

## ERO External Evaluation

### Epsom Girls Grammar School, Auckland

The purpose of ERO's external evaluations is to give parents, whānau and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education children and young people receive. ERO reports on the equity and excellence of learning outcomes for all students and for specific groups including Māori students, Pacific students and students with additional learning needs. This includes a focus on accelerating learning for students. ERO also reports on the quality and effectiveness of the school's processes and practices for continuing and sustaining improvement. The report gives evaluation findings that answer four key questions about the school's performance.

#### School Context

Epsom Girls Grammar School is a large, urban school catering for students from Year 9 to 13. Nine percent of students are Māori and ten percent have Pacific heritage. Over a third of students are Chinese or Asian. The school offers students a broad curriculum, centred on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner. School development is innovative and future focused.

The school's vision is to develop young women as confident and resilient learners, actively contributing to their communities. The school fosters courage, compassion, curiosity and community. It aims to build students' agency and critical engagement in learning.

The board's strategic priorities emphasise:

- a school culture with positive relationships and high expectations
- personalising student learning and achievement pathways
- effective and inclusive teaching practices
- learning partnerships that support student learning
- strong community engagement
- developing sustainable leadership capacity.

The school sets high targets for achievement in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and University Entrance (UE) for all students.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- achievement within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- pathway outcomes and destination data
- achievement data for Years 9 and 10
- learners with additional needs
- progress and achievement in relation to school goals and targets
- pastoral and wellbeing information for groups of students

- participation, contribution and engagement information across a number of sporting, arts and cultural areas.

Other valued outcomes include student confidence, leadership, a strong sense of belonging and agency, and service to others and the community. High expectations for student achievement and attainment noted in previous ERO reports continue to be evident.

Since the 2014 ERO review, a new principal and several new senior leaders have been appointed. Most trustees have been newly elected or co-opted to the board. The school is an active member of the Auckland Central Community of Schools (ACCOS).

## **Evaluation Findings**

### **1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students**

#### **1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?**

The school successfully supports its students to achieve equitable outcomes. Students continue to achieve high levels of success in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Most students stay at school until Year 13.

The school's roll-based data show that most students achieve well in NCEA and UE. Most students, including Māori and Pacific students, leave school with NCEA Level 2 or above. Approximately 89 percent of students achieve well in NCEA Level 3. Rates of merit and excellence endorsements continue to be well above national averages and those of similar type schools.

The school has small percentages of Māori and Pacific students. Māori students achieve very well at NCEA Levels 1 and 2 and there is increasing parity of achievement for Māori at Level 2. Pacific students achieve well, particularly at NCEA Level 2 and there is increasing achievement and parity for Pacific students at all levels. A school priority is continuing to address remaining disparities.

Leaders and teachers use nationally-normed assessment tools to gauge the achievement of students as they enter Years 9 and 10. These students are regularly assessed in their literacy and mathematics achievement. There are effective systems for tracking and monitoring students' rates of progress. Leaders and teachers use the information gathered to inform planning and teaching strategies.

#### **1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?**

The school has very good systems to identify and support Māori, Pacific and other students whose learning needs acceleration.

Those students benefit from effective strategies that help to improve learning outcomes, such as student leadership initiatives, academic mentoring and tutoring, culturally responsive practices and cultural groups.

Students who require additional support in reading, writing and mathematics participate in targeted, individualised programmes that focus on addressing their particular learning needs. School data show that these students make good progress over time, with some achieving accelerated progress.

Learning support for students with additional needs is well coordinated. There are good processes in place for liaison between classroom teachers, deans and specialist agencies. Learning programmes, including those for English language learning, are tailored to individual students' requirements. These students achieve very well in their studies for NCEA and participate widely across all aspects of school life.

## **2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices**

### **2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?**

School conditions that enable learners to achieve equity and excellence include: highly effective leadership and stewardship, a collaborative school culture, meaningful learning partnerships, a responsive curriculum and a shared commitment among staff to enhancing their professional practice.

The board of trustees is strategically focused on promoting equity and excellence. The school's vision has a focus on improving student outcomes and fostering wellbeing. Trustees are well informed about student achievement and progress, and school priorities. Information is used purposefully to give trustees assurance about the extent to which the school is tracking towards strategic goals and to inform their decision making.

The deliberate development of leadership contributes to an increasingly student-centered curriculum. Relational trust at all levels of the school community and a receptiveness to change and improvement support this development. Evidence based decision making guides changes to school structures and processes, and supports well-aligned, coherent practices across the school.

A broad view of student success and wellbeing is at the heart of the school's curriculum. The school's responsive curriculum enables students' individual strengths and talents to flourish, and helps them to excel in a range of learning areas. Collaborative learning is promoted through problem solving and critical thinking opportunities in real-life contexts.

The school's inclusive learning culture supports all students to participate confidently in a wide variety of learning experiences. A holistic, wrap-around approach to pastoral care successfully supports student wellbeing and achievement. Effective coordination between pastoral and curriculum leaders and teachers, parents and outside agencies contributes significantly to this positive feature of the school.

The principal and teachers actively foster learning-focused partnerships with parents and prioritise close relationships with families. Support for tuakana/teina relationships among students helps to enhance their learning and wellbeing. Well-planned, multi-layered learning support approaches enable students to access personalised and flexible learning opportunities and pathways.

Māori students benefit from the deliberate focus on, and commitment to developing bicultural practices at all levels of the school. Trustees and staff are committed to providing opportunities for Māori learners to succeed as Māori, and for all students to learn about the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand.

A professional learning environment promotes and supports effective teaching practices. It includes flexibility and openness to new learning and blended e-learning approaches. Teachers' participation in professional learning groups contributes to enhanced practices through collaborative action and

research. Teachers and leaders have a positive influence in the local and wider education community, including the ACCOS Kāhui Ako.

## **2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?**

Senior leaders have identified that a next step is to continue embedding strategies that support accelerated and meaningful learning in the current climate of change in secondary school education.

The school should continue to build its longitudinal understanding of achievement and progress for individuals and groups of students. This information could include year-level cohorts, Māori and Pacific students, Year 9 and 10 students who require learning support, and students with additional learning needs.

## **3 Board assurance on legal requirements**

Before the review, the board 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 the following:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management
- finance
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student safety and wellbeing:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration and certification
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the *Vulnerable Children Act 2014*.

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

The school hostel, Epsom House, is owned and operated by Epsom Girls Grammar School. It accommodates 125 students.

ERO's findings confirm that:

- the assistant principal with hostel responsibility, the school counsellor, the hostel board sub-committee and experienced hostel staff regularly review and improve the hostel's systems and operations
- hostel management is efficient and effective in providing a supportive living and learning environment for students attending the school

- the culture and climate of the hostel and relationships between hostel staff, parents and boarders reflect the school's positive values.

Students who spoke with ERO during the review talked about the high quality of pastoral care, the choices available and responsibilities expected of them, and the long-term friendships that they make. Younger students appreciated the support of their older peers.

### **Provision for international students**

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (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 139 international students attending the school. Robust monitoring systems and internal evaluation processes ensure that the school continues to meet its obligations under the Code.

International students are provided with high quality support for their education and wellbeing from an experienced team of staff within the school's international student department. Learning programmes, including those for English language learning, are tailored to their individual needs. International students achieve very well in their studies for NCEA and participate widely across all aspects of school life.

## **4 Going forward**

### **Key strengths of the school**

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on existing strengths in:

- a student centred curriculum that personalises learning
- the strategic focus on building professional capability and capacity that promotes innovation across the curriculum to address disparity
- comprehensive internal evaluation that promotes ongoing improvement in outcomes for all students
- an inclusive, collaborative culture that values students' wellbeing and agency.

### **Next steps**

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

- continuing to promote effective acceleration approaches that support all learners to be successful
- continuing to respond to emerging shifts and trends in 21<sup>st</sup> Century secondary education.

**ERO's next external evaluation process and timing**

ERO is likely to carry out the next external evaluation in four-to-five years.



Violet Tu'uga Stevenson  
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Te Tai Raki - Northern Region

13 November 2018

## About the school

Location	Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	64	
School type	Secondary School	
School roll	2225	
Gender composition	Girls 100%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	9%
	Pākehā	35%
	Chinese	20%
	Indian	7%
	Samoan	4%
	South East Asian	4%
	other Asian	9%
	other Pacific	6%
	other	6%
Review team on site	August 2018	
Date of this report	13 November 2018	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	June 2014
	Education Review	May 2009
	Education Review	February 2006