

ERO External Evaluation

Mt Aspiring College, Wanaka

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

Mt Aspiring College is a co-educational school in Wanaka, Central Otago, with a roll of 1078 students in Years 7 to 13, 9% of whom identify as Māori. The school has a hostel for Year 13 students who participate in a specialist outdoor pursuits programme.

The school vision is to be the best possible learning community. Its SOAR values are Self (tika, mana), Others (aroha), Attitude (ihi, wehi), Respect (mana, ora). The school's current strategic goals are to improve educational outcomes for all students; to strengthen connections and relationships with parents, families, whānau and community; and to nurture and recognise the special nature of New Zealand's bicultural heritage.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board schoolwide information about outcomes for students in relation to the levels of *The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* and within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

Since the 2015 ERO review the school has experienced an increase of 36% in its roll and 20% in its teaching staff. To support this, 14 new teaching spaces have been added, many of which are temporary classrooms. In response to this growth the school has:

- recruited new teachers and senior leaders
- reviewed its pastoral structure to maintain its whānau atmosphere
- increased its curriculum breadth to meet more diverse learning needs
- engaged in planning for campus development.

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 is continuing to work towards achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all students.

Most students achieve Levels 1, 2 and 3 of NCEA. Almost all girls achieve NCEA at each level. There is variable disparity in boys' NCEA achievement. Most Māori students achieve Level 2, but there have been varying levels of disparity in Māori student achievement since ERO's last review.

School achievement information shows that, over time, in relation to achievement at or above curriculum level expectations:

- most Year 7 and 8 students achieve in reading and writing
- almost all students in Year 9 achieve in reading and writing
- most Year 10 students achieve in writing
- the majority of Year 10 students achieve in reading
- the majority of Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students achieve in mathematics.

There is disparity in boys' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 10 in reading and writing, while in mathematics boys' achievement tends to be better than that of girls. There was disparity in achievement over time for one cohort of Māori students in mathematics.

Over time there is a trend of improvement in student achievement for Years 7 to 9 students.

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

The school is effective in accelerating learning for some targeted students who need this.

Student learning information shows that in 2018 the school effectively accelerated learning for those Year 9 students who needed this in reading, writing and mathematics. Fewer priority learners showed accelerated progress in Years 8 and 10.

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?

The school's curriculum responds well to the needs, interests and aspirations of students, parents and whānau. Students at all levels learn across the breadth of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC). Learning for Years 7 to 9 is arranged in homeroom settings, with support from specialist teachers across the curriculum. Students and parents of older students are well informed of subject choices and pathways, and experience increasing choice in their subject selection. Differentiated programmes for senior students reflect their needs and interests. Opportunities to learn in the outdoor environment continues to be a feature of the school's curriculum. The school proactively draws on community resources to enhance students' learning, wellbeing and pathways.

Students experience positive relationships with their teachers. Teachers know most students very well as learners and individuals. They have systems for identifying individual learning needs, and students with high needs are well supported. Leaders are in the process of rationalising data management in Years 7 to 10 to ensure consistency in assessment and reporting of progress and achievement for all students. This is specifically focused on groups of students who need extra support. The school takes a holistic approach to student learning and social development. This is supported by its pastoral network and resourcing of additional staff.

Students benefit from reciprocal learning-centred relationships between the school, parents and the community. Parents, students and teachers work together to support transitions into the school and beyond. Facilitated service in the community is a valued feature of the senior students' programme. Student leaders take responsibility for leading the teaching and enactment of the school's SOAR values within the student body. Students learn within a connected, learning-focused community.

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

Trustees, leaders and teachers should clarify school vision, strategic planning and direction. They need to work together to establish and communicate clear, coherent strategic goals for the school and their learning areas. These goals should be monitored and progress communicated regularly and consistently.

Using the school's new data system, leaders and teachers need to establish specific, measurable achievement targets, including achievement of target groups and cohorts of students, to address disparity. They should ensure that the impact of initiatives and interventions to address this disparity is systematically evaluated.

Leaders need to embed documented systems and processes to support strategic directions. Expectations for all staff should be made clear, and professional support made available to enact these expectations. These systems, processes and practices should be evaluated to identify their impact and areas for improvement.

Leaders and teachers need to work together to build a professional, positive working environment that supports collaboration and openness to change. ERO acknowledges that the school is continuing to experience significant roll expansion and related change. ERO recommends that the board, as a good employer, ensures there are robust and reliable ways of monitoring and responding to feedback about the wellbeing of all staff, over time. Clarifying the school's management structure, and engaging in professional support to build leadership capability across the school, would better support staff wellbeing and capacity.

3 Other Matters

Provision for students in the school hostel

The Mt Aspiring College hostel accommodates up to 30 Year 13 students, 3% of the school roll. The hostel is owned by Mt Aspiring College. At the time of this review the school was in the process of appointing a hostel manager. This is presenting an opportunity for leaders to clarify the hostel's philosophy and update operating procedures.

Students live in groups of six in five villas on the school campus. They learn skills for independent living, such as planning and cooking meals for their villa, and, with support, take responsibility for their social and physical wellbeing. Hostel students are welcomed and included in school and community life through an induction programme, integration with local students, and a community service programme.

In discussion with ERO the school leaders agree that it would help to make expectations more explicit to parents, students and staff if school and hostel policies were better aligned. This will provide clarity of expectations and more consistent implementation of agreed procedures.

Students' understanding of the requirements of independent living would be strengthened by staff actively guiding students to be aware of hazards in their environment, and kitchen safety and hygiene. The owner has attested that it meets most of the requirements of the Hostel Regulations (2005). Since the onsite stage of the review, leaders have positively responded to and addressed aspects of hostel policy review and evacuation procedures.

Provision for international students

Mt Aspiring College is a signatory to The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016 (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code. ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's processes for reviewing compliance against the code are well documented and lead to change where needed.

At the time of this review there were 29 international students attending the school.

Students receive a welcoming and personalised introduction to the school and are integrated well into the school and community. The students are well supported in their academic and language learning and know about their learning and progress in these areas. Outdoor education opportunities are utilised by the students at the school. Achievement data needs to be collated, included and analysed in regular reports to the board of trustees to show how well international students are learning and progressing in their mainstream class programmes.

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's Act 2014.

5 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of Mt Aspiring College's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Developing

[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:

- achieving outcomes for students that show consistently good levels of achievement
- its holistic curriculum that draws on connections to students' wider lives and their local community and provides a wide range of pathways for students
- its connections with parents, whānau and community to enhance student learning and wellbeing.

Next steps

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

- building professional relationships across the school that promote collective responsibility for achieving equity and excellence of student outcomes
- developing, communicating, implementing and reviewing consistent systems and procedures that support the school community in a time of growth and change
- building evaluation capability at all levels that enables the understanding and sharing of what has the greatest impact for all learners.

As a good employer, the board must have robust and reliable processes in place to regularly know about the wellbeing of all staff. The board must also seek assurance, over time, that the school's complaints procedures are consistently followed.



Dr Lesley Patterson
Director Review and Improvement Services Southern
Southern Region
5 September 2019

About the school

Location	Wanaka
Ministry of Education profile number	533
School type	Secondary (Years 7 to 13)
School roll	1078
Gender composition	Boys 538, Girls 540
Ethnic composition	Māori 9% NZ European / Pākaehā 86% Other ethnicities 5%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	June 2019
Date of this report	5 September 2019
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review April 2015 Education Review May 2012