

Wellington Activity Centre Special Review Report

11/12/2008

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Background

Introduction

A Special Review is a review of particular areas of performance and is undertaken to specific terms of reference.

Special reviews may report on particular issues raised from external sources.

This special review report was prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

Terms of Reference

This special review is based on an evaluation of the performance of the Newlands College Board of Trustees and the Wellington Activity Centre Management Committee in relation to the terms of reference for this review. The terms of reference are:

- educational outcomes for students;
- educational programmes and learning resources;

- accountability and reporting arrangements;
- centre management systems;
- provision for student support;
- physical and emotional safety of staff and students; and
- any other matters that arise during the course of the review.

About the School

Location	Kaiwharawhara, Wellington
Ministry of Education profile number	6128
School type	Activity Centre attached to a state secondary school. (Years 9-13)
Decile rating	1
Teaching staff:	2
Roll generated entitlement	3
Number of teachers	
School roll	15
Gender composition	Boys 10
	Girls 5
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 8
	Māori 5
	Pacific 2
Special features	Attached unit of Newlands College
Review team on site	October 2008
Date of this report	11 December 2008
Previous ERO reports	Special Review, June 2005

Accountability Review, March 2001

Reviewed as an attached unit of Wellington East Girls'

College, October 1997

Reviewed as an attached unit to other Wellington secondary schools, 1995 and 1991

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

The National Manager Reporting Services has authorised this special review as part of a cluster of activity centre reviews to be undertaken by ERO in 2008/2009. This report is based on an evaluation of the performance of the Newlands College Board of Trustees and Wellington Activity Centre management committee in relation to the terms of reference for this review.

The Wellington Activity Centre (WAC) operates as an attached unit of Newlands College. The host school responsibility transferred from Wellington College in 2006 by mutual agreement. As an attached unit the centre is responsible to the board of trustees of the host school, but has a high level of operational autonomy. The activity centre is located in a residential suburb of central Wellington that students can access by public transport.

The centre has a nominal roll of 20 students drawn from the ten schools in the Central Wellington secondary school cluster. Students are referred to the centre as a result of ongoing concerns about their learning and behaviour. Some have previously been suspended by the boards of their referring schools and are seeking second chance education. Others need time-out from mainstream schooling and an opportunity to reengage in learning.

Students remain enrolled in their referring school and attend the centre for varying periods of time from six months to over a year, with the approval of the centre management committee. At the time of the review, 15 students attended the centre, four continuing from 2007 and eleven enrolled since the beginning of 2008.

During 2007 a total of 24 students attended the centre, which is similar to that of recent years. Some stay more than a year, but this has not affected enrolment patterns. Places are available according to needs. The newly appointed director has collated data on student destinations that indicates that while fewer reintegrate into mainstream education, the majority are assisted to find alternative education or further training programmes. This information is consistent with the stated aims of the centre.

The centre has established and maintains a positive and supportive relationship with its host school. It continues to be well served by its management committee, which receives comprehensive regular reports about the day-to-day operations of the centre.

Since the 2005 ERO review, there have been three directors. The current director was appointed at the start of 2008 and is well respected by students, staff, parents and the management committee. He has introduced systems that provide clearer structures and procedures, which improve upon the good practices already in place. The director is required to actively seek additional funding from local agencies and charitable trusts. Therefore, students at the WAC benefit from additional staffing to support their developmental and learning needs that otherwise might not be met.

The 2005 ERO report raised issues about operational management and programme planning. Students now have individual education plans (IEPs); an annual plan has been written; and a performance management system implemented. Education outside the classroom procedures are used appropriately, the afternoon programmes are demonstrating closer links to the national curriculum and work has been initiated to implement The New Zealand Curriculum. The role of the liaison tutor has been formalised.

Transparent processes for referrals have been developed and are implemented. Centre staff visit guidance counsellors from feeder schools and the new referral process is talked through with them. All parties are clear about expectations of the enrolment criteria and time-lines, including transition back to mainstream education.

The significant upgrade in buildings referred to in the previous ERO report has been completed. This has improved the physical environment for staff and students. New learning programmes have been established. The refurbished kitchen is an integral part of the Healthy Eating, Healthy Attitude programme. Other areas, such as the recreation room, enhance opportunities for a range of social interactions.

The next steps for further improvement are for staff to receive professional development in the writing of IEPs, for management to provide guidance to staff about term and unit curriculum planning and for the management committee to implement a regular maintenance plan regarding the grounds.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the director and management committee can manage the centre in the interests of student and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

Therefore, ERO will review the Wellington Activity Centre again as part of the regular cycle of activity centre reviews.

Findings

The findings of this review are reported under the following headings:

- learning programmes and resources;
- student support; and
- governance and management.

Areas of good performance and areas for improvement are identified under each heading.

Learning Programmes and Resources

Areas of good performance

Programme of learning. Students are offered a varied learning programme that includes formal academic studies through The Correspondence School, literacy enhancement, life skills, sports, health, information and communication technologies and education outside the classroom. ERO observes that where programmes are interesting and relevant, the students participate willingly.

Facilitation of education through The Correspondence School (TCS). As stated in the 2005 ERO report, the morning programme is centred on courses provided through TCS. All students undertake study of English, mathematics and science and, since the start of 2008, choose a fourth subject. Year 11 students are expected to complete at least two sets per week, while year 10 complete three sets. Teachers are actively monitoring and tutoring students to complete work to a higher standard. This approach encourages students to reflect on the quality of their work.

National qualifications. The centre promotes student entry into National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs) through TCS. A number of students have gained the minimum literacy and numeracy NCEA Level 1 requirements. They also achieve credits across several subjects towards completing the Level 1 certificate. Achievement is celebrated and motivates students to be engaged and to appreciate their peers' success.

Learning routines. Learning routines are well established. The term and weekly plans give clear structure and guidelines for set activities. These are reinforced through morning briefings with staff and students where the previous day's activities are reviewed and information about the current day is shared. Students know what is expected of them and settle quickly into the daily programme.

Literacy support. The position of literacy tutor is fully funded by locally raised funds. It is a valued addition to the core programme, as the centre acknowledges that students need literacy skills to successfully access the curriculum. The literacy tutor ascertains student ability levels in reading, spelling and comprehension through standardised testing and provides appropriate one-to-one tuition. She also identifies students' preferred learning styles. Assessment data are shared with TCS and the WAC staff who are able to adapt the learning programmes accordingly.

Tracking student movement. The director gathers and reports up-to-date information about enrolled students and tracks destinations following their transitions from the centre. Student outcomes for 2007 indicate that four went into employment, three left school, one went to Child, Youth and Family

Service, three enrolled in an alternative education facility, ten returned to mainstreamed education, while three remained at the WAC. This information assists the centre to monitor its success against its stated aims.

Reporting student progress. The centre has a wide range of appropriate reporting processes. Staff regularly meet to discuss student progress and they are proactive in updating parents. Parents work with staff to help develop the learning programme for students. They receive written reports each term. Referring schools are provided with ongoing information and are in regular contact with the centre.

Monitoring and self review. Information from IEPs is used to monitor progress against the achievement of set targets. Students are encouraged to reflect with staff about what has gone well and identify next steps. This monitoring and self review is useful to assess when a student is ready to be re-integrated into mainstream education.

Areas for improvement

Planning. While ERO noted some high quality planning that identified the learning intentions, success indicators, differentiated tasks and resourcing, this is not consistent across the centre. Where planning is below standard, the diverse needs of students are not being addressed.

Diagnostic assessment. Mathematics support relies solely on results from TCS testing. No standardised testing is used to diagnostically identify student learning needs. It is, therefore, difficult to plan and appropriately individualise the programme. Management is aware of these issues and is taking steps to address them.

Student Support

Areas of good performance

Referral processes. Students are an integral part in the enrolment decision making. There is a well-set-out, documented procedure for enrolment that provides a comprehensive profile of students' needs. The process is consultative and includes caregivers, potential students and staff from the referring school and the centre. This assists with planning and implementing a smooth transition to and integration of the student into the centre.

Behaviour management. Students understand and accept the high expectations for appropriate behaviours that promote successful learning outcomes and social interaction. Centre rules are clearly articulated, displayed and applied. Students know the culture of rewards and consequences based on personal choice of actions and so behave appropriately.

Environment. Every effort is made to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for staff and students. The centre is welcoming, inclusive and values each student's individuality. Staff care for the students and are prepared to go out of their way to ensure they participate effectively in the programme. Students acknowledge that they are treated with respect and that their efforts are appropriately affirmed.

Diversity of staffing. The centre employs staff with diverse skills. This diversity is acknowledged and well used to enhance learning opportunities for students, through such activities as the sports and gender programmes planned and implemented by youth workers. The additional literacy tutor assists students to access the curriculum. The long serving administrator has a wealth of institutional knowledge. This provides continuity and a source of guidance for management. The new director, through his experience and background, promotes appropriate professional relationships and brings with him a range of skills and relevant expertise.

Transitioning. The process for transition back to school is well documented and acknowledged in each student's IEP. It relies on a gradual and managed reintegration into the referring school, based on the incremental achievement of pre-set criteria. Students understand and appreciate this process as it empowers them to take responsibility for this to occur.

Area for improvement

Individual education plans. All students have an IEP with clearly set out procedures. Considerable progress has been made since the 2005 ERO review. However, the overall quality is still variable and some IEPs are not sufficiently specific with goals and associated actions. This makes it difficult to monitor and measure progress against the stated outcomes.

Governance and Management

Areas of good performance

Memorandum of Understanding. The centre management and board of trustees of Newlands College have developed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education that sets out expectations of all key stakeholders and clarifies the purpose of the centre. The activity centre provides programmes to meet the individual needs of its students focusing primarily on academic, personal and social development. The aim is to equip the students with the necessary skills and confidence to successfully return to mainstream education, move on to further training, or into the workplace. Overall, ERO considers that the centre is meeting its stated aims. Students are well served.

Centre management. The director uses a consultative style of management. He has introduced systems, processes and procedures that support the aims of the centre. In contrast with the 2005 review, staff and students spoken with by ERO state that daytoday operations are better organised and the procedures understood.

Planning and reporting. The management committee has developed a strategic plan that gives the centre a clear direction for its future. The director provides it with monthly comprehensive reports against the National Administration Guidelines. The management committee is well informed and can make appropriate decisions, which are supportive of management and of student outcomes.

Policy review. The management committee has adopted a cycle of policy review. Some policies have been deleted, while new ones provide appropriate guidelines for operational procedures. The review process will keep policies up to date and ensure consistent implementation for governance and management.

Performance management system. Procedures for appraising the director and teaching staff meet legislative requirements. They are appraised against the appropriate professional standards and have signed copies of their personal development objectives and appraisal reports. The aims of the centre are being further advanced through a specific improvement focus.

Areas for improvement

Health and Safety. Due to stated financial constraints, students undertake some aspects of caretaking of the grounds. As a result, the grounds are not well maintained and in need of attention. The storage of potentially dangerous equipment presents a hazard that needs to be addressed.

Management planning. The annual plan identifies the key areas of focus presented with specific outcomes, activities, responsibility and measures. Formal interim monitoring and reporting of progress towards the achievement of the outcomes would assist with timely interventions to address issues that may arise during the year.

4 Recommendations

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ERO recommends that:

4.1 Staff continue to receive professional development to support them to write systematic and consistent individual education plans appropriate to the needs of the student.

4.2 Management continues to provide guidance to staff to ensure that the quality of term and unit curriculum plans addresses the diverse learning needs of all students.

4.3 The management committee implements a regular maintenance plan to ensure that the grounds are kept in an orderly and safe condition.

5 Future Action

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ERO is confident that the director and management committee can manage the centre in the interests of student and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

Therefore, ERO will review the Wellington Activity Centre again as part of the regular cycle of activity centre reviews.

SIGNED

Lennane Kent

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

11 December 2008

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To the Parents and Community of Wellington Activity Centre

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The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluation follows.

Community Page

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When ERO has reviewed a school we encourage boards to inform their community of any follow-up action they plan to do. You should talk to the board or principal if you have any questions about this evaluation, the full ERO report or their future intentions.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the school or see the ERO website, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

SIGNED

Lennane Kent

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.