

**Dunstan High School**  
**Alexandra**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Dunstan High School

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?**

Dunstan High School in Alexandra is the only secondary school in this area of Central Otago. The school's hostel accommodates up to 48 students for five-day or full-week boarding options. Students and the school are an integral part of the local community. The school's whare, gymnasium and classrooms are shared with the community. The school and community work closely to support students' learning.

The school's vision is to provide learning experiences that suit each student. Its four cornerstone beliefs support students to become well-rounded citizens. Teachers know students and their families well. Students show a strong sense of belonging to their school, fostered through the house and tutor-group structure. A recent programme to encourage positive behaviour has contributed to a settled and supportive school culture that promotes and supports student engagement.

Students ERO spoke with were very positive about:

- their relationships with their teachers
- the way in which older students interact with and support younger students (tuakana-teina)
- the many cultural, sporting, service and academic opportunities they have
- teachers' responsiveness to their learning needs
- the many leadership opportunities they have and enjoy.

School staffing is stable with staff working well together to support students' learning. The board resources extra staffing and this helps to make class sizes smaller in Years 9 and 10. The staff work with outside agencies for the benefit of students. There has been significant development in the use of ICT, including improved sharing of information and resources about students' achievement and learning. There is an ongoing programme of building redevelopment to support modern learning.

Since the last ERO review in 2012, the board, leaders and teachers are making better use of self-review findings.

## 2 Learning

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

The school is using individual student achievement information well to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement. There is a strong focus on raising engagement in learning and achievement for individual students.

Senior student achievement information shows:

- students' achievement overall in NCEA Levels 1 to 3 is increasing
- the majority of school leavers attain NCEA Level 2
- senior students' literacy achievement in all levels of NCEA has increased in the last four years
- Māori students' achievement in NCEA is improving
- the proportion of students gaining merit endorsements has increased for NCEA Levels 1 to 3.

The school has identified that it wants to increase the number of students gaining excellence endorsements.

Students feel well supported with their learning. They appreciate the range of strategies teachers use to help them.

There are improved systems for identifying and supporting students who are at risk of poor educational outcomes. Information about students' learning needs is shared effectively between staff who need to know this.

Teachers are using student achievement information well to plan and deliver programmes for students. Individual student achievement information is increasingly collated and shared between teachers and departments through student profiles.

Senior leaders, teachers, parents and students are well informed about student engagement and achievement through a fortnightly reporting system. This is contributing to strengthening learning relationships with parents. This system is a focus for learning conversations between teachers and students. It is timely for the school to review how well this system is supporting senior students.

### **Areas for review and development**

School leaders need to carry out deeper analysis and interpretation of student achievement and progress information for all year levels, particularly Years 9 and 10 students. This information should be reported to the board and used to inform self review and planning for professional learning.

The school's student achievement targets should focus specifically on accelerating progress of groups of students who have low achievement. Targets need to align with a plan that clearly shows what will be done to lift students' achievement.

Leaders should ensure there is ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress towards meeting charter targets from departments and deans to senior leaders and the board.

### 3 Curriculum

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

Students benefit from a broad and rich curriculum. The school's curriculum effectively promotes and supports students' learning and responds to their immediate and future needs.

Teachers go out of their way to accommodate students' subject preferences. The courses students select and the ensuing timetable are constructed to best meet their needs and interests. Curriculum leaders are working to ensure effective alignment of programmes between the junior and senior school.

The school's aim for students to be honest and respectful, do their personal best, show friendship and to be involved is evident in the way students behave. Students value the many sports, cultural and service-learning experiences they have beyond the classroom. Their teachers place a strong focus on using the local environment and resources to make learning relevant, interesting and fun.

Senior students appreciate the variety of programmes for outdoor pursuits, vocational learning and learning about high performance. These are supported by a variety of pathways for learning, such as through the local trades academy, e-learning technologies, correspondence school programmes and Gateway courses. Learning support programmes for students with high needs are well developed.

Some departments have an ongoing focus to improve students' literacy beyond English classes. This has involved strategies to improve students' literacy skills across learning areas. This initiative is increasing teachers' collaboration and their confidence in supporting students' literacy in their subject area.

Students are provided with effective opportunity to learn through:

- a settled learning environment
- learning that is provided at the right level of challenge for them
- a supportive and inclusive learning community.

#### **Area for review and development**

Senior leaders and department leaders need to improve the way strategies for achieving the school targets for improving student achievement are identified, implemented, evaluated and reported.

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

The board, leaders, teachers and whānau have developed a shared understanding of Māori success at this school. Students ERO spoke with felt well supported by their teachers and their peers.

The school has maintained close links with its Māori community. This helps inform school development and the identification of plans and initiatives to raise Māori achievement. Recently the level of retention, engagement and achievement of Māori students has increased.

The school is seeking a more consistent inclusion of bicultural practice in classroom learning and in the daily life of the school. The te reo and tikanga Māori programme has been recently reviewed to help strengthen student involvement in this learning area.

School leaders acknowledge that they need to review the way they monitor and evaluate the school's plan for Māori success.

## **4 Sustainable Performance**

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

The school has sustained and improved its performance.

The school's charter, with strategic and annual plans, supports school improvement. These plans have identified four key strategic priorities. The priorities link well to the school's 'cornerstones of success'. They are evident in departmental goals and flow into classroom programmes.

The school has a culture of ongoing improvement. New programmes and initiatives are well aligned to school priorities and values. These developments provide rich opportunities for staff to follow an area of special interest and/or strength. The literacy projects undertaken over the last four years have been managed carefully to ensure an effective pace of change and that staff gain the necessary knowledge and skills.

School reviews are thorough and make recommendations for improvement. Leaders use a range of practices to gather useful information, including the gathering of student perceptions. Specific projects have been reviewed, for example the school-wide behaviour initiative and literacy developments. Useful next steps are identified from reviews to continue the developments.

Senior students take a significant role in promoting school programmes, priorities and initiatives. At the time of the review they were running a series of captivating assembly segments to help all students develop sound study skills and attitudes.

### **Areas for review and development**

The senior leadership team should provide the board with interim progress reports that describe and evaluate progress towards meeting the school's annual targets and strategic goals.

The senior leadership team gathers useful information from the teaching staff, including their views about timetabling and teaching preferences. ERO recommends that the board surveys all employees anonymously to determine how well it is meeting its 'good employer' obligations.

### **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 seven international students attending the school. They receive a high standard of pastoral care. Student surveys show a high level of satisfaction with the quality of students' home-stay care. Students spoken with appreciated the many opportunities provided for them to integrate with their school peers.

The learning and achievement of international students is closely monitored. The fortnightly reporting of each student's engagement and achievement is accessible by parents and students.

The school leaders agree that next steps are to ensure:

- the review of international students' learning programmes includes students' views about their learning
- reports to the board also include information about the achievement and quality of programmes for international students.

### **Provision for students in the school hostel**

The school hostel currently accommodates 45 students, 8% of the school roll. It is owned by Dunstan High School Board of Trustees.

The board continues to take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment that supports students' welfare and learning. Learning is actively promoted within the hostel through strong links with the school's teaching staff. Several of the hostel supervisors are also teachers. The hostel manager works closely with parents to support student learning and welfare in the most appropriate way.

Some key positive features impacting on hostel students include:

- the effective use students make of the wide range of what this school and community offer, in particular the sporting facilities
- the physical environment providing students with plenty of privacy and suitable spaces for dining, study and recreation
- the hostel manager establishing effective administration systems
- increasing use of ICT to streamline operations and improve links with parents
- hostel management being well supported by a separate board committee.

Hostel students ERO spoke with were very positive about the value of being in the hostel in terms of supporting their education.

### **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.

During the course of the review the school identified that a significant number of staff police vets were not up to date. They were all reapplied for at this time.

## **Conclusion**

Students at Dunstan High School are well provided for. They enjoy many opportunities to participate in school activities and the local environment, academic and vocational courses. The school's current focus is to raise student achievement. There are effective systems of pastoral care and strengthening systems for academic monitoring. Recent school developments in ICT have improved parents' access to their children's learning information.

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



Graham Randell  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern

6 July 2015

## About the School

Location	Alexandra	
Ministry of Education profile number	372	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	539	
Number of international students	7	
Gender composition	Boys 51% Girls 49%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā Māori Pacific Asian	85% 11% 1% 3%
Review team on site	May 2015	
Date of this report	6 July 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	May 2012 May 2009 November 2005