

Grants Braes School Education Review

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About the School

Location	Dunedin
Ministry of Education profile number	3742
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)
Decile [1]	10
School roll	141
Gender composition	Boys 86 Girls 55
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 78% Māori 6% Other 16%
Review team on site	September 2011
Date of this report	2 December 2011
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review July 2008 Education Review November 2005 Education Review March 2003

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

[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 integrated 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 that have an impact on student learning?

Teachers have high expectations for students' learning and behaviour. Students interviewed by ERO spoke very positively about their school. They enjoyed their teachers and appreciated the wide range of in-and-out of class learning experiences the school offers.

Teachers now use an inquiry approach to topic learning. This has led to good integration of different learning areas, interesting contexts for learning, and an emphasis on thinking and inquiry skills. There has been significant investment in ICT, including developing teachers' skills.

Teachers have built strong home-school relationships. Each week, they email parents about class programmes and students and put interesting examples of students' learning on wiki-space. Parents are involved in many school events and activities. They are also well informed about their children's progress and achievement.

2 Learning

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

Overall, students show very good levels of engagement in their learning. Most students make good progress and achieve well.

Areas of strength

Culture of learning. Students have a good understanding about how they learn. Students:

- talk about and reflect on their learning with their peers and teachers
- know their next learning steps and long-term learning goals
- know how to work well independently and in small groups
- show an interest in and enthusiasm for their learning.

Learning support and extension programmes. Students with special abilities, or needing extra help to succeed with their learning, are very well supported. Students spoke very positively about their extension and support programmes. ERO noted that:

- many students benefit from the wide variety of interesting extension activities
- students at risk of not achieving benefit from very specific interventions
- English as a second language students benefit from well-planned language instruction
- teachers carefully monitor the progress and achievement of students in learning support programmes.

The school can show that the learning interventions have led to improved student achievement.

Use of assessment in the classroom. Teachers know their students well. Most teachers:

- skilfully assess students as part of their day-to-day teaching
- give students specific oral and written feedback and next learning steps
- use assessment information to evaluate the impact of their teaching
- Parents are well informed about their children's progress and achievement.

Teaching strategies. Teachers use effective teaching strategies and expect all children to achieve. ERO saw:

- meaningful contexts for learning
- thoughtful integration of reading, writing and other curriculum areas
- explicit teaching of thinking, questioning and inquiry skills.

Area for review and development

Aspects of assessment. The school is yet to fully implement the National Standards. Senior leaders and teachers acknowledge that they need to further build their confidence in moderating different assessments and making overall-teacher judgements against the National Standards. ERO also noted that:

- more work needs to be done to align the school's expectations for achievement with the National Standards
- the school could improve the way it reports to the board on the progress of groups of students over time
- the school could include more specific information in newsletters about student achievement across the school.

How well does the school promote Māori student success and success as Māori?

Findings

Māori students show good levels of interest in their learning. Reports to the board indicate that most achieve at or above the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Students who need help with their learning are very well supported. Senior Māori students spoke enthusiastically about their school, the varied learning opportunities, and their teachers.

The board is well informed about how Māori students are progressing and achieving academically. Teachers provide regular and useful information to parents about their children's learning.

Area for review and development

The school is in the early stages of meeting some legal requirements related to Māori students. To meet these, the school needs to regularly consult with, and report to, parents of Māori students about:

- the school-wide achievement of their children

- their ideas about how the school could better provide for their children
- possible targets to lift achievement or implement other priorities.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum provides interesting and meaningful learning for students. At the on-site stage of the ERO review the curriculum document was still in draft form and had just been made available to the community for comment.

Areas of Strength

Use of technology. Teachers skilfully use technology as a teaching and learning tool. They and their students also use technologies, like wiki space, pentablog and skype, to share students' learning with parents and other interested groups.

Students told ERO that they are proud of their technology skills and see technology as an important feature of their school. They confidently use a wide range of technologies to research, present and share their learning

Reflective practice. Teachers constantly discuss and reflect on the impact of their teaching. Some school practices have contributed to this. For example; in 2009 teachers researched an aspect of their teaching. They continue to share professional readings and teaching strategies. At the completion of a unit of work, most teachers evaluate the impact of their teaching and identify what they might do differently next time.

Area for review and development

Curriculum review. The school has been slow in completing its review of curriculum and aligning it with the revised New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). ERO noted that there had been little consultation with parents and students in the development of the school's vision for learning and curriculum goals and/or priorities. The present curriculum does not include a statement as to what the NZC principles will look like in this school.

The review of curriculum implementation could be improved. The school has a procedure and guidelines but these are not well known or followed. Student and parent opinions could be better used in these reviews.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

Overall, the school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Area of strength

Governance practices. The trustees have good governance practices. They are focused on improving student achievement and allocate money so that it has a direct benefit to students. Their strategic and annual plans identify relevant priorities and how these will be achieved. The board is also future focused. This is evident in its well-planned marketing of the school.

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
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

This review did not identify an area of non compliance. However, ERO discussed with trustees and senior leaders some areas where they could improve their practices. In particular, the board should go in committee when discussing sensitive matters. When

reviewing policies and procedures, the trustees and senior leaders need to be assured that these are known by staff and that the school's practices align with them.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

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2 December 2011