

ERO External Evaluation

Mt Albert Grammar School, Mt Albert, Auckland

The purpose of ERO's external evaluations is to give parents, whānau and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education children and young people receive. ERO reports on the equity and excellence of learning outcomes for all students and for specific groups including Māori students, Pacific students and students with additional learning needs. This includes a focus on accelerating learning for students. ERO also reports on the quality and effectiveness of the school's processes and practices for continuing and sustaining improvement. The report gives evaluation findings that answer four key questions about the school's performance.

School Context

Mt Albert Grammar School (MAGS) is a large, co-educational school catering for students from Year 9 to Year 13. It is situated in the suburb of Mt Albert, Auckland city. Founded in 1922, the school values its traditional heritage while offering a breadth of 21st century educational opportunities.

The school states that its overarching vision for the future is to provide an aspirational, resilient learning community that affirms personal excellence. This is supported through the legacy items of the four school pillars and the 'MAGS Way'. These values continue to acknowledge the aims of excellence, honesty, respect for oneself, others and the environment, and recognise the value of educational opportunity.

Since the 2013 ERO review, a new headmaster has been appointed together with several new senior team leaders. A number of new trustees have been elected or co-opted to the board.

Te Puna o Wairaka, a vertical whānau group, has continued to support the cultural identity of Māori learners and school tikanga. The recently constituted Runanga, a group of community members, whānau, students and staff, is developing new strategies for a Māori Education plan.

The school campus features many specialist learning opportunities and facilities. Programmes such as the Academic Institute and Sports Academies offer students choices for different academic pathways. The ASB Bank MAGS farm provides a substantial number of students with authentic learning to study agribusiness, agricultural and horticultural science.

The school roll is growing rapidly towards 3000 students, presenting an ongoing property challenge for the board of trustees who wish to continue providing high quality facilities. School House, the boarding hostel for boys, caters for approximately 100 boarders. One hundred and eighty international students attend the school.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- achievement within the New Zealand Qualifications framework
- pathways outcomes for senior students

- achievement data for Year 9 and 10
- progress and achievement in relation to school targets
- pastoral and wellbeing information about student groups and cohorts
- participation, contribution and engagement information across a number of sporting, arts and cultural areas
- outcomes relating to identity, culture and language
- retention, stand down, suspension and attendance information.

The school is a proactive member of the Mt Albert Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako (CoL). This kāhui ako is currently led by an Associate Principal from Mt Albert Grammar School.

The high expectations for student achievement and attainment noted in previous ERO reports continue to be evident.

Evaluation Findings

1 Equity and excellence – achievement of valued outcomes for students

1.1 How well is the school achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for all its students?

The school is highly effective in achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for its students. It has the capacity and capability to accelerate learning for all learners and is successfully addressing parity issues for some groups of students.

Scholarship success places Mt Albert Grammar School consistently in the top seven schools in the country. One student gained a scholarship in Te Reo Rangatira, one of only eight students in New Zealand achieving this award in this subject. Increasing numbers of excellence and merit endorsements for NCEA reflect achievement above national percentages and this success is celebrated by the school through Lion Awards. Achievement across the three levels of NCEA is well above the national average and above percentages for similar schools.

School achievement information for NCEA Level 1 and 2 shows highly equitable levels of success. Almost all Māori and Pacific learners are included in approximately 90% of students who are leaving school with NCEA Level 2 or above.

Some ethnic and gender disparities are evident in NCEA Level 3 and in University Entrance data. These outcomes are affected to some extent by senior students' pathways decisions. School leaders are implementing systems that are now trialled and proven to attain greater parity for all Year 13 students.

For Year 9 and 10 students, leaders and teachers use nationally normed assessment tools to gather achievement information as students enter Year 9 and exit at Year 10. This comparative data shows that after two years most junior students reach the curriculum levels required to access NCEA Level 1 and succeed.

Other valued outcomes for students are the development of resilience and a strong sense of self belief through the pursuit of personal excellence. Students are learning how to be reflective and self-directing and to feel optimistic about their future. The school has a developing culture where young people celebrate all kinds of diversity.

1.2 How well is the school accelerating learning for those Māori and other students who need this?

The school responds very effectively to Māori, Pacific students and other young people whose learning and achievement needs acceleration.

Year 9 achievement information indicates that a substantial group of Māori and Pacific students enters the school below expected curriculum levels in literacy. By the end of Year 10, this information shows that accelerated learning in literacy has occurred for most of these students. Almost all of these learners who have accelerated over a two-year period go on to achieve senior qualifications. There is evidence to show that this improvement trend for junior students has been maintained over time.

Māori and Pacific students at NCEA Level 1 and 2 have made accelerated shifts in their achievement over the last three years. Ninety-one percent of Māori students and 85% of Pacific students gained NCEA Level 2 in 2017. The Māori cohort outperformed other cohorts in the school. At NCEA Level 3 there are some disparities for Māori and Pacific learners.

2 School conditions for equity and excellence – processes and practices

2.1 What school processes and practices are effective in enabling achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

School leadership and stewardship, teacher capability and the improvement-focused learning culture are highly effective school conditions that enable students' achievement of equity and excellence.

Leaders deliberately promote equity and excellence through personalised approaches to learning. The opportunity for individualised programmes is a key driver in the school's new strategic plan. Leaders at all levels of the school are successfully promoting a collaborative and reflective teaching culture that encourages and supports students to achieve their personal best.

Teachers continue to grow their capability and trial ways to support students who need to make accelerated shifts in their learning. The recently introduced teacher appraisal process is high quality, reflects the new Education Council standards, and aligns with school priorities and professional learning initiatives.

At Year 11, 12 and 13, staff focus on the tracking and monitoring of NCEA performance through a 'numbers, names and needs' approach. Additionally, a mentoring system has been introduced. Students have a significant mentor teacher to work with in a personalised learning relationship over their time at school. Subject teachers plan different actions when additional learning strategies are needed to ensure successful outcomes. Learner support systems work effectively for students who have different or special needs.

The school has a learning culture that promotes and fosters student wellbeing for learning. A wrap-around approach to pastoral care and the use of restorative practices support student management.

There is a school-wide curriculum focus on building student-directed learning behaviour. Digital platforms extend time for students, groups of students and teachers to have more personalised learning contact. This helps to extend the scope of self-managed learning.

Stewardship of the school is sound. The board has made strategic appointments to senior leadership to guide the school's development in offering students 21st century educational opportunities. Trustees value the school's ethnic diversity, and the broadening of pathway choices for students.

2.2 What further developments are needed in school processes and practices for achievement of equity and excellence, and acceleration of learning?

Developments that could be considered for further improvement include:

- A review of Year 9 and 10 systems and processes for assessment and the use of achievement data, including transition information. This could offer further opportunity for leaders and teachers to create a meaningful learning profile for junior students. It could also assist teachers to inquire into acceleration strategies that may be effective for junior students across other learning areas in the curriculum, as well as the current literacy focus.
- Leadership inquiry into how the school's systems can strengthen parity for Māori and Pacific students at NCEA Level 3. This would ensure the acceleration gains made at NCEA Level 1 to Level 2 are maintained to advantage.

3 Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board and principal of the school completed the *ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists*. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to the following:

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

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

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration and certification
- processes for appointing staff
- stand down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion of students
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the *Vulnerable Children Act 2014*.

Provision for students in the school hostel

The school hostel, School House, accommodates 101 students (four percent of school roll). The hostel is owned and operated by Mt Albert Grammar School.

ERO's findings confirm that:

- the hostel director and experienced hostel staff regularly review and improve the hostel's systems and operations
- hostel management is efficient and effective in providing a supportive living and learning environment for boys attending the school
- the culture and climate of the hostel reflects the school's positive values.

Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* established under *section 238F of the Education Act 1989*. At the time of this review there were 180 international students attending the school.

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

ERO's evaluation process confirms that the school's internal evaluation processes are of high quality.

Mount Albert Grammar provides international students with pastoral care processes of a high standard. The school provides good quality English language support for its international students. They integrate well into the school's educational programmes and are immersed in all aspects of school and community life.

4 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

For sustained improvement and future learner success, the school can draw on existing strengths in:

- leadership and stewardship capability to embed the school's new strategic direction
- teachers with the professional capability to provide personalised student learning
- students gaining self-belief and confidence through the school's positive learning culture.

Next steps

For sustained improvement and future learner success, priorities for further development are in:

- systems review at junior level, to gather meaningful achievement information in each learning area, in order to accelerate learning for those who need it
- leadership inquiry into NCEA Level 3 achievement for Māori and Pacific students.

ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Foley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Foley
Deputy Chief Review Officer Northern (Acting)
Te Tai Raki - Northern Region

18 April 2018

About the school

Location	Mt Albert, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	69	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	2991	
Gender composition	Boys 57% Girls 43%	
Ethnic composition	Māori Pākehā Asian Pasifika MELAA other	13% 40% 23% 19% 3% 2%
Provision of Māori medium education	No	
Review team on site	February 2018	
Date of this report	18 April 2018	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review Education Review Education Review	November 2013 November 2007 December 2010