



**Education Review Office**  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

**St Mary's School (Northcote)**  
**Northcote, Auckland**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## St Mary's School (Northcote)

This review is designed to support schools that were experiencing difficulties at the time of the last review. ERO provides ongoing evaluation over the course of one-to-two years as the school works to improve its overall performance and build its self-review capability.

This report answers key questions about the school's background and the context for the review. The report also provides an evaluation of how effectively the school is addressing areas identified for review and development and the quality of its practices and systems for sustaining performance and ongoing improvement.

## Findings

### 1 Background and Context

#### What is the background and context for this school's review?

St Mary's School (Northcote) is a Catholic, state integrated school catering for children in Years 1 to 6. Children from the local parish and from a wider geographical area attend the school. The school serves families from diverse ethnic backgrounds and some children are bilingual. The school no longer caters for girls in Years 7 and 8.

The 2014 ERO review identified that employment practices and personnel management approaches required addressing. Accelerating student progress, improving outcomes for Māori and Pacific children, and strengthening school leadership and internal evaluation were further priorities.

The board appointed a principal who began in Term 4, 2015. A new senior leadership team has been established, and a number of new staff have joined the teaching and support staff.

In 2016, several new trustees, with a wide range of professional expertise were elected onto the board and a new board chair person was elected. In 2017, the new parish priest joined the board as a proprietor's representative. The board has engaged in training with the New Zealand School's Trustees Association (NZSTA) to develop its governance capability.

In 2016, to support the school to address employment matters and other ERO recommendations, the Ministry of Education (MoE) appointed a Limited Statutory Manager (LSM). The LSM continues to support the board and principal to manage the pace of change, and the implementation of new employment and personnel management practices.

In 2017, the school completed a new classroom block to provide more modern learning facilities for children. Some older classrooms still require significant remediation and improvement.

## **2 Review and Development**

### **How effectively is the school addressing its priorities for review and development?**

#### **Priorities identified for review and development**

The key priorities identified for improvement included:

- improving personnel management practices
- accelerating student achievement and promoting equitable outcomes
- promoting culturally responsive school practices and developing partnerships with whānau.

#### **Progress**

Trustees and school leaders, working with external support, have made very good progress to address the key issues identified in the 2015 ERO report.

Previous and current trustees have worked well to make positive changes. These changes have resulted in new staff appointments, a more inclusive school environment and greater scrutiny of student achievement. The new principal is skilfully leading change and provides clear expectations to staff.

#### **Improving personnel management approaches**

The board and principal have positively managed some complex employment and personnel management matters. New personnel management and employment policies and processes guide school operations. An external human resources audit has informed school improvement. Employment and recruitment strategies align more clearly with good practice and NZSTA guidelines.

A more positive staff culture is developing. The majority of the staff are supportive of the ongoing changes in the school. Communication with staff and the community has significantly improved. Senior leaders are more accessible and approachable. The school now has a clear process for managing complaints and concerns.

Leaders and trustees use community and staff consultation to inform their decision making. Decisions are well considered and strongly focus on the best interests of children. A priority is to continue building a greater shared commitment and sense of ownership by all staff, to support the successful implementation of leadership decisions and school goals.

Professional development processes for teachers have improved. Teachers who are new to the profession are being appropriately supported and mentored. A well-designed performance management system is in place and is aligned to Education Council requirements. There are also better opportunities for staff to contribute to their own professional development requirements.

The principal and senior leaders have created new opportunities for supporting teacher leadership that is focused on improving children's learning. These opportunities are helping to promote a more child-centred school culture. The ongoing restructure of middle leadership is timely, and aligns leadership roles with accelerating children's learning, and strengthening teaching and learning. Further professional development for middle leaders is required to help them develop their leadership capability.

## **Accelerating student achievement and promoting equitable outcomes**

The school has made very good progress in evaluating and improving systems for assessing and evaluating children's progress and achievement. Moderation processes for teacher judgements in relation to the National Standards are more robust. Teachers are better able to respond to the needs of learners and target specific children to accelerate their progress. Use of the Learning Progression Frameworks could help to strengthen teachers' understanding of children's next learning steps.

The school's data indicate that there continues to be disparity in achievement for Māori and Pacific children in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to the National Standards. The evidence of acceleration for these and other children is not yet apparent. This is in part due to the issues with the reliability of previous school achievement information.

School conditions for accelerating student progress are now present. The board has well-developed plans and targets to focus on improving outcomes for targeted children. Teachers focus their inquiries on how well they are accelerating children's learning. To continue improving learning outcomes for children, teachers should strengthen their planning and ensure that learning tasks are relevant and sufficiently challenging for children.

## **Promoting culturally responsive school practices and developing partnerships with whānau**

The school has made some progress towards promoting culturally responsive school practices. The school charism of kotahitanga/unity, manaakitanga/respect, atawhaitanga/compassion and pono/truth underpins the school's special Catholic character, and a more bicultural approach to the school's philosophy. This is now beginning to be enacted through curriculum review and in religious education.

The school has a newly developed action plan to guide culturally responsive and inclusive school practices. Regularly evaluating the outcomes of this plan will be essential to build the pace and depth of the school's responsiveness.

Teachers share their cultural knowledge and expertise with each other. Classroom environments and some class programmes are increasingly responsive to children's cultures and New Zealand's bicultural heritage. Further work is required to enhance teachers' skills and understanding of tikanga, te reo Māori and te ao Māori. External professional development is essential.

Community consultation is used well to inform the school vision and strategic goals. Strengthening consultation with whānau Māori would help support school plans to improve outcomes for Māori children. School leaders are aware of the value of using local links and community of learning networks to inform school kawa and tikanga.

Consultation with the Pacific community and other key groups in the school community is well established. The school is looking ahead to promoting stronger learning partnerships with individual families. This is likely to help promote the school goals related to inclusion and excellence.

A key strategy to accelerate children's learning is leaders and teachers partnering more closely with parents. New class profiles, and learning conversations with children and parents are helping teachers focus on knowing the learner and being more responsive. Teachers are also working more closely with parents to develop individual learning plans for targeted children. Identifying and building on children's bilingual strengths should form a part of these learning plans.

### 3 Sustainable performance and self review

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

The school is well placed to sustain and continue to improve and review its performance. Senior leaders are developing a more evaluative school culture to guide improvement.

Working closely with the LSM, the principal and senior leadership team are well supported to manage the complexity of the adult working relationships in the school. Increasingly, staff are responding well to the higher expectations for their performance as educational leaders and as effective teachers.

ERO recommends that the LSM remain in place until effective personnel management processes are well embedded, and the remaining employment matters resolved. The school's robust performance management process provides a good framework for this work. Any significant concerns regarding teacher performance should be reported to the Education Council.

The new principal is leading the school well, and is working collaboratively with the board and a capable senior leadership team. The senior team is actively leading curriculum development and supporting teachers to use more effective teaching practices. As strong advocates for children, they have increased expectations of staff to ensure that children progress faster and achieve well.

Improved professional learning and development is increasing teachers' professional capability. School assessment processes are more robust and the school's 2016 National Standards achievement information is a more reliable benchmark of how well children are achieving.

The board has set more specific and relevant achievement targets to promote equitable outcomes for children. Trustees spend more time discussing student achievement and the resourcing required to improve outcomes for children. They have strengthened their understanding of their roles, responsibilities and board accountabilities. Trustees should continue to update the board's policy framework to meet current legislation, and ensure that they stay well informed about ongoing changes in education.

Strategic planning is well developed and aligned to the annual student achievement goals and targets. Effective systems for evaluation and reporting are in place. As the board works with school leaders to continue managing the pace of change, trustees should ensure they conduct regular external staff and student surveys to provide assurance of effective change management.

ERO, school leaders and trustees agree the key next steps for the school are to:

- develop board evaluation processes that are focused on achieving accelerated and equitable learning outcomes for Māori and Pacific children
- embed practices that promote an accountable and professional working environment
- promote teacher inquiry and collaboration to support children's learning
- continue developing effective teaching strategies and assessment practices across the school
- develop and document a relevant, child-centred and culturally responsive curriculum promoting children's efficacy and agency as successful learners
- strengthen inclusive teaching practices.

## 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

The school is a positive learning environment for children. There has been very good progress in addressing the matters identified in the ERO 2015 report. New trustees, school leaders, teachers and support staff have joined the school and have contributed to improving the teaching and learning environment.

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



Violet Tu'uga Stevenson  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern (Acting)

29 June 2017

## About the School

Location	Northcote, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	1505	
School type	State Integrated Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	379	
Gender composition	Girls 53% Boys 47%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	2%
	Pākehā	57%
	Filipino	14%
	Samoan	5%
	Indian	4%
	Tongan	4%
	African	2%
	British	2%
	Chinese	2%
	Korean	2%
	other	6%
Review team on site	April 2017	
Date of this report	29 June 2017	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	April 2015
	Education Review	December 2011
	Education Review	June 2008