

Freyberg High School Education Review

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About the School

Location	Palmerston North	
Ministry of Education profile number	200	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 15)	
School roll	1313	
Number of international students	32	
Gender composition	Male 45%, Female 55%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	60%
	Māori	29%
	Asian	6%
	Pacific	3%
	Other ethnic groups	2%
Special Features	Māori Immersion Unit, Teen Parent Unit, Special Education Unit, Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour Lead School	
Review team on site	April 2013	
Date of this report	28 June 2013	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	May 2010
	Education Review	November 2005
	Education Review	November 2002

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

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1 Context

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

Freyberg High School is a large co-educational secondary school situated in Palmerston North. It provides a diverse student population with a wide range of pathways, programmes and opportunities for success. Nearly 30% of the roll identify as Māori and 3% as Pacific. A Māori language immersion unit (Rumaki) for a group of Year 9 and 10 students provides them with extended opportunities for learning through instruction in te reo Māori.

High expectations, self-management and leadership are promoted and supported through a whānau-based structure. The school philosophy 'to be the best for each student' is enhanced by productive partnerships with parents, whānau, community groups and agencies. A schoolwide emphasis on the use of e-learning resources and strategies enriches learning across the curriculum. Provision of extension classes and academies in a range of performing arts subjects enable many students to enhance their learning and extend their opportunities to excel. Migrant and refugee students are supported through specialist staffing, programmes and resourcing.

Students value the inclusive culture, where diversity is embraced and celebrated. Learners at all levels and abilities are well supported and their achievements recognised.

2 Learning

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

Student achievement information is increasingly shared and used effectively by the board and senior leaders to improve student engagement, progress and achievement, especially in the senior school.

Engagement data, including for attendance and retention, indicates improvement. However, trustees and leaders recognise poor attendance is a barrier to achievement for some students. They have set goals to lower truancy rates and improve rates of attendance schoolwide.

National qualification results are improving. The school reports that students in Years 11, 12 and 13, who participate in National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA), have continued to improve their overall rate of achievement since the May 2010 ERO report. These results are comparable to achievement rates in schools of a similar type. The number of students obtaining endorsements in NCEA certificates and in individual subjects has increased. Student achievement information for NCEA is used well to plan and review programmes and this contributes to ongoing improvement.

Leaders and staff are developing their systems and processes to improve the quality and use of student information to raise achievement at Years 9 and 10, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are beginning to access information from a recently introduced data management system. Next steps in using data should include better identification of all students' needs, monitoring their progress and evaluating the effectiveness of programmes for learners in these years.

Teachers make effective use of data to plan transitions and programmes to suit the needs of individual students in learning support and special needs areas. Individualised learning experiences enable students to have success, gain confidence and make appropriate progress.

Most students are well engaged in learning. Teachers promote engagement through sharing high expectations for success, a clear purpose for learning and focused feedback. Lessons are well paced. Teachers gather a range of information and, in classes where this is specific to individual learning needs, target their planning accordingly. Some teachers are effectively developing student ownership of learning and as a result students are setting goals and tracking their own progress.

- ERO identifies that leaders should make more in depth use of data on all senior students' engagement, progress and achievement. This includes using the range of information from New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Ministry of Education and sources within the school to provide a more detailed picture of the progress and achievement of priority learners at senior levels. This should enable leaders and trustees to better evaluate the impact and effectiveness of strategies and programmes to meet the needs and aspirations of these groups of students.

In addition senior leaders and trustees should:

- continue to support teachers' analysis and use of robust assessment information, based on standardised assessment tools and exemplars in literacy and numeracy at Years 9 and 10
- set detailed action plans to support annual improvement targets for accelerating progress and achievement of identified groups of priority learners in Years 9 and 10
- continue to review and report on effectiveness of programmes and strategies to improve students' presence and engagement at school.

3 Curriculum

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

The school provides flexible courses and pathway options for students at a range of levels across a broad curriculum. Programmes are tailored to meet needs, interests, career aspirations and extend strengths. Guidelines and expectations for planning, teaching and learning reflect the principles of The New Zealand Curriculum and school values.

Students welcome the opportunities to extend their learning and performance through academies in music, dance, drama, tikanga Māori and sports and in junior extension programmes. They value the opportunities to learn in designated digital classes at Years 9 and 10 and in many classes across the wider school. In these lessons, teachers and students regularly use their own or school-provided digital technologies and programmes. This assists with catering for different needs and interests and promotes independence and self-directed learning.

Students' backgrounds and cultures are well represented in learning contexts. Positive and respectful relationships promote learning in most classes.

Productive partnerships with parents, families, agencies and careers guidance staff and well considered workplace learning opportunities support appropriate learning and career pathways for students.

Teachers participate in professional learning and development (PLD) initiatives and programmes to improve their knowledge and skills. PLD is closely linked to teachers' needs and priorities. Professional learning groups provide collegial support and strategies to improve practice.

Teacher evidence-based reflection on the effectiveness of their practice is variable when compared to schoolwide expectations. Examples of effective leadership, collegiality and reflection are particularly evident amongst teachers of Years 9 and 10 writing classes. These teachers are beginning to evaluate their writing programmes and practices to better meet students' needs and raise overall literacy achievement.

School leaders recognise the need to raise Pacific achievement. Recent initiatives based on a Pacific Education Plan for 2013 to 2015 show the benefits of recognising the cultures and identity of students and fono. These strategies, together with setting specific targets, have potential to promote positive outcomes for Pacific students as priority learners in the school.

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

Trustees and school leaders have promoted a range of strategies to promote Māori language, culture and identity across the school. Consultation with, and input from whānau and several Māori teaching staff, support these initiatives and programmes to improve success of this group of priority learners. The retention rates of Māori students to age 17 has improved to be comparable with those for Māori nationally.

Innovative leadership impacts positively on teachers promoting success for Māori as Māori. Schoolinitiated research and surveys by curriculum leaders provide useful staff development and teaching strategies.

Regular staff PLD in te reo Māori, development of cultural competencies, a school haka and waiata, demonstrate the school's commitment to strengthening cultural recognition of Māori learners.

While there has been progress in rates of achievement, engagement and opportunities for high levels of success in such areas as te reo Māori at NCEA and kapa haka, trustees and leaders recognise the need for further progress in engagement and achievement. Improvement in attendance rates, acceleration of literacy and numeracy progress and NCEA qualifications of Māori leavers are included in overall school priorities.

The board and school leaders should continue to consult with whānau to formalise a strategic plan with specific improvement targets and outcomes for identified cohorts or groups. This framework and action plan should improve trustees' capacity to monitor, question and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and initiatives to improve rates of success for all Māori.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is well placed to improve its performance. The strategic plan promotes the school values, teacher competency and is aligned with national priorities. Trustees are well informed through regular reports about many aspects of school operations and use the information for planning. Relationships between the board and senior leadership and administration team are productive.

Leaders focus on improving teaching and learning. Regular meetings, reports and in-class visits promote discussion and monitoring against professional expectations and practice. Senior leaders and ERO have identified the need to further develop the appraisal framework to be more explicitly linked to student outcomes.

Useful and productive strategies are evident for engaging with families, whānau and fono. Feedback contributes to ongoing school improvement and communication initiatives.

The climate is positive and inclusive. Diversity is recognised, celebrated and reflected in the school culture. Students contribute their ideas and time to school events and decisions through leadership roles, student council and whānau representation. Students with high needs participate in a range of activities in and outside the classroom. Positive relationships, individual rights and fairness are promoted with a focus on student self-management.

Self review is encouraged, evident across the school and used to promote improvement. These processes should be strengthened with consistent follow up and evaluation against more specific goals and targets at classroom, department and schoolwide levels.

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. At the time of this review there were 32 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 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.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

Joyce Gebbie
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