



Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Nelson College
Nelson

Confirmed

Education Review Report

Education Review Report

Nelson College

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. The report answers four key questions about the school.

Findings

1 Context

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

Nelson College is a long-standing, state secondary school with a rich history. It is a Years 9 to 15 boys' school with traditions. The school is part of the Nelson City Community of Learning with a group of eight schools and centres.

The school's mission is to inspire and challenge boys to develop their academic, cultural and sporting abilities. The school aims to grow a boy's character and promote values to enable each boy to be unique and the best he can be. The school strongly promotes a positive and inclusive culture and continuous improvement. Boys' learning benefits from these school priorities.

Nelson College constantly responds to the changing needs of all learners. There is a strong focus on adults building respectful relationships with students, and on students showing respect for each other. The school has an increasing number of migrants from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. The way staff and students acknowledge and celebrate this diversity enriches the learning of all students.

Students' pride in their school is clearly evident. In addition to academic achievement, boys as individuals and teams achieve many successes in a wide range of sporting and cultural fields, locally and nationally. These pursuits assist students to develop their sense of belonging and pride, and increase their retention at school.

The school's building and refurbishment programme has created a significant number of purpose-built facilities covering a range of specialist learning areas. About 140 students reside in two on-site hostels. Over one third of these are international students. A third hostel is undergoing major refurbishment.

The school has a history of high performance in its most recent ERO evaluations.

2 Learning

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

The school makes highly strategic use of a wide range of learning information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement.

Leaders and teachers use achievement and other information very effectively to ensure that students' needs, interests and abilities are provided for. Students' learning strengths and needs are identified early and a range of ongoing monitoring across junior and senior years is having a positive impact on students. Students told ERO that the teachers know them well and tailor courses and activities to engage, support and motivate them.

The school has a strong focus on retaining senior students, who are well supported through a variety of purposeful strategies to achieve appropriate leavers' qualifications. The school has programmes in place to enable students to feel confident to set and achieve learning goals, take learning risks and stretch themselves.

Students achieve very well. By the time they leave school, nearly all students have achieved Level 1 NCEA and their numeracy and literacy requirements. Over 80% of leavers have achieved Level 2. Achievement at NCEA Level 3 and Excellence endorsements at Levels 2 and 3 are strengths. Leaders gather and scrutinize school-wide learning information well to develop improvement targets and monitor progress towards these.

Leaders and teachers use data very effectively to monitor progress and achievement and to assess outcomes. Data is used to inform decisions around teaching and learning and to find the best ways to engage students. Leaders review teaching practices and work with teachers to improve outcomes for students. School leaders and teachers have a relentless focus on enabling all students to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Next step

Curriculum leaders and teachers need to improve consistency of reporting to students in Years 9 and 10, and their parents, about achievement in terms of curriculum levels.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum very effectively promotes and supports student learning. It provides boys with equitable opportunities to develop the skills and qualities they need to equip them for success. The vision, principles and values of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) are highly evident. The school places a high priority on ensuring students have respect for themselves, others and their learning. Leaders promote a highly inclusive environment, with the expectation that each boy will feel effectively engaged in his learning, stay on at school and leave with a 'passport' to his future.

Ongoing development of the curriculum is very responsive to the current and future aspirations, interests and needs of students. Flexible, authentic and engaging learning programmes and choices provide many pathways to success in the senior school and to purposeful, well-planned transitions beyond the school. Learners value the wide range of learning experiences, innovative curriculum design and extensive support they receive from teachers both in and outside the classroom.

Senior leaders and teachers lead and share innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Professional development is well structured and aligned to strategic priorities. Professional learning is building teachers' capacity with digital technologies and cultural responsiveness.

Boys benefit from a culture of manaakitanga/caring within the school. The pastoral system effectively supports boys' wellbeing and respect for learning. Student leadership and responsibility are strongly fostered. Senior boys feel empowered by the variety of leadership opportunities including an embedded mentoring system between teachers and students, senior students to junior boys, and between peers in the senior school. This focus on relationships and respect has been a priority in Year 9. Respect and positive relationships are further enhanced across the school as a result of whole-school events and a range of outside-the-classroom activities. Senior students lead the implementation of respect initiatives. Boys feel well supported to have positive relationships, serve the community and develop into well-rounded, successful young men.

Students appreciate the choices and responsive teaching methods they benefit from at the school. The opportunity for authentic learning in many subject areas is raising student engagement and achievement. High expectations are clearly stated and evident for all. Student successes, whether academic, sporting, cultural, or in service to the community, are widely celebrated in the school. Students' opinions and ideas are encouraged and acted upon.

A wide range of support and 'wrap-around' services provide targeted assistance for students to ensure every boy has an equitable opportunity for tailored success. Newly arriving students are well supported to make a successful transition into the school's learning culture. Students with particular gifts and talents are extended and challenged. The school is effectively engaging students who have found the learning-to-learn process challenging. Leaders and teachers find innovative ways to ensure each boy has access to relevant, engaging contexts for a successful pathway beyond school. This includes a comprehensive careers programme to help boys work with family/whānau to plan their future.

Next step

School leaders should consider recording in a concise way the principles, practices and expectations of what is currently a very inclusive and highly responsive curriculum-in-action. This would provide a very useful document to share the intended curriculum with students, parents and whānau, as well as a benchmark for evaluating the impact of curriculum implementation.

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

The school very effectively promotes educational success for Māori, as Māori. The school responds well to the NZC principles relating to the Treaty of Waitangi, Inclusion and Community Engagement for the benefit of Māori learners.

Māori boys learn in an environment where te reo and tikanga Māori are valued. They confidently identify and stand proud as Māori at Nelson College. As a result of the school's culturally responsive efforts, leavers' data for 2014 and 2015 shows between 70 and 80% of Māori students had achieved at least Level 2 in NCEA. In addition, two thirds of Māori students in Year 13 in 2015 achieved a Level 3 certificate.

The school is aware of the areas where there is an in-school disparity between Māori achievement and the achievement of other students. School leaders work deliberately with Māori teachers and other key staff to ensure Māori boys experience success, increase their engagement and accelerate their progress.

They focus on ensuring Māori learners:

- experience a strong sense of belonging and enjoy success as Māori
- work in partnership with their teachers and whānau to plan for success
- are well supported to stay on at school to achieve appropriate qualifications before they leave.

The recent completion of the Whare te Ara Poutama in the centre of the school is providing a strong sense of physical and spiritual connection for Māori students and the wider community. Māori students choose to join the whānau groups, where their culture is at the centre of what they do and how they learn. They achieve NCEA credits in te reo Māori and Māori performing arts in the whānau class environment. Every senior Māori student in the whānau classes is mentored to take successful, deliberate steps towards achieving personalised learning goals. Core concepts such as rangatiratanga and tuakana-teina relationships are a natural part of daily life for boys from the whānau classes.

Senior leaders are actively involved in leading initiatives to raise Māori achievement. They are continuing to build partnerships with whānau and local iwi to inform their decisions for improvement. Teachers are being supported to continue to develop their confidence with te reo Māori and their culturally responsive competencies.

Nelson College is well placed with highly capable, culturally responsive leadership to maintain the strategic focus on providing tailored solutions to support the high expectations for Māori students.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is very well placed to sustain the recent history of high performance and continue to improve.

The adults and students in the Nelson College learning community benefit from strong and visionary professional leadership. This has resulted in a school that is highly committed to being inclusive, flexible, innovative and responsive to learning needs. Senior leaders are trusted and empowered to lead important initiatives and ensure key aspects of school operations contribute to the board's short and long-term goals. Leaders show genuine care for students and families in need of extra support. The school has very effective practices in place to grow and support leadership at every level of the school.

Strategic priority setting and alignment is a strength in the school. The headmaster leads a consultation, implementation and evaluation process that ensures trustees are well informed about progress in relation to board priorities. School leaders ensure the work of middle leaders and teachers contributes to overall school improvement in relation to those priorities.

New and beginning teachers benefit from well-coordinated guidance from a range of key staff. There are clear expectations so they can become fully certificated teachers based on convincing evidence. They are well supported to meet the criteria for best-practice teaching and learning at this school.

The school has effectively built links with its own and the wider community. Staff members use a wide range of strategies to regularly communicate with parents/whānau. They are building positive relationships with families with a focus on supporting boys to make good progress and achieve well. This is especially so in the case of boys at risk of poor outcomes. Significant financial support by friends of the school, including old boys, and funds generated by the entrepreneurial efforts of the

school, extend staffing and other provisions for students' learning. The school's aim is to ensure 'no boy misses out'. This is very evident across a wide range of initiatives to support boys' wellbeing, increase engagement with learning, and raise achievement.

Next steps

Many teachers regularly reflect on their teaching, inquire into what works well and what needs to improve, share their thinking with colleagues, and adapt practice to improve outcomes for students. There is variable quality in the way all teachers can show evidence of these good practices. Leaders need to support more teachers to be able to rigorously evaluate the impact of their teaching.

The board agrees a next step to strengthen the focus trustees place on learning is to improve recording of the evaluative questions, conclusions and recommendations when reports come to them about students' learning.

Provision for international students

The Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016 (the Code) was introduced on July 1st 2016. The school is making good progress in aligning its policies and procedures to meet the new Code requirements by December 1st 2016.

At the time of the review there were 78 international students attending the school. Most are accommodated at the school's boarding houses while about 20 are in homestays.

International students are well supported pastorally and with their learning. They are:

- helped to settle in to their new living and learning environments
- supported in their learning to set and meet appropriate achievement goals
- monitored regularly to ensure their learning and pastoral needs are being met
- encouraged to become involved in the wider life of the school and community
- well informed, along with their families, about their progress at the school.

Provision for students in the school hostel

The board of Nelson College owns three boarding houses on the school site. At the time of this review, two were in operation with 140 boarders. They represent 12% of the school roll. The hostel owner has attested that all requirements of the Hostel Regulations are met.

Boarders experience positive relationships with each other and with hostel management and staff. Junior boys are welcomed and supported by staff and senior boarders to adapt to hostel living. The deputy principal responsible for the hostel and the hostel managers have effective systems for monitoring and responding to the safety and wellbeing needs of boarders. These include clear and well-understood guidelines for staff and boarders, and regular communication with parents and caregivers. Systems are in place to consider and respond to the opinions and ideas of boarders. From time to time, hostel staff gather parents' views about the suitability of particular ways of doing things.

Hostel managers communicate and work constructively with school leaders and staff to support boarders' learning and participation in all aspects of school life. Hostel students benefit from well-established study routines and access to appropriate teaching staff and school resources when needed.

The hostels are undergoing major refurbishment one by one. Once this process is complete boarders will experience significantly upgraded accommodation in an otherwise historic setting. The board has taken a well-considered approach to planning these improvements.

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

Nelson College is a high-performing boys' school with traditions. Boys show a strong sense of belonging and pride. They achieve very well in their learning and in sporting and cultural activities. Teachers take many innovative approaches, providing responsive learning opportunities that engage boys well in their learning. Strong, visionary professional leadership provides a highly inclusive environment for the increasingly diverse range of students.

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



Lesley Patterson
Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern

6 December 2016

About the School

Location	Nelson	
Ministry of Education profile number	294	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 15)	
School roll	1168	
Number of international students	78	
Gender composition	Male 100%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	14%
	Pākehā	73%
	Asian	10%
	Pacific	3%
Special Features	Boarding hostels Attached private preparatory school (Years 7 and 8) Outdoor Education Centre	
Review team on site	September 2016	
Date of this report	6 December 2016	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	September 2012
	Education Review	June 2009
	Education Review	May 2006