

Sacred Heart School (Dunedin)
Dunedin

Education Review Office

External Evaluation

ERO External Evaluation

Sacred Heart School (Dunedin)

1 Context

Sacred Heart School (Dunedin) is a small Catholic school that provides special character education for children from Years 1 to 6. The school has some children from bilingual homes where English is a second language. The principal is long-serving and has worked along with the teachers, parents and board to develop and maintain positive relationships within the community, including local schools.

There have been significant changes since the last ERO review including the retirement of a long-serving teacher and the reorganisation of classroom structures from three classes to two. Children learn in large, well-resourced and attractive spaces. ERO's previous reviews show Sacred Heart School has a record of consistently good performance.

2 Equity and excellence

The school's vision is to 'provide each child a superior education by building on their desire to inquire and learn in a safe, caring and supportive environment'. The school intends to develop in children a healthy respect for self and others and to nurture their spiritual development. This is to be achieved through the school's core values of respect, humanity, justice and truth.

The school community wants its children to be inquiring, self-managing, literate and numerate learners who act in a climate of faith and who care and support one another.

Children overall achieve highly in relation to the National Standards (NS). The number of Māori children attending the school is low. Their overall level of achievement is high and similar to that of their school peers.

The school's National Standards data for 2014 and 2015 shows that:

- most Māori children attain high levels of achievement and those who needed their achievement accelerated made good progress and/or were identified for ongoing support
- children's achievement in writing is generally lower than in reading and mathematics, while remaining higher than average for the region.

Since the last ERO evaluation, the school has:

- undertaken a range of professional development to promote student learning, engagement and achievement and to implement more effective school evaluation and teacher-inquiry practices
- put in place individual achievement plans for all children requiring extra support to achieve at or above the National Standards
- continued to provide targeted programmes and a skilled teacher aide to support children in need of extra assistance.

ERO and school leaders agree that the content and use of the individual achievement plans for Māori children and for all children should:

- be extended and personalised
- provide evidence of what has worked and what else needs to be done
- show the ongoing record of support.

3 Accelerating achievement

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

The school uses the same processes to identify and support all learners, including Māori who are at risk of not achieving excellent and equitable outcomes.

Teachers are very well aware of the conditions that contribute to accelerating children's progress. These include:

- knowing each learner well and setting individual learning plans
- providing a positive class and school culture where children are able to take risks
- teachers having a thorough knowledge of curriculum
- teachers constantly reflecting on what works and using internal evaluation effectively
- board funding of extra support.

Children at risk of not achieving well in their learning are identified through standardised testing and teacher observations, reflections and discussions that also include parents and/or whānau. Targets are set for these children to accelerate their progress to achieve National Standards. They receive specific teaching by a specialist teacher and/or experienced teacher aides within and out of the classroom. Teachers are committed to instilling confidence and self-belief in learners.

Parents of children receiving extra support are informed and invited to be involved. Some are actively working in partnership with the school to accelerate their child's progress. Teachers acknowledge (and ERO agrees) that this should be extended to become more visible in the achievement plans developed for each child receiving support for acceleration.

The principal is continuing to help raise the quality of teacher inquiries and modern learning practices.

A next step for the principal and for teachers is to show more clearly how the learning and achievement of children at risk of not achieving excellent and equitable outcomes are being accelerated. For example:

- information used for the individual learning plans could contain more information such as children's interests and strengths, and cultural backgrounds in a wider range of areas
- teachers' recording of support should be more regular and highlight key information about what is working well with evidence to support this
- reports to the board should show the number of children whose achievement was or was not accelerated over a given period of time to enable the board to better evaluate the effectiveness of the support provided.

4 School conditions

How effectively do the school's curriculum and other organisational processes and practices develop and enact the school's vision, values, goals and priorities for equity and excellence?

The board of trustees is well placed to sustain and improve the conditions required for all children, including Māori children, to attain equitable and excellent outcomes for individual success. Trustees bring a range of skills and experience to the role of stewardship of the school. They access external support to guide them when additional knowledge and skills are needed. They consult well with parents and the wider community about important decisions.

The board, principal and teachers are developing their understanding of effective evaluative inquiry. They increasingly evaluate the impacts of programmes, particularly focusing on teaching and learning, to make improvements for the benefit of all children. Trustees are well informed about school-wide achievement and what is needed to support children in their learning. This helps them in their decision making. They provide additional resourcing to support teaching and learning, and build the capacity of teachers to continue to grow and improve school performance. The principal and teachers regularly report children's learning information to parents and provide them with useful ideas to support their children.

Over the past two years, trustees have redeveloped the school's charter and annual plans to focus on key priorities. This continues to be an area that requires further development to ensure there are clear plans for how the strategic goals in relation to student learning will be implemented.

A culture of respect, trust and care is evident across the school. The principal and teachers are developing practices to empower children to take increasing responsibility for managing their own learning. It is timely to review the school's curriculum documentation to provide more specific guidance for teachers to support children to become self-managing learners. This includes involving children in assessment practices.

The school has continued to develop ways to value how te reo and tikanga Māori is experienced by children. Children told ERO they enjoyed learning and singing waiata and te reo Māori. The challenge for the school will be to maintain and build on these current good practices.

5 Going forward

How well placed is the school to achieve and sustain equitable and excellent outcomes for all children?

Leaders and teachers:

- know the children who need their learning and achievement need to be accelerated
- respond effectively to the strengths, needs and interests of each child
- regularly evaluate how well teaching is working for these children
- act on what they know works well for each child
- build teacher capability effectively to achieve equitable outcomes for all children
- are well placed to achieve and sustain equitable and excellent outcomes for all children.

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

6 Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review the board of trustees 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
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance
- compliance with the provisions of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.



Chris Rowe
Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern (Acting)

4 May 2016

About the school

Location	Dunedin	
Ministry of Education profile number	3815	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	41	
Gender composition	Boys: 21 Girls: 20	
Ethnic composition	Pākehā	30
	Māori	3
	Pacific	2
	Other	6
Review team on site	February 2016	
Date of this report	4 May 2016	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	February 2013
	Education Review	August 2009
	Education Review	September 2006