

Hutt Valley High School Education Review

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1 Context

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

Hutt Valley High School provides coeducational secondary education for over 1600 students in Years 9 to 15. Since the August 2012 ERO report, the student population has become increasingly diverse. Of the roll, 20% of students identify as Māori and 6% as Pacific.

Students are provided with wide range of opportunities for participation and success, including in cultural, sporting and service activities. A focus on strengthening relationships between students and staff contributes positively to the learning environment. Student attendance, retention and participation have increased in response to an ongoing strategic focus by the school on these areas.

Membership of the board of trustees and the senior leadership team has remained stable since the previous ERO review. Trustees are planning for significant property developments to promote modern learning opportunities for students.

2 Learning

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

The school is continuing to make better use of student achievement information to steadily raise senior students' achievement in national qualifications.

There has been an ongoing overall increase in attainment of the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs) Levels 1, 2, 3, including of merit and excellence endorsements. Achievement is strong for some groups of students. Most school leavers have at least an NCEA Level 2 qualification. The school is proactive in accessing assistance with NCEA assessments for eligible students.

High success is achieved in New Zealand Scholarship awards for students who are supported by special programmes, with six Outstanding Scholarships gained in 2014.

Progress is evident in lifting NCEA qualification rates for Māori and Pacific students since 2012, but achievement for these groups remains significantly below that of their peers in the school. The board, school leaders and staff should continue to enhance Māori and Pacific success by reducing disparity in student outcomes. Male students' NCEA success rates overall require closer monitoring to ensure better progress. University Entrance rates remain the focus of work in the school and are below that for similar schools.

Year 9 and 10 learning hubs provide a productive forum for mentors and teachers to discuss assessment information and share strategies to improve teaching and learning. Students are beginning to set individual learning goals with their parents and mentor teachers. The role of the mentor should assist smoother transition to high school and contribute to productive learning partnerships with students, families and whānau during Years 9 and 10.

Years 9 and 10 achievement and progress are measured using school-based assessments that are becoming more closely aligned to each curriculum level. This practice should enable teachers to better identify, and target their teaching for, each student's next steps for learning.

Schoolwide processes for using standardised assessment information about literacy and mathematics require development. This should include: how entry data and school testing are to be used to better target teaching and learning programmes; and expectations for how information will be collated, analysed and reported to the board. The board should then be better placed to measure the value added against improvement targets and know how well students' progress is being accelerated during Years 9 and 10.

Students with additional learning needs are appropriately identified and offered placement in a targeted class. Learners with higher needs are provided with a programme in the Learning Support Centre. Processes for learners in mainstream classrooms who have individual education plans (IEPs) require review and development. This should include ways of ensuring that individual learning goals are well supported by strategies that reflect current best practice in special education.

Key next steps for the board, school leaders and staff are to set specific Year 9 and 10 improvement targets with accompanying action plans to better support those students most at risk of underachieving.

3 Curriculum

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

Students enjoy a comprehensive school curriculum where academic learning, careers planning and pathways are well supported. School systems are increasingly building the curriculum around individual careers and lifelong learning. Improved student destination data is informing this work. Teachers are beginning to provide more flexible learning programmes to better cater for individuals.

Students are actively encouraged to participate in an extensive range of co-curricular activities, including the arts, sports and cultural performances. Academic excellence is supported by the Scholarship-focused senior programmes. School citizenship and service are recognised through leadership and awards. Students value the recognition of their positive endeavours as members of the Hutt Valley High School community.

Work to establish the schoolwide 'Connected Curriculum' is a significant ongoing development. The curriculum outlines the school's expectations for effective teaching practices. This work is supported by regular revisiting of these expectations in staff discussion forums.

Curriculum leaders are continuing to develop departmental responses to the new schoolwide expectations and there are examples of good progress to support a consistent approach to effective teaching and learning.

Associated staff professional learning and development (PLD) is currently about blended learning that uses digital technologies and further embedding teachers' understanding and involvement in restorative practices to support positive conditions for learning. In addition, Year 9 students are beginning to bring their own digital devices (BYOD) to support their learning across the curriculum.

Ongoing work should also consider how implementation of the school's curriculum will reflect the principles of The New Zealand Curriculum and foster culturally-responsive teaching approaches for Māori and Pacific learners. Improved targeting of PLD should support the embedding of effective practices schoolwide.

Appraisal support groups are a helpful forum for teachers from different curriculum areas to share teaching approaches and strategies. It is timely to further refine the appraisal process to link it to improving outcomes for students. This should include formalising expectations for teachers' inquiry into their practice, and their use of data and research to improve teaching and learning.

Strengthening expectations for how teachers and curriculum leaders are to use evidence to support annual appraisal and demonstrate how they meet the Registered Teacher Criteria should also increase the robustness of the process.

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

During 2014, the board co-opted a Māori trustee to support the development of a whānau steering group. This resulted in a group of family members meeting and discussing aspirations for their children. An inaugural Māori prize giving ceremony was held in 2014 in response to whānau wishes. This valuable celebration of Māori success affirmed students' culture and identity.

Improved opportunities for Māori students include a kapa haka group operated by parent volunteers. A former student has recently gifted a school waiata. The refurbished whareniui, Hotuwaipara, provides a venue for whānau hui and school pōwhiri.

A Māori Achievement Plan was developed in 2014 and 2015 in consultation with the whānau steering group and some staff. A key next step is to integrate the objectives of this plan into the school's strategic direction, achievement targets, curriculum and teacher appraisal.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is well placed to continue to improve its performance.

Improvement in students' NCEA achievement and their wider participation contributes to gradual, positive change. The board, school leaders and staff recognise that supporting learners at risk of underachievement and knowing about the effectiveness and impacts of this support are a priority.

Building stronger connections with the local community continues to be focus for governance. Stable membership of the board and good use of trustees' individual expertise provides purposeful stewardship. External expertise is used regularly for ongoing reviews of key areas of governance responsibility, such as policy development. Further reviews of health and safety and recruitment are planned. Ensuring that policies are cohesively supported by procedures is a next step.

Strengthening provision to effectively support Māori and Pacific students' and their families' positive participation in education remains a priority. In 2014, the board co-opted two trustees for better representation of Māori whānau and Pacific views in strategic decision making to promote improved outcomes for students. Progress is evident in Māori consultation. More limited progress has been made to date in forming a Pacific family group. Further work towards sustainability in these areas is needed.

School leaders continue to work collaboratively to promote improvements in teaching and learning. They provide staff with many opportunities to engage with school developments and share good practices, and are continuing to build the curriculum leadership of middle managers.

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. At the time of the review, there were 40 international students enrolled from a wide range of nationalities. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

The school continues to provide the effective pastoral care for international students identified in the 2012 ERO review.

International students are well supported to achieve their individual educational goals and aspirations. Regular reviews about the quality of provision respond to students' views and

interests. Host families and parents are actively involved in school decision making around meeting the needs of students. Sound systems are in place for monitoring and tracking, and to orientate and help students to integrate into the life of the school and wider community.

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.

In order to improve current practice, the board and school leaders should:

- complete the ongoing review of the policy framework and ensure that supporting procedures are in place to meet legislative requirements, including processes for police vetting, teacher registration and staff appointments.

During the course of this review ERO found the following area of non-compliance. The board of trustees must:

- complete the performance management system for the school's leaders each year and the attestation of school leaders in relation to the appropriate professional standards.

[s77C State Sector Act 1988]

Conclusion

Hutt Valley High School provides comprehensive opportunities for participation and success to an increasingly diverse student population. NCEA results and leaver qualifications continue to steadily increase over time. Achievement is strong for some groups. Improving the progress and achievement of Māori students, Pacific students and those with additional learning needs is a key next step.

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

Joyce Gebbie
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central

28 July 2015

School Statistics

Location	Lower Hutt	
Ministry of Education profile number	261	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	1614	
Number of international students	40	
Gender composition	Male 55%, Female 45%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	20%
	NZ European/Pākehā	55%
	Asian	17%
	Pacific	6%
	Other ethnic groups	2%
Special Features	Learning Support Unit	
Review team on site	June 2015	
Date of this report	28 July 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	August 2012
	Education Review	June 2009
	Special Review	April 2008