

Ahipara School Education Review

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About the School

Location	Ahipara, Northland	
Ministry of Education profile number	1000	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	209	
Gender composition	Boys 58% Girls 42%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	71%
	NZ European/Pākehā	25%
	Other	4%
Review team on site	August 2013	
Date of this report	4 October 2013	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	December 2010
	Education Review	May 2007
	Education Review	November 2001

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?

Ahipara School is a semi-rural school that caters for students from Years 1 to 8. Situated 14kms west of Kaitaia, the school has a largely Māori student roll, with 25 percent European/Pākehā students and a small number of other cultures. The school has a history of positive ERO reports that recognise the school's mission to 'Enhance Student Learning and Achievement in Every Way'.

The experienced and respected principal leads a collaborative and stable staff and guides a supportive board of trustees. Together they prioritise the interests of children, maintain meaningful partnerships with parents and whānau, and celebrate the richness of the local community.

The attractive, well maintained school environment supports students' wellbeing, safety and learning. Art work throughout the school reflects the school values. A climate of respect and caring is modelled by staff and students. Staff, children and whānau are proud of their school and the contribution it makes to students' achievement, including the success of Māori students as Māori.

2 Learning

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

Teachers' high expectations and strong focus on student achievement result in most students making good progress over time. Specific strategies are in place to accelerate the progress of targeted students who have yet to reach expected standards. Students are aware of their progress in writing, reading and mathematics, and use learning goals effectively to focus their next steps for learning.

Senior leaders use the school's rich student achievement information to prioritise student learning and identify areas for ongoing teacher development. Very good strategies have been developed to closely monitor the progress of individuals and groups of students. Effective use of teacher aides enables teachers to give additional support to students with targeted learning needs. Teachers respond promptly to achievement information, modifying planning, grouping and learning goals as needed. Through professional development initiatives teachers are now beginning to explore the data more deeply to better examine the outcomes for different groups of students.

Student progress and achievement in relation to National Standards are celebrated and shared regularly with parents/whānau through informative reports. High attendance at parent meetings, 3way interviews and information sharing at school events mean that whānau have many opportunities to know about their children's successes. They actively participate in learning initiatives and have high expectations that students will achieve their goals.

Within this supportive learning community students are progressing and achieving well. They demonstrate a strong sense of belonging, take responsibility for their learning, and encourage success in others.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum is well designed to reflect the strengths and interests of students and the local environment. It aligns well with The New Zealand Curriculum and provides authentic educational opportunities that promote and support student learning. Students are confident, articulate and enthusiastic learners who benefit from a wide range of academic, extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities.

The curriculum features an integrated approach to learning that incorporates the key competencies as well as the school values and vision. It has a strong focus on developing life-long learners. In keeping with their ongoing reflective practices, senior leaders are planning a review of the curriculum in 2013 to ensure it remains current with recent trends in education.

Classrooms are inclusive of all students. Teachers personalise their approaches to students and plan purposeful lessons that engage students in 'hands on' and 'real life' learning. Positive relationships enable teachers to ask demanding questions that prompt students' thinking and problem solving. Specific teaching strategies provide focused support for targeted students and help to accelerate their learning.

Teachers are highly reflective practitioners. They engage in ongoing self review and whole school professional learning and development (PLD) to enhance their teaching practices. A strong culture of trust enables them to share teaching strategies. The principal and senior teachers have developed several assurance systems to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices. Teachers appreciate collaborative learning opportunities with their colleagues and identify PLD as a strength of the school.

The senior leadership team has identified, and ERO agrees, that teachers would benefit from further learning about teaching as inquiry and different theories of teaching. Teachers are well placed to initiate and undertake such PLD through existing systems for staff development.

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

Māori students are strongly affirmed in their language, culture and identity. They share their pepeha, and believe teachers know them well and provide them with individual support that recognises their strengths and maximises their potential as learners. Many are recognised and valued as leaders and role models throughout the school.

School leaders have high expectations that Māori students will succeed as Māori and as

life-long learners. Māori students engage well in their learning and achieve at levels that are similar to their classmates. The school's strong inclusive practices promote tikanga and include a progressive, timetabled te reo programme. Students have authentic opportunities to learn in-depth about taiaha, Matariki and the history and ecology of the local community. They participate enthusiastically in kapahaka and waiata and take leadership roles in powhiri.

The principal and board continue to develop their consultation with iwi, hapu and whānau. They have co-opted a kaumatua to the board to support Māori initiatives and facilitate relationships with the local marae. The board is guided by Ka Hikitia, the Ministry of Education's blueprint for Māori students' success. Trustees are also working to develop an education plan with Te Runanga O Te Rarawa with a specific focus on being Kaitiakitanga o te Rohe (guardians of the area).

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is very well placed to sustain and improve its performance. It has a committed and experienced board of trustees that embraces community values. Through ongoing self review the board, principal and senior leaders engage in effective, responsible decision making. Whānau and students express considerable appreciation for the school's tone, its respectful climate and the culture of inclusion fostered by staff and leaders of Ahipara School.

The principal is highly effective. She is committed to growing the expertise and skills of those around her. She delegates leadership responsibilities to senior leaders, teachers and students, trusting them to enact the school values of Tikanga, Manaakitanga, Perseverance, Resilience and Respect. The principal also involves the school in educational cluster groups, often taking a leading role in promoting education initiatives in the far north.

The board is kept well informed through principal reports. Trustees know about student learning, achievement and progress, and are increasingly focusing their targets for student achievement on measurable improvement. The board is responsive to the interests of the community, staff and students. Trustees have resourced the physical environment very well. They encourage staff professional development and personal study as strategic initiatives for ongoing school improvement and sustainability.

ERO, the principal and trustees agree the next steps for governance and management include continuing to:

- provide targeted training for trustees
- formalise the documentation of strategic self review
- strengthen the evaluative content of reports to the board.

These steps align well with the principal's current focus on clarifying the links between the charter, the strategic plan, the curriculum and school goals for strengthening coherence in the governance framework.

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.

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4 October 2013