

# Education Review Report: St Mark's Catholic School

The purpose of ERO's reports is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. ERO's reports are intended to be clear, concise, constructive and evaluative. 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.

This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer. The report answers four key questions about the school.

## Findings

### 1 Context

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

St Mark's Catholic School is a state integrated school in Pakuranga. It caters for Year 1 to 6 students from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds. The special character of the school is reflected in the Catholic values and beliefs woven into children's learning. The school has strong links with the St Mark's parish. The school's mission is to provide the best education in a Catholic environment, ka whakaratoa i te kura nga tino matau teitei i waenganui i nga Catorika. Staff and children actively engage in and appreciate the school's positive and inclusive learning environment.

Since ERO's 2008 review, the principal, associate principals, and staff have continued to develop and promote effective teaching and learning practices within the school.

### 2 Learning

**How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?**

Students are highly engaged in their learning. They are confident and articulate learners who display a strong sense of self-management. Relationships between teachers and students are respectful and affirming and students interact particularly well with each other. This provides a positive foundation for learning.

Most students, including Pacific students, are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority are achieving above national expectations. Students are making particularly good rates of progress in their early years at school.

Students who speak languages other than English are well catered for in an inclusive environment. Students requiring additional support in their learning are identified early and engage in programmes designed to lift their achievement levels in literacy and numeracy. Teacher aides are effective in helping students to engage and progress in their learning.

The board and staff are continuing to explore the reporting of student achievement against the National Standards. They are looking at how the National Standards can best serve students' learning, help teachers monitor students' rates of progress and contribute to enhancing the school's partnership with parents.

#### **How well are Māori students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?**

Most Māori students are achieving above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Māori students are actively engaged in class. In response to the 2008 ERO report, initiatives have been developed to raise the profile of te reo Māori in the senior school. Māori students are well represented in school leadership roles.

### **3 Curriculum**

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

The school's curriculum promotes and supports student learning effectively. Values including respect and integrity underpin the curriculum. Teachers place a high priority on promoting students' development of literacy, numeracy and inquiry skills. Science or social science topics are often the focus for inquiry learning. Since the last ERO review, teachers have worked to further integrate learning areas and make better use of teaching time. A continued focus on developing students' oral language provides opportunities for students to develop their thinking skills.

A number of teachers are adept at making learning strategies transparent and promoting students' oracy and critical thinking skills. The senior leadership team and teachers are continuing to develop systems to embed these effective teaching and learning practices school wide.

Aspects of the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* are made transparent to students. This has the potential to help students to make further and better use of goal setting. Students are provided with good opportunities to develop leadership and self-management skills. Emphasis on developing the key competencies will continue to enhance the curriculum and students' learning.

Te reo Māori is included in the Year 4 and 6 programme. Teachers should implement the school's planned differentiated programme at each year level to ensure all students are effectively challenged to develop their language skills in te reo Māori.

### **4 Sustainable Performance**

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

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance. The principal provides strong leadership and teachers are continuing to develop a curriculum that promotes life-long learning. A supportive board of trustees has ensured that the school is well resourced and well maintained. The senior leadership team have reviewed the performance management system. As a result, they have implemented a more intense and developmental focus. They have also identified the need to strengthen the focus of appraisal on key teaching and learning strategies.

The school's annual plan incorporates expected outcomes against which progress can be reported. Regular consultation with Māori, Pacific and Filipino whānau informs board decision making.

The board and teachers should ensure that the outcomes from cyclic self review of policies are documented. Using National Standards has assisted the board and teachers to set more specific achievement targets for 2011. As a result, they should be well placed at the end of the year to evaluate the impact of their initiatives on the achievement of all students and groups of students.

### **Provision for international students**

- The school is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. At the time of this review there were no 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.

### **Board assurance on legal requirements**

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of the school completed an ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. 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 students' achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.