

Somerville Intermediate School Education Review

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

About The School

Location	Howick, Manukau City
Ministry of Education profile number	6760
School type	Intermediate (Years 7 and 8)
Decile rating[1]	10
Teaching staff:	42.77
Roll generated entitlement	4.43
Other Number of teachers	47
School roll	930
Number of international students	19
Gender composition	Girls 52%, Boys 48%
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 46%, Māori 6%, Chinese 12%, Indian 9%, African 6%, British/Irish 5%, Korean 4%, Middle Eastern 2%, Australian 1%, Samoan 1%, South East Asian 1%, Sri Lankan 1%, other European 3%, other Asian 2%, other Pacific 1%
Review team on site	September 2009
Date of this report	10 November 2009
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, November 2006 Education Review, February 2003 Accountability Review, October 1999

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Somerville Intermediate School continues to provide the good quality of education and the rich and wide variety of learning opportunities noted in previous ERO reports. The 2006 ERO report commented positively on the good relationships evident within the school community. Very good relationships and a respectful, friendly and inclusive tone continue to be outstanding features of the school.

Students report that they feel safe and enjoy school. They appreciate the many opportunities they are offered in all learning areas of the curriculum and in extra-curricular pursuits. Results of standardised tests indicate that most students, including Māori students, achieve at or above national age-related expectations in literacy and numeracy. School data show that Māori students make significant progress in their achievement from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 8. Year 8 Māori students achieve in reading at levels that are above age-related national expectations and are above the average level achieved by other Year 8 Māori students in similar schools.

Achievement data are well analysed and targets for improvement are set for all students and for groups of students. Teachers identify students who could benefit from extension or support and provide a range of programmes to meet their diverse learning needs. Students make good progress over their two years at the school.

Teachers work collegially and have high expectations for students' learning and behaviour. They are committed to improving teaching and learning in the school. They benefit from a focused and well supported professional development programme with an emphasis on developing strategies to help students to take more responsibility for their own learning. School managers should continue to support teachers to consolidate their use of these formative assessment practices.

Since the last ERO review the school has initiated significant developments to facilitate boys' learning, support integrated inquiry approaches, and to develop the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support students' learning.

The strong leadership of the principal has been noted in previous ERO reports. The principal is well respected, reflective, and committed to ongoing school improvement. He is well supported by the other members of the senior leadership team in ensuring that the school is well managed and that the positive culture of the school is fostered. A very good standard of communication with parents and the school community is maintained. The school's leadership, management and communication systems are of high quality.

The school has very good levels of self review in many areas of its operation. Trustees receive comprehensive reports that guide their decisions about resourcing to support student

learning. The board works strategically to maintain and further develop the high standard of the school buildings, grounds and facilities. Trustees are knowledgeable about their responsibilities and govern the school effectively.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four to five years.

The Focus Of The Review

Student Achievement Overall

ERO's education reviews focus on student achievement. What follows is a statement about what the school knows about student achievement overall.

Somerville Intermediate School places a high priority on students' academic progress and achievement. Teachers and school leaders ensure that there is close monitoring and documenting of students' progress and achievement against current school-wide targets in reading, writing and numeracy. Standardised assessment tools provide useful information about student achievement levels twice each year so that student progress can be carefully monitored. Achievement data collected at the end of 2008 indicate that in reading, writing and numeracy the majority of students are achieving well above national age-related expectations.

Achievement data are analysed by year level, ethnicity, and gender. School leaders and teams of teachers discuss the achievement of these groups and of individual students. They consider strategies and programmes to support student learning. Students requiring further support and extension in classroom and withdrawal programmes are identified and catered for.

In addition to the assessment data collected in literacy and numeracy, teachers collect a substantial amount of information about achievement in other learning areas. Progress indicators have been developed for all learning areas. Curriculum teams set learning goals, develop teaching strategies, and evaluate student progress against these goals. Student self-assessment practices are developing well. Teachers use detailed reports, student portfolios, and meetings that involve students, to share with parents what they know about their child's achievement.

The school celebrates many other forms of student achievement. Assemblies, the school website, and regular newsletters highlight student successes in speech and science competitions, and in sports and cultural endeavours. This broad notion of student achievement is in keeping with the school's mission statement for students to develop at their 'optimum intellectual, emotional, physical and cultural level'.

The board of trustees receives comprehensive regular reports on student progress and achievement. These reports enable trustees to make informed decisions about how they can best support children's learning.

School Specific Priorities

Before the review, the board of Somerville Intermediate School was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the school to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the board of trustees. This discussion focused on existing information held by the school (including student achievement and self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students at Somerville Intermediate School.

ERO and the board have agreed on the following focus area for the review:

- personalising learning: the quality and variety of learning opportunities for students.

ERO's findings in this area are set out below.

Personalising Learning: the quality and variety of learning opportunities for students

Background

Personalising learning involves students being informed, active participants in their own learning. Students have a good understanding of how they are progressing and, when appropriate, contribute to decisions about how learning works best for them. Components of personalising learning include effective teaching, formative assessment strategies, effective use of curriculum documents, ICT and other resources, and strong and engaged parent communities.

Personalising learning has been a school-wide focus for teacher professional learning. Sessions on developing formative assessment strategies have been facilitated by an external consultant. Teachers have also gained greater knowledge of the use of nationally standardised assessment tools in literacy and numeracy. The school is in the second year of the Ministry of Education's Numeracy Project, which focuses on improving student performance in mathematics by improving teachers' professional skills. In 2009, school managers arranged for staff to be involved in an Information Technology Professional Development contract with a cluster of local schools. To supplement these activities, teachers regularly discuss and share best practice. These sessions are facilitated on a collegial basis, often involving differentiated options to enable members to follow up particular areas of need or interest.

Given the commitment the school has made to personalised learning, the board and senior staff asked ERO to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on the quality of teaching and learning.

Areas of good performance

Variety of learning opportunities. A wide range of learning opportunities is provided for students across all essential learning areas of the curriculum. Programmes in technology and the arts areas are well integrated with classroom units of work emphasising the use of inquiry skills. Innovations such as the boys' class, digital classes, and extension programmes cater for students' different learning styles. Many co-curricular opportunities in sports and cultural endeavours, leadership, and performance are also available for students and contribute to the development of the whole child. These opportunities help to make learning meaningful and enjoyable for students.

Quality of learning opportunities. Teachers are consolidating effective teaching practices, and ERO observed several examples of high quality teaching. Students in many classrooms benefit from lessons in which:

- programmes are well planned and well managed, tasks are purposeful, and learning outcomes are used to make learning explicit;
- ICT is used to support learning and to maximise learning time;
- learning is linked to students' life experiences and prior knowledge;
- curriculum areas are integrated;
- questioning is used effectively to encourage high-level thinking, and to assess student understanding;
- students have opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers, and to set their own next goals for learning; and
- classroom learning environments support and promote high levels of student interest and motivation.

These strategies contribute to a high standard of student engagement in learning and help to ensure that well planned, relevant activities support student learning and achievement.

Support for students' differentiated needs. Effective strategies are in place to identify and provide for the needs of students who have high abilities or who need additional support. Teachers use a purpose-built facility to withdraw identified students for a range of extension and support programmes to supplement their classroom learning. The management, provision and monitoring of programmes is of high quality. Documentation shows that students' needs are being effectively met, with consistent gains made in achievement over time. International students and students with high needs benefit from dedicated lessons and are also well integrated into general school programmes. Students are encouraged to enter a wide range of

competitions at regional and national level, with pleasing levels of success. These strategies help to ensure that the diverse needs of students are met and their learning is extended.

Professional learning programme. A successful professional learning programme extends teachers' skills in providing a wide range of good quality programmes. All teachers have benefited from the school's focused, well coordinated approach to the organisation and delivery of professional development. Professional learning has focused on:

- formative assessment strategies that can impact on achievement across the curriculum;
- aligning professional learning with school goals and with teacher appraisal;
- enabling teachers to share best practice and learn from each other;
- providing differentiated sessions that cater for varying levels of teacher experience and knowledge; and
- looking closely at how The New Zealand Curriculum affects planning, organisation and teaching.

The professional learning programme has helped teachers to develop a sense of collective responsibility for, and commitment to, improving teaching and learning in the school.

Promoting a culture of learning and achievement. School managers and staff work collegially to foster a learning environment that supports personalised learning. This positive school culture is evident in:

- good relationships between students and teachers and amongst students;
- teachers' high expectations for student achievement and engagement;
- the school focus on character development through a virtues programme;
- teachers' promotion of an inclusive emotional environment so that students feel safe and support each other; and
- the board's provision of well maintained modern facilities, including dedicated specialist rooms, library and ICT facilities, and areas for quiet reflection.

As a result of these good practices, students have a focus on learning and achievement and are developing good citizenship skills.

Liaison with parents. Parents spoken to by ERO during the course of this review expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school. Very good levels of communication between home

and school are demonstrated in:

- · high quality verbal and written reporting to parents on student progress and achievement;
- · reporting on progress and goal-setting to the parents of children who are identified as gifted or as having special needs;
- · the development of the school web-site and electronic communications;
- · celebrations of student achievements, including assemblies and evenings to showcase topic and extension work; and
- · efforts made to inform and survey parents about educational matters.

Good liaison with parents contributes to students and the school being supported by a positive and engaged community, and enhances the provision of personalised learning.

Areas for improvement

Embedding and extending professional learning. Teachers have established good foundations for developing learning partnerships with students. They should now more consistently implement strategies that encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning. These practices should encourage students to have increased:

- · responsibility for setting goals relating to their learning needs;
- · awareness of the steps needed to reach these goals;
- · involvement in developing success criteria related to learning expectations;
- · opportunities for self and peer assessment; and
- · involvement in the use of standardised assessments and school-developed frameworks for assessment to identify specific areas for improvement.

In addition, teachers' use of formative teaching strategies should be developed by:

- · providing fuller written comments on students' work in relation to stated learning intentions and success criteria;
- · making more use of plenary sessions so that students have increased opportunities to reflect on their own progress and achievement;
- · itemising clear expectations of good practice in the use of formative assessment strategies; and
- · teacher appraisal processes that include clearer comments on achievement in

teachers' work and on areas on which they could focus to make further improvements.

Implementation of these suggestions should lead to less variability in teacher practice and to greater levels of student participation in their own learning.

Continuing to develop the effective use of student achievement data. Achievement data are well analysed and senior managers use the findings effectively to make decisions and to set targets for improvement. All teachers should now use the data available to inform their planning and practice for personalising students' learning. Areas of development could include:

- · greater use of the school's electronic databases to support the sharing of student achievement information, so that teachers can better plan experiences that take into account students' prior learning of skills and competencies;
- · increasing students' knowledge of their own achievement levels; and
- · using achievement data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching.

More effective use of data should lead to more focused teaching and learning and to students taking increased responsibility for improving their achievement.

Areas Of National Interest

Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole to Government to be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement. ERO also provides information about the education sector for schools, parents and the community through its national reports.

To do this ERO decides on topics and investigates them for a specific period in all applicable schools nationally.

During the review of Somerville Intermediate School ERO investigated and reported on the following areas of national interest. The findings are included in this report so that information about the school is transparent and widely available.

Success for Māori Students: Progress

Since the 2006 ERO review, the percentage of students who identify as Māori has grown from 4% to 6%.

In this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school was familiar with the Māori Education Strategy - Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success and progress made since the last review in promoting success at school for Māori students. The school reports it has considered Ka Hikitia and has made changes to some of its practices as a result.

Areas of progress

Māori student achievement. Senior managers have good knowledge about the achievement of Māori students. Achievement data for Māori students as a group are well analysed and targets for improvement are set. Māori students continue to achieve in literacy and numeracy at levels that are above national age-related expectations and at levels that are similar to those of all other students at the school. Achievement data show that good progress is made by Māori students during their two years at Somerville Intermediate. Achievement information is used to identify Māori students in need of extension or support programmes, and these needs are well catered for.

Community consultation. The board of trustees, through the principal and staff, continues to consult regularly with the Māori community. School managers have improved the mode of consultation by getting input from Māori parents themselves about what questions the school should be asking them, and changing the design of survey questions to gain clearer feedback from the Māori community.

Areas for further improvement

Building teacher confidence. Teachers continue to be supported by a specialist staff member in teaching te reo me ōna tikanga Māori to all students. As identified in the 2006 ERO report, teachers should now be supported to further develop their own confidence and competence in using te reo Māori in the classroom.

The Achievement of Pacific Students: Progress

In this review ERO evaluated the progress the school has made since the last review in improving the achievement of its Pacific students and in initiatives designed to promote improved achievement. Fewer than 2% of the students at Somerville Intermediate are of Pacific ethnicities. The progress of these students is closely monitored by senior managers on an individual basis. Pacific students spoken to by ERO during the course of this review expressed satisfaction with the school.

Preparing to Give Effect to the New Zealand Curriculum

Schools are currently working towards implementing The New Zealand Curriculum by February 2010. During this review ERO investigated the progress Somerville Intermediate School is making towards giving full effect to the curriculum as part of its planning, organisation and teaching practice.

ERO found that school leaders and teachers at Somerville Intermediate School are making good progress towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum in their planning, organisation and teaching.

Including Students with High Needs

During this review ERO investigated the extent to which the board and school leaders of Somerville Intermediate School provide an inclusive education for students with high needs. This included collecting evidence about the school's policies, processes and practices to support the enrolment and induction of students with high needs and to support their participation and achievement at school. The information collected during this review will contribute to information that will be reported in a national education evaluation report.

Prior to a review, a board of trustees and principal attest in the Board Assurance Statement that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal requirements including those detailed in Ministry of Education circulars and other documents.

The board of Somerville Intermediate School was asked to attest to whether it had 'ensured that teachers of students with disabilities, and other contact staff, have a sound understanding of the learning needs of students with disabilities and, where necessary, have put in place support systems centred on each individual with disabilities.' The board was also asked to attest that 'policies and procedures that relate to students who have special education needs are implemented without discrimination'.

ERO's findings confirm these attestations.

Provision for International Students

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

Somerville Intermediate 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.

Areas of good performance

International students are well integrated into all aspects of school life. They report that they appreciate and benefit from the good pastoral care and many learning opportunities provided for them. International students benefit from:

- helpful, well planned English language support in regular small withdrawal groups, with trained English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) staff;
- the positive school tone, and the inclusive practices and acceptance of other students and staff;
- the wide variety of specialist courses, sporting activities, and interesting curriculum topics that students are involved in;
- encouragement and support to participate in community competitions and events; and
- the relationship being established between the school and the students' parents in Korea through the principal visiting students' home towns and sharing video materials about the students' time at school in New Zealand.

As a result of these good practices, international students are achieving their academic goals

and are making good progress with English language learning. The school's self-review process provides reliable information about provision for the welfare, academic success and integration of international students. Findings from self review are reported to the board.

Board Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Somerville Intermediate School completed an ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. 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; and
- asset management.

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

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

Compliance

ERO's investigations did not identify any areas of concern.

Recommendation

ERO and the board of trustees have developed the following recommendation:

6.1 that school managers continue to support teachers to consolidate formative assessment practices and the use of student achievement data to enhance classroom practice and students' ownership of their learning.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four to five years.

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

10 November 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Somerville Intermediate School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Somerville Intermediate School.

Community Page

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Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

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

Dr Graham Stoop

Chief Review Officer

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS

About ERO

ERO is an independent, external evaluation agency that undertakes reviews of schools and early childhood services throughout New Zealand.

About ERO Reviews

ERO follows a set of standard procedures to conduct reviews. The purpose of each review is to:

- improve educational achievement in schools; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on student achievement and build on each school's self review.

Review Focus

ERO's framework for reviewing and reporting is based on three review strands.

- School Specific Priorities - the quality of education and the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement.
- Areas of National Interest - information about how Government policies are working in schools.
- Compliance with Legal Requirements - assurance that this school has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

Review Coverage

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Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a school is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this school.

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