

- Background
- Efficient
- Statutory Obligations
- Other Matters
- Conclusion
- About The School

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This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

Background

Introduction

The Chief Review Officer has a statutory duty to report on the performance of private schools throughout New Zealand.

Under section 35A of the Education Act 1989, private schools are required to be "efficient". The Act defines "efficient", in relation to a private school as:

- (a) having suitable premises, staffing, equipment, and curriculum; and
- (b) usually providing tuition for 9 or more students who have turned 5 but are under 16; and
- (c) providing suitably for the inculcation in the minds of students of sentiments of patriotism and loyalty; and
- (d) giving students tuition of a standard no lower than that of the tuition given to students enrolled at schools of the same class.

This report focuses on the extent to which the school meets this requirement and other statutory obligations.

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Efficient

Suitable Staffing

Since the 2007 ERO review there have been significant changes in staffing, including the appointments of a new principal and deputy principal, and changes to the membership of the St Mark's Church School Board. In addition, the Junior College that was established in 2007 has been discontinued and a decline in roll numbers has resulted in fewer teachers being employed.

The board has undertaken considerable review of its operations and established a clear direction for the next five years. Trustees have developed a sound framework that includes vision, mission and values statements captured in the 2009 to 2015 strategic plan. This provides a solid foundation for growth and development of the primary school that caters for students from Years 1 to 8. Trustees are committed to employing teachers who support the school's mission 'to provide students, within a caring Christian environment, with the foundations for success in an inter-connected world'.

The principal provides strong leadership and is ably supported by the deputy principal. Together, they are working in partnership with the church and school community to develop a collaborate culture based on the new strategic direction. The principal has effectively managed considerable change related to staffing, curriculum and school-wide organisation. Management and staff are hardworking and committed to the overall direction for the school. A warm, welcoming and inclusive learning environment is evident, with clear guidelines and expectations to support and enhance teaching and learning.

Useful quality assurance processes are being established. The performance management system has been appropriately reviewed. Teachers have received some constructive feedback about their teaching, and teaching teams have completed valuable, reflective reports to the principal about key aspects of curriculum and school organisation. The board has recently undertaken the principal's appraisal and the deputy principal's appraisal is yet to be completed.

Suitable Curriculum

St Mark's Church School's curriculum embodies the philosophy of the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate (IB PYP), and includes elements of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). The school is working towards authorisation as an International Baccalaureate Organisation World School in 2010. The programme offered to students is predominantly structured through units of inquiry.

The special character is clearly evident across the school. Key elements include:

emphasis on Christian virtues;

involvement in worship and participation in parish and school services;

a religious education programme at all levels; and

a close relationship with the parish and the diocese.

A strong Christian perspective is apparent in the relationships between management, teachers and students. Students are able to participate in the choir, the chapel team and readings at services.

Management and the teaching staff are developing a well-structured IB PYP framework to guide teaching and learning across all year levels. This outlines the scope and sequence of learning that incorporates central ideas, key concepts, the learner profile, focus learning areas and questions to scaffold the inquiry process. Teaching teams use these to develop units of work. In addition, policies outline expectations for student achievement, assessment and reporting to parents.

Students continue to enjoy a wide range of academic, cultural and sporting opportunities. Specialist teachers are employed to deliver languages, music, drama, art, physical education, religious education, science and technology. Students perform in musical, drama and sporting events in the wider Wellington area and interact with other schools. These opportunities cater for students' special interests and abilities, with some achieving high standards.

Student leadership is suitably fostered. Seniors take responsibility for younger students through the buddy programme and the house system. They role model positive attitudes and promote inclusiveness amongst the student body with appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for the individual.

School management has identified assessment as an area for improvement and appointed a teacher-in-charge who has prepared an action plan to support this development. At present, teachers use some national assessment tools linked to NZC and are developing other assessments related to IB PYP. Results from the Progressive Achievement Tests for literacy and mathematics indicate that a good percentage of Years 4 to 8 students achieve in the upper stanine bands. Management acknowledges that assessment information has yet to be further analysed and utilised to fully inform programme planning, teaching and reporting of school-wide trends and patterns of achievement to the board.

Patriotism and loyalty are well demonstrated through classroom programmes, in assemblies and the general life of the school. The school has established links with Government House.

Suitable Tuition

Students continue to receive a good quality education with examples of high quality teaching practice. Teachers are facilitating student-centred learning through the IB PYP. Students are taught specific skills and attitudes to foster and develop independence, enjoyment and ownership of their learning through the inquiry approach. Learning tasks are well planned and enable students to explore a particular area of interest based on a central idea. Teachers work with individuals to support and guide the learning process. Students are encouraged to use various skills and tools to progress their research and present their findings.

Examples of effective assessment practices at class level include:

teachers using data to inform ability groupings;

student goal setting based on identified needs;

teachers sharing learning intentions so students know the lesson purpose, together with criteria and rubrics to support self and peer assessment;

learning-based oral feedback and conferencing with students to identify appropriate next learning steps;

teachers providing useful written feedback and feed forward about students' work; and

portfolio entries that foster and encourage student pride in, and ownership of, their work.

Overall, classes are focused learning environments in which students enjoy their work. Students are confident, competent learners who are encouraged to explore and extend their learning through the wide ranging opportunities made available to them. They demonstrate pride in the school, show respect and respond positively to the high expectations set by the board, management, staff and parents.

Suitable Premises and Equipment

The school buildings, equipment and resources continue to be well maintained and attractively presented. Since the 2007 ERO review, new information and communication technologies have been purchased and facilities such as the library are being enhanced to support IB PYP. Teachers and students have access to a wide range of materials and equipment to support teaching and learning and classrooms are well organised.

Statutory Obligations

St Mark's fulfils the statutory obligations and requirements for private schools under section 35A of the Education Act 1989.

Other Matters

Provision for International Students

Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and the Provision of English Language Support

St Mark's Church 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. This is a requirement of all schools that enrol international students in terms of the Act. Schools are also required to provide English language support for their international students.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code.

Conclusion

Students at St Mark's Church School continue to receive a wide range of educational opportunities within an inclusive learning environment. The board has ensured suitable provision of curriculum and tuition, staffing, premises and equipment. The curriculum is designed to promote academic achievement, student inquiry and Christian values, together with patriotism and loyalty. The school ably meets requirements to be 'efficient' as defined by section 35A of the Education Act 1989.

Kathleen Atkins

National Manager Review Services

Central Region

About The School

School type	Fully Registered Private (Years 1 - 8)
Decile rating	10
Numbers of teachers	27
School roll	271
Number of international students	1

Ethnic composition New Zealand European/Pākehā 57%, Indian 12%, Other European 9%, Chinese 8%, Māori 3%, British 3%, German 2%, Other ethnic groups 6%

Gender composition Male 67%, Female 33%

Review team on site March 2010

Date of this report 7 May 2010

Previous ERO report February 2007