

# St Leo's Catholic School (Devonport) Education Review

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# 1 Context

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

St Leo's Catholic School (Devonport) is located in a seaside suburb of Auckland. It is a small, integrated school catering for students from Years 1 to 6. The school has had a long association with the local community since its establishment in 1893. An historical feature of the school is the old school building which now forms part of the parish hall.

The school is inclusive and welcoming and has a strong pastoral care focus. Students and staff benefit from the school's very good relationships with the local parish, parents, the wider community, and a number of Catholic colleges. The board of trustees has a very good understanding of its governance role. A professional and respectful working relationship exists between the board and principal.

Since the 2012 ERO review a number of staffing changes have taken place. A new principal was appointed as of term 4, 2014. A new deputy principal was appointed internally and a Director of Religious Studies and several new teachers have also joined the school. These changes have brought some new directions in school management, particularly those related to building more distributed ownership and leadership for school improvement initiatives in teaching and learning. The principal is carefully managing the pace of change to support the new direction of the school.

The school gathers its inspiration from the Mercy charism. Mercy values are taught and lived, and the expectation that all within the school community will show a concern for the wellbeing of others is evident. The recently developed school motto of 'Nurture - the whole child; Gracious - Mercy Values; Excellence - No Compromise' draws its insight from the charism and values, as well as capturing the current school philosophy. These underlying concepts are supporting the future direction of the school. An outdoor prayer and reflection space for students enhances the Catholic character of the school.

A school culture of high expectations for all permeates across all school systems and processes. The 2012 ERO report recommended strengthening bicultural practice, self review, student directed learning and the curriculum. The school has responded well to these recommendations and progress in these areas of school performance is evident.

## 2 Learning

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

The school makes good use of achievement information to make positive changes to student learning. Students are highly engaged in learning and motivated to achieve. Student engagement is supported by very respectful relationships between teachers and students.

High levels of achievement in relation to the National Standards are evident, with the large majority of students, including Māori and Pacific, achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement in these three areas compares favourably with other schools locally and with national achievement levels.

Analysis of student achievement information by teachers is shared across year levels to identify emerging trends and patterns. This promotes well informed decisions about directions for teaching and learning, and for setting targets for improved performance. Student achievement information is also well reported to the board and used to make informed resourcing decisions.

Sound monitoring systems are in place for students with special education and behaviour needs. Teachers and teacher aides provide in class support. Systems at board level for identifying and monitoring the progress of students not achieving at expected levels have recently been strengthened, further enabling the board to prioritise its support for these students and their teachers, as needed.

The school also works actively to help students accelerate learning. A current literacy focus across the school is helping to further accelerate student achievement in writing.

Parents are given good opportunities to discuss the progress and achievement their children are making in relation to the National Standards. Student reports have been refined and provide a good record of learning and progress over time.

### 3 Curriculum

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

The school is presently in the process of reviewing and refining its curriculum. It is making good progress with this work which aims to heighten opportunities for students to become future focused, self-led learners. Its developing curriculum is effective in promoting and supporting student learning. It aligns well to The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) principles and values, and reflects the school's Catholic character. Students engage in meaningful and purposeful learning activities. These activities are complemented by strong school-home relationships, which further adds to the effectiveness of the school's curriculum.

Curriculum planning and implementation is underpinned by effective systems which set high expectations for teaching and learning. Ongoing reflection by senior leaders and teachers about new curriculum initiatives and implementation is guiding the school's transition towards more future focused learning. Senior leaders provide relevant support for teachers in delivering the curriculum. Professional conversations about teaching are encouraged and a school culture of shared responsibility and collaboration is evident. These good practices are raising teacher awareness and capability to deliver new initiatives effectively.

Students benefit from a curriculum that is enhanced by contributions from external specialists. These include learning experiences in weekly te reo Māori sessions, and for instrumental music lessons and sport.

The curriculum builds on the school's bicultural practice that is interwoven into all school programmes and reflected in learning environments. Students are highly receptive to the EnviroSchool's programme and can confidently talk about their involvement with this. Teachers recognise that this programme aligns well with aspects of te ao Māori and further supports the school's bicultural focus.

The school's culturally responsive and inclusive environment supports diversity and promotes student engagement and participation in learning. Pacific families identify with the spiritual dimension of the school and actively contribute to supporting student learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for Pacific students' cultures to be recognised and valued.

Senior leaders are looking at ways to further strengthen children's transition into the school. A deeper understanding of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, should help to support this development.

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

The school is effective in promoting educational success for Māori students. These students achieve well across all learning areas. They benefit from the respectful relationships that exist throughout the school and enjoy the opportunities they have to succeed as Māori. These opportunities are enriched by the school's inclusive culture where Māori spirituality, te reo and tikanga Māori are part of the curriculum. The school's religious education programme provides another dimension for Māori students to achieve success as Māori.

Māori students have a strong sense that their culture is valued in the school. They are represented in leadership roles and benefit from a school house structure that supports the concept of whānau. They engage fully in the school's kapa haka group and have specific leadership roles during school pōwhiri.

The school's bicultural practice is guided by a local kaumatua. Senior leaders actively consult Māori whānau and, as a result, effective school/home partnerships have developed. Staff and students keenly seek opportunities to explore and learn more about the history of Māori in the local area.

The school has used the Ministry of Education Strategy Ka Hikitia-Accelerating Success 2013 – 2017, to promote the potential of Māori students. Senior leaders and teachers acknowledge that tikanga Māori is a strong and valued part of the school culture. They also identify, and ERO agrees, that the use of te reo Māori across the school is an area to further develop and strengthen.

## 4 Sustainable Performance

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

St Leo's Catholic School (Devonport) is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

A dedicated and motivated board provides effective governance. Board decision making is responsive and strategic. Trustees are focused on supporting a school ethos of excellence. They acknowledge the importance of reviewing their own practice, and undertake reviews of school policies and procedures. Trustees are well informed through good school reporting processes.

The principal is implementing a strategic approach that supports and monitors progress against new school directions. She is developing a culture of distributive leadership that empowers and values teachers. Senior leaders and teachers are working together effectively to ensure a consistent and shared vision about school systems and student learning approaches. The school's performance appraisal system is being reviewed to support this development. Senior leaders acknowledge the importance of aligning the Ministry of Education resource Tātaiako - Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners, with teacher appraisals. They plan to merge this resource into the school appraisal system.

The school is increasingly establishing self-review practices that support ongoing improvement and value the contributions of staff, students and the school community. Senior leaders and teachers are committed to professional development and value the learning that this brings to their practice.

Senior leaders and ERO agree that the key next step for the school is to continue to embed and consolidate new initiatives, empowering students, teachers and parents to embrace future focused learning.

### Provision for international students

St Leo's Catholic School (Devonport) 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. No international students were enrolled at the time of the ERO review.

The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

ERO's investigations confirm that the school's self-review process for international students is robust and compliant with all sections of the Code.

### 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 Leo's Catholic School (Devonport) is welcoming and inclusive. Students engage in a purposeful curriculum and high levels of student achievement are evident. The Mercy Catholic Character and excellence for all are central to the school's ethos. The board is effective and shows strong commitment to students, staff and parents.

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

Graham Randell  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern (Acting)

12 August 2015

## School Statistics

Location	Devonport, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	1500	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	98	
Gender composition	Girls 51% Boys 49%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	3%
	NZ European/Pākehā	74%
	Australian	10%
	British/Irish	4%
	Tongan	3%
	other	6%
Review team on site	June 2015	
Date of this report	12 August 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	May 2012
	Education Review	March 2009
	Education Review	May 2006