

Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru

Whangaruru, Northland

Profile no 691

PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS KURA HOURUA READINESS REPORT

Confirmed report to Ministry of Education September 2014

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) commissioned the Education Review Office (ERO) to help determine the readiness of Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru to operate effectively as a school from Term 1, 2014.

Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru is the one of the first five Partnership Schools Kura Hourua (PSKH) in New Zealand. These schools are a new type of school within the existing network designed to bring together the education, business and community sectors to provide new opportunities for students to achieve educational success. These schools have been given increased flexibility about how they operate and use funding to deliver school-specific targets.

A contract between the PSKH and the Ministry expresses the sponsor's accountabilities to the Crown, and the Crown's commitment to resourcing the school. Clearly specified targets for student achievement, student engagement, enrolment of priority learners and financial reporting are in place. The contracts were signed in September 2013.

Terms of reference

The Ministry of Education asked ERO to:

- focus on the systems and procedures necessary for Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru to open smoothly in 2014
- identify what is in place and its suitability, what is planned, any gaps and whether the plan is achievable
- identify (as near as possible) priority areas to be addressed
- recognise that many procedures and systems will be in the process of being developed and look for evidence that the school has a planned timeframe to develop them
- seek evidence that the national priorities and all applicable guidelines provided by the Ministry, have been considered.

METHODOLOGY

ERO has undertaken an evaluation to determine the readiness of the school to operate. The process for evaluating the context and preparation of this school has been tailored to the particular circumstances and progress of the school.

An interim written report was prepared for the Ministry of Education in December 2013 to comment on progress up to that time. In April the Readiness Review was extended to allow additional time for the school to demonstrate its capacity to meet the terms of its contract.

ERO met with the sponsors, school management team, the governance facilitator, local Ministry staff and school staff. Visits to the school in 2014 have focused on the development of the teaching and learning model and observations of the programme in action, including discussions with students. Evidence was gathered to ascertain to what extent timely and appropriate steps have been taken to prepare the school to operate effectively.

The matters detailed in the appendix to this report, the readiness profile, relating to school governance and management have been discussed at different times with school

management and members of Ngā Parirau Mātauranga Charitable Trust as well as with Ministry staff, including the regional director.

CONTEXT

Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru was established by the Ngā Parirau Mātauranga Trust as a co-educational secondary school catering for students from Years 9 to 15. There are now 48 students on the roll. The students are divided into four classes; senior boys, senior girls, junior boys and junior girls.

There are five fulltime teaching staff, including the curriculum leader. One teacher is untrained. Other staff include the caretaker, administrative staff and teacher aides. A member of the Trust Board is currently serving as the acting Chief Executive Officer. The school is situated on a farm in Northland.

A governance facilitator worked with and for the Trust until the end of June 2014.

FINDINGS

Te Kura Hourua ki Whangaruru is not yet in a position to operate effectively without substantial further support.

The key issues are:

- the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality of management
- the variable implementation of leadership roles
- disengaged students
- the difficulty of recruiting suitable staff
- the lack of business expertise.

Tensions arising from these factors have resulted in strained relationships between Trust Board members and staff, and among staff.

The Trust Board's vision for the school is attractive and powerfully articulated.

However, the practicalities of realising this vision have proved extremely challenging and are yet to be adequately addressed.

Teaching and learning

The Trust Board's strong desire to provide well for the young people of Whangaruru is reflected in developing a school where adults promote a place-based curriculum that develops personal inquiry skills, interwoven with te reo Māori and Ngati Wai tikanga. It is a model that seeks to strengthen peoples' relationships with each other and with the place in which they live.

Good use has been made of external providers to enable students to gain unit standard qualifications in areas such as fencing and possum trapping that are of benefit in this area. Education outside the classroom similarly includes equine skills, coast guard training, safe use of motorbikes and kapa haka.

English, maths, te reo Māori, agriculture /horticulture and PE are taught within the school. Project work is designed to integrate learning in realistic contexts. Provision for science and social studies is made through Te Kura The Correspondence School. The suggested digital link with Macleans College for Year 9 English has not materialised. A

timetable has now been put in place so that students and teaching staff can prepare for what is to happen each day.

Students clearly enjoy outdoor activities and social interactions, and some are taking advantage of opportunities to be involved in school-based sporting activities in the city. However, student attendance is poor and the roll has decreased significantly over time. While better systems are now in place to monitor student attendance electronically and to follow up absences, available data indicate established patterns of poor attendance, with at least a third of students absent on our visits.

A number of the students are described as having been previously disengaged from formal education. Considerable resource went into providing a short-term diversion programme for students whose behaviour was particularly challenging. Contacts are being built with other agencies to provide ongoing support, but distance can make access difficult.

Teaching staff need to build their capability to implement planned progressions of learning to meet the needs of individual learners. Available data suggest that many students need significant support to reach age-appropriate achievement levels. However, there is very little planning evident to show how acceleration will occur. Instead there is an over reliance on teacher-aides to monitor student behaviour. This type of teacher-aide support should be unnecessary in these small classes.

Professional learning and development now underway for teaching staff in understanding *The New Zealand Curriculum* is a very good step. In particular, it will be useful for teaching staff to reach a shared understanding of achievement at the different levels of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The school's prerequisites for Level 1 NCEA courses are expressed in terms of levels of the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Teaching staff need to share an understanding of the curriculum levels if they are to help students meet those expectations. Shared understanding would also help to improve reporting to parents which does not yet indicate the level at which students are achieving.

The timeframe NZQA had to work with the school to achieve Consent to Assess was very short. The school has a framework of policies and procedures intended to guide school assessment practice. It is not clear how well systems are operated to ensure the assessment for internally awarded credits is valid and reliable.

Poor planning resulted in a lack of resources to support classroom teaching. Inability to access the Internet has not helped.

More needs to be done to support students to develop ownership of their learning. There is a lack of urgency. Teaching staff could do much more to ensure classrooms support independent learning, acknowledge students' achievement and celebrate the history and culture of the area. There is limited evidence of feedback to students that will engage them in learning and allow them to take pride in their accomplishment.

Staffing has been unstable. It has been hard to recruit teaching staff with the necessary expertise and understanding of the kaupapa and pedagogical model. The consequent

reliance on relieving staff has been difficult to manage as systems and structures remain in a developmental phase. Adequate support for the untrained teacher has not always been available.

Governance matters

The commitment of Trust Board members to making the school succeed has been highly evident, but the challenges they have faced in trying to provide governance have been almost overwhelming. They made good use of the governance facilitator and, more recently, Ministry support to address concerns.

In April the governance facilitator in conjunction with Ministry staff, designed an action plan to address the most pressing issues in relation to governance and management of the school. A seconded acting CEO did a great deal to improve the management and business operation of the school by:

- restoring effective working relationships between staff and governance, and among staff
- ensuring student attendance is closely monitored, and associated issues addressed
- putting a regular timetable in place for staff and students
- clarifying employment matters
- enabling students and teaching staff to have appropriate access to ICT
- reporting to the sponsors, including financial reporting, regularly and clearly.

A Trust Board member is currently acting as CEO while the board makes a decision about the structure of their operating model. The challenge is to ensure progress made is sustained with changes in leadership.

It is important that:

- appropriate strategies are in place to promote student engagement in learning
- good personnel management practices are in place
- there are clear expectations and a systematic approach across all school operations and practices
- good practice continues in running the business operations of the school.

The Trust Board should consider how many staff it can afford to employ. Staffing numbers are high, particularly in relation to the small number of students who regularly attend.

ERO acknowledges the whole hearted commitment of the people involved to providing education for the young people of Whangaruru that connects them to this place and to their history and culture. However, ERO is not confident in the school's capacity to address concerns without substantial support. There is a high level of risk because there are no robust mechanisms for making any progress sustainable.

Appendix one: Readiness Profile
WHANGARURU
TE KURA HOURUA KI

Matters to address	Progress	Comment if applicable
The vision and direction for the school is developed and reflected in documentation for the school.	✓	Clearly articulated vision.
Planning and practices show responsiveness to the needs of Maori students, Pasifika students, and students with special education needs.	Some progress	Good use of tikanga to build school culture initially. Planning does not clearly show how leaders and teachers will respond to the learning needs of priority learners.
Processes for planning and reporting, and self-review are being developed.	Some progress	Challenge is to sustain the improvements made by the previous acting CEO.
Processes are to ensure students settle effectively into the new school have been developed and are being implemented.	Some progress	Leadership programme at start of year for the students then enrolled helped them settle initially. Since then students have not had a similar experience.
Systems for assessing, analysing and reporting on student achievement are being developed.	No	Student achievement data and diagnostic information are not well used. Systems for storing or managing information on students need improving.
A set of key policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and students, and there is a programme in place to develop others that may be needed.	Some progress	Policies are in place. Ongoing work needed to build shared understanding of a teaching culture that promotes positive engagement in learning. Network with other agencies being developed.
There is an efficient management structure with suitable governance interface, appropriate structures and delegations.	Some progress	Relationships between governance and management have been dysfunctional at times. Challenge is to maintain current improvement and clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.
School leaders are developing shared beliefs about desired teaching and learning approaches amongst school leadership and staff	No	Shared beliefs about teaching and learning approaches have yet to be fully developed and implemented. Whole class teaching is prevalent.
A school curriculum and programmes are being developed to reflect the needs of students and sufficient planning is in place to guide learning as the school opens.	Some	Current PLD should help. Planning is inadequate to provide guidance for relievers and untrained teachers. Student needs have not been specifically identified.
The school is staffed appropriately to provide the desired programme and staff	No	Location is a significant inhibiting factor. Staff turnover has been high.

induction is planned		Teaching positions are advertised with little success.
Performance management systems for staff are being developed	No	Action has been taken to ascertain the registration status of key staff but it is not clear that there is sufficient appraisal in place to be able to attest that teachers continue to meet the Registered Teacher Criteria. The school would benefit from support in this area for the teachers who are registered, or who are registered Subject to Confirmation.
A disputes procedure has been developed	✓	Policy is in place.
Effective systems are in place to monitor student engagement, including a student management system.	No	KAMAR is now in the school, but ICT remains a challenge. Declining levels of student attendance have been evident. Accuracy of roll numbers is questionable.
An enrolment scheme and enrolment procedures are in place, and they must adhere to the "open for all" enrolment policy whilst targeting priority learners.	✓	Enrolment scheme and policy are in place. Enrolment process is carefully implemented to include some elements of induction for the learner and their whānau.
Policies and procedures for managing school finances and a draft budget for 2014 are in place	✓	Significant improvement evident.
Staff and students have access to appropriate furniture and equipment, teaching materials, library, resources, ICT.	Some progress	Appropriate furniture in classrooms. Teaching materials and resources need development. Connectivity remains an issue.
There is a plan for the operation and maintenance of the school premises.	✓	Experienced caretaker has made significant improvements to safety of premises.