

**Cambridge High School
Cambridge**

Confirmed

Education Review Report

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The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. 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. The report answers four key questions about the school.

Findings

1 Context

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

Cambridge High School is a large, co-educational secondary school catering for students in Years 9 to 13. The roll has increased since the last ERO review in 2011 and is now 1486. Fourteen percent of students are Māori, 4 percent are Asian and there are 10 Pacific students. There are 65 International fee-paying students.

Since the last ERO review the senior leadership team has been reorganised and expanded to reflect priorities for improving achievement and engagement. One of the two deputy principals is new to the school. Leadership of the board of trustees is unchanged. Other board members however are new, and bring a range of appropriate experiences and expertise to their roles. Significant property developments include the upgrading of the staffroom and science block and construction of four new classrooms.

The school places a strong emphasis on being a community school that aims to meet a wide range of needs and expectations. The school's charter gives priority to promoting academic excellence, traditional values, acknowledgement of diversity, and positive outcomes for Māori students. Key values of respect, responsibility and achievement are visually represented throughout the school and are evident in many aspects of school life.

In recent years the school has had a positive ERO reporting history. The 2011 ERO report contained areas for review and development about formative practice, and the need for teachers to strengthen their understanding and implementation of Māori perspectives. Over the past three years there has been professional development in both these areas. In particular, there has been a major focus on improving engagement with Māori students and the Māori community. In addition teachers have been involved in a school-wide professional development programme that aims to improve relationships, promote student engagement, and enhance achievement. Linked to this, a new appraisal process has been introduced and teachers are being supported to reflect more on their practice.

2 Learning

How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement?

The school makes very good use of achievement information to inform school development and improve student achievement.

Achievement information is used effectively to:

- determine goals and targets at school-wide and curriculum level especially for students in Years 11 to 13
- inform annual self review and decision making about learning programmes
- guide decision making about individual students' learning pathways and track their progress
- place students in classes and identify those requiring additional support and extension
- monitor students' progress against curriculum levels in Years 9 and 10
- provide information to parents about students' achievement and progress.

A next step for the school is to give consideration to strengthening the use of assessment information by setting specific targets for students in Years 9 and 10. This would contribute to more effective monitoring of progress especially for priority learners.

Data from senior school qualifications shows that students, overall, are achieving very well in relation to national expectations and when compared with students in similar schools. The proportion of students achieving NCEA qualifications has continued to improve since the 2011 ERO review. Similarly more students are attaining merit and excellence endorsements. In 2013 fifteen students achieved New Zealand Scholarships. Public Achievement Information (PAI) shows that in 2013 the school exceeded the Ministry of Education target of 85% of students leaving school with a Level 2 NCEA qualification. This data also shows improvements, over time, in levels of retention and attendance as well as a reduction in suspensions and stand downs.

Data gathered and analysed by the school for students in Years 9 and 10 shows most are making good progress and achieving at expected levels as they move through the school. The school is able to show that students in special programmes make significant progress in aspects of literacy and mathematics.

3 Curriculum

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

The curriculum is very effective in promoting and supporting student learning.

The school provides a broad range of learning experiences designed to meet the varied needs of students. This includes academic programmes and an increasing number of practical and vocational options including opportunities for work experience. There is a flexible approach to timetabling and there are multiple pathways within and across learning areas. Students receive very effective advice and guidance to support them to make decisions about these pathways and staff work hard to ensure that they have access to appropriate and relevant programmes.

Within each learning area, curriculum management documents provide clear guidelines and expectations for curriculum delivery. This is supported by regular self review of implementation

plans and internal review of teaching and learning programmes in each faculty. Self review contributes to the ongoing development of teaching programmes to meet the needs of students.

Additional features of the curriculum include:

- good quality provision for students with particular learning needs that focus on supporting their transition to mainstream programmes, and to further study and employment
- support for students identified as having particular talents and strengths to extend their learning
- effective use of links with the wider community to broaden experiences for students
- extensive opportunities for students to participate in and gain success in sporting, cultural and education outside the classroom activities
- access to a range of student leadership experiences.

Overall, teachers are enthusiastic about their roles and supportive of their students. ERO observed settled classroom learning environments where interactions between teachers and students were positive and respectful. In these classes teachers are using effective strategies to engage students in learning. They share the purpose of learning with students and provide them with lesson outlines that help them to understand what they are learning. Teachers acknowledge students' prior learning, use effective questioning techniques, check for understanding, provide feedback and discuss next steps. All students including Māori and Pacific benefit from these teaching and learning strategies.

Some teachers are using assessment information to differentiate learning for groups and individual students within their classes. ERO and the school agree that it is important that teachers continue to work towards implementing this practice more consistently across the school.

Curriculum delivery, teaching, learning and student wellbeing is strongly supported by a well-led, highly effective and cohesive pastoral care team. This includes a wide range of student support services, academic mentoring, and student involvement in peer mentoring and tutoring. Teacher's involvement since the last ERO review in school-wide professional development focused on encouraging positive relationships and engagement with students. This focus is contributing to a settled school culture and supportive learning environment.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?

Improving the achievement and engagement of Māori students has been a priority for the school over the past three years. This is reflected in school practices and the school's charter and strategic plan.

A key school-wide initiative in improving relationships with Māori students has been involvement in the He Kakano professional learning project. This has resulted in developments such as:

- greater consultation with Māori students and whānau including hui at local marae
- the appointment of Māori liaison people to assist in communication with families
- formation of a Māori student leadership group
- celebration of the success of Māori students at an annual Māori prize-giving.

The whanau group, Ngā Poutiaki, is represented on the board of trustees and continues to be an important link between the school and wider community. Māori students have the opportunity to participate in a revitalised kapa haka group and in events such as a biennial Māori students' careers expo, which is held on a local marae.

Māori students and parents indicated that they now have a greater sense of belonging in the school and there has been a significant improvement in the positive engagement of Māori students in all aspects of school life.

The focus on Māori student achievement and engagement has contributed to continuing improvement in the achievement of Māori students in NCEA in relation to national comparisons and when compared with the achievement levels of other students in the school. A significantly greater proportion of Māori students are now leaving school with NCEA qualifications. While the gap between the achievement of Māori students and other students in the school has narrowed, the school is aware that improving the achievement of Māori continues to be an important priority.

The school should continue to increase the presence of a Māori perspective in the school, including classroom environments, curriculum planning and contexts for learning.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is very well placed to sustain and improve its performance. ERO is confident that there are systems and practices in place to address the areas for development identified in this report.

The school is very well governed. The board is effectively led by an experienced chairperson and board operations are guided by well developed systems and procedures including ongoing self review. Trustees are kept informed about the school and have close relationships with senior staff and heads of faculties.

Leadership at all levels of the school is very effective. The principal has high expectations for teaching, learning and improving student achievement. He is well supported by a cohesive and highly competent leadership team. Together, the principal and senior leaders are providing clear direction for school development.

Other features of the school that contribute to high levels of sustainability are:

- robust, evidence-based self review that takes account of student and parent voice, and which guides ongoing development and decision making
- highly effective systems and practices that promote a safe and inclusive school culture
- a strong commitment to ongoing professional development and support for teachers to improve and reflect on their practice
- positive relationships and engagement with parents and the community.

There is a settled and supportive atmosphere throughout the school, and relationships and interactions between staff and students are affirming and supportive.

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. 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 learners is thorough.

At the time of this ERO review there were 65 international fee-paying students in the school. These students are well supported by a very experienced team including the international student

manager, home-stay coordinator, ESOL teacher and administrative support person. Policies and procedures are clearly documented. Students receive high-quality learning opportunities and are able to participate in sporting and cultural activities. Their progress is carefully monitored and there is strong support for their wellbeing and pastoral care.

Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees 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:

- 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 student achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

Conclusion

School leaders and teachers at Cambridge High School are providing high-quality learning opportunities and pathways for students within a flexible, multi-layered curriculum framework. The school has high expectations for students' learning and success and is strongly committed to their care and wellbeing.

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



Dale Bailey
National Manager Review Services
Northern Region

1 August 2014

About the School

Location	Cambridge	
Ministry of Education profile number	142	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	1486	
Number of international students	65	
Gender composition	Girls 51% Boys 49%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā Māori Other European Other Asian	69% 14% 8% 5% 4%
Review team on site	June 2014	
Date of this report	1 August 2014	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Supplementary Review	June 2011 August 2008 November 2005