

18 December 2009

To the Parents and Community of Parakai School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Parakai School.

Parakai School is a semi-rural, full primary school in the Kaipara area catering for children in Years 1 to 8. The board of trustees, the principal and staff foster a positive, inclusive environment in the school. Learning partnerships with families are nurtured and a strong sense of community is evident. The school has strong relationships with actively involved parents, the neighbouring kindergarten, the college, and a variety of community organisations.

A significant feature of school development has been consultation with the Māori community, which in 2009 resulted in the opening of Te Whare Kākano, a Māori and English bilingual unit. Whānau report that they appreciate the support the school provides for this class and the ongoing, developing partnership with the kaiako. Te Whare Kākano contributes to the whānau atmosphere of the school and, as a result, school-wide awareness about te reo me ōna tikanga Māori, and the integration of te reo in mainstream classes, has increased. The bilingual curriculum and a school te reo Māori programme are still in early stages of development.

Over the past three years, teachers have undertaken professional development in literacy, with particular regard to teaching reading. The board asked ERO to focus this review on the effectiveness of strategies for teaching and learning in reading. ERO finds that the school has high expectations for students' learning, has implemented a variety of initiatives to promote reading, and uses assessment data well to inform classroom programmes. Models of effective teaching and learning strategies in the school provide a sound basis for further personalising learning programmes and for increasing the consistency of good teaching practice. High levels of student engagement in reading are evident.

Effective strategies promote positive social behaviour amongst students and contribute to the settled, calm atmosphere of the school. Sound systems have been established to integrate students with high needs successfully into classroom programmes and school activities.

Student achievement information collated by the school shows that the majority of students make good progress as they move through the school and, by the end of Year 8, achieve at or above national age-related expectations in reading. Māori students in the school achieve at the same levels or above those of their non-Māori peers. The school provides opportunities for students to experience success in a variety of academic, cultural and sporting events and competitions. However, the majority of students achieve below national expectations in numeracy. The school has identified the need to focus professional development for teachers, and to establish achievement targets, to improve the teaching and learning of numeracy.

There is a need to transfer successful strategies for teaching and learning literacy to other curriculum areas in order to raise achievement levels across the curriculum.

The principal has established positive and supportive relationships amongst staff, whānau and students. He has fostered a reflective culture and established a collaborative leadership team during a time of change. Although the senior managers are new to their roles, they work well together to achieve ongoing improvements. It is timely now to define leadership roles more clearly and to allocate responsibilities in key areas of school operations, especially curriculum development and quality assurance.

The board has a stable membership, is well informed and has established good processes for regular self review, including useful strategic planning and reporting systems. More specific reporting, improved documentation of strategic discussions, and a more robust quality assurance process could contribute to ongoing improvements in school operations and, consequently, in outcomes for students.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

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

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

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

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