

Conifer Grove School Education Review

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1 Context

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

Conifer Grove School continues to provide students from Years 1 to 8 with a rich variety of learning opportunities. The school's overarching vision of 'Learning for a Lifetime' is characterised by caring and inclusive relationships and practices within a vibrant school environment. Staff, students, whānau and families are very proud of their school.

Students are confident, friendly and respectful. An annual cultural fair is a significant event that honours students' language, culture and identity. Trustees, school leaders and staff continue to have high expectations for all students to experience and celebrate success.

Students learn in three age-related add teams Timata, Haemata, and Kotahitanga. Transition into, through and beyond the school is very well managed. Special features of the school's setting include the Information Technology Centre and the productive school gardens situated in the attractive school setting. These facilities are well used to enhance students' learning and community participation.

ERO's 2012 report noted how the school's positive tone reflected its core values of responsibility, honesty, caring and trust. Trustees and school leaders have sustained and further developed these positive features.

2 Learning

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

Student achievement information is used well to make positive changes that increase learners' engagement and success. Trustees and school leaders scrutinise school-wide achievement information. This helps them to ensure that resources are focused on the areas of greatest student need.

Students enjoy affirming relationships with each other and with staff. They are highly engaged and work independently and collaboratively. Increasingly they can talk about their achievement and teachers assist them to set appropriate learning goals.

The school's active promotion and support for the wellbeing of students impacts positively on their engagement and learning. The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) initiative has been successful in creating more positive home and school relationships in order to improve children's wellbeing and increase their school achievement.

The school works well with the significant numbers of new entrant students who arrive with limited formal literacy and numeracy skills. Transition programmes are individualised to the developmental levels of each child. This helps to ensure students experience success in their first years at school.

Well-developed assessment systems provide achievement information that is used to inform strategic decisions. National Standards data indicate that the majority of students achieve well in literacy and mathematics. Māori students achieve particularly well in mathematics. The achievement data for Pacific students are trending upwards in literacy and mathematics.

Senior leaders use assessment data to monitor selected students and ensure that these students receive the help they need to progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They put in place support programmes that are carefully targeted to the needs of identified students. The progress students make while on these programmes is carefully monitored.

Learning environments celebrate students' achievements and successes. Teachers promote strategies that help students to become increasingly self-managing learners. Senior leaders recognise that increasing opportunities for students to take further ownership of their learning is a next step. ERO supports this intention.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum is effective in promoting and supporting student learning. The school values and The New Zealand Curriculum key competencies are cornerstones of the curriculum. Students experience a wide range of opportunities to participate in meaningful learning activities and experience success. They also have good opportunities to develop social and leadership skills as they move through the school.

Curriculum documentation provides clear direction for teachers. Assessment information, student views and parent contributions inform ongoing curriculum review and development.

Learning programmes are relevant and flexible. They feature a natural integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance learning opportunities for students. School leaders are focused on empowering students for the future. This involves extending e-learning and maximising the opportunities provided for students to learn locally, nationally and globally.

Team leaders and teachers are highly collegial and willingly share their expertise. They implement the curriculum very well and are committed to strengthening their practice. Well-considered professional learning and development, using internal and external expertise, enhances teaching practices.

Students have opportunities to learn about and participate in the Māori dimension of New Zealand's cultural heritage. School leaders have appropriately included, in the new school wide te reo Māori plan, further professional development to increase teachers' capacity to integrate te reo me ōna tikanga into learning programmes.

The board and school leaders recognise that providing more evaluative information in reports to the board about the effectiveness of initiatives is a useful next step for curriculum development. More evaluative reporting is likely to enhance strategic planning and help with decision-making about resourcing.

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

Twenty six percent of students identify as Māori. Māori students express very positive attitudes to learning and are well represented in school leadership roles. They take pride in the recognition and acknowledgement of Māori values and tikanga. They have multiple opportunities to celebrate significant events in the Māori calendar such as Matariki and to participate and lead karanga, waiata and kapa haka.

Particular strategies to promote Māori success in the school include the:

- school waiata which is a feature of school assemblies
- prominent displays of te reo Māori throughout the school
- strategic appointment of a Māori teacher to further develop Māori school initiatives.

The Māori Parents Whānau Committee is providing cultural expertise and guidance for trustees, staff and students. Key members of this whānau group have developed an action plan, Te Ara Hou, to strengthen educational success for Māori and build productive partnerships with Māori whānau.

Trustees and school leaders are committed to promoting Māori student potential. They acknowledge that Te Ara Hou provides a more coordinated and strategic approach to promote success for Māori, as Māori. To enhance this plan, trustees and school leaders could identify and document the roles and responsibilities they have in relation to achieving the goals of Te Ara Hou. The New Zealand School Trustees Association's resource Hautū could be a useful tool to guide this new development.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance. An inclusive school culture and committed staff, trustees and community provide a strong foundation for sustaining and improving student learning. School leadership is focused on valued outcomes for students.

The principal is instrumental in building leadership capacity and influence throughout the school. She is well supported by a competent senior leadership team who have complementary leadership skills and strengths. The team is focused on creating a professional learning culture and recognising people's capabilities to enhance school development.

Capable middle leaders are pivotal to ongoing improvement of classroom programmes and for sustaining school initiatives. Positive professional relationships have helped establish a collegial culture of trust and care.

The board is well led. Trustees are committed to supporting the school's ongoing development. They use their skills and expertise for the benefit of the school. Trustees have worked strategically to build relational trust with their school community. They have sought feedback from families, staff and students to help them plan for the future.

ERO affirms the school's intention to review the charter and strategic plan. The board should give priority to its role in setting, evaluating and monitoring strategic and annual goals. The principal could now adapt her reporting to focus more on progress towards meeting these goals.

Trustees and school leaders recognise that key next steps for school development include:

- updating appraisal policies, procedures and practices to align with the latest New Zealand Education Council expectations
- developing a Treaty of Waitangi policy to underpin steps taken to promote Māori student success as Maori
- extending evaluative inquiry to better inform and support the board's self-review and the school's strategic direction.

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.

Conclusion

Students at Conifer Grove School benefit from learning environments that reflect the school's culture of high expectations. Affirming relationships and positive values provide sound foundations for learning. The school's responsive curriculum builds on students' strengths and supports their learning needs. Good quality governance, leadership and teaching help to ensure these positive features are sustained.

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

Graham Randell
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern

15 January 2016

School Statistics

Location	Takanini, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	1255	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	546	
Gender composition	Boys 53% Girls 47%	
Ethnic composition	Pākehā	36%
	Māori	26%
	Indian	12%
	Samoan	8%
	Asian	6%
	African	3%
	other Pacific	6%
	other	3%
Review team on site	November 2015	
Date of this report	15 January 2016	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2012
	Education Review	August 2009
	Education Review	September 2006