



**Education Review Office**  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

**Waitakere College**  
**Henderson, Auckland**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Waitakere College

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?**

Waitakere College, in west Auckland, is a large multicultural secondary school catering for students from Year 9 to 13. Staff, students, whānau and community members report that the school continues to be welcoming, inclusive and supportive. College leaders promote a strong sense of optimism and confidence in the school's vision, which inspires young people to be future-focused and well prepared to follow their pathways.

Since the 2013 ERO review a new whare wananga, Te Waipuna o te Mātauranga, has been built at the front entrance to the school confirming the significance of bicultural learning. The whare provides a central place for promoting Māori language, culture and identity.

The college is a proactive member of Te Kāhui Ako o Waitakere, Waitakere Community of Learning (CoL), which includes other local secondary, intermediate and contributing schools from the Waitakere area. The CoL has set achievement challenges for future improvement, and expert teachers and leaders have been selected to work across the CoL schools. A long-term programme of professional learning is planned for teachers to work as a collective group in the interests of students.

ERO's 2013 report identified a variety of successful education opportunities for all students in the school, underpinned by high quality pastoral care systems. These features were supported by capable school leadership, a collegial and collaborative staff and a school culture focused on student wellbeing. This review finds that trustees and senior leaders have sustained these features and have continued to seek further ways to enhance students' learning opportunities.

### 2 Learning

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

School leaders and staff use achievement information very effectively to make positive changes in learners' progress and achievement.

Students in Years 11 to 13 are achieving very well in National Certificates of Achievement (NCEA). Results have been trending upwards since 2013. Level 1, 2 and 3 results, including those for Māori and Pacific learners, show that achievement is above the national average and well above percentages for other similar schools. Historical disparity between different groups of students is being relentlessly addressed across the school. High levels of achievement, particularly at Level 1, indicate that success is generally equitable for Māori and Pacific learners.

Major contributing factors to the positive learning culture include:

- strategies for accelerating the learning of students at risk of not achieving
- teachers' comprehensive data analysis, monitoring and intervention in learning to support progress towards achievement
- teachers' inquiry into practice to adapt learning approaches and content in response to students' needs
- personalised learning to support students' success
- pathways counselling to encourage students' motivation and commitment to their future aspirations
- high quality transition practices that support students entering into Year 9.

School leaders and teachers track student information thoroughly, particularly for students at risk of not achieving. Monitoring and adapting processes are then applied, often resulting in positive shifts in achievement. The school's NCEA forecasting system is very effective in predicting learning patterns that may need teacher attention or self-correction by the learner. Credit forecasting as well as credit monitoring and tracking, is now being used as an effective strategy at Levels 1 and 2 and has contributed towards recent successes in NCEA results.

Achievement data indicate that students make good progress through Years 9 and 10. This progress helps them to prepare for the Year 11 curriculum at NCEA Level 1. The school is currently prioritising a CoL literacy focus to support learning readiness for junior students. School leaders recognise that additional achievement information, as well as standardised assessment, would help teachers to measure accelerated progress in Years 9 and 10. This strategy could help raise Māori student achievement to achieve the government target of 85 percent for NCEA Level 2.

School leaders have discussed areas for future consideration including:

- reviewing and strategising for a wider view of Year 13 learning and pathways success
- developing acceleration practices as a result of a CoL inquiry, to improve learner outcomes.

### **3 Curriculum**

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

Waitakere College's curriculum promotes student engagement and learning very effectively. The curriculum design is highly responsive to students' individualised learning needs and pathways.

The school vision is to give students opportunities to own and manage their individual learning. Self-managing competencies are explicitly taught and teachers are encouraged to make learning programmes inclusive and responsive to student voice and preference. Teachers have a strong commitment to students' goal setting.

The curriculum's evolving design integrates well with the school's pathways philosophy. As a result, many senior students leave school to take up further study or enter into employment with a NCEA

qualification of Level 2 or above. In most cases these qualifications align with students' pathways decisions.

Vocational academies in the curriculum include specialised learning in medical science, construction, engineering, business and computing. The academies deliver effective learning programmes to maximise students' access to tertiary qualifications while still at secondary school. The college works hard to establish purposeful connections with tertiary institutions, industry providers and prospective employers. Course selections and assessment opportunities are flexible and student-centric with the aim of fostering success for all.

Positive and affirming relationships underpin learning success and promote equity for students. These relationships nurture and support the school's strategic commitment to students' wellbeing. Within the curriculum students learn social responsibility and develop a meaningful sense of service to others. High levels of action, care and support enable students to learn and succeed in their own way.

For the past 15 years, the Te Kotahitanga initiative has guided teachers to support Māori learners to engage and make greater connection with their learning. The initiative has been renamed Poutama and is now funded and supported by the board. School leaders value the Poutama ethos as a successful, foundational aspect of relationships-based learning.

Teachers continue to develop ways to ensure that their teaching is relevant and authentic for students so that it connects to the real world. Some teachers are engaging students in creative learning through contexts that reflect students' interests. This is a developing area of the curriculum. Programmes are also increasingly responsive to students' cultural backgrounds, particularly Māori and Pacific cultures.

The college's e-learning vision is being implemented well and all students now have opportunity to use digital devices to enhance their learning. Online dialogue with teachers is promoting greater student engagement through frequent feedback about their learning. This offers students a further opportunity for more personalised learning.

Pacific students experience success and wellbeing for learning through the school's culture of high expectations for all to participate and achieve. Staff use teaching strategies to motivate and support Pacific students for future success. The Pacific community has representation on the board of trustees and a consultative parent fono.

Waitakere College offers a wide range of co-curricular activities. There are many opportunities for students to experience success and build their leadership capability in a variety of sporting, cultural and academic events and competitions. Student success is publicly acknowledged and celebrated.

Areas for future consideration include:

- extending the scope of cross-curricular learning experiences, especially for junior students
- continuing to build mature student agency in their own learning
- sharing the success of aspirational pathways with the community.

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

The school is promoting educational success for Māori students effectively. There has been a strong upward trend in NCEA results that indicates significant success for Māori learners at Levels 1 and 2. This success is well aligned with the Ministry of Education's Ka Hikitia strategy.

Te reo Māori is available for Year 9 -13 students to study and is now centred in Te Waipuna o te Mātauranga. The process of building and opening this whare was supported by the mana whenua , Te Kawerau a Maki, as well as Ngāti Whātua, Tainui and Ngapuhi.

The school's strategic and annual plans show strong commitment to Māori students' success. The board and school leaders continue to investigate ways to further consult and engage with whānau Māori to strengthen their participation and partnership in their children's learning. Hui are regularly held and an active whānau group named Uenuku Komiti meets to discuss aspirations, celebrations and events. Māori parents are reporting high levels of satisfaction with the pathways approaches taken by the school and the success it is bringing for Māori learners.

Mana Māori is a school initiative that has become a vehicle for Māori success, as it sets out high expectations for all aspects of culturally relevant learning. Māori students have good role models and guidance from Māori staff working in the school. Students take the lead during formal tikanga such as pōwhiri, whaikōrero and kapa haka performances in the Auckland region.

To further promote Māori student success whānau, iwi and school leaders could consider:

- reviewing te ao Māori content in the mainstream curriculum to promote language, culture, identity as a dimension in the school that leads to successful pathways
- lifting the Mana Māori programme to a strategic board level in order to strengthen te reo me ōna tikanga Māori through planned, measurable goals.

## **4 Sustainable Performance**

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

Waitakere College is very well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

Evaluation at all levels is making positive changes to learner outcomes. There is evidence of strong commitment from school leaders to continually evaluate and adapt practices, aimed primarily at supporting student wellbeing and success. Evidence is systematically gathered and analysed to guide school planning and development. Cycles of evaluation for improvement are an integral part of all the college's systems to ensure that current objectives are met. At all levels of the college there is collaboration and openness to learning. This self knowledge promotes a well-organised, efficient school that is continually improving.

Trustees bring a range of skills to school governance and stewardship. They enjoy a positive and effective working relationship with school leaders. The board's strategic vision reflects the valued educational outcomes that the community wants for its young people. There are high levels of coherence between strategic and annual planning through to classroom practice. The college's high expectations for student success iare resulting in increasingly positive educational outcomes for learners.

The principal is an experienced and respected leader who ensures that a wide view of leadership capability benefits the school. He works with a cohesive and capable senior leadership team who

have complementary strengths and attributes. They strategically promote a culture of collective responsibility for student wellbeing and educational success.

Capable middle leaders are pivotal to guiding teaching developments, and promoting flexible and responsive curriculum options for students. The school values all teachers as leaders of learning, and there are many opportunities for distributed leadership. Staff engage in weekly professional learning that is often planned and led by teachers as the experts. External facilitation is sought for teachers' learning when it is needed. As a result of purposeful professional learning students benefit from a useful consistency in teaching approaches across the school.

Teacher capacity and capability has continued to strengthen. Many teachers work hard to find new and innovative approaches to raise student achievement within each student's chosen pathway. Teachers' continuous reflection and professional commitment to quality teaching practice is contributing positively to student success and equity.

The school is highly effective in engaging the community in partnerships for student learning and in the life of the school. Community consultation is in-depth, purposeful and used to guide the college's planning and decision making. The college benefits from considerable funding support, and involvement by community groups and businesses, tertiary partners and past students.

### **Provision for international students**

The 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*. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

At the time of this review there were 20 international students attending the school.

Waitakere College has high level systems to maintain the quality of both education and pastoral care for international students. Progress towards achievement is well monitored and students' course selections continue to be carefully considered and personalised. Students are well integrated into the college's educational, community and cultural experiences. Self-review processes are in place to ensure systems continue to develop and improve.

### **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

Waitakere College provides high quality education. Students have opportunities to succeed through a responsive curriculum that prioritises wellbeing for learning. Students are confident and well equipped to transition into the world of tertiary study or employment. High quality leadership is a key factor in the school's continued success.

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



Steffan Brough  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern (Acting)

15 May 2017

## About the School

Location	Henderson, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	44	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	1299	
Number of international students	20	
Gender composition	Girls 50%, Boys 50%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	24%
	NZ European Pākehā	27%
	Samoan	5%
	Tongan	3%
	Cook Island Māori	2%
	Niuean	2%
	Other Pacific	8%
	Indian	4%
	Filipino	4%
	Chinese	2%
	other Asian	4%
	other European	4%
	African	2%
	Middle Eastern	2%
	others	7%
Special Features	Inclusion Support Centre	
Review team on site	February 2017	
Date of this report	15 May 2017	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	May 2014
	Education Review	January 2011
	Education Review	November 2007