

St Albans Catholic School (Christchurch) Education Review

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About the School

Location	Christchurch	
Ministry of Education profile number	3517	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	104	
Gender composition	Girls 59% Boys 41%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	88%
	Māori	9%
	Other Ethnicities	3%
Special Features	Integrated	
Review team on site	October 2012	
Date of this report	12 December 2012	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	September 2008
	Education Review	October 2005
	Education Review	August 2002

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?

St Albans's Catholic School provides education for students in Years 1 to 6.

The board, principal and staff work in ways that successfully promote the school's Catholic special character. They provide students with a positive learning environment that fosters caring and respectful relationships.

Since the school's September 2008 ERO report, a number of significant developments have occurred. These include:

- school-wide professional development that has led to the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance students' learning
- wider use, across the school, of teaching practices that effectively engage students in learning and affirm the cultural backgrounds of Māori students
- teachers making better use of achievement information to identify and respond to students' strengths and differing abilities
- improvements to the school's facilities, staffing and resources that have helped to extend 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 makes some good use of achievement information to foster student progress and achievement.

The principal and teachers are making growing use of analysed achievement information to support their efforts to raise student achievement. They use this information to:

- make judgements about student achievement in relation to the National Standards
- establish clear targets for improving student achievement
- provide useful reports to parents, the board and community about student achievement.

The principal and teachers have developed suitable guidelines and practices to help them to make sound overall judgements about student achievement. This has led to teachers more effectively identifying students who are achieving well and those who most need additional support.

The board, principal and teachers have made appropriate use of achievement information to respond to those students most in need of additional learning support. For instance they have:

- developed useful plans and initiatives to help raise achievement in mathematics and for boys
- increased the use of small group teaching to help respond to variations in students' abilities
- funded additional staffing and resources to help meet the needs of priority learners.

To build on the good work being undertaken, the principal and teachers should now give priority to:

- evaluating and reporting to the board on the impact of the additional learning support provided for selected students
- extending provisions for tracking and reporting the progress groups of students make over their time at the school
- making clearer judgements about student achievement against the National Standards in reports to parents and sharing such information more often with individual students.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum promotes and supports student learning well. This is particularly evident in the achievement of students in reading and their positive attitude to learning.

The school's well designed curriculum provides students with suitable opportunities to achieve across the curriculum.

This curriculum gives suitable emphasis to:

- promoting values and key competencies through its focus on virtues and learner qualities
- clarifying the expectations of students and teachers
- making learning interesting and meaningful for students.

A feature of the school is the positive learning environment created for students by staff. This learning focused environment is fostered through:

- the respectful and supportive relationships that exist between teachers and students, and among students
- good standards of behaviour and well established routines
- the focus placed on promoting the school's special character.

Teachers use a wide range of effective teaching practices to engage students in learning. For instance, reviewers observed:

- focused and purposeful teaching both during class and group lessons
- teachers giving due consideration to how best to engage boys in learning
- teachers posing questions that helped to extend students thinking and problem solving skills
- students receiving regular affirmation of their efforts and feedback about their work.

The opportunities teachers provide for students to learn and progress would be enhanced through teachers building on recent initiatives to further promote biculturalism, te reo and tikanga Maori. They should also extend the opportunities they provide for students to become more independent learners and better assess and evaluate the progress students make towards achieving this key school goal.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The principal works in ways that foster a positive school culture. Features of this culture include the level of support and trust, and the degree of collaboration, support and team work that is evident among staff.

School-wide professional development, and effective use of staff strengths, has clearly helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning opportunities for students. Reflective practices are helping to foster ongoing improvements to teaching.

Many board practices help to sustain and improve school performance. These include:

- the recent updating of policies and procedures
- practices that help to build a sense of partnership between the board, principal, staff, parish and Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- the focus trustees place on fostering student achievement
- their ongoing efforts to improve school facilities, staffing and resources in ways that benefit students.

To help capitalise on the positive school culture to promote ongoing improvement to the quality of education for students:

- the principal and teachers should build on the best of current self-review practices to enhance the quality and usefulness of future reviews
- the board should refine its planning to make its strategic priorities clearer and extend its ongoing programme of self review.

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 three years.

Graham Randell
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