

Sacred Heart College (Lower Hutt) Education Review

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About the School

Location	Lower Hutt	
Ministry of Education profile number	262	
School type	Integrated Girls' Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
Decile [1]	7	
School roll	825	
Number of international students	9	
Gender composition	Female 100%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	54%
	Māori	14%
	Pacific	14%
	Asian	11%
	Other ethnic groups	7%
Review team on site	March 2011	
Date of this report	5 July 2011	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	July 2008
	Education Review	December 2004
	Accountability Review	August 2000

The Purpose of an ERO Report

The purpose of ERO's reports is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. ERO's reports are intended to be clear, concise, constructive and evaluative. An ERO school report answers the question "How effectively is this school's curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?" Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school's systems for sustaining and continuing improvements.

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

[1]

School deciles range from 1 to 10. Decile 1 schools draw their students from low socio-economic 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 integrate 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

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1 Context

What are the important features of this school's context that have an impact on student learning?

Sacred Heart College is a Catholic integrated secondary school for girls in central Lower Hutt. Students enter at Year 9 from a large number of contributing primary schools throughout the Hutt Valley. A third of the students speak languages other than English at home.

The multicultural roll is at capacity with the total of 825 including 14% Māori, 14% Pacific and 11% Asian students. Long-serving staff members have been joined by several new teachers, including some working toward full registration. Staff and the board of trustees are committed to the school, its special character and to fostering best possible outcomes for students.

The college's reporting history with ERO is positive. The overall quality of teaching and learning has been steady and student performance in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is very good and trending upwards. Increasing digital technologies throughout the school has been a priority for the board and for professional development of teachers. It is integral to the continuing development of the school's curriculum.

Students are settled. The special Catholic character is reflected in the values and the inclusive way students are welcomed into the school.

2 Learning

How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Areas of strength

Student engagement and success

Students enjoy and experience success in a wide range of learning opportunities. There are high participation levels in the sports codes, Duke of Edinburgh and community service programmes, cultural festivals and academic competitions. These activities enrich learning in the classroom and offer additional opportunities for developing leadership, special talents, civic responsibility and confidence. They contribute strongly to school pride and culture.

Relationships

Relationships are respectful and supportive. Very good pastoral care systems reflect the values of the school. These include peer support, peer mediation and mentoring. Strong friendships are forged as form classes remain together through successive year levels.

Student achievement

Schoolwide achievement in NCEA, tracked over time, is very good. A comparison of this college's data with schools of the same decile, for Levels 1 to 3, shows that overall students perform better, even above, averages for schools of a higher decile band. The achievement of both literacy and numeracy requirements is exceptionally high and the percentage of endorsed certificates for merit and excellence is similarly above national averages at all three levels. Annual department reviews consider achievement data and significant patterns and trends for senior students. Attendance is well monitored and the retention rate throughout the school is very high. For the past two years, all students have left with a Level 2 qualification or better including Māori and Pacific students.

Entry test information at Year 9 indicates students have a wide range of knowledge and skills' mastery in English, mathematics and science. Development in reading is targeted and monitored over Years 9 and 10 so that by the end of Year 10 a strong foundation is laid to prepare students for senior level study.

Student achievement data is reported to the board of trustees and community groups. The English department reports Years 9 and 10 reading test results. Information is used to modify aspects of programme provision and set expectations for achievement in national qualifications.

Areas for review and development

Years 9 and 10 assessment

The range of nationally-referenced information is limited for Years 9 and 10 students. The choice of suitable assessment tools is under review in 2011 for both English and mathematics. It would be useful to consider extending assessment to cover all aspects of literacy, to collate information about strengths or weaknesses, and to make comparisons with national norms.

As yet there is no nationally-standardised information collated, analysed and used to track progress and achievement of Years 9 and 10 students in mathematics over those two years.

The board sets no specific student achievement targets at Years 9 and 10. It is timely that data is analysed and used for this purpose. This would support the college's high expectations for student learning across the curriculum and for success in gaining national qualifications.

How well are Māori students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Māori students are highly engaged and play a vital part in the character of the school. While academic progress of Māori students is well monitored and tracked over time, of equal importance is the development of leadership, contribution, well-being, confidence and partnership with whānau.

School data shows that very good gains in reading achievement are made by Years 9 and 10 Māori and Pacific students. Results, including for NCEA, are above those for Māori and Pacific students nationally. The performance of, and contribution made by, Māori students is a source of pride at the school.

3 Curriculum

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?

Areas of strength

Curriculum design is responsive to students' interests, abilities and talents through provision of different pathways for learning. Students are regularly consulted about their preferences for course options. Considerable effort is made to accommodate these through staffing and timetabling. Students in the junior years are introduced to subject specialisation through short-term modules, which helps them to make choices for later learning. These are positive factors for promoting engagement.

High expectations are held for student achievement in NCEA and for continuing success beyond Year 13. These are strongly communicated and fostered through:

- leadership, management and monitoring of curriculum coverage and assessments to ensure students' learning and achievement are tracked and gaps are addressed;
- effective guidance for senior students in career options and course selection;
- organisation of Years 9 and 10 classes to provide additional challenge or enrichment in English, mathematics and science;
- strong provision of learning support for English language learners and students identified as having special learning needs;
- making relevant information about students available to all departments;
- the Māori/Pacific Achieve initiative that specifically supports the aspirations for learning and higher achievement of these students in Years 11 to 13;
- tutorials and other support offered by teachers outside of scheduled class times;
- the long-established peer support programme implemented by Year 13 students for juniors; and
- a good level of consistency in implementing guidelines for behaviour, standards of work and self management.

Following extensive consultation for development of the Sacred Heart College curriculum, teachers reflect on their teaching approaches and are sharing different strategies for enhancing student engagement and learning. Strengths of the process are that it is college-wide and assisted by achievement information and student feedback. While

specifically targeting Pacific student achievement, changes effected are likely to benefit all students and teachers. A united focus on effective teaching is assisted by departments working collaboratively for professional development.

Relationships and interactions are positive and respectful. Overall, classrooms are settled and disruption free. An atmosphere of care, trust and accountability underpins learning.

Areas for review and development

Many teachers are embracing change and exploring different teaching strategies. The school leadership team has led much professional development over the last three years, particularly within the areas of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and information and communication technologies (ICT). They plan to sustain ongoing improvement in these areas. The school is now well placed to further explore the principles, key competencies and effective pedagogy of the NZC. School leaders should continue to develop shared understandings with staff about what constitutes best practice for teaching and learning, including:

- exploring further ways to collect information to differentiate for individual learning needs, styles and interests;
- enriching formative assessment practice to strengthen student partnership and ownership in learning; and
- extending teacher reflection on practice through deeper inquiry into data.

These steps should support the school's upward achievement trend.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

Areas of strength

Trustees have a clear understanding of, and commitment to, their governance role. They are highly supportive of the principal and staff and a good working relationship is evident. Provision of ICT infrastructure is a priority, as is continuing to improve learning experiences for students. The board shows ownership of the mission and values, and rejoices in the school's successes.

An openness to reflection and regular self review is effectively modelled and led by the principal. She is proactive about seeking feedback. There is regular and full communication of information to the board, whole school community and whānau. High expectations for the quality of service provided ensure safety, well-being and success of students at the college. The culture is inclusive and diversity is celebrated.

Provision for international students

The 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. At the time of this review there were 9 international students attending the school.

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

ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's self review process for international students is thorough.

Provision for students in the school hostel

Sacred Heart College, Lower Hutt does not have a school hostel.

Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of the 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
- 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
- attendance.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

Kathleen Atkins
National Manager Review Services
Central Region

5 July 2011