

## ERO External Evaluation

### Totara College of Accelerated Learning, Dannevirke

The purpose of ERO's external evaluations is to give parents, whānau and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education children and young people receive. ERO reports on the equity and excellence of learning outcomes for all students and for specific groups including Māori students, Pacific students and students with additional learning needs. This includes a focus on accelerating learning for students. ERO also reports on the quality and effectiveness of the school's processes and practices for continuing and sustaining improvement. The report gives evaluation findings that answer four key questions about the school's performance.

#### School Context

Totara College of Accelerated Learning is a Year 1 to 13 co-educational, integrated area school in Dannevirke. At the time of this review there were 65 children on the roll, with one third identifying as Māori.

Totara College's vision states that 'all students and staff will reach their God given potential, academically, socially, physically and spiritually'. Its values of integrity, kindness, respect and diligence are well known by students throughout the school.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board schoolwide information about outcomes for students in reading, writing, and mathematics, including progress information for those students who require additional support.

Teaching programmes follow the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum and Packets of ACE booklets (PACE) provide students with individual graded study units. In Years 1 to 10 these are complemented with other learning programmes that meet the requirements of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In Years 11 to 13, students work through PACEs to gain ACE achievement certificates. Students also are able to gain credits towards National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs).

Since the November 2014 ERO report, there have been changes in trustees and staff. From 2016, the school has had extensive professional learning and development (PLD) in mathematics and writing with support from the Ministry of Education.

The school is a member of the Christian Schools Kāhui Ako.

## **Evaluation Findings**

### **1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students**

#### **1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?**

The majority of students in Years 1 to 10 achieve at school expectations in reading, writing, and mathematics. A third of students achieve above school expectations in reading. The school is yet to achieve equitable outcomes for all students in mathematics.

Most students leave school with an academic qualification. Achievement in ACE overtime shows that most students leave having attained Level 2 or 3. Some students also select and complete NCEA credits.

Over the past three years the school's data shows that achievement levels have declined in writing and in mathematics. Significant disparity is evident for girls and the majority of Māori students in mathematics.

#### **1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?**

Although some students have had their learning accelerated, the school is not yet successfully accelerating progress for the majority of students at risk of not achieving at expected levels in reading, writing, and mathematics.

### **2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices**

#### **2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?**

The board is highly supportive of leadership, staff, and the school. Trustees have a shared Christian vision and are diligent in upholding the school's special character. Improving student achievement, wellbeing and preparation for future success are clear focuses for the board.

The principal fosters relationships with families and the wider school community. Parents are welcomed into the school and actively encouraged to support and be involved in their child's learning.

Students' independence is encouraged as they become competent self-managers, setting and focusing on achieving their personal goals. They work through the PACE booklets at their own rate. Teachers track and monitor this learning. Students express a strong sense of belonging, ownership, and pride in the school.

Students with additional needs are identified and their strengths, interests, and needs are well known. External support and agencies work with teachers to appropriately respond to their needs.

## **2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?**

Trustees and leadership continue to build shared understanding and knowledge about accelerated learning to achieve equity and excellence in student outcomes. Leaders should improve the quality of reporting to trustees who seek to understand rates of progress to assist them to make resourcing decisions for learning.

Teachers, with good team leader support, are now using a wider range of strategies and assessments to identify student needs, track progress, and support their learning. Further development is needed to effectively analyse data to identify disparity in achievement, establish and monitor learning targets and track progress and acceleration over time.

Continuing to align systems, plans, teaching practice, PLD, appraisal and teaching as inquiry with schoolwide learning targets is an ongoing focus for leaders.

Curriculum documentation requires review to provide clear guidance for implementation and expectations of teaching practice. It should acknowledge the unique place of te ao Māori and reflect the local context of the school, its history, story and beliefs.

In order to effectively review and strengthen these key systems, leaders should develop their understanding of effective internal evaluation at all levels of operation. This should assist teachers and leaders to more clearly know the impact of teaching on student learning.

## **3 Board assurance on legal requirements**

Before the review, the board 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 the following:

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

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

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration and certification
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

## Appraisal audit

The endorsement of practising teacher certification was audited. The appraisal and endorsement process does not meet a reliable and consistent standard based on the *Practising Teacher Criteria* established by the Education Council for the issue and renewal of practising certificates.

## Actions for compliance

ERO identified non-compliance in relation to board processes, health and safety practices, and health consultation.

In order to address this, the board of trustees must:

- maintain an ongoing and evidence-based programme of review in relation to policies and procedures, teaching programmes, including evaluation of student achievement information  
*[National Administration Guidelines 2 (b)]*
- strengthen policies and procedures for investigating, providing support and following up on serious concerns about student safety  
*[National Administration Guidelines 5]*
- improve formal documentation of procedures related to risk management for school trips and education outside the classroom  
*[National Administration Guidelines 5: Good practice – EOTC Guidelines]*
- ensure policies and procedures linked to child safety and appointment of staff meet the expectations of the *Vulnerable Children Act* and the associated Ministry of Education guidelines
- ensure that appraisal of teaching staff is robust and based on the Practising Teacher Criteria for the issue and renewal of practising certificates; and there are clear procedures for dealing with matters related to reporting to the Education Council.  
*[Education Act 1989, Part 31]*

Since the onsite phase of the review the school has begun the consultation process to comply with the requirement to adopt a statement on the delivery of the health curriculum at least once in every two years, after consultation with the school community.

*[Education Act 1989, Section 60B]*

## Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

- ensure minutes of board meetings are properly kept in relation to in-committee minutes, complaints, and policy review.  
*[Public Records Act, 2005]*

## 4 Going forward

### Key strengths of the school

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on existing strengths in:

- a shared purpose in relation to the school's special character that supports the board of trustees in their decision-making
- relationships with parents that value and promote student learning and success.

### Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

- achieving equity and promoting acceleration for groups of learners through targeted and deliberate actions
- strengthening assessment and teaching practices to effectively identify and respond to learners' needs
- reviewing the curriculum to provide guidelines for effective teacher practice and the delivery of a localised learning programme
- building cohesive processes that strengthen and inform board reporting, internal evaluation, and decision-making.

ERO recommends that the school seek support from the Ministry of Education in order to bring about improvements in:

- curriculum design and teaching practice
- building capability of teachers and leaders to implement a responsive curriculum
- strengthening governance and policy review.

### ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

ERO intends to carry out a process of ongoing external evaluation to support development over the course of one-to-two years.



Patricia Davey  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central (Acting)  
Te Tai Pokapū - Central Region

31 May 2018

## About the school

Location	Dannevirke
Ministry of Education profile number	439
School type	Composite Area School (Years 1 to 13)
School roll	65
Gender composition	Female 34, Male 31
Ethnic composition	Māori 21 Pākehā 42 Pacific 2
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	March 2018
Date of this report	31 May 2018
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review November 2014 Education Review August 2011 Supplementary Review October 2009