ensure that school initiatives, systems and practices:

- have clearly defined and relevant outcomes;
- are subject to regular reflection; and
- are evaluated for their contribution to student achievement.

This reflective approach should ensure that the board and school management are continually reviewing all aspects of school operations.

Areas Of National Interest

Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole to Government to be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement. ERO also provides information about the education sector for schools, parents and the community through its national reports.

To do this ERO decides on topics and investigates them for a specific period in all applicable schools nationally.

During the review of Western Heights High School ERO investigated and reported on the following areas of national interest. The findings are included in this report so that information about the school is transparent and widely available.

Success for Māori Students: Progress

In this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school was familiar with the Māori Education Strategy - Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success and progress made since the last review in promoting success at school for Māori students.

The school reports it has taken Ka Hikitia into account when revising planning documents for this year.

Areas of progress

Māori students have many opportunities to achieve success. Significant factors include:

- the key belief and commitment expressed by the board, principal and staff that all Māori students can succeed;
- the principles of Te Kotahitanga embedded throughout the school;
- an inclusive school environment which affirms the cultural identity of Māori as an integral part of the school;
- purposefully designed initiatives that embrace the full range of learning needs of Māori students;

- substantial funding and resourcing from the Ngāti Whakaue Endowment Trust;
- a very high number of Māori staff, including members of the senior leadership team, who act as positive role models for Māori students;
- the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga immersed within school culture;
- provision of opportunities for leadership development and participation in extra curricular activities such as kapa haka, sports, and the arts;
- high levels of positive in-class engagement by Māori students; and
- since 2005, significant progress in levels of achievement in NCEA for Māori students, whose achievements are now above the national average.

The findings in the school's specific priority and the student achievement overall sections of this report also reflect progress of Māori students in the school.

The Achievement of Pacific Students: Progress

In this review ERO evaluated the progress the school has made since the last review in improving the achievement of its Pacific students and in initiatives designed to promote improved achievement.

At the time of this review 22 students (2%) identified as being of Pacific descent. The achievement and progress for these students is collated on an individual basis.

Preparing to Give Effect to the New Zealand Curriculum

Schools are currently working towards implementing The New Zealand Curriculum by February 2010. During this review ERO investigated the progress Western Heights High School is making towards giving full effect to the curriculum as part of its planning, organisation and teaching practice.

ERO found that school leaders and teachers at Western Heights High School are making good progress towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum in their planning, organisation and teaching.

Including Students with High Needs

During this review ERO investigated the extent to which the board and school leaders of Western Heights High School provide an inclusive education for students with high needs. This included collecting evidence about the school's policies, processes and practices to support the enrolment and induction of students with high needs and to support their participation and achievement at school. The information collected during this review will contribute to information that will be reported in a national education evaluation report.

Prior to a review, a board of trustees and principal attest in the Board Assurance Statement that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal requirements including those detailed in Ministry of Education circulars and other documents.

The board of Western Heights High School was asked to attest to whether it had 'ensured that teachers of students with disabilities, and other contact staff, have a sound understanding of the learning needs of students with disabilities and, where necessary, have put in place support systems centred on each individual with disabilities.' The board was also asked to attest that 'policies and procedures that relate to students who have special education needs are implemented without discrimination'.

ERO's findings confirm these attestations.

Thinking about the Future

ERO is currently discussing with secondary schools how they are thinking about the future and what it might mean for their students.

The school reports that it has thought about the future and what it might mean for their students in the following ways:

- the school has participated in the Secondary Futures project;
- a profile of the future graduate student of Western Heights High School is being developed;
- the school has considered implications of future roll growth and its critical impact on resourcing;
- the school is considering and extending career and learning pathways for students including the allocation of additional funding; and
- the school is increasing and consolidating links with parents and community organisations through consultation.

Provision for International Students

Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and the Provision of English Language Support

Western Heights High School is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. This is a requirement of all schools that enrol international students in terms of the Act. Schools are also required to provide English language support for their international students.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code.

Background: Since the last review, the school has been proactive in enrolling international fee paying students. The board has delegated decision making in this area to the principal. The director of international students is newly appointed and a support staff member has been made home stay coordinator. The director has visited a number of countries to publicise the school and what it can offer international students. As a result there are now 13 foreign fee paying students and 5 exchange students enrolled.

Area of good performance

The school has effective systems and practices in place to cater for international students. These include:

- the director and home stay coordinator having refined and updated policies and procedures;
- comprehensive, up-to-date information is kept on both foreign fee paying and international exchange students and their agents;
- home stay accommodation visited by ERO is of high quality and all international students were complimentary about their home stay parents;
- international students appreciate the opportunities available to them and take a full part in the wider life of the school;
- students know where to go if they have concerns, either at school or in their home stays; and
- trusting and open relationships exist between international students and parents, home stay parents and staff responsible for international students.

International students are well looked after at this school and appreciate the structures that

are in place to meet their ongoing academic, social and pastoral needs.

Provision of English Language Support

Background: Many of the international students come to the school with a high level of English language. Those who need support are identified and supported by the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher who has a high level of interest and expertise in linguistics.

Area of good performance

There is a well resourced English support programme available to students at this school.

Aspects of this programme include:

- the teacher making use of up-to-date Ministry of Education resources, including the 'English Language Intensive Programme' and 'English Language Learning Progressions';
- the expertise of the advisory service which continues to be a valuable resource; and
- programmes planned by the ESOL teacher to meet students' individual needs.

Continuing high level subject support is available from the ESOL teacher to international students at this school to assist with their English language development.

Board Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Western Heights High School completed an ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. 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; and
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on students' achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment);
- physical safety of students;
- teacher registration;
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions; and
- attendance.

Compliance

ERO's investigations did not identify any areas of concern.

Recommendation

ERO and the board of trustees have developed the following recommendation:

6.1 that the board and management continue to strengthen self-review practices.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four to five years.

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

6 September 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Western Heights High School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Western Heights High School.

Community Page

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Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the school or see the ERO website, www.ero.govt.nz.

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS

About ERO

ERO is an independent, external evaluation agency that undertakes reviews of schools and early childhood services throughout New Zealand.

About ERO Reviews

ERO follows a set of standard procedures to conduct reviews. The purpose of each review is to:

- improve educational achievement in schools; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on student achievement and build on each school's self review.

Review Focus

ERO's framework for reviewing and reporting is based on three review strands.

- School Specific Priorities - the quality of education and the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement.
- Areas of National Interest - information about how Government policies are working in schools.
- Compliance with Legal Requirements - assurance that this school has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

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Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a school is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this school.

[1] Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.