

**St Mark's School (Christchurch)**  
**Christchurch**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## St Mark's School (Christchurch)

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?**

St Mark's School (Christchurch) offers education for students from Years 1 to 8. It is the only integrated Anglican Primary School in the South Island. A commissioner and acting principal were appointed in early 2015 due to difficulties the school was facing with leadership and governance. The school is well supported by the board of proprietors and the Anglican Church.

Students are proud of the school, its history and traditions and the strong focus on family values.

Relationships between the school and the community have been greatly enhanced by the open communication provided by the commissioner, acting principal and staff. The special character review has contributed to the positive way everyone is working together. Strengthened links between the school, the parish and the Anglican Church are contributing to the sense of forward movement.

The mix of long-serving and new staff enables the acting principal to use the strengths and skills of individual teachers to benefit outcomes for students.

The rebuild of key buildings in the school began in Term 4, 2015. Children, staff and parents are being prepared for the changes in curriculum and teaching approaches that will make best use of the new learning spaces.

At the time of the review, the commissioner was involved in the appointment of a principal and the election of a new board of trustees in 2016. She is well supported by the acting principal and the board of proprietors as she undertakes these important tasks.

### 2 Learning

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

Most students are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to the National Standards.

Teachers make good use of achievement information to identify students with learning needs, particularly those students at risk of not achieving. Parents and teachers contribute to decisions made about suitable programmes that will help students progress and achieve. Teachers value the professional advice and guidance of external advisers. They appreciate the professional discussions about engaging the more challenging students and identifying effective strategies to improve student learning.

Parents are well informed about their children's involvement in support programmes. Open communication is maintained so parents know what impact the programme has had, and how they can support their child's learning at home.

The school has effective systems and programmes that help students learn and progress. These include buddy support for students and grouping students with similar needs. The celebration of student achievement at daily assemblies further promotes students' belief in their ability to experience success with their learning.

### **Areas for review and development**

While student achievement in general is good, there is a concern about the number of students who are achieving below and well below the national standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

ERO has identified, and the school agrees, the key next steps for the teachers and leaders to ensure positive outcomes for these students are:

- identifying and developing meaningful targets that focus on accelerating progress
- regularly tracking, recording and reporting progress to staff, parents and the board
- building and maintaining learning partnerships with parents
- making better use of students' achievement data to inform board decisions about providing extra support.

## **3 Curriculum**

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

The current school curriculum supports the school's focus on educating the whole child. The vision, values and emphasis on quality learning and teaching are central to the intent of the curriculum, and the school and community's high expectations for learning and achievement.

The acting principal and staff have begun updating the curriculum to ensure that it better reflects the school's new approach to teaching and learning.

Positive and respectful relationships between students and with adults are evident in the school. Students have a wide range of leadership opportunities. Student opinion is sought and well used by teachers and management to make decisions about curriculum.

Students are positive about the range of learning experiences they have and the opportunities they are given to extend their learning, interests and abilities. They are taking increased responsibility for their learning and have a better idea about identifying their next steps.

Teachers provide a range of programmes that extend students' needs and interests. Students are well supported by the learning support staff and specialist teachers in music and science.

### **Areas for review and development**

The principal and teachers are currently updating the school's curriculum. In order to strengthen the quality of this document, the following aspects should be included:

- ways in which the special Christian character of the school underpins the learning programmes
- a stronger focus on incorporating bicultural aspects across the full curriculum.

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

The use of Ngāi Tahu expertise and the delegation of responsibility to a staff member for supporting the development of a shared understanding about success as Māori in the school is a positive development.

Teachers know the students and their whānau well. The bicultural content within the school's religious programme is a natural way for all students to use te reo and tikanga Māori in meaningful situations.

## **4 Sustainable Performance**

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

The commissioner, the acting principal and the board of proprietors are confident that positive and respectful relationships and communication with parents and the community have been re-established. Generally feedback to them indicates that most parents are positive about the future direction of the school.

The commissioner is working on a number of key tasks to restore the school's management and governance structure.

The acting principal and senior leaders are working with staff to establish a curriculum and learning programme linked to the future focus of the school.

The commissioner and acting principal are working on the school's health and safety policies and procedures.

### **Areas for review and development**

The commissioner and the acting principal have identified, and ERO agrees, the next steps to support the governance and management of the school include:

- the development of strategic and annual plans linked to the vision, values and special character of the school
- maintaining a focus on building purposeful relationships with parents.

## 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

St Mark's School (Christchurch) is a state integrated Anglican school providing education for students from Years 1 to 8. Most students achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The broad curriculum offers students an extensive range of positive learning experiences.

There is a commissioner and acting principal leading improvements to the governance and management of the school. This intervention will continue in 2016.

ERO intends to carry out another review over the course of one-to-two years.



Chris Rowe  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern (Acting)

10 February 2016

## About the School

Location	Christchurch	
Ministry of Education profile number	4135	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	206	
Gender composition	Girls 55%; Boys 45%	
Ethnic composition	Pākehā	93%
	Māori	2%
	Asian	4%
	Other ethnicities	1%
Review team on site	December 2015	
Date of this report	10 February 2016	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2010
	Education Review	October 2007
	Education Review	December 2004