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Location: Culverden, North Canterbury

Ministry of Education profile number: 308

#### Disclaimer

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

## The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Amuri Area School is located in Culverden, North Canterbury and provides education for students in Years 1 to 13. It shares facilities, including the library, swimming pool and sports grounds, with the local community. The board and principal ensure that the school is well resourced and maintained.

The board, principal and teachers have focused on raising student achievement through a number of ongoing initiatives. At the time of the 2007 ERO review, programmes to improve student behaviour and engagement had been introduced. These have been effective in establishing a positive school culture in which students have strong sense of belonging and are focused on their learning.

School leaders have successfully reviewed and redesigned the school's curriculum. This curriculum reflects the needs and aspirations of the students and their community. It provides continuity in learning for students as they progress through the school. Students, particularly senior students, now have a broader range of course options and opportunities to achieve success.

Teachers have engaged in professional development to help improve the quality and consistency of

teaching practices. ERO observed some high quality teaching in many classes. The principal and senior leaders have identified that sharing and extending effective teaching practices is a continuing school priority.

Improvements in assessments, particularly in numeracy and literacy, provide students and teachers with good quality student achievement information. More teachers could now make better use of information about students' achievement to plan for the range of students' needs and abilities within their classes and reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practices.

Most students in Years 1 to 8 are achieving at or above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Some students, particularly in Years 8, 9 and 10 are performing below national expectations. Teachers are providing learning programmes to support these students. In the senior school, results vary due to the small numbers of students. In 2009, 62% of senior students achieved qualifications in National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA).

The school is well led and managed. The principal provides clear direction. His leadership has been a key factor in fostering a 'one school ethos' and promoting ongoing school improvement. The deputy principal and curriculum leaders play a significant role in supporting and leading the school curriculum initiatives. A growing sense of collegiality is evident in the school.

The board chair and trustees work in partnership with the principal and are committed to improving outcomes for the students. They continue to support school initiatives by providing additional staffing and resources.

The board, principal, senior leaders and ERO agree that in order to raise student achievement, the most significant priorities for the school include:

- embedding and building on school initiatives;
- extending the use of high-quality teaching practices; and
- strengthening self-review processes.

### Future Action

The board of trustees has demonstrated that it is governing the school in the interest of the students and the Crown. The board, together with the principal and school leaders, continues to focus on improving student learning: engagement, progress and achievement. ERO is likely to carry out the next review within three years.

## Amuri Area School's Curriculum

How effectively does the curriculum of Amuri Area School promote student learning: engagement,

progress and achievement?

## School context

At the time of the 2007 ERO review, the board, principal and teachers had begun a number of initiatives to increase student engagement and raise student achievement. Some of these initiatives are now well embedded. Ongoing changes to the curriculum are being well managed and helping to bringing about ongoing improvements to learning and teaching.

Since the last review, changes in the community have resulted in a more diverse student population. Students now come from a wider range of cultural backgrounds. The number of transient students, and those returning in Years 11 to 13, has increased.

## Areas of strength

### Learning environment and school culture

The principal, senior leaders and teachers have established a positive school culture and a supportive, learning-centred environment for students. ERO confirmed:

- positive relationships between teachers and students, and among students;
- successful behaviour initiatives that enable teachers to maintain the emphasis on learning;
- a range of initiatives that foster a sense of belonging, such as vertical form groups and the house system;
- good support for students as they progress through the school, for example, in careers and guidance; and
- that students said they felt safe at school and encouraged in their learning.

### Curriculum design and initiatives

The principal, senior leaders and teachers have developed a well-balanced school curriculum that reflects the needs and aspirations of the students and their community. Features of this were:

- a curriculum that provides continuity in learning for students in Years 1 to 13;
- consistency of expectations and guidelines across all learning areas; and
- common planning formats that support teachers in the implementation of the school curriculum and the integration of key competencies, values and vision.

A number of worthwhile school initiatives are contributing to the successful implementation of the school's curriculum. These include:

- more comprehensive and robust assessment practices and more extensive curriculum review practices;
- the introduction of student goal-setting and the development of e-portfolios;
- the growing use of the student voice to evaluate programmes of learning and teaching; and
- increasing provision of school-wide professional development.

## Learning opportunities for students

Most students are benefiting from the increased use of effective teaching practices. These approaches include the use of authentic learning contexts and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), learning intentions and success criteria, good questioning techniques, formative feedback, and hands-on learning activities.

A feature of the school is the varied opportunities students have to achieve success in a wide range of areas. This is particularly evident for students in Years 11 to 13 where the principal and teachers have responded to the interests and needs of students by significantly extending the range of study options to include vocational, academic and recreational programmes. For example, there has been a significant increase in opportunities for students to take part in sporting events both within and beyond the school.

## Professional leadership

The school is well led and managed. The principal provides clear direction for teaching and learning, and actively promotes the school's mission of raising achievement and encouraging excellence. His leadership has been a key factor in fostering a 'one school ethos', promoting school improvement and making good use of staff strengths.

The deputy principal and curriculum leaders play a significant role in supporting and leading the school improvements. Teachers are encouraged to extend their capabilities through professional development, the appraisal process and the school's buddy system.

## Areas for development and review

The board chair, principal, senior leaders and ERO agree that the following areas for development will help raise student achievement further.

## Embedding and building on school initiatives.

A number of school initiatives are relatively recent and their potential for improving teaching and learning has yet to be fully realised. For instance, there is still scope to extend bicultural perspectives

within the school environment and programmes. The quality of the goals students set vary in quality and the computer-based portfolios are in the early stages of implementation. Some teachers have benefited from the impact of professional development more than others.

Expectations regarding assessment beyond literacy and numeracy are not as extensive as they could be in school guidelines. This has hindered the school's ability to be able to accurately report on overall student achievement in some subjects other than literacy and numeracy in Years 1 to 10.

### Extending the use of high quality teaching practices

Students would benefit from some teachers using a wider range of teaching strategies. For example, in some classes there was an imbalance between teacher-directed and student-centred teaching and learning. It was difficult to determine how well some teachers were using student achievement, and other information about their students, to target their teaching to the varied backgrounds, interests and abilities of their students. In addition, there was little documented evidence to show how some class teachers regularly evaluated their programmes in ways that led to improved teaching and learning.

Addressing these concerns would help students to reach their potential and the school's goal of developing independent learners.

### Strengthening self-review processes

While the school now has a more comprehensive ongoing programme of curriculum review, several developments could enhance the quality and usefulness of self review. These include:

- extending the understanding of, and the guidelines for, implementing effective self review;
- gathering a wider range of good quality evidence to support judgements; and
- making greater provision in curriculum reviews for evaluating the quality of teaching practices.

## Board Assurance On Legal Requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Amuri Area 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 legal 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.

During the course of the review, the school and ERO identified an area of non-compliance.

The board is aware that consultation with its community regarding the school's treatment of the health curriculum is overdue. They plan to undertake this consultation in 2010.

In order to address to meet its obligations the board must ensure:

1.1 at least every two years, and after consultation with the school community, adopt a statement on the delivery of the health curriculum.

Source: [s60B(1) Education Act 1989]

The board meets its obligations in setting annual achievement targets. These targets give appropriate emphasis to raising achievement in English and mathematics. However, some targets focus more on process than actual achievement. Better use should be made of analysed achievement information to set specific targets for particular groups of students. Associated plans could be more extensive.

The board is over-reliant on anecdotal information to review student safety and wellbeing, and how well it is meeting its good employer obligations. As noted in the last report, the board should use anonymous student, staff and parent surveys as part of its ongoing programme of self review in these areas.

The school is currently reviewing its practices related to Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) to align with the new Ministry of Education guidelines.

In order to improve current practice, the board of trustees should:

1.2 develop more robust annual achievement targets and plans;

1.3 extend provisions for gathering anonymous feedback from students and parents about student safety, and from staff about employment practices;

1.4 reconsider the board's role in approving high risk EOTC experiences.

## Future Action

The board of trustees has demonstrated that it is governing the school in the interest of the students and the Crown. The board, together with the principal and school leaders, continues to focus on improving student learning: engagement, progress and achievement. ERO is likely to carry out the next review within three years.

Graham Randell

National Manager Review Services

Southern Region

## About The School

School type	Composite Year 1 to 15
Decile rating[1]	8
School roll	278
Gender composition	Boys 60%; Girls 40%
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 79%; Māori and Pacific 11%; Asian 4%; Other 6%
Review team on site	March 2010
Date of this report	22 April 2010
Previous three ERO reports	Education Review March 2007 Education Review June 2004 Supplementary Review June 2002

## Discretionary Review May 2001

22 April 2010

To the Parents and Community of Amuri Area School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Amuri Area School.

### Community Page

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The board, principal, senior leaders and ERO agree that in order to raise student achievement, the most significant priorities for the school include:

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### Review Coverage

This report provides an evaluation of how effectively the school's curriculum promotes student learning: engagement, progress and achievement. ERO's evaluation takes account of the school's previous reporting history and is based on;

- what is known about student achievement information, including the achievement of Māori and Pacific students;
- decisions made to improve student achievement using the information; and
- teaching strategies and programmes implemented to give effect to the school's curriculum.

ERO's review is responsive to the school's context. For example, when ERO reviews a school, it takes into account the characteristics of the community, from which it draws its students, its location, and the aspirations the community has for its young people, and relevant local factors.

ERO also builds on the school's own self-review information. That is, ERO is interested in how a school monitors the progress of its students and aspects of school life and culture, and how it uses this information.

ERO also gathers information during the review to contribute to its reports on national education

evaluation topics. Comments relevant to this school are included in the report. The national reports are published on ERO's website.

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

Graham Randell

National Manager Review Services

Southern Region

## 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 integrates the following.

- school curriculum;
- national evaluation topics -contribute to the development of education policies and their effective implementation; and
- Board Assurance Statement, including student and staff health and safety.
- It also integrates external review with school self review by taking the most useful aspects from external and self review to build a picture of the school and its context.
- This helps ERO to answer the major evaluation question for reviews:

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote student learning: engagement, progress and achievement?

### Areas for Development and Review

ERO reports include areas for development and review to support on-going improvement by identifying priorities. Often the school will have identified these matters through its own self review and already plans further development in those areas.

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