

ERO External Evaluation

Whanganui High School, Whanganui

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

Whanganui High School is large co-educational urban school catering for students in Years 9 to 13. At the time of this review the roll of 1315 including 409 Māori students. A large number of students whakapapa to Te Atihaunui-a-Pāpārangi iwi.

Specific education provisions include Te Atawhai Special Needs Unit and the offsite Alternative Education facility. There are 52 international students that attend the school from a range of countries.

The school's vision states that Whanganui High School 'will provide a future-focused education which enables all students to succeed'. This is supported by the mission statement 'that all students are given the opportunity and support required to reach their potential in all aspects of their education through LIFE (Learning – ako, Integrity – mana, Fellowship – manaakitanga and Excellence – kairangi)'.

The three main strategic goals in the school's charter are:

- development and maintenance of quality systems and processes
- development of quality learning and teaching
- provision of a high-quality learning environment.

There are further developmental goals for achievement, retention, engagement and attendance. Specific development areas focus on: students reaching their academic potential; teachers demonstrating and developing culturally responsive and relational pedagogies and effectively using digital technology in all curriculum areas to enhance future-focused teaching and learning.

Since the May 2016 ERO report, a new principal has been appointed to work with the experienced senior leadership team. A new board of trustees' chairperson was recently elected and there are three new parent-elected trustees.

There have been significant changes to the school operation since the previous ERO review. A house system has been introduced that reflects significant 'tohu tai au' in and around Whanganui. Form classes are now arranged vertically incorporating all year levels and aligned to a house. The timetable has changed from a 10-day structure to a five-day model. The enrolment zone that was in place has now been removed and there is open entry to the school. There are four dedicated supported learning classes at Year 9 and 10. The number of these classes has increased since 2018.

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

- National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA)
- aspects of achievement at Years 9 and 10.

The school is a member of the Takitini Tahi Kāhui Ako.

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 yet to achieve equitable and excellent outcomes for all of its students.

The school's 2018 enrolment-based data shows that most students achieved well at NCEA Level 2 and the majority of students achieved NCEA Levels 1 and 3. This data also shows that less than half of students achieved University Entrance (UE). There is significant disparity between the achievement of male students compared to their female peers at Level 1 and UE. At Level 3, there is some disparity between males and females. New Zealand European students achieved significantly higher than their Māori peers at Levels 1, 3 and UE. There were lower levels of disparity for Māori at Level 2. For Pacific learners there is significant disparity across all levels of NCEA and some disparity in University Entrance, when compared to New Zealand European students.

Trends and patterns over time also shows that there has been a decline in overall achievement.

Achievement data from 2016 - 2017 indicates that there is ongoing disparity for males and Māori.

A wide range of student achievement data is gathered and reported for Year 9 and 10 students in a variety of ways. Strengthening the reporting, analysis and use of this data is a priority for the school. This data shows that by the end of Year 10 most students achieve at expected levels.

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

The school has some achievement information that shows effective acceleration for those Māori and other students who need this over time.

Of those students entering the school at Year 9 in 2015 achieving below curriculum expectations, almost all successfully gained NCEA Level 2. Strategies and interventions used to accelerate the progress and achievement were most effective for female and New Zealand European students when compared with male and Māori students.

For the small number of students that were part of the supported learning class from 2018 - 2019, achievement information shows this initiative effectively accelerated learners progress and achievement.

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?

A wide range of well-considered strategies has been introduced to guide change and improvement. The principal has introduced and revitalised many initiatives to support student wellbeing and aspects of achievement. A clear focus on building the capability of teachers and middle leaders is evident through professional learning and development that is well aligned to charter goals. Purposeful and strategic appointments have distributed the leadership of key initiatives to support students' academic and pastoral needs. The board is well informed about senior student achievement, organisational change and it is improvement focused. This enables trustees to contribute to ongoing discussions and decisions about improving student outcomes.

There is a broad range of flexible and meaningful pathways for learners as they progress through the school. Transition processes for all learners into, through and beyond school are responsive to individual student's strengths and interests. Students can select from a wide range of courses and opportunities to enhance engagement and potential career outcomes.

Collaborative systems, processes and teams provide effective advice, guidance and mentoring for students. Respectful relationships support positive learning environments. The holistic wellbeing of all students is an ongoing priority for the school. There is a highly inclusive approach to identify and respond to students with additional learning and health needs at all levels of the school. Students are provided with a wide range of leadership opportunities that authentically involve them in many processes across the school.

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

The school needs to more effectively analyse and use achievement information to inform teaching and learning. This needs to include extending leaders' and teachers' knowledge about the purpose of assessments to accelerate the progress and achievement of learners. Deepening the analysis of achievement information is also needed to enable the school to understand and respond to the trends and patterns of groups and cohorts over time.

Internal evaluation requires strengthening to better measure the impact of changes in teacher practice. A more rationalised and streamlined approach is needed to strengthen the effectiveness in implementing and embedding strategic priorities. Senior and middle leaders need to continue developing their understanding of internal evaluation to fully evaluate the impact on all of the school's valued student outcomes.

Leaders and teachers have identified and begun to prioritise culturally responsive and relational pedagogies to support students' language, culture and identity. Further consideration and integration of Māori contexts into students' learning remains an important focus area for the school. A sense of urgency is required to implement the systems, processes and resources that have been developed recently.

3 Other Matters

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

At the time of this review there were 52 international students attending the school.

The school's self-review process for international students is thorough and contributes to further developments. Policies and practice suitably guide the provision for international students. Students can access comprehensive curriculum experiences and subject choices. Continuing to strengthen reporting to the board about outcomes for all international students should enhance ongoing evaluation of the programme.

Clear processes are in place to track and monitor students' progress and achievement towards intended destination pathways. There is an extensive range of opportunities and experiences for students to know, understand and fully engage in New Zealand life. A wide range of support for international students is in place to guide and respond to their learning, health and wellbeing needs.

4 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 Children's Act 2014.

5 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of Whanganui High School's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Developing

6 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- an approach to change and improvement that supports students' academic and pastoral needs
- the development of teachers and middle leaders that supports implementation of charter goals
- pathways for students that are broad in range, flexible and meaningful
- practices that cater for the holistic wellbeing of all students.

Next steps

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

- the analysis and use of student achievement information to directly inform teacher practice
- internal evaluation to fully understand the effectiveness of recent changes in organisational structures and systems
- supporting and incorporating te ao Māori to promote students' language, culture and identity.



Phillip Cowie

Director Review and Improvement Services Central

Central Region

19 December 2019

About the school

Location	Whanganui
Ministry of Education profile number	189
School type	Secondary (Years 9 - 13)
School roll	1315
Gender composition	Female 49%, Male 51%
Ethnic composition	Māori 31% NZ European/Pākehā 55% Pacific 3% Other ethnic groups 11%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	September 2019
Date of this report	19 December 2019
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review May 2016 Education Review September 2011 Education Review October 2008