

Ongaonga 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 | Ongaonga, Central Hawke's Bay |
| Ministry of Education profile number | 2629 |
| School type | Full Primary (Year 1 - 8) |
| Decile rating[1] | 6 |
| Teaching staff: | 7.1 |
| Roll generated entitlement | 1.2 |
| Other | 10 |
| Number of teachers | |
| School roll | 138 |
| Gender composition | Male 61%, Female 39% |
| Ethnic composition | NZ European/Pākehā 86%, Māori 14% |
| Review team on site | June 2009 |
| Date of this report | 17 July 2009 |
| Previous ERO reports | Education Review May 2006 Education Review November 2003 Accountability Review August 2000 Effectiveness Review April 1997 Assurance Audit August 1995 Review June 1992 |

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Ongaonga School is a rural full primary for students in Years 1 to 8, located east of Waipukurau in Central Hawke's Bay. At the time of this review in June 2009 it had a roll of 138 students, 14% of whom were Māori.

Teachers, trustees and parents believe that developing good citizens for the future and providing students with a well-rounded education is a priority. These values are evident in the way students relate to each other and with teachers, and in the confidence they show while learning.

Most students achieve at or above age appropriate expectations in literacy and mathematics. Small groups in Years 4 and 8 are identified as 2009 target groups for improvement in numeracy. Teachers are aware that Year 7 and 8 students need to be well prepared and achieving as successfully as possible before they enrol at secondary school. As a result, specific strategies are in place for a group of Year 7 students, to improve their achievement from average to above average.

Systems for assessing, monitoring and using student achievement information are under review. The newly written mathematics document is a useful model for future curriculum development.

Most teachers use a good range of strategies to promote student enthusiasm for learning. However, teaching practice across the school is variable. Sharing the good models evident in many classrooms is necessary to ensure all students receive consistently high quality learning opportunities. Such an emphasis on improvement should also contribute to sustained curriculum development, the imbedding of agreed strategies and improvements to student achievement. A greater emphasis monitoring the quality of teaching and learning by the principal and senior managers should also contribute to improved outcomes for students.

Most students understand and can explain their current level of achievement and next steps for improvement. Parents are well-informed through informal discussion and at more formal parent/teacher interviews. The current written report format is being reviewed, following consultation, to ensure that the content is accurate and clear.

Students enjoy considerable opportunities to participate in sporting and cultural activities. Their involvement in Māori cultural festivals is actively promoted and valued by students and their whānau.

Community relationships are strong and the School Support Group contributes considerable

funding to enhance the wide range of resources available to students. Extending the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is an ongoing commitment by the board to 'future-proof' students' knowledge and skills.

Trustees have a robust system for reviewing policies and procedures. The proposed review of assessment should contribute to lifting board self review to a higher level. Senior leaders, teachers and trustees support each other to meet the wishes of parents and the community, and to provide a challenging environment for students.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interests 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 three 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.

Teachers assess students' developmental needs and early literacy skills during their first weeks at school. The results of close observation and more formal assessment provide a starting point for teaching. Students are enthusiastic learners and make positive gains following enrolment. Parental interest is strongly evident. A reading recovery programme, teacher-aide assistance and a specialist teacher, support students with specific or more complex needs.

The results of Progressive Achievement Tests show that most students in Years 5 to 8 have a good understanding of what they read. A small number of Years 4 and 5 students receive additional support to improve their comprehension skills.

Most teachers assess students' writing samples against nationally developed exemplars. They moderate and analyse the results to identify areas of strength and aspects for further development. Most individual teachers review their programmes and adapt teaching strategies to achieve improved outcomes.

Most students in Years 6, 7 and 8 achieve at or above nationally agreed expectations in mathematics. Groups in Years 4 and 8 are specifically targeted for improvement in 2009. In addition, extending the capability of a group of Year 7 students is a priority. Most teachers use diagnostic tests to identify the next steps to improve students' knowledge and understanding of number strategies.

There are clear guidelines for identifying students with specific or more complex learning needs. Their achievement levels and the support to be provided are recorded in a special needs register. The special needs coordinator, at regular intervals, discusses their programme with class teachers and monitors the success of interventions.

The schoolwide picture of student achievement and progress in literacy and mathematics is unclear. Consequently, assessment procedures are currently under review to determine which assessment tools provide the most useful information for teaching and reporting purposes. The review follows parent consultation, suggestions from the board and teachers' professional development in literacy and mathematics. Agreed guidelines and practices should result in greater consistency, reliability and purpose for assessment.

School Specific Priorities

Before the review, the board of Ongaonga 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 Ongaonga School.

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

- improving student achievement.

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

Improving Student Achievement

Background

Teachers have participated in professional development in mathematics and formative assessment. As a result, a new curriculum document guides teachers' planning, teaching and assessment practice in mathematics. Senior leaders expect that students will have a better understanding of their current learning level and goals for improvement.

Areas of good performance

- Teaching strategies

Most teachers use a good range of strategies to promote student achievement and enthusiasm for learning. In these effective classrooms, staff model new skills and concepts, ask open-ended questions to develop students' ideas and make links with prior learning and experiences. Tasks are relevant and meaningful, sometimes arising from students' interests or choices of activity. These teachers use ICT well to support, engage and motivate students in practical learning. Follow-up activities are usually well matched to individual needs identified through assessment, or observed during group sessions. Most students are keen, confident learners.

- Student involvement in learning

Students know their current learning level, next steps for improvement and the criteria against which to measure success. In most classrooms teachers share goals in literacy

and numeracy, helping students focus purposefully on the learning task. Goals are displayed on walls, in students' books and are constantly reinforced by the teacher throughout the lesson. There are ample opportunities for students to self and peer-assess their work. As they progress through the school, students increasingly take responsibility for their learning.

- Learning journey reporting

In many cases students' learning journey books provide an accurate, forward-looking record of achievement and progress across the curriculum. They include samples of work levelled to school indicators of success. Some achievement data is referenced to age appropriate or national expectations and illustrates progress over time. Comments also indicate how individuals may improve in certain areas. There are examples of self-assessment and self-chosen work. Well structured and comprehensive learning journals are a valuable tool for reporting to parents and assist students to understand how well they are achieving.

- Mathematics curriculum guidelines

Recently developed guidelines clearly outline appropriate, agreed expectations for teaching and assessment in mathematics. The document includes strategies likely to be successful in improving teaching and learning, advice about the use of assessment data, and explicit statements about expected achievement for each year level. This document encourages a consistent approach to planning and delivering effective mathematics programmes across the school.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency

Teaching practice across the school is variable. Many good models exist in individual classrooms. However, programmes for some students reflect an over-reliance on less challenging worksheet activities and lack cohesion. Sharing teachers' knowledge and strengths should contribute to improved learning opportunities for students. Curriculum development, imbedding agreed strategies and improving student achievement should also benefit from consistent quality improvements.

- Assessment

Teachers' implementation and use of assessment is inconsistent. Systems for gathering, collating, using and reporting student achievement are complex and under review. Determining and formalising an agreed framework should better inform teaching, assist senior leaders to track achievement over time and contribute more effectively to the board's review process. Senior leaders should then be well placed to monitor teachers' planning and assessment, to achieve greater consistency in matching students' current achievement levels to the next steps identified for learning.

- Self review

The board's self-review process is not based on a consistent and comprehensive school framework for assessment. Trustees acknowledge the improved quality and quantity of achievement information shared by senior leaders. A more structured reporting system with written commentary should improve reviews of resourcing and progress in meeting achievement targets. It should also sharpen the board's planning, decision making and monitoring process.

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 Ongaonga 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: Progress

In this review, ERO evaluated the progress the school has made since the last review in improving the achievement of Māori students and in initiatives designed to promote improved achievement. Areas of good performance identified in the May 2006 report are sustained.

Areas of progress

- Consultation

In response to parent and whānau wishes, greater opportunities are available for students to participate in cultural festivals. Students demonstrate considerable pride in their appearance and performance skills. In addition to board-initiated cluster meetings for parents, plans are in place to continue whānau meetings as part of the consultation process towards implementing the New Zealand Curriculum.

The Teaching of Reading and Writing in Years 1 and 2

As part of this review ERO looked at how well teachers assess, plan and teach reading and writing to students in Years 1 and 2, and how well the school promotes high levels of student achievement in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.

Areas of good performance

- Developing confident learners

Priority is given to students experiencing immediate success in literacy learning. The new

entrant teacher assesses students' readiness to begin formal learning. Expectations for individual achievement are clear and progress is monitored against nationally agreed standards. Routines and thorough organisation encourage independence and confidence. Teachers emphasise links between oral language, writing and reading. Students understand that writing can be improved by referring to learning prompts, and by thinking carefully and extending their ideas. Sharing work in progress allows them to monitor their own efforts while learning to give and accept critical feedback. Students read and write with enthusiasm.

- Teaching strategies

Teachers use a range of effective approaches to engage students in learning. In reading, examples include: using carefully chosen resources matched with interests; asking open-ended questions to extend ideas; sharing the learning purpose; and spending regular, quality teaching time with each group. Follow-up tasks require students to practise new reading skills and strategies.

In writing, teachers enthusiastically model the process, encourage students to reflect on and improve their work, support learning through discussion and provide learning prompts for students to use independently. Expectations are explicit and students know the indicators for success.

Where this good practice is evident, students persevere with tasks and are improvement focused.

- Literacy environment

Classroom environments make meaningful links between students' experiences, interests and current learning. Displayed work provides an evolving record of progress and examples of peer and self-assessment. Students confidently use resources and learning prompts, and self select appropriate texts during silent reading time. They respond positively to their surroundings and are proud of their achievements.

Area for improvement

- Sharing good practice

There are no planned opportunities for teachers in Years 1 and 2 to regularly share good practice. They discuss informally students' needs, programme content and ideas for teaching strategies. Allocating professional development time to support this process should result in more consistent practice, and complement the quality of assessment and teaching already evident in junior classrooms.

Implementing the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010

Progress to date

In preparing for teaching the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010 the school has:

- · allocated professional learning and development time to gain an understanding of the new document;
- · supported the principal's participation in local cluster schools' meetings to work collaboratively on curriculum development;
- · developed an action plan to guide implementation;
- · presented information at a series of local parent meetings and sought feedback about homework and reporting processes;
- · written a new mathematics curriculum document to guide teaching and assessment practice; and
- · trialled the use of key competencies in integrated units.

Next steps

The school has decided that its priorities for preparation over the next three to six months are to:

- · seek parent and student feedback on the school's vision and values and possible curriculum principles and design;
- · develop a statement about the characteristics of the "Ongaonga Kid" as a result of the above consultation;
- · review how well current programmes and practices match the intentions of the new curriculum statement in terms of the curriculum principles and learning areas;
- · decide how to use key competencies in planning and assessment;
- · develop all curriculum statements using the new mathematics document as a model; and
- · review and further develop systems for reporting information about student achievement to parents.

Board Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Ongaonga 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.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that:

6.1 the principal and senior leaders continue to review and develop assessment practice, to better inform teaching, track schoolwide achievement overtime and contribute to the board's review process; and

6.2 the principal and senior leaders monitor teacher performance, and initiate opportunities for teachers to share effective teaching strategies and improve consistency.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interests of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

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Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

17 July 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Ongaonga School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Ongaonga 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>.

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.

Review Coverage

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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.