

**EDUCATION REVIEW REPORT:
ST PETER'S COLLEGE, GORE**

OCTOBER 2006

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

1. 1. About the School

Location	Gore
Ministry of Education profile number	397
School type	Integrated Secondary (Year 7–13)

Decile rating ¹ [1]	8	
Teaching staff:		
Roll generated entitlement	31.25	
Number of teachers	37	
School roll	379	
Number of international students	7	
Gender composition	Girls 50%, Boys 50%	
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 89%; Māori 8%; Pacific 1%; Other 2%	
Review team on site	June 2006	
Date of this report	18 October 2006	
Previous ERO reports	Education Review	December 2003
	Discretionary Review	September 2000
	Accountability Review	September 1999
	Discretionary Assurance Audit	June 1995
	Assurance Audit	February 1995
	Effectiveness Review	June 1994
	Review Report	February 1992

2. 2. The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

St Peter's College provides students with a learning environment that promotes their achievement and develops attitudes and values consistent with the school's Catholic Christian character. Students learn in a supportive environment that helps them to become successful and confident learners.

The leadership and direction set by the senior management team has maintained ongoing school development. The trustees, principal and teachers have worked together to address the areas for improvement identified in the last ERO report. Teachers have further improved the quality of learning and teaching across the school such as modifying their assessment programmes to give better feedback to students about their learning.

The focus areas for this review were: the use of assessment information to improve the quality of learning and teaching, Year 7 to 10 programmes, and how they meet the learning needs of students, the achievement of Māori students, providing for student who are under-achieving, provisions for international students, and for those students accommodated in the school hostel. In addition, ERO investigated aspects of student health and safety, including the school's strategies for preventing bullying.

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

The principal, teachers and trustees now have a detailed knowledge of student achievement in Years 11 to 13. They are increasingly using this information to identify where they can improve their practice, programmes and outcomes for students. The principal is aware that the school does not yet have the same level of information about Years 7 to 10 students. The senior managers are working with the teachers on their assessment and monitoring programmes to address this need.

Students achieve well in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) when compared to other similar types of schools. Since NCEA was introduced, the percentage of students who gain NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and 3, including the literacy and numeracy credits, has usually been significantly above the average for similar schools. Students achieve success in externally assessed standards at slightly higher rates than students in similar schools but the percentages achieving merit or excellence grades is lower than in other similar schools. The level of Māori student achievement in NCEA is variable but shows similar patterns to the achievement of non-Māori students at the school. The percentage of students leaving school without recognised qualifications is low.

In response to the trend in externally assessed standards the principal and teachers are working to improve the percentage of students who achieve merit and excellence grades.

A pastoral care teacher works with Māori students and their whānau to support their learning and achievement. In many classrooms, Māori students benefit from high quality teaching. The range of approaches being used by a few teachers may not be meeting the learning needs of some Māori students. Some students ERO spoke with said the comments from some of their peers were hurtful.

Classroom environments are calm, pleasant places for students to work. Teachers respect students and build their self-esteem and confidence to participate. Strong pastoral support and clear discipline systems encourage positive behaviours and allow students and teachers to focus on learning rather than behaviour.

The teachers that ERO observed paced their lessons well and provided students with interesting and varied learning experiences. The students were clear about what that they need to do to achieve success. The feedback they receive helps them to focus their efforts and to know the next steps in their learning. A range of teaching strategies and programmes meet individual student's needs. They show consistently high levels of motivation and engagement in learning.

The school's curriculum design covers the objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum, the school's special character and meets the needs of students. Programmes in each learning area are well planned and delivered, particularly those in the arts, health, physical education and information technology. Teachers of mathematics have developed some effective approaches for addressing the different achievement levels of students in their classes.

The principal was aware of some of the areas for improvement that were identified during the review. For example, the need to make more consistent provisions across programmes for developing students' skills and helping them to gain a better understanding of thinking processes and about how to learn. Other main developments involve modifying assessment, monitoring and reporting practices. Most learning areas have developed practices that could be adopted or adapted by others to achieve the desired improvements.

The school has a cooperative and caring culture with clear values, standards and expectations. Achievement is celebrated and diversity recognised. The students that ERO spoke with said they appreciated these features and show confidence and enjoyment in participating in the life of the school. They respect staff and are confident about asking them for help.

The student support programmes and counsellors make a significant contribution to providing a safe emotional environment for students.

Student feedback on aspects of the school is obtained through a variety of channels. The board does not yet systematically and anonymously survey students and parents to find out their views of the learning programmes or about safety, including bullying. Greater opportunities for students to participate actively in school decision making and leadership would strengthen the quality of what is provided and increase the sense of ownership and pride they show in the school.

The principal and other school managers provide clear and purposeful leadership for staff. Professional development and accountability systems focus strongly on improving learning and teaching.

The school charter includes general goals and targets for improving student achievement. The board has yet to develop strategic plans to guide school development and review its effectiveness. The trustees are modifying board operations to address this need. They should make more use of student achievement information to identify where improvements could be made and then develop more specific targets and strategies for achieving them. However, the board is clearly focused on the quality of student learning and achievement. The recommendations in the report were formulated by the board to achieve this outcome.

A board of governors, separate to the St Peter's College Board of Trustees, takes responsibility for the quality of governance and management of St Peter's College Hostel. The review of the school hostel identified a number of areas where improvement is needed. These include policy development, improving procedures and monitoring their effectiveness.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of the students and the crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. Therefore ERO will review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

ERO intends to return to the hostel within 12 months to specifically evaluate the progress the board of governors has made in bringing about the improvements to the hostel outlined in section 7 of this report.

3. 3. School Specific Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the board of St Peter's College, Gore 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 St Peter's College, Gore.

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

- • how effectively the design and teaching of Year 7 to 10 programmes meet the needs of students; and
- • the use of assessment information to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

How Effectively the Design and Teaching of Year 7 to 10 Programmes Meet the Needs of Students

Background

Since the last review, St Peter's College has modified the design of its junior curriculum to meet student needs more effectively. The teachers have improved the quality of the school curriculum documentation to make sure the department programmes provide a curriculum that reflects the balance of New Zealand Curriculum and the school's special character. They have sought to establish programmes at each year level that meet the changing needs of students as they move from Years 7 to 10. The board considered that ERO's feedback on the quality of the school curriculum would help trustees in maintaining this important aspect of learning and teaching.

Student progress and achievement

The school has made progress in developing the assessment and monitoring processes teachers need to gather information on the progress and achievement of students in Years 7 to 10. However, they have not yet begun to collate or analyse this information to identify trends and patterns of achievement at these year levels. [*Recommendation 6.2*]

Areas of good performance

- • *Knowledge of good teaching practice.* The school professional development and meeting programmes give priority to improving teachers' understanding and skills in this area. Their active participation in these programmes enables them to contribute towards the school's improvement strategies. The principal provides useful feedback to teachers about their classroom practice.
- • *High standards and expectations.* There is a consistent expectation that students' time at school will be used purposefully, and all students will achieve well. The principal and deputy principal model and set high expectations for teaching and learning. These expectations help to ensure that students work in purposeful calm achievement-based environments. Teachers make efficient use of the time they have available with their classes. Students expect to work in class and come prepared to learn.
- • *Planning of classroom programmes.* The principal and heads of learning areas (HELAs) have developed a common format for programme planning within each learning area. Teachers develop courses and unit outlines at each curriculum level using this format. These outlines provide teachers with a good framework for planning and delivering their class programmes. As a result, students in most classes participate in well planned lessons and varied learning experiences.
- • *Design of arts, health, physical education and information technology programmes.* While subject department programmes in general are well designed, the design of these programmes is particularly effective in meeting the learning needs of students. They reflect the range of aims and objectives of the respective New Zealand Curriculum statements. Teachers use a variety of resources to enhance students' learning. Students experience varied learning activities and show good levels of interest and motivation. Students said they enjoy learning in these subjects.
- • *Focus on learning and achievement.* Teachers use a variety of strategies to focus students' learning. Teachers, particularly in the arts, health, physical education, materials technology and English, make clear to students the purpose of each lesson as well as the work they need to do. They provide students with specific criteria needed for success and assess their work against these

criteria. This feedback lets students know how they can improve. Teachers also frequently give students additional tuition outside normal school hours.

- • *Learning needs of individuals.* Teachers use a range of strategies and programmes to meet the learning needs of students. Staff professional development and meetings give priority to helping teachers use a variety of teaching strategies. Reviewers observed students participating in needs-based groups, one-to-one conferencing with their teacher and using cooperative and peer learning. Some teachers intentionally provide different learning resources and activities to cater for the learning styles of their students. The next step is to make sure teaching meets the learning needs of Māori students and those from other cultures.
- • *Positive learning environments.* Pastoral care and discipline systems encourage positive behaviour and support learning. Classroom environments recognise and reward student effort and celebrate achievement. Positive feedback builds students' self-esteem and their confidence to participate. The relationships between teachers and students, and between students, are respectful. School and family partnerships are supported through the contacts learning tutors maintain with families, student log books, and parent evenings. Students learn in classes where teaching focuses on learning rather than behaviour.
- • *Learning support.* Students with identified learning needs are well supported. Students with reading, learning or behavioural needs receive support from specialist staffing and programmes. Individual education plans are developed to support these students. The specialist teachers also make good use of external resource personnel to identify, assess and respond to these students. Good liaison between class and specialist teachers enhances the support these students receive.

Areas for improvement

- • *Managing the quality of learning and teaching.* Further development of department self review should promote more consistent high quality learning and teaching. HELAs report annually to the principal and trustees using a common format. Preparing these reports, and the detailed written feedback they receive from the principal, supports some development. However, HELAs lack consistent procedures for managing quality within their learning areas. Teachers vary in how well they evaluate and improve their own practice. For example, most teachers make limited use of assessment information to evaluate their teaching. Some HELAs, such as the head of health and physical education, are beginning to document their expectations of good practice for their subject areas. [Recommendation 6.1]
- • *Focus on progress.* Teachers vary in how well they identify, plan for and report on students' progress. Some subject areas lack specific progressions of learning at each curriculum level. As a result, units of work are often based on only one level of the New Zealand Curriculum and planning does not provide adequately for students working above or below that level. Students achieving below the level will be less able to relate learning to what they already know or can do and learning will therefore be less coherent and meaningful. Students achieving above these levels may not be extended. Class assessments may not accurately identify the progress these students are making. [Recommendation 6.2]
- • *Learning how to learn.* Reviewers observed relatively few instances of teaching that focused on helping students learn how to learn. Instances of mind-mapping, planning and thinking strategies were observed in visual art, social studies, mathematics and English. However, there was limited evidence of planning for the objectives of the process strands of other curriculum subjects. More opportunities for students to engage discussions about their learning processes and

develop increasingly effective learning strategies are likely to help them become more independent and effective learners. [Recommendation 6.3]

- • *Essential Skills*. Subject areas varied in how well programmes delivered the essential skills of the New Zealand Curriculum. Programme plans and units of work usually refer to skills but it is not clear how teachers are to integrate them into learning. Assessment programmes make limited provisions for teachers to assess and monitor student progress in these essential skills. Students identified some areas where they considered they could have more opportunities to express preferences and make choices. Extending these opportunities is likely to improve development of the essential skills and increase students' motivation to learn.

The Use of Assessment Information to Improve Student Learning

Background

The previous review included a focus on student achievement from Years 7 to 13. The last report also included a recommendation that the learning committee should develop more useful assessment practices that improve student achievement. In the last three years, the teachers have acted on this recommendation. In terms one and two 2006, ERO is evaluating the use of assessment and the analysis and use of NCEA and National Qualification Framework (NQF) data. ERO proposed, and the board agreed, that an evaluation of the use made of assessment information to improve student learning would provide useful feedback to the school on the progress teachers had made.

Student achievement and progress

The principal accurately identifies and reports on the patterns of student achievement in NCEA. He has found that students generally achieve well when their results are compared the results of schools of a similar type and decile. The percentage of students who gain NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and 3, including the required literacy and numeracy credits, has usually been significantly above the average. Students also achieve success in externally assessed standards at slightly higher rates. The percentage of students failing to gain credits in externally assessed standards and leaving school without recognised qualifications is low. The percentage of students who achieve merit or excellence grades in externally assessed NCEA assessments is lower than other similar schools.

Areas of good performance

- • *Expectations of achievement*. The school has given priority to improving the achievement of senior students. Student achievement is celebrated in assembly, newsletters and school publications. School targets over the last three years have sought to focus on improving achievement in NCEA by a further 10%. The principal has worked with HELAs in identifying where school NCEA grades are lower and in increasing the number of merit and excellence grades in each subject.
- • *Use of success criteria*. The use of criteria that specify what students must do to achieve, merit and excellence levels in NCEA is helping to focus their learning. Teachers use these criteria in most learning areas to provide consistency and useful feedback for students. Students are able to set targets and identify what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers are able to provide specific and useful feedback to students about their learning. Senior students are well aware of their achievements and the next steps in their learning.
- • *Effective use of assessment to promote learning and achievement in the arts*. Students' learning in the arts is promoted effectively by the use of assessment information. The arts teachers

identify clear and useful achievement criteria for each subject and class. Their assessment methods enable them to assess students at the level of the curriculum appropriate for each student. They involve students in assessing their own and others' learning and to use assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes and their teaching.

- • *Use of assessment information in mathematics to meet different levels of student achievement.* Teachers in mathematics carry out pre-tests to identify the pattern of achievement within their classes and adjust their class programmes to meet the students' needs. Teachers group the students within their classes according to their level of achievement and adapt their teaching to meet the different learning needs of those groups. Teachers in Years 7 to 10 use a national assessment each year to establish a profile of each student's mathematical achievement. This profile is shared with the students and their parents and used by teachers to identify individual learning priorities. Students in Years 7 and 8 use pre-test information to select areas they will work on individually or with other students.
- • *Using assessment to support students who are underachieving.* The school makes good use of assessment information to identify students who are at risk of underachieving. Teachers analyse whole school assessments in reading and mathematics to identify students who are not achieving or at risk of not achieving. They continue to assess the learning of these students and monitor their progress to identify the effectiveness of the interventions and programmes established to improve their learning. Students who are at risk of underachieving are well supported in their learning.
- • *Strategies for making valid and reliable assessments.* The teachers use a range of strategies to make sure assessments are accurate measures of student achievement. They work with teachers from other schools to develop tests and moderate their assessments. Teachers also use an increasing range of nationally developed tools to assess learning such as exemplars, AsTTLe and PATs. Teachers are more likely to make valid and reliable judgements of student achievement when they reference their assessments to external sources.
- • *Use of National Qualification Framework to improve outcomes for students.* The range of courses beyond NCEA Level 1 provide students with opportunities to gain both unit and achievement standards and caters for the diverse needs of senior students. The school uses outside providers of some vocationally oriented courses, such as travel and retail, to meet the needs of students where it is unable to provide the course. This strategy allows students to gain worthwhile qualifications and to learn in contexts that are interesting and relevant.

Areas for improvement

- • *Monitoring and reporting students' progress in Years 7 to 10.* Teachers usually assess learning in each class against expectations for one year level of the New Zealand Curriculum. As a result, they do not clearly identify the achievement and progress of students working above and below those levels. Teachers give useful feedback to parents on chosen aspects of learning in written reports. However, the information in these reports is not clearly linked to known progressions, such as the levels of the New Zealand Curriculum, and therefore does not specify the progress students have made. Few learning areas record and monitor student progress from year to year. Clearer feedback about progress should increase students' sense of achievement and engagement in learning. [Recommendation 6.2]
- • *Assessing and reporting.* Students in some areas have limited opportunities to participate actively in assessing and monitoring their own learning. More use of self and peer assessment, and the involvement of students in recording, monitoring and evaluating their own achievement is

likely to strengthen their understanding of, and sense of responsibility for, their own learning. [Recommendation 6.3]

- • *Teachers' knowledge and use of student achievement information.* Heads of learning areas do not always know enough about the achievement levels of their students, particularly those in Years 7 to 10. Teachers make limited use of assessment data in evaluating their units of learning or the quality of their teaching programmes. More analysed information about student achievement would help teachers manage learning and teaching more effectively. [Recommendation 6.2]
- • *School targets for improving student achievement.* The board sets only one school-wide student achievement target each year. It has not yet targeted the lower achievement in merit and excellence grades already identified by the school. The trustees and teachers could use their existing knowledge of NCEA data to develop more specific targets and strategies and for improving the achievement of Year 11 to 13 students. As teachers extend their analysis of student data in Years 7 to 10, they could also develop targets and strategies for improving the achievement of these students. [Recommendation 6.5]

4. 4. 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 St Peter's College, Gore 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.

The Achievement of Māori Students

During the review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school has knowledge of and strategies for promoting the achievement of Māori students. Students who identify as Māori are 8% of the school roll.

Areas of good performance

- • *Enhancing learning.* Māori students benefit from high quality teaching in most classrooms. In these classrooms, Māori perspectives are incorporated into classroom programmes and te reo and tikanga Māori are evident in public areas and events such as school masses. Students state that their teachers have high behavioural expectations of them. When classroom and school practices are culturally inclusive and expectations are high, learning for Māori students is enhanced.
- • *Pastoral support for Māori students.* The pastoral care teacher provides good academic and emotional support for Māori students. This teacher also gives ongoing support to classroom teachers with te reo and tikanga Māori and maintains ongoing liaison with the Māori whānau and community. The Māori students express confidence and trust in the pastoral care teacher. The

ongoing provision of good quality support and improved links with the Māori whānau and community are likely to improve educational outcomes for Māori students.

Areas for improvement

- • *Student achievement.* The quality of Māori student achievement is variable. Some teachers lack the knowledge needed to link students' learning to Māori experiences. However, the limited range of approaches being used by some teachers is likely to be affecting the learning of Māori students in their classes. The trustees were concerned that students felt this way. School use of achievement data to enhance teaching and learning is variable. The achievement of Māori students will improve when learning is designed to meet their needs. [Recommendation 6.2]
- • *Nurturing student wellbeing.* Students are motivated to learn when there is a culture of respect in the school and where they feel accepted by all. Māori students that ERO spoke with said that they are harmed by the hurtful comments of some of their peers. During the on-site stage of the review, they began to discuss how they and staff could address the situation. Further efforts to celebrate cultural diversity and to monitor student perceptions of racism and then address any issues will make the school a safer and more inclusive place for all students, including Māori students. [Recommendation 6.4]

Providing for Students who are Underachieving

In 2006, as part of each school education review across the country, ERO is evaluating how well schools are providing for those students in their school who are not achieving as well as they should. ERO's findings for St Peter's College are summarised below.

The school is developing knowledge of the progress and achievement of its students overall. The school has reliably identified those students who are not achieving as well as they should. The following responses have been made by the school to support students who are underachieving:

- • a reading teacher provides a range of support programmes for students and teacher-aides provide reading support for students with identified learning needs;
- • pastoral care staff, including learning tutors, monitor the achievement and behaviour of students across the school and meet together to develop appropriate strategies for addressing identified students' learning needs; and
- • the special needs coordinator and teachers work with the resource teacher: learning and behaviour, group special education personnel and other support agencies to develop and implement individual learning and behaviour plans for identified students.

Recommendation

To improve the achievement of students in the school who are underachieving ERO recommends that:

- • as part of its self-review programme the school evaluates the extent to which the support it currently provides for these students is improving their progress and achievement.

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 Peter's College, Gore 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.

Areas of good performance

- • *Nurturing international students' wellbeing.* The school has set up effective systems and networks that promote the wellbeing of international students. These strategies include: comprehensive induction procedures, regular communication with international students' parents and homestay carers, shared social events with carers and school personnel, and involvement in co-curricular activities. Students stated that they enjoyed the school experience and that the director of international students and the ESOL teacher were strong advocates for them. The school provides good support and care for international students.
- • *Self review.* The director of international students uses a range of ways to monitor and evaluate how well the school and caregivers promote student learning and wellbeing. These strategies include: regularly evaluating the quality of homestay accommodation, surveys of homestay carers and international students, and regularly liaising with learning tutors and the ESOL teacher. The school has responded appropriately to concerns identified as a result of self review. Effective self-review processes should help to make sure that international students are well cared for on an ongoing basis.

Areas for improvement

- • *Record keeping.* The director makes frequent visits to the homes of students accommodated in homestays, including informal visits such as when transporting students to or from their homestays. Recording these informal visits in school documentation, along with the formal visits, will help to maintain clear records of school communication with homestays.
- • *Hostel accommodation.* The director regularly visits students at the school hostel. However, records have not been kept of checks that have been made to determine if accommodation provided by the hostel is suitable for international students and meets the code requirements. More formalised systems for monitoring hostel accommodation will help to ensure students receive the quality of care the school is responsible to provide.

Provision for Students in the School Hostel

In this review ERO evaluated the extent to which the school hostel provides a safe physical and emotional environment that supports learning for students accommodated in the hostel.

A hostel board of governors, separate to the St Peter's College Board of Trustees, is responsible for the quality of governance and management of St Peter's College Hostel and for addressing the areas for improvement identified in this report.

Areas of good performance

- • *Documented procedures for the operation of the hostel.* The hostel board of governors and manager have developed and documented a clear hostel management structure and protocols. These documents define the relationship between the board and hostel manager. Detailed procedures and handbooks support the governors, manager and staff in carrying out their respective responsibilities for the hostel.
- • *Promoting students' sense of belonging.* The hostel manager gives priority to making sure the hostel reinforces students' sense of identity and is a place where they feel they belong. For example, students are able to personalise their individual living spaces. Each year group designs and makes a display of personalised tiles. The students recently raised funds to buy a large television screen for the main student common room.
- • *Support for students' learning.* Regular supervised prep times encourage student achievement. Students requiring assistance are provided with additional learning support. Parents receive detailed written reports from the hostel staff about their behaviour and adaptation to hostel life.
- • *Recognition of different student groups.* The hostel staff recognise and respond to the needs of the different ages groups of students at the hostel. They differentiate appropriately between the different year levels in their expectations of students in most areas of hostel life. This is also reflected in the compositions of the three different dormitories in the hostel.
- • *Systems for recording and analysing data.* A supervisor has been recording and analysing data on several aspects of hostel operations. This data includes records of the number of extra duties the students receive as part of the school's disciplinary system. The database provides a useful source of information that the staff and governors can use to evaluate the effectiveness of some hostel management procedures.

Areas for improvement

- • *Policy guidelines for staffing.* The board delegates responsibility for staffing numbers and the appraisal of staff performance to the hostel manager. It is likely that a number of the areas for improvement identified during the review could have been addressed through higher quality staff management, appraisal and training. Improved guidelines and procedures in these areas should improve the quality of hostel provisions for students. [Recommendation 7.1]
- • *Implementation of management procedures.* Some management procedures are not being implemented to a consistently high level. For instance, signed records that include times when dormitory supervisors completed their last checks are not consistently maintained. Methods for communicating significant information about students among staff, and between shifts, are not systematically followed. Staff meeting records do not always reflect consistent and systematic approaches. Some students told ERO they did not always feel comfortable about some of the procedures used when staff enter their dormitory. [Recommendations 7.1 and 7.2]
- • *Effectiveness of some disciplinary actions.* Some aspects of the hostel disciplinary system are not fully effective. Data on the extra duties given to students as punishments indicate a higher use of punishment than is desirable. Students are sometimes placed on behaviour contracts that they have not signed, are not regularly evaluated and have no identified endpoint. A number of students in Years 9 and 10 consider aspects of the disciplinary system are unfair and not consistently implemented. [Recommendation 7.2]

- • *Procedures for responding to, and investigating, informal complaints.* The board carries out telephone and written surveys of parents on occasions. However, it has yet to establish procedures for making sure that complaints, other than those received in writing by the board, are responded to satisfactorily. The manager has established a number of management procedures for students to communicate any concerns they may have. These should now be supplemented by systematic anonymous surveys of students and parents on safety at the hostel. *[Recommendation 7.2]*
- • *Suitability of dormitory management provisions.* The hostel manager aims to promote students' sense of responsibility by showing them high levels of trust. This approach may need to be supported by clearer expectations of standards and supervision. For example, the tidiness of some student spaces during the review may not be consistent with accepted safety standards needed for hostel accommodation. The dormitory located in a separate building accommodates mixed gender Year 7 and 8 and Year 13 students and, therefore, presents a higher level of risk to students. The board should evaluate the suitability of these provisions. *[Recommendations 7.3 and 7.4]*
- • *Individual student records.* The manager maintains documentation in files on individual students. However, the quality and completeness of the information in these files is variable. More consistently maintained records that include information on areas such as medical needs, pastoral care, referrals, punishments, behaviours and records of dispositions and attitudes of concern would provide a better basis for staff to monitor the progress and needs of the students. *[Recommendation 7.2]*

5. 5. Board Assurance on Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of St Peter's College, Gore 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.

Strategies for the Prevention of Bullying

ERO expects that each New Zealand school will have acknowledged that bullying behaviour is a risk to be managed.

As part of this review ERO discussed with the board and staff about how the school organisation and culture supports the physical and emotional safety of students. In particular ERO asked about the strategies the school has put in place to prevent bullying of all types and what they know about the success of these approaches.

The school described the culture as one in which students are supported, encouraged to have a sense of right and wrong and care for others and where individual responsibility is fostered, including the responsibility to make a difference.

The school states that it has done the following to prevent bullying in the past three years:

- • maintained the school peer-support programme;
- • introduced an initiative known as “Circle of Friends” where student groups are drawn together and meet over a period with an adult facilitator to change behaviours that have resulted in a student being bullied;
- • the two school guidance counsellors maintain a high profile among students and in classes talking to students on health topics and issues related to relationships and bullying;
- • the guidance counsellor has run a short “quiz” with classes on text bullying;
- • it has run a kia kaha programme with Year 9 and 10 students;
- • taught students cooperation and communication skills in the health, religious education, outdoor education and leadership education programmes; and
- • students in Year 10 attend a local youth expo on choices to view the community services available and help them build resilience in daily situations.

The school believes from follow-up interviews with students who participate in the “Circle of Friends” initiative that this initiative has been successful in developing students understanding and changing their behaviours.

Recommendation

In order to improve current practice, the board should:

- 5.1 systematically and anonymously survey students and their parents on the safety of the school environment, including the effectiveness of the school’s strategies for preventing bullying.

6. Recommendations

ERO and the board developed the following recommendations to improve student achievement.

- 6.1 The principal and heads of learning areas will construct guidelines to enhance the quality of learning in their areas of responsibility.
- 6.2 The heads of learning areas will work with staff to develop progressions of learning from Years 7 to 10 that are understood by teachers and used to inform teaching, assessing, evaluating and reporting progress.

- 6.3 The teachers will extend opportunities for students to understand, assess and monitor their own learning and achievement.
- 6.4 The trustees, principal and staff will continue to foster biculturalism, tolerance, compassion and the celebration of diversity.
- 6.5 The board will develop more useful annual targets for improving student achievement.

7. 7. Recommendations for Provision for Students in the School Hostel

ERO recommends that the hostel board of governors:

- 7.1 strengthens staff management, appraisal and training provisions;
- 7.2 reviews and improves hostel procedures for investigating informal complaints, managing discipline, providing a safe emotional environment and maintaining individual student records;
- 7.3 evaluates its procedures for ensuring dormitory accommodation and supervision is consistent with parental expectations and safety standards; and
- 7.4 systematically and anonymously surveys students and parents on the hostel environment, including safety and the effectiveness of approaches for preventing bullying.

8. 8. Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of the students and the crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. Therefore ERO will review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

ERO intends to return to the hostel within 12 months to specifically evaluate the progress the board of governors has made in bringing about the improvements to the hostel outlined in section 7 of this report.

Isabell Sinclair Ir
Area Manager
for Chief Review Officer

18 October 2006

18 October 2006

To the Parents and Community of St Peter's College, Gore

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **St Peter's College, Gore**.

St Peter's College provides students with a learning environment that promotes their achievement and develops attitudes and values consistent with the school's Catholic Christian character. Students learn in a supportive environment that helps them to become successful and confident learners.

The leadership and direction set by the senior management team has maintained ongoing school development. The trustees, principal and teachers have worked together to address the areas for improvement identified in the last ERO report. Teachers have further improved the quality of learning and teaching across the school such as modifying their assessment programmes to give better feedback to students about their learning.

The focus areas for this review were: the use of assessment information to improve the quality of learning and teaching, Year 7 to 10 programmes, and how they meet the learning needs of students, the achievement of Māori students, providing for student who are under-achieving, provisions for international students, and for those students accommodated in the school hostel. In addition, ERO investigated aspects of student health and safety, including the school's strategies for preventing bullying.

The principal, teachers and trustees now have a detailed knowledge of student achievement in Years 11 to 13. They are increasingly using this information to identify where they can improve their practice, programmes and outcomes for students. The principal is aware that the school does not yet have the same level of information about Years 7 to 10 students. The senior managers are working with the teachers on their assessment and monitoring programmes to address this need.

Students achieve well in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) when compared to other similar types of schools. Since NCEA was introduced, the percentage of students who gain NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and 3, including the literacy and numeracy credits, has usually been significantly above the average for similar schools. Students achieve success in externally assessed standards at slightly higher rates than students in similar schools but the percentages achieving merit or excellence grades is lower than in other similar schools. The level of Māori student achievement in NCEA is variable but shows similar patterns to the achievement of non-Māori students at the school. The percentage of students leaving school without recognised qualifications is low.

In response to the trend in externally assessed standards the principal and teachers are working to improve the percentage of students who achieve merit and excellence grades.

A pastoral care teacher works with Māori students and their whānau to support their learning and achievement. In many classrooms, Māori students benefit from high quality teaching. The range of approaches being used by a few teachers may not be meeting the learning needs of some Māori students. Some students ERO spoke with said the comments from some of their peers were hurtful.

Classroom environments are calm, pleasant places for students to work. Teachers respect students and build their self-esteem and confidence to participate. Strong pastoral support and clear discipline systems encourage positive behaviours and allow students and teachers to focus on learning rather than behaviour.

The teachers that ERO observed paced their lessons well and provided students with interesting and varied learning experiences. The students were clear about what that they need to do to achieve success. The feedback they receive helps them to focus their efforts and to know the next steps in their learning. A range of teaching strategies and programmes meet individual student's needs. They show consistently high levels of motivation and engagement in learning.

The school's curriculum design covers the objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum, the school's special character and meets the needs of students. Programmes in each learning area are well planned and delivered, particularly those in the arts, health, physical education and information technology. Teachers of mathematics have developed some effective approaches for addressing the different achievement levels of students in their classes.

The principal was aware of some of the areas for improvement that were identified during the review. For example, the need to make more consistent provisions across programmes for developing students' skills and helping them to gain a better understanding of thinking processes and about how to learn. Other main developments involve modifying assessment, monitoring and reporting practices. Most learning areas have developed practices that could be adopted or adapted by others to achieve the desired improvements.

The school has a cooperative and caring culture with clear values, standards and expectations. Achievement is celebrated and diversity recognised. The students that ERO spoke with said they appreciated these features and show confidence and enjoyment in participating in the life of the school. They respect staff and are confident about asking them for help.

The student support programmes and counsellors make a significant contribution to providing a safe emotional environment for students.

Student feedback on aspects of the school is obtained through a variety of channels. The board does not yet systematically and anonymously survey students and parents to find out their views of the learning programmes or about safety, including bullying. Greater opportunities for students to participate actively in school decision making and leadership would strengthen the quality of what is provided and increase the sense of ownership and pride they show in the school.

The principal and other school managers provide clear and purposeful leadership for staff. Professional development and accountability systems focus strongly on improving learning and teaching.

The school charter includes general goals and targets for improving student achievement. The board has yet to develop strategic plans to guide school development and review its effectiveness. The trustees are modifying board operations to address this need. They should make more use of student achievement information to identify where improvements could be made and then develop more specific targets and strategies for achieving them. However, the board is clearly focused on the quality of student learning and achievement. The recommendations in the report were formulated by the board to achieve this outcome.

A board of governors, separate to the St Peter's College Board of Trustees, takes responsibility for the quality of governance and management of St Peter's College Hostel. The review of the school hostel identified a number of areas where improvement is needed. These include policy development, improving procedures and monitoring their effectiveness.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of the students and the crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. Therefore ERO will review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

ERO intends to return to the hostel within 12 months to specifically evaluate the progress the board of governors has made in bringing about the improvements to the hostel outlined in section 7 of this report.

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, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

Isabell Sinclair Irwin
Area Manager
for 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

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.

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.
