

Westlake Boys' High School Education Review

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1 Context

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

Over the past 51 years, Westlake Boys' High School on Auckland's North Shore has aspired to provide high quality education for young men in Years 9 to 15.

The school's clearly articulated vision and traditional values underpin a positive school culture. High expectations for achievement and behaviour promote the settled environment. Students demonstrate a sense of belonging and pride in their school.

Significant growth in the school is continuing to pose a challenge for the board. Recent property improvements and upgrades of some classroom spaces have improved teaching and learning environments. The whare Ako has also been renovated as the board works towards providing students with more modern facilities.

School leaders have promoted a culture of professional development and inquiry. Staff are benefiting from professional development focussed on supporting Māori success and on other priority learner groups. A school focus on developing middle leadership and promoting a more inclusive educational approach is benefitting students.

At the time of the last ERO review in 2011, the recently appointed headmaster and associate headmaster had begun a number of new initiatives. After three years, these initiatives are proving successful in:

- accelerating outcomes for Māori, Pacific and special learning needs students in Year 11 – 13
- creating a more respectful school tone and collegial staff culture
- building stronger relationships between school governance and leadership.

2 Learning

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

School leaders use achievement information very effectively to make positive changes to learners' progress and achievement, particularly in Years 11-13.

The school continues to operate a dual assessment pathway in Years 11 to 13. The majority of the top group of Year 9 and 10 students pursue qualifications through the Cambridge International examinations (CIE) pathway. The remainder of the students, with a few exceptions, enter the National Certificates in Educational Achievement (NCEA) pathways. In both pathways, students achieve very well. Most noticeable are the increased levels of achievement for students in NCEA.

In NCEA, school information shows increased numbers and levels of endorsed certificates, highlighting more students are achieving and at higher levels. More students are also gaining University Entrance across both pathways. Scholarship success has continued to increase and sustainable programmes are in place to help students better manage the challenging demands of Scholarship, NCEA and/or CIE assessments. The very positive results in the NCEA pathway indicate the learning interests and needs of students are well catered for. School leaders have identified further self review is a priority to evaluate the sustainability and suitability of the dual assessment pathway.

In Years 11 to 13, achievement information is well analysed and evaluated to make changes to teaching programmes that better support learners, including Māori and Pacific students. The majority of these students access the NCEA pathway. They are achieving above national levels for Māori and Pacific students. They are well known by teachers and their learning is well supported and monitored.

Students with additional and individual learning requirements receive good support. There is good evidence to show the reduced gap between the school's priority learners and their peers. To continue to enhance outcomes for these students, further self review is now required to determine the best way to promote accelerated learning for these students in Years 9 and 10. This review should include the best way to group students, minimise transitions throughout the year and maximise learning.

With the high levels of success in the senior school, ERO and school leaders agree it is appropriate to focus on strengthening assessment and reporting in Years 9 and 10. Key developments to monitor and evaluate student progress in Years 9 and 10 should include the use of:

- specific and measurable achievement targets in literacy and mathematics
- robust and reliable assessment tools to report student progress and achievement to the board
- department reports to the board that consistently include the evaluation of junior programmes, including student achievement results and successful teaching and learning approaches.

To further promote student ownership of their learning and help parents and whānau monitor progress over time, the school should:

- report to families on their son's progress and achievement against The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) levels, this may include particular reference to literacy and mathematics learning areas
- use students' National Standards information to better inform teaching programmes.

The board makes very good use of senior school achievement information. It is well informed and reviews its resourcing requirements effectively. Trustees are well placed to now consider setting more targets that are specific to student wellbeing and achievement, enhancing the quality of student learning, and other types of outcomes.

3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum is very effective in promoting and supporting student learning. The design of the curriculum is significantly influenced by the assessment pathways students enter. The overall curriculum is therefore partially aligned to the NZC and partially aligned to the CIE. In most Year 9 and 10 programmes, the focus is mostly on NZC values, key competencies and learning objectives.

Subject options in Year 11-13 have expanded to cater for students' interests. There is more choice for learners and more opportunity to pursue a variety of pathways to tertiary and employment. Careers education and pastoral care have been strengthened. Academic counselling and additional staffing have been well used to provide more helpful advice and guidance to students.

Students experience wide co-curricular opportunities and demonstrate high performance in sport, the arts, culture and leadership. Global experiences and opportunities are part of the Westlake experience for some students. This wide range of activities and opportunities engages many students and helps promote positive outcomes for student wellbeing.

The curriculum has a strong focus on supporting second language learning. This is a well considered strategy to prepare young men for global citizenship. Continuing to engage with the language, culture and identity of all students should remain a high priority of all staff to further promote student success and wellbeing. Continuing to strengthen the teaching of English for second language learners across curriculum areas is also a relevant focus for teacher professional development.

ERO noted some very good examples of how well teachers develop good relationships with Māori and Pacific students. Enhancing the school's bicultural curriculum across learning areas and sharing successful approaches should remain key priorities. Documenting highly effective practices, within departments and at a school wide level, should help achieve consistently high quality teaching practices.

ERO and school leaders agree that the next stage of curriculum development should focus on supporting all students to:

- be confident in their own cultural identity and to have good knowledge and appreciation of New Zealand's the bicultural heritage
- experience more individual and personalised learning pathways.

To continue to expand meaningful e-learning experiences for students, ERO also recommends that school leaders extend teacher professional development in this area.

School leaders are managing the process of curriculum change and improvement skilfully. A number of teacher forums support inquiry into teaching and learning to inform professional development. Curriculum review is ongoing and very good systems exist for continuing to evolve the curriculum. Performance management has strengthened. As part of this process, leaders could now extend teacher inquiry and self review using the Ministry of Education's Tataiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori students and other relevant research about effective teaching practices for diverse learners in the New Zealand educational environment.

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

The school is very effective at promoting educational success for Māori and is increasingly effective at promoting Māori students success as Māori. Haka competitions and other key cultural school events are part of the inclusive environment promoted at the school.

The board has committed significant financial and personnel resources to provide a wider range of support structures for Māori students. Led by the school Kaitiaki, who is also the Head of Te reo Māori, professional development is providing meaningful and useful learning for staff. Well considered strategic decision making and action has benefitted Māori learners. This is evident in Māori student achievement which has steadily improved in Years 11-13. A useful next step is to develop self-review reports that clearly show how well Māori students are achieving in Years 9 and 10.

Whānau have developed their own strategic plan in response to the school's strategic plan for Māori success. Continuing consultation with Māori whānau could now accelerate key actions to realise agreed goals. Further professional development could highlight the commitment of school leaders and increase outcomes for students.

The school is well positioned to accelerate its approaches for promoting Māori student success as Māori. The school could use more robust benchmarks from the Ministry of Education Māori education strategy, Ka Hikitia, to consider how well it enacts its role as Treaty of Waitangi partners.

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. Self review is well understood and well used to make positive changes for learners. School leaders demonstrate an open and thoughtful approach to reviewing established school structures to better serve students.

School leadership is highly effective. The school is well led by the headmaster who models a high level of care and concern for student wellbeing and achievement. The leadership team have embedded successful approaches to raise student achievement. They have used a variety of approaches, including supporting students, developing the curriculum, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and building school leadership capacity. Consultation groups such as the Pasefika Komiti are valuable assets.

Governance is well led and understood. Trustees have a positive and effective working relationship with the headmaster and senior leaders. Financial and property management decisions are well considered. Effective strategic planning is evident and the ongoing strategic priority to maintain effective and positive relationships with the community is also clearly evident.

Succession planning for trustees is in place and mid-term elections offer opportunities for the board to continue to diversify and be more representative of the community. Several new trustees, with governance experience have joined the board and provide additional useful skills and expertise. Policy review and the operations of the board have significantly improved and are sustainable.

To continue to strengthen governance, ERO and the board agree they could:

- develop a governance self review tool
- provide external appraisal for senior leaders and the headmaster
- review curriculum costs to families; and make it clearer to families which are voluntary, in line with the Ministry of Education circular from June 2013.

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

At the time of this review there were 154 international students attending the school.

The school continues to provide good quality pastoral care and support for international students. Students are well integrated into the school and key personnel provide relevant and useful learning programmes, including English programmes for speakers of other languages. Compliance with the code, student achievement and other outcomes for international students are clearly reported to the board.

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

Westlake Boys' High School continues to be a high performing school. It provides young men with a broad range of curriculum and co-curricular opportunities. The school is well led and student wellbeing is increasingly a key priority for trustees, school leaders and teachers. School values clearly underpin a positive and settled school environment. Students are proud of their school and benefit from teaching that promotes high standards of achievement and increasing levels of success in qualifications.

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

Dale Bailey
National Manager Review Services
Northern Region

27 June 2014

School Statistics

Location	Forrest Hill, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	37	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 15)	
School roll	2114	
Number of international students	154	
Gender composition	Boys 100%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	7%
	NZ European/ Pākehā	40%
	Chinese	13%
	Korean	12%
	South East Asian	7%
	Middle Eastern	2%
	Indian	3%
	African	2%
	Tongan	2%
	Samoan	1%
	other Asian	2%
	other European	7%
	other Pacific	2%
Review team on site	May 2014	
Date of this report	27 June 2014	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	May 2011
	Education Review	October 2007
	Education Review	May 2004