

Queen Elizabeth College Education Review

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About the School

Location	Palmerston North	
Ministry of Education profile number	201	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 15)	
School roll	210	
Gender composition	Male 52%, Female 48%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	37%
	NZ European/Pākehā	34%
	Asian	17%
	Pacific	7%
	Other ethnic groups	5%
Special features	Bilingual Unit, Service Academy	
Review team on site	September 2013	
Date of this report	13 November 2013	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2012
	Education Review	March 2008
	Education Review	May 2005

The Purpose of an ERO Report

The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance

about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school report answers the question “How effectively is this school’s curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?” Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school’s systems for sustaining and continuing improvements.

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1 Context

What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?

Queen Elizabeth College in Palmerston North caters for students in Years 9 to 15. The current roll is 210 students. Thirty seven percent of students are Māori. A bilingual te reo Māori class, Reo Rua, is offered to Year 9 and 10 students.

Small, multi-level classes enable school leaders and teachers to know the students and their families well. Students achieve success in an extensive range of sporting and cultural opportunities.

The school offers English language learning programmes for adult students recently migrated to New Zealand. In 2012, a Service Academy for senior students who have shown an interest in a career in the services was established at the school.

There is a tolerant, respectful tone across the school. A family atmosphere, within a supportive learning environment, is evident. This is fostered through formal and informal pastoral care.

Trustees, leaders and teachers work hard to meet the educational and pastoral needs of students. They aim to assist students to 'be the best they can be' and develop into 'contributing citizens'. Individuals are valued and students are proud to be part of this school.

2 Learning

How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement?

Assessment information is used appropriately to identify and respond to overall patterns and trends in student achievement, and the needs of year level groups, classes and individuals.

The information includes standardised test results at Years 9 and 10, and National Certificates of Education Achievement (NCEA) data. School leaders have also gathered data about attendance, outof-class behaviour, disciplinary matters and retention. Collectively, this information indicates the need to raise levels of student presence, engagement and achievement.

Data has been analysed according to the number of students who participate in NCEA. Since 2009, this shows a general upward trend and overall achievement above the figures for students who achieve the NCEAs nationally and in schools of a similar type. The exception is for NCEA Level 1 in 2012.

NCEA data analysed according to roll numbers shows that some Years 11 and 12 students are leaving college before they complete the year and gain qualifications. School leaders are beginning to collect and collate information about these students.

Professional development for school leaders and teachers about using student achievement information is likely to strengthen analysis of data and further develop the process of inquiry. This should lead to increased opportunities for thinking more deeply and drawing conclusions about the information that is gathered. It should also better inform focused planning and teaching.

Year 9 students are tested in reading, writing and numeracy when they enter the college. Results show that the majority of these students are performing below or well below expectation for their year and age. Some interventions are provided. These have not been reviewed to enable the school to identify how effective they have been in accelerating learning. Many students from each year group take longer than three years to gain an NCEA Level 1 qualification.

Targets were set in 2012 for accelerating Year 9 and 10 students' progress in reading and numeracy. These were not met and remain as targets for 2013. In 2011, staff undertook externally facilitated professional development in teaching literacy across the curriculum. ERO's evaluation highlights the need to reintroduce this focus in 2014. This should be supported by a specific action plan with measurable outcomes.

Useful frameworks are in place to respond to students' interests and career aspirations. These include many opportunities for formal and informal discussions with students and their families. Senior leadership meetings have a strong focus on individual students and their achievement. Teachers care about students and their achievement.

A number of strategies and initiatives have been put in place to support students and accelerate their progress. Leaders are aware that implementation of some of these approaches needs to be more thorough and consistent across departments. So far, there has been no deliberate monitoring or evaluation of the impacts of the initiatives.

A next step is to promote students' engagement through scaffolding their ownership of learning. To assist with this process, teachers should develop a shared understanding of using the key competencies as tools for teaching and learning, with increased use of specific feedback and student self assessment.

3 Curriculum

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?

The school provides a broad-based curriculum. This is taught through a range of subjects, including work-based options.

Over recent years, the school has introduced changes to its organisation and curriculum provision, with a focus on increasing student achievement. These include changing the pastoral care system to one that is house-based, with vertical group classes and house deans. This assists group teachers and deans to build ongoing relationships with students and their parents. Other developments include:

- 'Kete Tupu', a programme to assist Year 9 students to focus on learning and incorporate literacy strategies in core curriculum areas. Students attend weekly small group learning conferences
- support lessons for students in Years 9 and 10 who require additional assistance to make accelerated progress in reading
- the ACE programme for Year 9 and 10 students, focused on establishing sound work habits
- individual action plans for encouraging self-regulating learners
- weekly career-based programmes for Years 11 to 13.

The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) initiative has been introduced from the start of 2013. The school is working through a consultation process with staff, students and families to establish agreed behaviour expectations.

The school is reviewing how effectively the curriculum meets the needs of students and sustains their engagement in learning. Plans are being made to implement changes to composition of classes in 2014.

Information from Pacific students and their families has been collected, to assist staff to promote their success.

ERO observed some examples of teachers using good teaching strategies. These include providing relevant, meaningful contexts linked to students' prior knowledge. However, the quality of teaching is variable. Developing a shared understanding of effective pedagogy and indicators of high quality teaching and learning should be a priority. Professional development to support teachers to ensure full use of opportunities for focused teaching and collaborative learning, should also be initiated.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?

The school community values, supports and celebrates Māori students' culture, language and identity. Regular whānau hui and parent teacher meetings enable discussions about learning, achievement and school direction. Students, their whānau, trustees and staff have considered what success as Māori means for them. This information has been documented and shared.

School direction is clear and well documented in the strategic plan. A specific goal states the commitment of trustees and staff to providing a learning environment that acknowledges and reflects Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

School organisation promotes te ao Māori. The Reo Rua class is based in the school wharenuī, Te Matui. Students from this class lead pōwhiri for manuhiri. These are an integral part of the school's kawa.

4 Sustainable Performance

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

Trustees have a well-organised approach to governance. Succession planning is well managed and new trustees are mentored to sustain effective governance.

School leaders have improved the quality of reports to the board in response to findings in the 2010 ERO report. The reports are well-structured. They include increased analysis of information and recommendations to the board for future action. Teachers share information about essential learning areas at board meetings.

The inclusive, nurturing school culture is positive for supporting student wellbeing and achievement.

Senior leaders are working on improving the performance management system so that it becomes a robust tool for:

- monitoring progress towards the annual goals
- identifying development needs
- building capacity for improving teacher practice and promoting effective teaching and learning.

The principal's performance management should be strengthened and include closer links to the strategic direction of the school.

Self review should be improved to become more evaluative, increase the evidence base and ensure that impacts for students is always considered.

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:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management

- financial management
- asset management.

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

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

Recommendations to other agencies

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider providing support from a Student Achievement Function practitioner to assist school leaders and teachers to make increased use of assessment information to assist acceleration of student progress.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

Joyce Gebbie
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13 November 2013