School Context

Halfway Bush School provides education for children in Years 1 to 6. The school has a roll of 50 children.

The school’s vision is to provide quality education that meets the needs of all children. The school aims to support students to:

* achieve academic success
* become well-rounded children able to develop their passions, interests and talents
* take responsibility for their own learning.

At the time of this review the school’s key strategic goals are to support student achievement, encourage whānau participation in the life of the school, including by recognising the cultures of all children and the unique position of Māori culture within New Zealand.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board, schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

* achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
* selected key competencies
* sport participation levels
* outcomes for students with special learning needs.

A Kohanga Reo (Māori language preschool) is co-located on the school site.  Kohanga and school staff, whānau and children participate in a range of shared activities and celebrations.

The school is part of a cluster of local schools with a focus on developing future-focused problem-solving skills (project-based learning).

Evaluation Findings

1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students

1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?

School information shows that for the last three years the majority of students have achieved at or above the school’s expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school is not yet achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students in reading and writing, and for boys in writing.

School reports show that almost all children are demonstrating the school’s valued outcomes of relating well to others, managing themselves and contributing and participating positively.

The majority of children participate in a variety of sporting opportunities coordinated by the school.

1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?

In 2017, the majority of children (including Māori and boys) needing to make accelerated progress did so.

2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices

2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Children experience a calm, positive and caring culture. This provides them with an effective environment for learning. Leaders and teachers communicate and model high and clear expectations for respectful behaviour. Consequently the school’s values of respect/whakaute, honesty/pono and responsibility/kawenga are evident across the school.

Children are well known by their teachers, who take time to get to know children’s interests, strengths and learning needs.  Children learn in multi-level classes and regularly take part in whole-school activities which provide opportunities for older students to develop leadership and support the learning of younger students (Tuakana-teina relationships).

The principal has developed relational trust with staff and the wider school community. Useful school administration systems and practices and effective collaborations ensure an orderly environment for staff and children.  Students and their whānau have a strong sense of belonging in their school.

Children benefit from a curriculum that provides a broad range of experiences.  All children participate in weekly ‘Discovery’ activities which allow them to follow their interests and develop key competencies.

Māori perspectives and local history are valued and meaningfully integrated in learning activities.  The school has intentionally and successfully built its resources to enable children to be more active at school and in after school sports. Good use has been made of specialist teachers to enhance learning opportunities, including in the arts, aspects of science and technology and te reo and tikanga Māori. Teachers are well supported by detailed curriculum guidelines to know what is expected in the delivery of teaching and learning.

Children with additional learning needs are effectively identified and responded to. The board has increased resourcing for teacher aides and learning support. This is enabling teachers to work more effectively with those learners needing extra teaching.

2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Trustees, leaders and teachers need to improve the scrutiny of children’s progress and achievement information, in order to:

* be better assured that all children are making sufficient progress
* identify specific and common learning needs within learning areas
* strengthen reporting to trustees on outcomes for children, particularly those targeted for acceleration
* more effectively evaluate what is and what is not working to improve outcomes for children.

To lift achievement levels in writing there is a need to develop the collective capacity of teachers for effective teaching of writing. This should include focused professional learning, relevant appraisal goals, robust teacher inquiry and a collective responsibility for the analysis of data, intentional planning and evaluation.

3 Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board 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 the following:

* board administration
* curriculum
* management of health, safety and welfare
* personnel management
* finance
* asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student safety and wellbeing:

* emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
* physical safety of students
* teacher registration and certification
* processes for appointing staff
* stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
* attendance
* school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

Areas for improved compliance practice

To improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

* develop procedures to support policy statements in order to promote knowledge and understanding of current legal requirements and how these are to be applied in the school setting.

4 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on the following existing strengths:

* a calm, positive and caring learning environment that supports all students to develop competencies for relating to others, self-management and contributing to the life of the school
* a broad and responsive curriculum that provides all children with the opportunity to develop their strengths and interests
* well-established learning support programmes and resourcing that provide equitable learning opportunities for identified children.

Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

* closer scrutiny of progress and achievement information to know about the sufficiency of progress of all students
* evaluating the effectiveness of writing programmes to better know what is working well and what needs improvement to raise writing achievement overall
* targeted planning to accelerate learning in writing.

ERO’s next external evaluation process and timing

ERO is likely to carry out the next external evaluation in three years.

Dr Lesley Patterson  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern

Te Waipounamu - Southern Region

9 April 2018

About the school

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| Location | Dunedin |
| Ministry of Education profile number | 3745 |
| School type | Contributing |
| School roll | 50 |
| Gender composition | Boys  28  Girls  22 |
| Ethnic composition | Māori    18  Pākehā  18  Pacific     5  Other      9 |
| Provision of Māori medium education | No |
| Review team on site | February 2018 |
| Date of this report | 9 April 2018 |
| Most recent ERO report(s) | Education Review              May 2015  Education Review              June 2011  Supplementary Review     May 2009 |