



Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Portland School
Whangarei

Confirmed

Education Review Report

Education Review Report

Portland School

This review is designed to support schools that were experiencing difficulties at the time of the last review. ERO provides ongoing evaluation over the course of one-to-two years as the school works to improve its overall performance and build its self-review capability.

This report answers key questions about the school's background and the context for the review. The report also provides an evaluation of how effectively the school is addressing areas identified for review and development and the quality of its practices and systems for sustaining performance and ongoing improvement.

Findings

1 Background and Context

What is the background and context for this school's review?

Portland School, near Whangarei, is a contributing primary school that provides education for children in Years 1 to 6. Just over 50 percent of the children identify as Māori, and approximately 13 percent are of Pacific heritage.

ERO's 2017 report identified significant areas for development in building leadership and stewardship capability, improving teaching and learning programmes and internal evaluation. The report recommended that the school work with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) to increase the school's capability to improve student achievement and with the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) to improve stewardship capability. ERO also decided to carry out an ongoing evaluation, over the course of one-to-two years, to support and evaluate the school's progress and improvement.

Since the 2017 ERO review, the school has appointed a principal, part-time teacher and teacher aide. New trustees have joined the long serving, experienced board chair to govern the school. Significant classroom and property enhancements have been made. Relationships with whānau, the Portland community and connections with the "local environment" have been re-established and strengthened.

The Ministry worked with the school to develop an improvement plan aligned to ERO's 2017 recommendations. Teachers have worked with the Ministry's Student Achievement Function (SAF) practitioner to develop robust assessment systems and practices. The NZSTA has provided developmental programmes and advice to the board of trustees. These initiatives and professional learning opportunities have strengthened stewardship and leadership capability to sustain change.

Evidence collected through ERO's longitudinal review process has been used to evaluate the progress that trustees, the principal and teachers have made to address the concerns and recommendations identified in 2017. The findings are outlined in the following sections of this report.

The school is a member of the Ngā Kura mō te ako o Whangarei Kāhui Ako Group 4.

2 Review and Development

How effectively is the school addressing its priorities for review and development?

Priorities identified for review and development

Portland School has been involved in a review with ERO to support school progress and development. ERO established the following priorities for the review:

- developing and documenting a coherent and connected school curriculum
- developing robust assessment systems and processes
- improving the consistency and quality of teaching and learning
- strengthening internal evaluation capacity and capability
- building leadership and stewardship capability to sustain and embed changes.

Progress

The school has made good progress across the five improvement priorities identified in the 2017 ERO report.

Developing and documenting a coherent and connected school curriculum

The Portland School curriculum continues to evolve to meet the needs of all learners. Strong foundations are in place to enact a coherent, connected and relevant local curriculum for Portland learners. Curriculum principles have been developed following consultation with staff, the board and whānau.

The place-based curriculum emphasises the local environment, environmental sustainability and education outside the classroom (EOTC). It also places a strong focus on accelerating students' progress in literacy and numeracy. Te reo Māori and tikanga are interwoven throughout the school day and curriculum. The school now plans to develop a graphic representation of the curriculum to share with whānau and the community.

Developing robust assessment systems and processes

Assessment systems, processes and practices have significantly improved. Achievement information is now more reliable and robust. Teachers' analysis and use of achievement information to inform teaching and learning programmes has improved.

Teachers have benefited from internal and external professional development to build their understanding of effective assessment systems and practices. They are using achievement information more confidently to moderate assessment judgements.

The recent introduction of acceleration plans has created a sense of urgency for teachers to have a greater focus on accelerating children's progress in literacy and numeracy. This initiative supports teachers to analyse data and closely monitor the progress of children who are not achieving at curriculum expectations.

Since 2017, achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has continued to improve. Teachers are using effective strategies to support children to make accelerated progress in literacy and numeracy. Achievement information for 2020 show that, most children are achieving at expected curriculum levels in reading, and the majority are working at expected levels in writing and mathematics.

Improving the consistency and quality of teaching and learning

The staff have engaged with professional learning and development programmes to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning. These include:

- a behaviour for learning programme to further assist teachers and support staff to embed the school values
- teachers working with external practitioners to strengthen their classroom practice
- using kāhui ako writing achievement goals to accelerate progress and achievement
- attending EOTC safety planning workshops.

Teachers' use of acceleration plans, learning progressions and participation in weekly acceleration meetings are resulting in improved consistency of teaching practice. Teaching and learning spaces have been reorganised to allow for greater collaboration. Teachers are modelling and sharing effective teaching practice.

Changes to the learning environment have increased children's engagement and tuakana/teina learning opportunities. Children experience more opportunities to learn collaboratively in classrooms and outside on the new deck area.

The principal, teachers and support staff work collaboratively to support children's wellbeing and learning. High expectations for children's behaviour, engagement and learning are evident. The school values are increasingly well enacted inside and outside the classrooms.

Strengthening internal evaluation capability and capacity

Internal evaluation capability is continuing to improve. The school is now well placed to evaluate the extent to which initiatives have contributed to increasing literacy and numeracy achievement and ensuring these positive trends are sustained.

Continuing to strengthen the analysis of student achievement information should assist leaders and teachers to increase achievement parity and ensure equitable outcomes are achieved by all children.

A new strategic plan has been developed. The useful annual plan aligns to the strategic plan. The principal and board monitor the progress towards strategic and annual goals. They now intend to strengthen internal evaluation by documenting the outcomes of annual goals.

Building leadership and stewardship capability to sustain and embed changes

The board, principal and teachers are committed to ensuring that children achieve the best learning and wellbeing outcomes. The principal is providing inclusive and relevant learning opportunities for children and staff. He communicates to the community the school's clear vision and future direction as well as the priorities for school improvement.

The principal is well supported by the board. Trustees are committed to the school's values, direction and equitable outcomes for all children. They continue to engage with NZSTA to build their understanding of effective stewardship. Policies and procedures have recently moved to an online platform. This provides the school with a coherent and up-to-date policy framework.

The board is introducing portfolios for each trustee to share responsibilities and to use trustees' knowledge, experience, and expertise. Trustees are continuing to develop skills of scrutinising achievement and other relevant information for strategic decision making directed at improving student outcomes.

Key next steps

The board, principal and teachers should continue to:

- evaluate the impact of initiatives to accelerate student progress and achievement
- strengthen whānau involvement in children's learning
- strengthen the use of internal evaluation to sustain improvement and innovation.

3 Sustainable performance and self review

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

The school is developing good processes and systems to sustain and continue to improve its performance. The school learning culture is focused on children and their wellbeing. The board, principal and teachers are committed to improving children's progress and achievement. Over the last three years, achievement information has indicated a positive upward trend.

The board chair has provided effective leadership and service to the school community over the last three years. Sustainable planning processes are in place. Continuing to strengthen internal evaluation processes should assist the board, principal and teachers to respond effectively to future emerging issues.

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
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the *Children's Act 2014*.


Conclusion

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

Developing

ERO's Framework: [Overall Findings and Judgement Tool derived from School Evaluation](#)

[Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success](#) is available on ERO's website.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Tanner'.

Steve Tanner
Director Review and Improvement Services (Northern)
Northern Region - Te Tai Raki

18 November 2020

About the school

[The Education Counts website provides further information about the school's student population, student engagement and student achievement.](#)