

St Mary's College (Ponsonby) Education Review

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1 The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Confirmed Education Review Report: St Mary's College

This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

The principal, staff and board of trustees of St Mary's College have maintained a strong focus on providing girls from Year 7 to 13 with a high quality education in a caring and supportive environment. The school's special character, founded in the Roman Catholic faith and the Mercy values of compassion and social justice, is clearly reflected in school practices. Students benefit from teachers' expertise and commitment and their high expectations for achievement and success. Students have a strong sense of pride in their school. They appreciate the high levels of support given by staff and enjoy the extensive range of learning, leadership and cocurricular opportunities provided for them.

High levels of student achievement in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) continue to be evident for students in Years 11 to 13. Achievement in NCEA for all groups of students, including Māori and Pacific students, significantly exceeds national and decile averages. The percentage of students gaining merit and excellence endorsements at all levels of NCEA significantly exceeds national levels, and the numbers of students who attain these endorsements has increased considerably from year to year. A very high percentage of students, including Māori and Pacific, are leaving with university entrance and Level 3 NCEA.

Classroom teaching is purposeful and focused. Students enjoy positive relationships with teachers and with their peers. Since the 2007 ERO review, teacher professional learning and development has focused on developing students' higher order thinking skills to further increase their engagement in learning and to further improve their levels of achievement. At the faculty level, teachers have focused on developing students' information literacy skills, particularly in Years 7 to 10. The next step now is for school managers to coordinate a school-wide approach to professional learning that covers assessment processes and supports the use of strategies that involve students more actively in learning how to learn.

High quality, consistent leadership is a key factor in the school's success, together with cohesive and collaborative management practices. The board, principal and senior managers have consulted with the community, staff and students to develop the St Mary's College Curriculum, which aligns with The New Zealand Curriculum. The board, senior leadership team and staff are focused on ensuring that the St Mary's College curriculum is effective in supporting student learning: engagement, progress and achievement.

The board's long-term planning is focused on student success, supported by strong curriculum and assessment practices and by further engaging families in an effective home-school partnership. The board's strategic goals provide a useful framework for self review of the governance and management of the school.

Future Action

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

2 St Mary's College's Curriculum

How effectively does the curriculum of St Mary's College promote student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?

School context and self review

The special character of St Mary's College pervades all aspects of school life. The school's vision is that students will be empowered by an excellent education and Mercy values so that they are able to play a positive role in society.

St Mary's College is highly regarded by its community. The school has had significant roll growth over the past seven years. Students are achieving at levels that are similar to those of students in higher decile schools and higher than average levels of students in the same decile.

The principal, staff and trustees are strongly focused on students attaining high levels of achievement. Senior managers have ensured that good assessment practices for NCEA are established. Targets have been set to increase the number of merit and excellence grades and the number of NCEA certificate endorsements. Further, specific achievement targets have been set to increase the number of scholarships gained by students.

Achievement information in Years 7 to 10 indicates that students make good progress in literacy and numeracy over this four year period. Teachers know students well and monitor their engagement, achievement and progress closely. Significant progress is being made in meeting requirements for reporting against the National Standards for students in Years 7 and 8.

Areas of strength

Strong, supportive learning environment. The school provides a strong and supportive learning environment with the aim of imbuing young women with a strong sense of self esteem and confidence. The Roman Catholic beliefs, traditions, and values of the school provide a solid foundation for positive and respectful relationships. The school has a cohesive and well coordinated pastoral care network.

High levels of student achievement. High levels of achievement in NCEA are attained by students in Years 11 to 13. NCEA data show significant improvement in the school's overall achievement levels since the 2007 ERO review, including an increase in the number of merit and excellence endorsements. Māori and Pacific student achievement in NCEA is comparable with that of other students. Achievement levels consistently exceed comparable national levels.

Strong culture of high expectations. The notable improvements attained in student progress and achievement are underpinned by a culture of very high expectations for students' work ethic, and their participation in learning. Achievement expectations are made explicit for students. Classroom environments are settled and focused on learning, and increasing numbers of students participate in co-curricular activities. Teachers use a range of effective strategies to engage students in learning, including building respectful and affirming relationships.

Strong focus on individuals. The 2007 ERO report noted the dedication of class teachers and the guidance network, including form teachers, deans, guidance counsellors, careers and support staff, in monitoring progress and achievement of individual students. This dedication remains evident.

Teachers make good use of literacy and numeracy achievement data to identify students who need learning support or extension. Academic monitoring in the senior school helps teachers to track student progress and achievement closely and to provide the appropriate support.

Building community partnerships to improve student learning and achievement. The school has a number of effective strategies to engage parents and to support students' success at school and their entry into tertiary education. The curriculum has been extended in response to a review of the strategic plan and feedback from parents. A partnership has been developed with a local university to establish pathways into tertiary education.

Areas for development and review

Leading and effecting changes in teaching practice. The next step for senior managers is to develop a more coordinated and planned approach to staff professional learning and development to ensure that all teachers have a good understanding of the practices most likely to facilitate student learning and achievement. Particular emphasis could be placed on promoting consistent use of formative teaching practices so that students understand how to learn. Teachers could also plan to build on students' prior cultural knowledge and experiences, particularly for Māori and Pacific students.

Self review. Senior managers could strengthen current self-review practices by:

- more explicitly documenting decisions made and strategies selected to achieve specified goals for improving student outcomes;
- developing a coordinated approach to increasing teachers' skills in using achievement data to cater for students' learning needs; and
- refining processes for curriculum reporting in order to produce more succinct and

focused evaluation of teaching and learning practices to support student learning, engagement, progress and achievement.

3 Provision for International Students

St Mary's College is providing its international students with high quality educational opportunities. Students benefit from the strong pastoral ethos of the school and the effective systems and practices support student learning and well being. Extensive guidance about learning programmes includes a well developed programme for learning English as a second language. International students are well integrated into school life and report that they enjoy and appreciate the extensive opportunities that are provided for them.

Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and the Provision of English Language Support

St Mary's College is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989.

The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's self-review processes for international students are thorough.

4 Board Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of St Mary's College 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 legal obligations related to:

- board administration;
- curriculum;
- management of health, safety and welfare;
- personnel management;
- financial management; and
- asset management.

During the review, ERO looked at the school's documentation, including policies, procedures and records. ERO sampled recent use of procedures and checked elements of the following five areas that 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.

5 Future Action

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

Richard Thornton
National Manager Review Services
Northern Region

2 February 2011

About The School

Location	Ponsonby, Auckland
Ministry of Education profile number	50
School type	State integrated secondary (Years 7 to 15)
Decile[1]	7
School roll	802
Number of international students	16
Gender composition	Girls 100%
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 60% Māori 10% Samoan 9% Asian 9% Tongan 5% other 7%
Review team on site	October 2010
Date of this report	2 February 2011
Previous three ERO reports	Education Review, October 2007 Education Review, November 2007 Assurance Audit, November 1997

[1] School deciles range from one to ten. Decile one schools draw their students from low socioeconomic communities and at the other end of the range, decile 10 schools draw their students from high socio-economic communities. Deciles are used to provide funding to state and state integrated schools. The lower the school's decile the more funding it receives. A school's decile is in no way linked to the quality of education it provides.

Community Page

2 February 2011

To the Parents and Community of St Mary's College

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on St Mary's College.

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Review Coverage

This report provides an evaluation of how effectively the school's curriculum promotes student learning - engagement, progress and achievement. ERO's evaluation takes account of the school's previous reporting history and is based on:

- what is known about student achievement information, including the achievement of Māori and Pacific students;
- decisions made to improve student achievement using assessment and selfreview information; and
- teaching strategies and programmes implemented to give effect to the school's curriculum.

ERO also gathers information during the review to contribute to its national reports. The national reports are published on ERO's website.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the school or see the ERO website, www.ero.govt.nz.

Richard Thornton
National Manager Review Services
Northern Region

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 integrates the following:

- school curriculum;
- national evaluation topics –contribute to the development of education policies and their effective implementation; and
- the Board Assurance Statement, including student and staff health and safety.

ERO's review is responsive to the school's context. When ERO reviews a school, it takes into account the characteristics of the community from which it draws its students, its aspirations for its young people, and other relevant local factors.

ERO also builds on the school's own self-review information. ERO is interested in how a school monitors the progress of its students and aspects of school life and culture, and how it uses this information to improve student learning.

This helps ERO to answer the major evaluation question for reviews:

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?

Areas for Development and Review

ERO reports include areas for development and review to support on-going improvement by identifying priorities. Often the school will have identified these matters through its own self review and already plans further development in those areas.