



**Pirongia School**  
**South Waikato**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Pirongia School

The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school report answers the question "How effectively is this school's curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?" Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school's systems for sustaining and continuing improvements. The report answers four key questions about the school.

## Findings

### 1 Context

#### **What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?**

Pirongia School is a semi-rural school located in the township of Pirongia in the South Waikato. It provides education for students in Years 1 to 8. The roll is currently 302 of which 31 are Māori. Most of these are from iwi outside the local area.

The principal and senior leadership team have remained stable since the last ERO review in 2010. While there have been some changes, membership of the board of trustees has also remained consistent since the last review.

Students benefit from attractive, well-maintained grounds and a friendly, welcoming and settled atmosphere. The local mountain, Pirongia, which can be seen clearly from all parts of the school, has been used systematically to promote students' sense of belonging and wellbeing under the banner of 'Pikia Tō Tātou Māunga, Together We Climb.'

The school continues to be highly integrated with the local community. It maintains mutually beneficial relationships with a large number of organisations and businesses, and through its environmental education programmes and outreaches, promotes students' sense of kaitiakitanga for the local area.

Pirongia School has had a positive reporting history with ERO. A highly successful response to the recommendation in the last ERO report on embedding good teaching practice in writing across the school has resulted in a near doubling of the proportion of students achieving at or above National Standards in this curriculum area.

### 2 Learning

#### **How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement?**

The vast majority of students at Pirongia School achieve at or above the National Standards in reading. A significant majority achieve at or above the standards in mathematics and writing. Overall achievement exceeds national averages. The school is proud of their ability to show that virtually all children make progress even though they may not yet be achieving at the National Standard.

The school uses achievement data very effectively to promote student engagement, progress and achievement.

The board of trustees receives regular reports on student progress and achievement and uses this data for setting appropriate targets to raise student achievement. Trustees also receive data about the effectiveness of the additional support programmes for students at risk of not achieving, and use this information to make ongoing resourcing decisions.

School leaders use assessment information to identify and track priority learners, identify achievement trends and patterns, and to identify and plan appropriate professional development for teachers. Robust systems are in place to ensure the consistency and validity of assessment information, including working with a large cluster of local schools to moderate teacher judgements.

Teachers use assessment information to plan and implement effective learning programmes. Highly effective practice is evident in identifying individual and group learning needs and subsequent monitoring of progress, achievement and next steps for learning. Teacher enquiry into how best to support at risk learners in their classes has become a highly effective professional practice that has impacted very positively on student learning outcomes.

Students are supported to know and understand their achievement levels, set goals and identify their next learning steps. ERO spoke to groups of students at all year levels and in nearly all classes. A significant majority were able to talk knowledgeably about their learning levels, their next steps in learning, and demonstrated high levels of ownership and understanding of their learning goals.

Parents receive written reports three times a year regarding progress and achievement. These reports are supported by student-led learning conferences twice a year where student learning goals are set. These goals are regularly revisited and adjusted when required.

### **3 Curriculum**

#### **How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?**

The Pirongia School curriculum is highly effective in promoting and supporting student learning.

While there is an appropriate focus on literacy and mathematics, students also benefit from a rich range of sporting, cultural, musical and leadership opportunities. Regular camps are carefully focussed on enriching children's understanding of the local environment and in developing key competencies and life skills. A strong environmental programme reinforces students' understanding of their role as kaitiaki. Years 7 and 8 students benefit from a high-quality, skills-based technology and arts programme.

A systematic approach is taken to developing students' social and emotional well being that utilises local contexts in meaningful ways. These contexts also reinforce children's sense of identity and belonging.

Teachers have used the local environment to develop a Pirongia School model for undertaking student research using digital technology. This framework supports the effective integration of digital learning across the curriculum and the use of higher order thinking skills. The school has recently introduced a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) programme for Years 5 to 8 students. This has led to higher levels of student engagement, more personalised learning and greater opportunities for student collaboration. ERO and the school agree that it is important to continue to explore further ways that digital technologies can be used to promote a more student-centred curriculum.

Teachers know their students well. They build friendly, trusting relationships with students using a variety of strategies. ERO observed high-quality teaching practices and learning environments across the whole school. High-quality strategies and approaches observed by ERO included:

- variable and flexible grouping arrangements
- effective systems for giving students feedback and feedforward about their work
- detailed knowledge of the literacy and mathematics curricula
- systematic and effective reflection by both teachers and leaders
- collective planning that supports a sequential approach across the school

The school is committed to continuing to deepen their understanding of how students learn. ERO recommends that they also continue to explore effective ways of teaching. These two complementary approaches should enhance the already highly responsive learning opportunities provided for every learner.

### **How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?**

The school effectively promotes educational success for Māori as Māori.

The school is supported by an active whānau support group, which meets regularly and is well led. The group acts as a forum to support Māori parents and whānau and to promote and support Māori programmes in the school. These include regular noho marae, the active school kapa haka and school-wide Matariki celebrations.

A knowledgeable local is employed by the school to advise and support teachers to integrate te reo Māori in thematic planning and to teach te reo Māori to extension groups. Māori culture has become more visible in the school. Māori language and Māori cultural concepts, such as the importance of the local area, is evident in the school charter. Some local tribal history and stories are taught. Māori knowledge is integrated into programmes of learning in many curriculum areas. A growing body of high-quality Māori artwork promotes self esteem and belonging.

A lead teacher with responsibility for Māori programmes in the school promotes high expectations for teachers and the consistent and ongoing development of teacher practice. Teachers are using the Ministry of Education resource, '*Tātaiako*,' through the school's performance management system to deepen their understanding of Māori preferred ways of teaching and learning.

ERO and school leaders agree that it is important to continue to explore and embed '*Tātaiako*' within the Pirongia School context and with the ongoing support of local whānau. Taking a more systematic and sequential approach to the teaching of local tribal history should promote a stronger sense of identity for all students.

## 4 Sustainable Performance

### How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

The school is very well placed to sustain and maintain its performance because:

- highly effective and well informed trustees bring a range of appropriate skills to their roles, are committed to the overall vision of the school, and use reflective processes for school improvement
- the principal, and other leaders, provide clear direction and a common sense of purpose for the school. They have high expectations for staff and students and have established robust school-wide systems and routines which contribute to positive outcomes for students
- there is a consistently high quality of teaching by a committed team of teachers across all levels of the school
- evidence-based, self-review practices are visible throughout all parts of the school and lead directly to improved outcomes for students
- the school benefits from a high level of support from, and engagement with, parents, whānau and the local community
- an inclusive school culture supports student well being.

### Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees 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:

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

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

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

## Conclusion

Students at Pirongia School benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that is based in the local area. Consistently high quality teaching has led to high levels of student achievement. The school continues to be well integrated with its local community and enjoys high levels of community and whānau support.

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

Dale Bailey

**Dale Bailey**  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern

19 May 2015

## About the School

Location	South Waikato	
Ministry of Education profile number	1897	
School type	Full Primary (Years 1 to 8)	
School roll	302	
Gender composition	Boys 51% Girls 49%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā Māori Other	88% 10% 2%
Review team on site	April 2015	
Date of this report	19 May 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	August 2010 June 2007 April 2004