

Opihi College Education Review

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1 Context

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

Opihi College is a Year 7 to 13 semi-rural school in South Canterbury. The school has made significant progress since the ERO reviews in 2011 and 2013. Strengthened leadership, management and financial practices are considerably benefiting the school and students' learning and wellbeing.

The school's values are most clearly evident in relationships across the college and in the way staff care for students and promote high expectations for their achievement and wellbeing. The school's smaller size enables teachers to know students and their families very well.

Changes at the school since the 2011 ERO review include a new principal and senior leadership team and some new staff and board members. After a time of some decline, the school's roll is beginning to grow.

The school has maintained the strengths identified in the 2011 report. Many of the areas for improvement identified in that report have been addressed. Further progress in aspects of self review, department reporting, target setting and planning will strengthen the positive work undertaken over the past three years.

2 Learning

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

The school is making good progress in using achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement. This is most evident in:

- teachers' use of class profiles across the school and portfolios at junior levels to track and review individual students' learning needs and progress
- the extra support provided for some students whose learning and achievement are below expectations
- the regular feedback provided to students about their learning progress that is further supported by mentoring for students at all levels
- the increasing opportunities for parents to be more fully involved in conferencing about their children's learning, engagement and progress.

NCEA achievement information for 2013 provided by the school shows that students achieve best at Levels 1 and 2. Students generally achieved at or above regional and national NCEA Levels. National Standards information shows that students achieve best in reading. Achievement levels in mathematics are lower at school entry, and at Year 7 and 8 National Standards Levels. Leaders have identified the need to raise achievement levels in mathematics through further professional development for teachers.

The effective use of a school-wide programme to increase student engagement is:

- promoting the regular analysis and use of engagement information to focus and continue to improve teaching practices and approaches
- having a significant and sustained impact on students' learning, behaviour and attitudes across the school.

Leaders and teachers also make good use of achievement information to acknowledge and celebrate successes across academic, sporting and cultural codes in ways that motivate and further engage students.

The pastoral care of students is a significant strength of the school.

Student wellbeing is given a high priority and responsibility for it is shared across staff, pastoral care programmes are well structured and led at senior leadership, guidance counsellor and dean levels. Parents are well included in pastoral care processes.

Areas for review and development

The next steps to further strengthen the use of achievement information are to:

- use achievement information to review current literacy and mathematics provisions for students achieving below expectations in Years 7 to 10
- establish guidelines for literacy monitoring and reporting progress and achievement
- gather, analyse, track and report achievement information of students in Years 9 and 10
- review and improve the management of provisions for priority learners.

3 Curriculum

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

Leaders and teachers are making significant improvement with engaging students in an increasingly relevant and interesting curriculum. Students have many opportunities to experience a good range of programmes and activities beyond the classroom that enrich their learning and enjoyment of school.

A recent change to curriculum leadership at a senior level is having a positive impact on providing a flexible and responsive curriculum. Although at an early stage of development, leaver information is now being used to analyse student career destinations and ensure that the curriculum reflects these trends and choices.

Students have increasing opportunities to be involved in a range of work experience situations that will help them to plan career pathways. The continued strengthening of partnerships with the local tertiary and business community by senior leaders is opening up further work experience opportunities for students.

Teachers help students to set goals that better focus their learning priorities and promote self directed learning. They use a good range of teaching approaches and, according to students spoken with by ERO, consistently going the extra mile to encourage and support learning.

The positive relationships between teachers and students and between students are promoting an environment of safety and acceptance. There are many opportunities for collaborative learning in classrooms.

Areas for review and development

Leaders and ERO have identified that the next steps for school-wide curriculum development are to:

- complete the review of the junior and senior curriculum and document outcomes that reflect the aspirations of students, their parents and the local community
- improve teachers' shared understanding of how thinking and inquiry strategies, and key competencies develop from Year 7 to Year 13, and how these can be best taught across subject areas
- continue to realign the senior curriculum to better meet the vocational needs of students
- develop a rationale and programme for students identified as gifted and talented.

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

The progress being made to strengthen and support Māori students' success as Māori is helping to expand opportunities within the school and in the local community. The principal and senior leaders are providing strong support for developments in a range of areas. Leadership of Māori in the school is highly valued by students.

The factors that are most contributing to progress with promoting success as Māori include:

- the leadership and support of senior leaders and the teacher in charge of Māori and senior leaders
- the involvement of the principal in regular meetings with the local marae to promote successful outcomes for Māori students
- a re-energising of kapa haka and attendance at cultural festivals and competitions
- involvement in a national strategy to increase the engagement of Māori students.

Areas for review and development

In consultation with Māori students and whānau, it is now timely for leaders to develop strategic planning that sets a clear direction for success as Māori. This includes:

- setting priorities and goals for ongoing improvement
- developing timeframes, responsibilities and indicators of what success will look like at the college
- including success as Māori in a regular cycle of reviewing and reporting to the board.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Trustees have given priority to addressing the financial issues that have limited school development in recent years. Careful financial management has resulted in the school now being in a position to plan positively for the future.

Trustees have developed strategic priorities for the school that are giving leaders and staff improved clarity about the future direction of the school. The board has supported the new principal well to achieve improvements to school operations.

The role of the principal has been very important in achieving major school redevelopment. He is working effectively with a new senior leadership team to manage change, and to make substantial improvements to learning and teaching. The strengths of senior leaders are being used to improve the school's curriculum and the effectiveness of the pastoral care programme. Teachers are given good opportunities to grow their leadership skills.

The appraisal process for teachers has been substantially reviewed. Appraisal now focuses much more on teachers taking responsibility to create better learning opportunities for students. Students can now provide feedback to their teachers about the impact teaching has on their learning and achievement.

Leaders and teachers have developed a reflective culture that is supporting improvement in learning and teaching. Review is now based on the gathering and analysis of a wider range of information, including the views of students.

A significant change in school culture is the opportunity for parents to be more involved in their children's education and the provision of parent-support programmes. Feedback from parent surveys has affirmed the school's change in approach.

Areas for review and development

The board and senior leadership team have worked closely with ERO to identify further areas for school development and improvement.

The board has achieved important improvements to some school operations. Changes in board membership have increased the need for trustees to fully understand their governance roles and responsibilities. The next steps for trustees include:

- participating in whole-board training specific to improving their understanding of governance roles and responsibilities and key priorities for school development
- establishing plans for effective financial management, property development and ICT resourcing
- extending annual planning to identify priorities and expected outcomes for board goals that the principal will report on at each board meeting
- developing a strategic goal and annual planning and reporting processes for student and staff wellbeing.

There have been recent and major changes in leadership responsibilities within the school. The next steps to make sure leadership across the school is effective and accountable include reviewing and establishing job descriptions for all current leadership positions, and establishing terms of reference for the curriculum committee.

Reflection and review has improved for many school operations. However, there are limited guidelines for review planning, documenting and reporting that will ensure self review is central to sustained school-wide practice. The next steps to improve school review are to:

- further develop and document processes, guidelines and priorities for self review at board, leadership, department and teacher levels
- make sure the annual review for all departments and programmes is more consistent and evaluative in practice, and aligned to board goals.

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.

At the time of this review, there were two international students attending the school.

ERO's investigations confirmed that the school has effective systems and practices to support and review the quality of students' wellbeing and education. Students are actively included and involved in all aspects 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
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

Conclusion

The school's strengths are in the quality of care for students, support for their learning and generally good levels of achievement. Together with teachers, the new principal and senior leaders have made significant progress towards addressing a range of concerns that led to an early return by ERO in 2013. This report acknowledges that progress and identifies key priorities for ongoing improvement.

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

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Southern Region

12 January 2015

School Statistics

Location	Temuka	
Ministry of Education profile number	354	
School type	Secondary (Years 7 to 13)	
School roll	291	
Number of international students	2	
Gender composition	Girls 51%; Boys 49%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	75%
	Māori	18%
	Asian	5%
	Other ethnicities	2%
Review team on site	October 2014	
Date of this report	12 January 2015	
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review	February 2013
	Education Review	January 2012
	Education Review	October 2008