

ERO Readiness Review PSKH interim progress:

Middle School West Auckland

December 2014

Middle School West Auckland is an initiative of Villa Education Trust. It is designed to provide the established Villa model of education building on the successful establishment of South Auckland Middle School as a Partnership School Kura Hourua in 2014.

The school is offering places for 160 students in 2015. At this stage, 90 enrolments have been confirmed. Because of the location of the school in West Auckland they are likely to meet their target of enrolling 75% of learners who are at high risk of poor outcomes.

Villa Trust now has a history as a provider of good quality education. The establishment of their existing PSKH provides a framework of expertise in the development of the school in timeframes that are somewhat challenging.

The school will enrol boys and girls from Years 7 to 10. The Villa schools are designed to engage learners from Years 7 to 10 in a model of project-based learning that provides a strong foundation for subsequent academic and personal success. The teaching focus is on building learners' skills so they can manage their own learning. Projects are based on the *New Zealand Curriculum* and underpinned by Christian values. A key element is the commitment to small class sizes and the provision of independent learning opportunities.

The challenge for Villa in this school is the substantial increase in size from previous models. The current development of school premises in collaboration with an existing church shows an innovative use of urban space, but does not provide enough room for the projected whole school. Two villas will be on this site with another villa to be developed during 2015.

A fourth villa is planned on the site of Nga Kakano kura. One whole villa will run on that site under the leadership of the principal overall. The curriculum on this site will remain essentially the Villa curriculum but will incorporate te reo and tikanga Maori, most particularly by devoting one afternoon a week to this area. An agreement about how the two schools will operate on the same site is being developed with MoE support.

Staff have been appointed to roles as academic leaders and bring considerable expertise and experience of the expectations of secondary education. Nine more teachers have been appointed. All teachers, with one exception for particular expertise, will be fully registered teachers.

The key mandatory policies to support the provision of a safe physical and emotional environment, as required by the Ministry of Education, have been submitted. Suitable consideration of physical safety in a public environment used for children's recreational space will need to be made as patterns of use become apparent.

Middle School West Auckland is making good progress towards operating and managing a Partnership School/Kura Hourua and to providing for students at the beginning of 2015.

Strengths

- The vision and direction for the school is articulated and reflected in documentation. It is based on the established direction of the Villa Trust Schools. The aim is to provide a sound foundation for students as they progress from primary school to senior secondary, and to keep this age group well engaged in meaningful learning.
- There will be some economy of scale. For instance, it is expected that the academic leaders of each villa will meet regularly across MSWA and SAMS and Mt Hobson Middle School for ongoing professional support. This should also allow the development of worthwhile assessment practices including moderation.
- The school's business leaders recognise the challenges in scaling up. Additional staff are providing good support, and further appointments will be made. Efficient and effective management practices are evident.
- There is a carefully planned enrolment and induction process for students and their parents/whānau that reflects the already established SAMS processes.
- Key teaching staff have been appointed after a careful appointments process. The new academic leaders have extensive experience in secondary education. They are enthusiastic about working with NZQA to develop Consent to Assess in a way that is consistent with Villa educational philosophy.
- There is an ongoing commitment to engage with the community to best meet the needs of the students and to inform people of the purpose of the school. A new community liaison officer has begun work. School leaders report that there has been positive interest and response from the community, reflected in the relatively high number of enrolments.

Challenges ahead include:

- the comparative difficulty of accessing community organisations in West Auckland
- developing teachers' understanding of the school curriculum and model of teaching. Some time has been allocated to building a shared understanding of Villa teaching and learning practices
- reporting student progress and achievement using *National Standards*, and devising a valid and reliable way to report on students' progress and achievement in Years 9 and 10
- building positive relationships with the West Auckland principals which may take some time.

The ERO Readiness Report for this school is due at the end of Term 1, 2015.