

Birkenhead College Education Review

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About the School

Location	Birkenhead, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	31	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 15)	
School roll	730	
Number of international students	41	
Gender composition	Boys 53% Girls 47%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 49% Māori 16% Filipino 7% Samoan 6% Tongan 6% Chinese 3% African 2% Fijian 2% Indian 2% Korean 2% other Asian 2% other 3%	
Review team on site	August 2012	
Date of this report	7 November 2012	

Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	February 2010
	Education Review	November 2006
	Education Review	July 2003

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

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1 Context

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

Students at Birkenhead College on Auckland's North Shore are confident, friendly and proud of their school. They benefit from a caring and inclusive school culture and have many opportunities to participate in a wide range of academic, cultural, arts and sporting activities. Students have a variety of leadership opportunities across the school.

The school has a history of positive ERO reports. Previous reports have commended the school's high aspirations and commitment to developing the potential of all learners. Teachers' support for students' learning and involvement in extra-curricular activities was noted. These positive features of the school continue to be evident.

The school has well-established links with the local community and contributing intermediate and primary schools. School sports and performing arts facilities are well used by the wider community. Students have opportunities to participate in community-based learning experiences. The principal, senior managers and teachers continue to make meaningful connections with local Māori and iwi.

The board of trustees plans strategically and continues to provide students and teachers with high quality teaching and learning facilities. Trustees bring a variety of professional backgrounds and experiences to their role.

2 Learning

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

Students at Birkenhead College are progressing and achieving very well.

Positive relationships between students and teachers support students' engagement with their learning programmes. Students have many leadership opportunities and actively engage in the wider life of the school.

Academic results for students in Years 11 to 13 show that there has been significant and sustained improvement in National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) achievement over the past three years. Most notably:

- student achievement in NCEA at all levels is significantly higher than national averages
- Māori student achievement has increased significantly and exceeds national averages at Level 1
- there has been a significant increase in merit and excellence endorsements at all levels
- Level 1 literacy and numeracy achievement is higher than the national average.

Pacific students' achievement in all three levels of NCEA is higher than for Pacific students nationally. Lifting the achievement of Pacific students to align with overall school achievement and improving Māori and Pacific rates of gaining University Entrance have been identified as next steps for improvement.

School leaders and ERO agree that more systematic processes are needed to measure student progress in literacy and mathematics at Years 9 and 10. Student progress and achievement is measured against The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) levels within each subject. Collating and analysing this information across the school would further strengthen reporting to the board and community, and would assist in the identification of strengths and areas for development.

Students receive high quality learning support. The progress of all students is closely monitored. Programmes of targeted support are tailored for individuals identified as being at risk of not achieving to their potential. Teachers and senior students give time and expertise to support students to make accelerated progress and to achieve success.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum effectively promotes and supports student learning. It is influenced by students' experiences, backgrounds and needs, and provides relevant and meaningful learning opportunities for all learners. A focus on developing citizenship and promoting a caring society is evident across the school.

School leaders and teachers regularly review the school's curriculum. New programmes and teaching approaches are introduced in response to the findings of this self review. Collaboration between teachers from different learning areas provides support for cross-curricular approaches. Students and teachers benefit from the board's support for innovation, including a commitment to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in learning.

High quality teaching practices are evident across the school. Students respond very positively to teaching that acknowledges and values their cultures and identity. Professional development contributes to the effectiveness of teaching and to a culture of continuous learning in the school.

Students benefit from the school's strong commitment to their individual learning pathways. These pathways enable students to plan their learning at school and prepare for their future education, training and employment. Strong relationships with the local community provide valuable opportunities for students to experience learning beyond the classroom.

ERO and school leaders agree that useful priorities for further development of the school's curriculum could include:

- using The New Zealand Curriculum as a strategic resource for considering new initiatives and future directions for the school
- more consistently sharing progress and achievement information with students to increase ownership of their own learning.

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

Sixteen percent of students at Birkenhead College are Māori. Māori students and their whānau appreciate the school's support for them to be successful as Māori. A well-established whānau class and the school's whare wananga support Māori students' sense of belonging. Students and whānau value kapa haka and see this as an important part of being Māori at the school.

Senior leaders and teachers are committed to supporting and enhancing Māori students' success at the school. Māori culture and contexts are evident across the curriculum. Māori students are well known by their teachers. Students respond to the school's high expectations and Māori students are well represented in academic, sporting and cultural activities and successes.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is very well placed to sustain and further improve its performance. Self review is student focused and helps to ensure that school systems are effective in supporting students' academic, social and cultural learning.

Leadership is very effective. The experienced principal and his supportive senior leadership team work collaboratively to foster strong relationships in the school. Senior leaders mentor and support teachers, actively growing leadership at all levels of the school. The board and school leaders value the school's strong and mutually beneficial relationships with the local community.

Trustees plan strategically in response to the high quality information that they receive from school leaders. The board and school leaders use self review to identify and prioritise areas for development and to monitor the progress and success of existing initiatives. Trustees value staff and provide well for their ongoing professional learning and development.

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 this review there were 41 international students attending the school.

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

ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's self-review process for international students is thorough and effective.

The school has well documented systems to guide its education and care of international students. The international department monitors the progress and achievement of individual students. Students are encouraged to participate fully in the wider life of the school. Staff regularly review their practices and identify areas where additional support and guidance would benefit students.

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.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four-to-five years.

Violet Tu'uga Stevenson
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