

Grantlea Downs School Education Review

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

About The School

Location	Timaru
Ministry of Education profile number	2111
School type	Full Primary (Year 1 to 8)
Decile rating[1]	4
Teaching staff:	16.92
Roll generated entitlement	0.15
Other	20
Number of teachers	
School roll	338
Number of international students	2
Gender composition	Girls 48%; Boys 52%
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European Pākehā 78%; Māori 19%; Cook Island 1%; Asian 2%
Review team on site	May 2009
Date of this report	10 August 2009
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, July 2006

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Grantlea Downs School is a full primary school in the north of Timaru with a roll of 338 Year 1 to 8 students at the time of the ERO review in May 2009. Almost 20% of these students are Māori. The school roll has grown significantly over time. The principal has been present throughout this growth.

The school has a caring culture. Staff provide a positive learning environment for students. The school's values are clearly evident in the interactions among students, and between students and staff. Teachers celebrate students' successes, foster their wellbeing and give them a strong sense of belonging. Students told ERO that they feel safe and well supported in their learning.

Students achieve well in literacy, numeracy and other areas such as the arts and physical education. Teachers are gathering and analysing a range of achievement information. This information is showing that most groups of students have made significant progress during their time at school. Māori students are also achieving well.

The principal and staff are committed to ongoing school improvement. The school has a comprehensive programme of self review. Information collected through self review is addressed, and where appropriate, improvements to teaching and learning are made.

The school's curriculum is well taught. The principal and teachers provide a rich variety of learning experiences for students. These experiences reflect the school's strong emphasis on providing all students with a range of opportunities to achieve success. ERO observed teachers making consistent use of teaching practices that are known to foster students' achievement and progress. Students were well motivated and engaged in learning.

The board, principal and teachers are responsive to the needs of individuals and groups of students. For example, appropriate support is given to students with special learning needs. Students with special abilities also have some opportunities for extension and enrichment. The school has a good range of buildings, facilities, resources and a well maintained and spacious outdoor environment. The teachers and students make good use of these facilities and resources to enhance learning opportunities.

The board governs the school well. Strong professional leadership exists at all levels of the school. The principal's leadership, along with that of syndicate and curriculum leaders, has progressively raised the quality of teaching and learning.

ERO, the board, principal and the senior staff agree that some refinements to self-review

practices would increase their usefulness.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interests 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 four to five years.

The Focus Of The Review

Student Achievement Overall

ERO's education reviews focus on student achievement. What follows is a statement about what the school knows about student achievement overall.

Overall, students achieve very well in reading. A growing number of students is achieving above the school's expectations in this area. Students' achievement in written language, including spelling, has improved over time. Student achievement in numeracy is also consistent with national expectations.

An analysis of student achievement in aspects of physical education and health in 2008 showed that over 80% were achieving at or above the school's benchmarks. Achievement levels were highest at Years 5 and 6.

The school's analysed achievement information shows that most groups of students make significant progress during their time at school. For example, many five year old students enter school achieving below national expectations in reading but, by the end of their first year at school, most are achieving at or above such expectations. Groups of older students often make good progress in the areas in which annual targets for improving student achievement are set. A significant number of students have made good progress, particularly in literacy, during their involvement with the school's QUEST (special needs) programme.

The school places significant emphasis on students having, and using, a wide range of opportunities to achieve success. A good example of how this occurs is in the additional cultural and sporting activities the school provides for students. For instance, the school has 31 sports teams that involve most students. Over 100 students receive music tuition and/or belong to school groups such as the choir and brass band.

School Specific Priorities

Before the review, the board of Grantlea Downs School was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the school to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the board of trustees. This discussion focused on existing information

held by the school (including student achievement and self review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students at Grantlea Downs School.

ERO and the board have agreed on the following focus areas for the review:

- quality of learning and teaching.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

Quality of Learning and Teaching

Background

The principal and teachers have been working to develop and maintain a caring culture where the focus is on students' wellbeing, learning and development. Students are encouraged to participate in learning activities both in and beyond the classroom. ERO agreed to evaluate the quality of education across the school to see to what extent the students' physical, educational, social and motional needs were being met.

Areas of good performance

- Teaching practices. Teachers make consistent use of a range of teaching strategies that are known to promote student achievement and progress. The principal and teachers have high expectations for both students' learning and behaviour. Teachers give feedback that tells students what they have achieved and need to learn next. Students are engaged and motivated by planned, integrated and meaningful learning experiences. Teachers regularly evaluate the impact of their teaching programmes and practice.
- Learning opportunities. The principal and teachers have developed a school curriculum that includes a rich variety of learning experiences for students. Well balanced classroom programmes are complemented by learning opportunities in choir, brass band music, sport and environmental studies. Students with special abilities in specific areas like music have found these activities enriching. Teachers encourage and support able students to involve themselves in extension programmes.
- Environmental studies. Students are involved in activities related to caring for the physical environment. They have responsibilities for conservation, recycling and gardening. Teachers have encouraged students to develop a close liaison with the city council and the Enviro Schools' coordinators. Teachers and parents actively support these extra-curricular activities. This breadth of the school's curriculum provides students with opportunities to experience learning in a variety of areas.
- Quality of planning. Planning practices help to promote school-wide consistency in the

quality of teaching programmes. Students benefit from well-planned class programmes that focus on their specific learning needs. Teachers individually and cooperatively develop teaching plans that are purposeful and focused. Professional development and other school plans are collaboratively developed and linked specifically to students' needs.

- Literacy and numeracy initiatives. Teachers' classroom programmes give appropriate emphasis to English and mathematics. The principal and teachers have developed their own set of achievement objectives that are linked to the New Zealand Curriculum. They regularly track individual students' progress and achievement over time. They monitor the effectiveness of the programmes in meeting students' needs. Teachers have been involved in extensive school-wide professional development in assessment. This has led to consistent expectations for the delivery of programmes across the school. Recent initiatives have helped teachers to extend their use of high quality teaching practices.
- Emphasis on learning how to learn. Students have a range of opportunities to develop the attitudes and skills needed to become independent learners. Parents and teachers help students achieve their learning goals. These goals encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. A range of prompts to support students' learning, are prominently displayed in classrooms. Teachers have progressively developed a useful and detailed model for inquiry learning. This model encourages students to seek information on topics of interest to them personally. These examples of effective teaching practices are helping students to become confident and competent life-long learners.
- Identifying and responding to special learning needs. The principal and teachers proactively address the identified learning needs of students. They have developed strong systems for identifying students who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving. A range of approaches is used by class teachers and support staff to respond to individual needs. These approaches include the school's well targeted and managed special needs programmes known as the Quality Education Support Team (QUEST). Students learn in cross class and inter-class groupings in literacy and numeracy. The board provides well targeted professional development for staff to support students' specific needs. Students with special abilities are also provided with a varied range of enriching extension activities.
- Assessment and evaluation. Students' learning is supported by well considered assessment practices. Teachers use good quality assessment practices to identify student achievement and next steps in learning. They use a range of school and national assessment tools. Clear links are evident between planning, teaching and assessment. Assessment information effectively guides the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Well designed processes are in place to demonstrate and evaluate progress. Teachers regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the class, syndicate and school programmes.
- Reflective culture. A feature of the school is the learning culture created by the board, principal and senior staff. This culture fosters regular reflection upon, and critical evaluation of, all aspects of learning and teaching. The board, principal and staff implement a

comprehensive ongoing programme of self review. Self-review practices are particularly strong within syndicates. Reviews achieve a good balance between providing the board with assurance, evaluating practices and analysing student achievement.

Recommendations emerging from reviews are used to develop plans. The implementation of these plans is monitored and the outcomes evaluated. The school's reflective culture, self-review programmes and action plans help to foster ongoing improvements to the quality of teaching and students' learning.

- Shared leadership. Strong professional leadership exists at all levels of the school. The principal and senior staff provide good curriculum guidance and support. The principal effectively involves teachers in decision making. This collaborative approach is contributing to effective school performance. Students also have opportunities to take on leadership roles. The school council represents students' views and contributes to decision making relating to student interests. The house captains organise many outdoor games that keep students active and engaged. This shared leadership fosters a strong commitment to and ownership of the school's vision.

Areas for improvement

- Managing provisions for gifted and talented students. Provisions for managing programmes for students with special needs are more extensive than those for students with special abilities. For instance, the school has yet to develop clear criteria for identifying students as gifted and talented. While a wide range of learning opportunities exist for students with special abilities these have yet to be developed into a coherent programme. Systems for evaluating the quality and success of the school's work in this area are still to be established. [Recommendation 6.1]

- Self-review practices. Refinements to some practices would help to improve the quality and usefulness of self reviews. The evaluation of teaching programmes, practices and student achievement patterns is more extensive within syndicates than across the school. Better analysis of such information at a school-wide level would give the principal, senior staff and board a clearer overview of what is working well and what could be improved. Opportunities for parents and students to contribute to key reviews are not as extensive as they could be. Analysis of achievement patterns in literacy, numeracy, health and physical education is better than in other curriculum areas. Greater use should be made of existing information to establish the progress groups of students make over their time at the school and to determine the overall achievement levels of boys and girls. [Recommendation 6.2]

Areas Of National Interest

Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole to Government to be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement. ERO also provides information about the education sector for schools, parents and the community through its national reports.

To do this ERO decides on topics and investigates them for a specific period in all applicable schools nationally.

During the review of Grantlea Downs School ERO investigated and reported on the following areas of national interest. The findings are included in this report so that information about the school is transparent and widely available.

Success for Māori Students: Progress

In this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school was familiar with the Māori Education Strategy - Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success and progress made since the last review in promoting success at school for Māori students.

The school reports it has not yet discussed the document but expects to do so in the near future.

Areas of progress

- Fostering learning. Almost all Māori students are achieving at or above expected national norms in literacy and numeracy. The principal and teachers set high expectations and ensure there is ongoing evaluation for raising student achievement. Students told ERO that teachers make learning fun. Teachers make sure students understand the tasks they are expected to complete. They provide specific feedback that guides students' learning and next steps. Students and teachers often reverse the roles of teacher and learner. Teachers focus attention on learning and regularly celebrate students' achievements. These approaches enhance students' potential to succeed.
- Positive relationships. Māori students told the review team that they like the caring and supportive school culture. They told ERO that teachers are approachable and helpful. Teachers promote a school-wide commitment to respectful behaviour, where students are

friendly and include others. Students experience positive relationships with their peers, teachers and support staff. Students and teachers collectively appreciate and contribute to the calmness and tranquillity of the school's learning environment.

- Holistic learning. Students are able to pursue learning interests beyond the classroom. They enjoy succeeding through their classroom programme and also appreciate the opportunities to demonstrate their talents in sporting, cultural, creative and musical activities. Students said that they enjoy working in small groups because they like learning from each other. They also like helping others with their learning. Some students accept opportunities to take on leadership roles. They like having responsibility and helping make decisions about the school environment. These attitudes build self esteem and give students a sense of belonging.

Area for further improvement

- Developing bicultural perspectives. Māori students said that they would like to learn te reo and tikanga Māori (Māori language and culture) on a regular basis. They are able to attend kapa haka and some have visited a nearby marae. Teachers have a school-wide programme in te reo and tikanga Māori. However, only some teachers are using this programme on a regular basis. Through such a programme, all students are likely to develop a greater awareness of the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand. [Recommendation 6.3].

The Teaching of Reading and Writing in Years 1 and 2

As part of this review, ERO looked at how well teachers assess, plan and teach reading and writing to students in Years 1 and 2, and how well the school promotes high levels of student achievement in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.

Areas of good performance

- Teaching strategies for reading. Teachers use a range of instructional strategies to help students with their reading. They model the reading and writing processes. They use a range of probing questions that emphasise the strategies that will help students with their learning of letters or words. Students are able to repeat high frequency words so that they become familiar with them. They are encouraged to look for words within a word, or in a text that they already know. They have access to word lists and other learning prompts. Teachers allow students to read in small groups of similar ability. Teachers link the reading text to students' prior learning or experiences. The next step is to ensure that all teachers to provide follow-up activities that are specific to students' achievement levels in reading.
- Teaching of writing. Students told the review team that they like writing stories. Teachers model the writing process and share with students what good writers do. Teachers make available lists of words that students can use to help them with their

writing. Frequently used words for reading are also available for writing. Students are encouraged to write about their experiences. They know how to use words they are familiar with to help write new words. They use their knowledge of letter sounds as well to help their writing. They enjoy listening to each other sharing their stories. Teachers encourage students to attempt to spell words for themselves and to edit their own writing. Some students are becoming able to independently plan their own writing.

- Goal setting. Students are focused on their learning. They know what their learning goals are, and can say what they need to learn next. Teachers share the learning intention with students at the beginning of the lesson. They then summarise the learning at the end of the lesson. Students are fully engaged in their learning. Parents are informed of their child's achievements on a formal and informal basis. They also know their child's learning goals and can support them with their reading and writing at home. Teachers give specific feedback so that students know what they have achieved and still need to learn.
- Assessment and monitoring. Teachers track students' progress and achievement over time. They analyse the achievement information and identify the next steps in learning for each student. Teachers evaluate their planning and teaching and reflect on the impact of these on students' learning. They use their tracking system to make early identification of students who need learning support. They respond appropriately and make changes to their programmes as necessary. The team leader collates and analyses students' achievement and progress every term and after one year at school. This information indicates that many students make significant progress after their first year at school.

Area for improvement

- Follow up activities. Students told the review team that they enjoy reading and writing. Teachers provide students with strategies for writing their ideas and for reading text. Students have access to several reading and writing prompts to support their learning. The next step is for all teachers to use appropriate follow-up activities to enhance students' learning in reading. [Recommendation 6.4]

Implementing the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010

Progress to date

In preparing for teaching the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010 the school had already designed its "own" curriculum prior to 2007. They have, and continue to consider the elements of their curriculum that already reflect the intent of the New Zealand Curriculum, those aspects that need refining and those that need introducing.

Next steps

The school has decided that its priorities for preparation over the next three to six months are:

- to consolidate and extend the initiatives they have taken to date regarding vision, values, learning areas and teaching practice:
- to give further consideration as to how best to incorporate the key competencies into the school's curriculum; and
- to do further work on the curriculum principles.

Provision for International Students

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

Grantlea Downs School 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. This is a requirement of all schools that enrol international students in terms of the Act. Schools are also required to provide English language support for their international students.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code.

Areas of good performance

- Pastoral care and support. The coordinator in charge of international students provides well organised pastoral care and support for international students. The coordinator has good administrative systems to comply with the relevant Code requirements. She knows the students well and maintains regular links with parents and home stays. Students feel safe and are well supported by their teachers and other students.
- English language support. Students benefit from effective teaching practices to develop their English language skills. The coordinator works with class teachers to appropriately test specific learning outcomes for students. The coordinator and class teachers work together through withdrawal of individuals and in-class assistance. The students' progress is regularly evaluated, and gains in progress and achievement are recorded.

Board Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Grantlea Downs School 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 legislative obligations related to:

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

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they 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.

Compliance

Students are familiar with the school's expectations for their behaviour and are aware of procedures for fire and emergency evacuation. Students told ERO that they felt safe at school and are well supported by the staff.

Overall, the board and principal achieve a high level of compliance. The two issues indentified by the review team were promptly addressed by the principal.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that:

6.1 the principal and teachers develop systems for evaluating the quality and success of provisions for gifted and talented students;

6.2 the principal and teachers refine the reporting of analysed student achievement information;

6.3 teachers provide further opportunities for students to develop their awareness of Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural heritage; and

6.4 all teachers provide appropriate follow-up activities that enhance students' learning in reading.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interests 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 four to five years.

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

10 August 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Grantlea Downs School

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

Community Page

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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, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

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 is based on three review strands.

- School Specific Priorities - the quality of education and the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement.
- Areas of National Interest - information about how Government policies are working in schools.
- Compliance with Legal Requirements - assurance that this school has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

Review Coverage

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Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a school is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this school.

[1] Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.