

ERO External Evaluation

St Thomas School (Auckland), Kohimarama, Auckland

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 Thomas School is located in Kohimarama, Auckland and caters for Years 1 to 8 students. The school's roll of 853 students shows increasing cultural diversity. A large number of students speak more than one language.

The school's vision is for students to connect and collaborate well with others, and to successfully play their part in the world. The aspiration is for students to develop a strong sense of self, community and place, curiosity and critical thinking.

The school's strategic and annual goals aim to:

- grow students' sense of agency and cultural identity
- harness students' potential for academic excellence
- establish and use learning progressions to gauge and promote students' learning and wellbeing.

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

- achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
- learning and wellbeing for success
- health and safety
- attendance.

Since the 2014 ERO review the school has experienced roll growth, ongoing property development and significant board changes. The majority of trustees are new to their governance role. Staffing changes over the past four years include the appointment of two senior leaders, a number of middle leaders and teachers.

The school is a member of Te Roopu Pourewa Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako.

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 continues to make good progress towards achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for students.

School achievement data show that over the last three years, most children achieve at or above expected curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. These data also show that overall student achievement is lifting over time. Boys' writing achievement has increased over the past two years.

The small cohort of Māori children achieve very well in literacy and mathematics. This level of achievement has been sustained for the last three years.

The small cohort of Pacific children achieve well in reading. The majority of these children are second language learners. There is persistent disparity between Pacific children's achievement overall and that of the other cohort groups.

The school's new learning progressions help teachers to gather, analyse and respond to students' learning strengths and needs. Students use these progressions to identify how well they are achieving and progressing in relation to their learning and wellbeing.

1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?

Over the past three years the school has developed more effective strategies to accelerate student progress.

School leaders are committed to addressing the in-school disparity for some cohorts of children. They have in-depth understanding and knowledge about these students' learning needs and strengths.

Good systems and processes are in place to identify, track and monitor the progress of children who need to make accelerated progress. School leaders are continuing to focus on growing team leaders' and teachers' data literacy to build the school's capacity to accelerate student progress and learning. Lifting overall writing achievement is the kāhui ako target.

Achievement data from 2018 indicate that accelerated progress was made in reading for small groups of Māori and Pacific students. Accelerated progress was also evident in writing for boys and in mathematics for girls. Teachers are building on these successes and sharing and extending effective strategies to accelerate students' progress in their classroom programmes. School leaders recognise that they now need to consider how these approaches could be more responsive to children's language, culture and identity.

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?

Key school practices and processes that are supporting the achievement of excellence and equity include well-coordinated leadership, useful internal evaluation and inquiry, and growing teacher collaboration and capability.

Senior leaders have used internal evaluation to develop a shared understanding of the school vision and values, and to restructure leadership across the school. They are focused on meeting the diverse needs of students.

Senior leaders promote collaborative practices to develop a professional learning culture and build teachers' leadership capabilities. Organisational structures and systems support the development of professional capability and collective capacity. This is promoting shared learning and decision-making at all levels of the school.

Senior leaders are coaching middle leaders and teachers to foster student agency. Teachers' professional learning and inquiries align well to the school's vision, values and strategic direction. Robust appraisal processes support teachers' professional growth.

The learning community is characterised by high expectations and respect. The broad, responsive curriculum promotes opportunities for students to engage in cultural, academic and sporting activities and to take more ownership of their learning. Senior leaders recognise the importance of expanding the bicultural and multicultural perspectives within the curriculum.

School leaders have been active in contributing to the wider education community and system. This means leaders and teachers have access to a wide range of professional learning and information to help them respond to students' diverse needs.

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

The board and senior leaders use a range of good quality information including community, staff, and student surveys to inform their decision-making. The school's vision, values, and strategic direction are more visible to the school community. A coherent strategic plan, sound governance policies, and a board work plan have been developed.

Trustees have engaged in New Zealand Schools Trustees Association (NZSTA) training to strengthen their stewardship roles and responsibilities. The board would benefit from further training including induction for new trustees. This training should support the board's pursuit of the school's vision, goals, and targets for equity and excellence with school leaders and teachers.

Leaders acknowledge the importance of continuing to develop:

- students' sense of agency as curious, collaborative, resilient, critical learners
- teachers' capability to accelerate student progress and achievement
- a more culturally responsive curriculum
- educationally powerful learning partnerships with whānau and parents.

3 Other Matters

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) established under *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 13 international students attending the school.

The school provides good quality education, pastoral care, and opportunities for involvement and integration into the community for international students. There are good systems and processes in place to ensure that this provision is well monitored and reported to the board.

4 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 Children Act 2014.

5 ERO's Overall Judgement

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

Well placed

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

6 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- the principal's inclusive approach to building collaborative leadership that promotes high expectations and a culture of professional learning
- teaching and learning strategies that enable students to lead their own learning.

Next steps

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

- board training to strengthen stewardship
- continuing to build leadership capability at all levels to support the school's achievement of parity for its Pacific students
- strengthening teachers' analysis and use of assessment information
- extending the use of effective teaching strategies that accelerate student progress and learning.



Steve Tanner
Director Review and Improvement Services Northern
Northern Region
19 July 2019

About the school

Location	Kohimarama, Auckland
Ministry of Education profile number	1510
School type	Full primary (Years 1 to 8)
School roll	853
Gender composition	Girls 50% Boys 50%
Ethnic composition	Māori 6% NZ European/Pākehā 52% Chinese 9% Indian 4% other European 7% other Asian 9% other Pacific 4% other ethnic groups 9%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	No
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	May 2019
Date of this report	19 July 2019
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review November 2014 Education Review March 2012 Education Review August 2008