

Somerset Crescent 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

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| Location | Palmerston North |
| Ministry of Education profile number | 2363 |
| School type | Contributing Primary (Year 1 - 6) |
| Decile rating | 2 |
| Teaching staff: | 10.1 |
| Roll generated entitlement | 1.2 |
| Other Number of teachers | 14 |
| School roll | 220 |
| Gender composition | Male 51%, Female 49% |
| Ethnic composition | Māori 50%, NZ European/Pākehā 35%, Pacific 14%, Asian 1% |
| Special features | Sensory Resource Centre on school site |
| Review team on site | November 2006 |
| Date of this report | 14 June 2007 |
| Previous ERO reports | Education Review March 2004 Accountability Review October 2000 Accountability Review November 1998 Assurance Audit October 1993 Review May 1990 |

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Somerset Crescent School is a contributing school located in Palmerston North. Since the March 2004 ERO report, school leaders focused on changing the school learning culture through raising teacher performance and improving student behaviour.

This review investigates and reports on the quality of teaching and learning in reading and writing, the quality of the learning environment and aspects of board governance and management. The following topics included in this report are evaluated in all current school reviews: the teaching of writing for Year 4 students; Māori and Pacific student achievement; and the provisions for underachieving students. How well the school meets legislative requirements and aspects of student health and safety, including bullying, are also investigated.

Assessment data demonstrates variations in achievement between year levels, boys and girls, Māori and Pacific students with many students achieving below expectations in reading and writing. Goals set for improving student achievement in literacy are appropriately identified through charter targets in oral language, reading and writing.

Programmes to support students with additional learning needs are a feature of the school. The Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO), together with senior staff, provides leadership for implementing programmes aimed at catering for identified high and moderate learning and social needs. Teacher aides sustain support in classrooms for individuals and student groups. Other features include a range of appropriate interventions and specialist assistance. The board should consider additional ways to support the needs of the significant number of junior students who begin school with low achievement levels.

In some classes, students benefit from recent literacy professional development. In these classes teachers use improved assessment and teaching approaches and literacy programmes are responsive to student needs. Teaching and learning is well supported by suitable literacy and technology resources. Good practices evident in these classes should be implemented across the school to ensure all students are fully engaged in learning. ERO's identified areas for improvement in teaching and learning include class, syndicate and schoolwide programme evaluation and the quality and frequency of reading programmes for some students.

School leaders and trustees are focused on moving the school forward. The principal sets high expectations. Senior teachers are undertaking leadership training to promote continued improvement within syndicates. Trustees use regular discussion on achievement data to make decisions about resourcing the school.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of students and the Crown and bring about improvement outlined in this report. Therefore ERO will review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

School Specific Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the board of Somerset Crescent 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 self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students at Somerset Crescent School.

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

- reading and writing; and
- the learning environment.

In addition, ERO decided to evaluate:

- governance and management.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

Reading and Writing

Background

The March 2004 ERO report identified that learning success was largely dependent on individual teacher capability, rather than schoolwide cohesive programme planning and implementation. ERO recommended that senior managers and the literacy team continue to monitor and support teachers to consistently implement school expectations for literacy. The board subsequently invested considerable resource into staff professional development to increase teacher capability, beginning with a focus on written language. The focus for 2006 is on reading. ERO agreed that an evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching reading and writing was appropriate for this review.

Student progress and achievement

Raising student achievement continues to be an ongoing board and staff focus. Across the school, assessment data demonstrates that many students achieve below expectations in reading and writing. Variations in achievement are evident between year levels, boys and

girls, Māori and Pacific students. Approximately three quarters of the five year old students enter the school with low achievement levels. Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR) for Years 3 to 6 show that many students made progress between March and September 2006. Improving achievement in literacy is appropriately identified as a school goal and recorded in charter targets for oral language, reading and writing.

Areas of good performance

- Assessment

Improved use of assessment in many classrooms contributes to effective literacy programmes. In these classes the use of written language indicators and running records results in focused teaching. Many teachers share with students appropriate written comments that show how well they achieve and their next learning step. Assessment practices are becoming more responsive to student needs.

- Teaching strategies

A wide range of effective teaching strategies contributes to students' engagement in learning in some classrooms. Well-planned programmes establish prior learning and incorporate high interest, relevant learning experiences. The integration of oral language with reading and writing further extends thinking. Purposeful learning is guided by the effective use of shared statements about what learning is intended. Teacher modelling encourages students to share their work with others. Group teaching includes opportunities to extend students' phonic awareness and alphabet knowledge. Effective teaching approaches contribute to progress and achievement in literacy in these classrooms.

- Learning resources

Students benefit from appropriately targeted learning resources. The board recently approved a substantial purchase of reading materials to cater for a wide range of abilities and interests. Book selection is considered carefully against student needs. The library and classroom reading areas encourage students' and, in particular, boys' interests. Well-targeted resources extend student enjoyment and desire to read.

- Professional development

Participation in literacy professional development leads to improvements in teachers' capability. Staff are developing confidence with trialling new assessment approaches and teaching strategies that facilitates effective assessment and analysis of student achievement. Support from the literacy lead teacher and special education needs coordinator (SENCO) assists staff to develop consistent teaching practice.

Areas for improvement

- Programme evaluation

Classroom evaluations do not always demonstrate how well teaching programmes meet individual student needs. Although some teachers analyse ongoing assessment data to

identify students' emerging needs, in some classes data is not well analysed or is mainly used to identify those students needing extra support. Implementing good practice seen in some classrooms, where teachers successfully use assessment for programme evaluation, should further meet students' specific learning needs.

Programme evaluation should be strengthened to link to assessment information collected and collated for charter targets and school goals. Such an approach would also assist the board identify effective programmes, successful interventions for underachievers and differences made by staff professional development.

- Programme implementation

High quality learning is not sufficiently maintained for some students. In some classrooms:

- the range of teaching strategies used do not fully engage students in learning. Good practice evident elsewhere in the school should be identified and implemented schoolwide to ensure learning is maximised for all students; and
- timetables do not include opportunities for students to participate in regular daily guided reading programmes. Monitoring of clear expectations about the teaching of reading should assist with raising students' reading levels.

Senior teachers recently appointed are undertaking leadership training. Such training should assist with strengthening curriculum leadership and support for staff. To improve consistency in the quality of teaching across syndicates, senior staff should continue to focus on identifying, modelling and sharing good teaching practice already evident within the school.

The Learning Environment

Background

A board and staff focus is to establish a socially and emotionally supportive environment through positive learning and behaviour throughout the school. The board's annual plan reflects the importance placed on engaging everyone in shared values and beliefs. To help achieve these goals, staff follow a specific behaviour management system that features positive interventions and strategies. ERO agreed that it would be appropriate to evaluate how well learning occurs using these approaches.

Areas of good performance

- Behaviour system

Positive steps are in place to provide an environment in which students can learn to the best of their ability. Expectations for behaviour are clearly stated and conveyed in ways students understand. Teachers introduce students to appropriate social skills, language and behaviour including conflict resolution, through specific programmes. Teachers analyse collected data to choose strategies for teaching students how to appropriately

respond to behavioural challenges. The board considers that negative behaviours have decreased over the last few years as a result of these programmes.

Students enjoy the personal awards that affirm and recognise achievement of behaviour standards. Selected senior students are trained in leadership skills that they ably demonstrate through appropriate role modelling of behaviours and by supporting others in positive playground interactions. Many students benefit from raised behavioural expectations and increased support.

- Learning interactions

In those classes where positive interactions are evident, teachers integrate the behaviour programme successfully into all learning. They ensure students are aware of expectations through clear goal setting and routines. These teachers model positive interactions and attitudes of respect. They use highly visible and attractive directives and guidelines, and successfully embrace their students' cultural diversity. As a result, these students are engaged and well focused on learning tasks within positive environments.

Area for improvement

- Behaviour management

Staff continue to work hard to reduce the number of negative behaviour incidences and to increase the effectiveness of the school's system for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. At the time of the review, not all staff demonstrated interactions with students that reflected the values underpinning the school's behaviour system. The board and management should continue to closely monitor patterns of behaviour and the implementation of agreed good practices to identify those teachers needing support to apply successful behaviour management strategies.

Governance and Management

Background

During the course of the review, ERO identified issues that may impact on the quality of learning and teaching and the safe working and learning environment. ERO decided to include a focus area for governance and management in this report.

Areas of good performance

- Focus on improvement

The principal sets high expectations through a clear vision for a progressive school in which high quality teaching supports students to achieve well. Development of senior teacher leadership is beginning to foster continued improvement within syndicates. The professional focus is on moving the school forward.

- Governance

Trustees are highly supportive of the principal, staff and students. Board membership reflects the community's ethnic diversity and provides a range of appropriate strengths. The board receives informative reports on teaching and learning. Trustees use regular discussion on achievement data to make decisions about resourcing the school.

Areas for improvement

- Communication

The board has given priority to establishing communication procedures and implementing and maintaining a rigorous appraisal and mentoring process. Trustees should now explore further ways to enhance communication to make certain processes allow staff to discuss issues productively.

- Self review

Refer to the section on student progress and achievement.

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 Somerset Crescent 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.

The Achievement of Māori Students

During the review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school has knowledge of and strategies for promoting the achievement of Māori students. The Māori student roll has increased from 40% to 50% since the previous ERO report.

Area of good performance

- Participation in learning

Students participate in a range of activities that encompass school and community biculturalism. They enjoy tikanga and te reo Māori programmes, marae visits, cultural events, waiata and kapa haka performances, and classroom art.

Regular opportunities are provided for all parents to support their students and the school. Whānau are often involved in school activities and attend assemblies. Examples of participation by parents of Māori students include sports coaching and giving of awards to students at school assemblies.

Area for improvement

- Raising achievement

The board sets targets to raise Māori student achievement. They are aware of the need to address underachievement and to extend more able Māori students. Trustees should continue to put in place new initiatives and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies designed to raise student achievement in targeted areas.

The Achievement of Pacific Students

During the review ERO evaluated the extent to which the school has knowledge of and strategies for promoting the achievement of its Pacific students. Fourteen per cent of the school population identify as Pacific.

Areas of good performance

- Promoting Pacific culture

Pacific students benefit from the opportunities provided to engage in events that reflect their culture. The school's "Pacific Pride" group provides performances of a high standard. Students model pride, skill and personal discipline.

- Community involvement

The board encourages increased parent interaction, dialogue and participation within the life of the school. A board member, who is representative of the Pacific community, works inclusively alongside parents and encourages their participation in school life and student learning.

- Learning programmes

The board appropriately targets and provides for Pacific achievement. To facilitate effective learning selected students are supported to develop their confidence with English through English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), reading and oral language programmes. Classroom teachers receive inclass support in teaching Pacific students who are not yet confident speakers of English.

Area for improvement

- Raising student achievement

School data identifies that over 60% of Pacific students achieve at levels below national expectations. Raising Pacific student achievement should be maintained as a continuing focus for the board.

Providing for Students who are Underachieving

ERO is currently evaluating how well schools are providing for those students in their school who are not achieving as well as they should. ERO's findings for Somerset Crescent School are summarised below.

Background

Staff identify a high proportion of students with learning, social and behaviour needs. Teachers endeavour to cater for students' additional learning needs through special programmes and classroom support.

Areas of good performance

- Catering for individual needs

Students with high and moderate learning needs are effectively identified on entry, placed on appropriate programmes, and have their needs monitored throughout their time at school. The SENCO successfully leads these programmes and processes. Many successes are evident as students work with teachers, teacher aides and specialists, individually or in small groups.

Staff respond appropriately to meeting learner needs through the use of support services, individual and group specific programmes, and a range of strategies.

The range of services used include Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb); Resource Teacher: Literacy (RTLit); Ministry of Education: Special Education (GSE); and external social services. The range of programmes provided by the school includes Talk to Learn, perceptual motor skills, and remedial reading. In the new entrant classroom, the teacher and management are exploring ways to assist students to successfully transition to school. Within classrooms teachers respond through grouping students for phonic, alphabet, oral language, writing and pre-reading skill development.

- Quality of practice

Examples of high quality teaching practices and interactions with students with learning needs are evident. Students and teachers benefit from the SENCO's modelling of high quality teaching and interpersonal practices with student groups. Teacher aides are mostly providing effective learning support in a range of situations for individuals and groups of students.

Areas for improvement

- Moderate learning needs

The school identifies a significant number of students with moderate learning and behavioural needs. Practices to cater for their needs could be improved through:

- greater monitoring of the impact of intervention programmes implemented in classes on student achievement; and
- increased guidance, support and clarity for teachers and teacher aides as they work with student groups in classrooms.

Such practices should result in greater cohesion of individual programmes within classrooms and improved knowledge of the effectiveness of interventions and responses to students' needs.

- Catering for early learning needs

The board recognises that raising the achievement of junior students, particularly new entrants, is a major challenge. Trustees appropriately provide high levels of teacher aide support in classrooms throughout the school. Further ways to support the learning needs of students should be considered as they progress through the school.

The Quality of Teaching for Year 4 Students: Writing

Writing is part of English in the New Zealand Curriculum, which is one of the curriculum statements covering the essential learning areas of the New Zealand curriculum.

Area of good performance

Areas of good performance identified in the Reading and Writing focus area also reflect the quality of teaching in a Year 4 class.

- Catering for needs

Students' diverse needs are well identified and catered for in the writing programme. Detailed assessment information using benchmarks and teacher feedback over the year provides students with specific information to assist their goal setting and areas for development. Detailed student progress profiles and levels of achievement are used for reporting and planning. Learning activities and resources cater for a wide range of individual needs, experiences and interests. Students at all levels in the class demonstrate enjoyment in their writing.

Board Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Somerset Crescent 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.

Strategies for the Prevention of Bullying

ERO expects that each New Zealand school will have acknowledged that bullying behaviour is a risk to be managed.

As part of this review ERO discussed with the board and staff about how the school organisation and culture supports the physical and emotional safety of students. In particular ERO asked about the strategies the school has put in place to prevent bullying of all types and what they know about the success of these approaches.

The board describes the culture of the school as one that is caring, safe, and learner centred.

The board and principal state that the following has taken place to prevent bullying in the past three years.

School personnel:

- implement a specific behaviour system, philosophy and social skills programme. This promotes clear expectations, zero tolerance for bullying, and positive interventions and strategies for use by teachers and students in classrooms and the playground;
- closely monitor the types and rates of inappropriate behaviours, including bullying, and address issues as they arise; and
- increased the selection of interesting outdoor play equipment, built a new adventure playground and modified the length of morning and lunch-time intervals so that students can engage positively in activities.

The board and most staff demonstrate a strong commitment to continue in promoting a positive learning environment and minimising bullying. The principal provides the board with a useful overview of patterns of student behaviour on a regular basis.

Compliance

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

Recommendations

ERO recommends that:

- 6.1 school leaders and teachers implement effective teaching strategies, evident in some classes, to ensure all students fully engage in learning; and
- 6.2 the board further enhance the evaluation of student achievement and behaviour patterns, and closely monitor student and staff needs, to provide a high quality learning environment.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of students and the Crown and bring about improvement outlined in this report. Therefore ERO will review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

signed

Graham Randell
Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

14 June 2007

14 June 2007

To the Parents and Community of Somerset Crescent School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Somerset Crescent 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, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

signed

Graham Randell
Area Manager

for 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.

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.

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.

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