



## **ERO External Evaluation**

### **St Gerard's School (Alexandra), Alexandra**

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**

St Gerard's school is a Catholic School catering for Years 1 to 8. It has a roll of 150 students, and is located in Alexandra, Otago.

The school's vision is for St Gerard's to be a place of ongoing love, learning, and growth. The vision is underpinned by the values of Joyfulness, Curiosity, Compassion and Commitment.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board, schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to school expectations
- outcomes for students with additional learning needs
- outcomes related to wellbeing for success.

The school has an experienced leadership and teaching team and is governed by a stable board.

The school is taking part in a Ministry of Education funded oral language professional learning and development initiative, and is part of the Dunstan Kāhui Ako | Community of Learning and the Enviro Schools programme.

## 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 school has had some success in achieving equity and excellence for its students.

Since 2016, most students have achieved at or above the school's expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Over this same time period there is increasing disparity for boys in writing.

In 2016 and 2017 greater proportions of Māori students achieved at or above the school's expectations than other groups, for reading, writing and mathematics. This was also the case for these students in reading and mathematics in 2018.

School surveys show that most students feel safe, listened to and included in the school.

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

School information shows that some individual students within targeted intervention programmes, have made accelerated progress in specific learning areas.

### 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?

Students at St Gerard's learn in an inclusive and caring environment. The school values of compassion and commitment are visible and embedded school-wide. Combined with the school's virtue of mercy and its Catholic faith these values support restorative practice in the school. Different cultures are valued and there are positive relationships between students and school staff. Transitions into the school are well supported and multi-level classes foster positive learning relationships between older and younger children. There is a strong sense of community in the school. The classroom environments promote students' engagement in their learning.

The school has a rich and responsive curriculum to meet students' interests and community aspirations. Students have opportunities to learn in a range of local, relevant contexts and have access to a broad and comprehensive range of activities in and out of school. Reviews of curriculum areas provide useful information to guide improvement. Students are well supported to self-manage and parents increasingly participate in students learning through multiple forums. Students have equitable opportunities to learn.

Teachers identify and provide tailored responses to students whose learning needs acceleration or extension. School staff are proactive in seeking solutions to raise student achievement through ongoing professional discussion, accessing relevant professional development and working with parents and external agencies. Well-coordinated and consistent teaching practices contribute to positive student outcomes.

School trustees have a strong focus on improvement. Trustees effectively scrutinise information about curriculum activities and student learning outcomes to ensure ongoing improvement. They are also committed to supporting the special character of the school. Trustees, the principal, and teachers work effectively together to realise the school's vision.

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

ERO's evaluation has identified, and the leaders agree, that some further developments are needed within school processes and practices to ensure positive equitable learning outcomes for all students.

The sufficiency of students' progress needs to be collated, analysed and evaluated school-wide, to determine how successful the school has been in accelerating the progress of those students who need extra support to achieve equitable outcomes. This should better inform the board about the rates of progress and achievement for all students and to be able to allocate resources, to those school processes and practices, most likely to ensure equitable and excellent outcomes for all students.

The school needs to address disparity between boys and girls in writing through targeted actions. These should include ensuring that the school's annual targets focus on raising achievement of any groups of students whose learning is below school expectations.

School leaders need to broaden the scope of current reporting to include school-wide information to show the progress and achievement of all students towards other valued outcomes for students.

The school's curriculum guidelines do not include all of the school's curriculum areas. Leaders need to broaden these guidelines to include all areas to better guide teaching practice.

## 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.

## 4 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of St Gerard's School (Alexandra)'s performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Developing

[ERO's Framework: Overall School Performance is available on ERO's website.](#)

## 5 Going forward

### Key strengths of the school

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

- the inclusive and caring learning environment that allows students to access a range of learning opportunities within local and cultural contexts
- teachers' ability to identify and provide tailored responses to students whose learning needs acceleration or extension
- trustees ensuring adequate resourcing for upholding the special character of the school and targeted responses to those students who need additional support.

### Next steps

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

- analysing and reporting school-wide information for accelerated learning of students who have not reached expectations to inform the school's internal evaluation
- focusing annual targets on accelerating the progress of any students who are below expectations to support their equitable outcomes
- addressing disparity in boys' writing through targeted actions
- reporting achievement and progress towards other valued outcomes the school has for its students
- redeveloping the school's curriculum guidelines to include all curriculum areas to guide teachers in their practice.



Lesley Patterson  
Director Review and Improvement Services Southern  
Southern Region  
9 July 2019

## About the school

Location	Alexandra										
Ministry of Education profile number	3823										
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 – 8)										
School roll	150										
Gender composition	Girls 51%, Boys 49%										
Ethnic composition	<table> <tr> <td>Māori</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NZ European/Pākehā</td> <td>71%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pacific</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other ethnicities</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </table>	Māori	13%	NZ European/Pākehā	71%	Pacific	8%	Asian	7%	Other ethnicities	1%
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NZ European/Pākehā	71%										
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Asian	7%										
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Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes										
Provision of Māori medium education	No										
Review team on site	May 2019										
Date of this report	9 July 2019										
Most recent ERO reports	<table> <tr> <td>Education Review</td> <td>September 2015</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education Review</td> <td>June 2012</td> </tr> </table>	Education Review	September 2015	Education Review	June 2012						
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