

**St Thomas More Catholic School
Mount Maunganui**

Education Review Office

External Evaluation

ERO External Evaluation

St Thomas More Catholic School

1 Context

St Thomas More Catholic School is a state integrated primary school catering for children in Years 1 to 6. It is located in Mount Maunganui and provides education for children from local and surrounding districts. Most children transition to Year 7 at Aquinas College in Tauranga. The current roll of 206 includes 36 children who are Māori.

The school's special Catholic character is highly visible in the environment, the curriculum and in the everyday life of the school. Children attend weekly liturgies at the adjacent church and regularly participate in school and parish events.

Since the previous ERO review in 2013, the principal has continued in her role. There have been significant changes to the senior leadership team and minor changes to teaching staff. The board chairperson is new to the position, as are most trustees. The school has a positive reporting history with ERO and good progress has been made in addressing the recommendations from the previous ERO report.

Since the previous ERO evaluation the school has accessed significant professional development to improve teachers' practice in the teaching of writing, mathematics and te reo and tikanga Māori. Professional learning has been accessed to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in te reo and tikanga Māori. Important aspects of 21st Century teaching and learning in line with school-wide developments in promoting modern learning practices (MLP) have been explored.

Major alterations are currently being made to school buildings to enable more flexible use of learning spaces, greater levels of teacher collaboration, the integration of computer technology and more authentic contexts for learning. These developments are contributing to higher levels of engagement and participation by students in their learning. Boys and Māori children in particular enjoy the flexible learning spaces and the meaningful integration of science into their writing.

2 Equity and excellence

The vision and valued outcomes defined by the school for all children are to 'develop the talents and gifts of each individual for the good of all through the transforming power of God's word. The school's Catholic values are expressed in the charter, and the community embraces learning with the head, the heart and the hands.'

Expectations for children's learning and behaviour are well defined in the graduate profile and well known to children, parents, teachers and the wider school community. An important aspect of the graduate profile is to enable all students to 'walk in a Māori world'. The school's curriculum honours the Treaty of Waitangi partnership by recognising and valuing the unique position of Māori in New Zealand society.

A significant majority of all children, including Māori are achieving at or above National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's achievement information shows that for 2015, of the 36 Māori children enrolled, 9 in mathematics, 6 in reading and 5 in writing are achieving below National Standards. These numbers below have been steadily decreasing since 2013.

A challenge for the school is to accelerate the progress of Māori and boys who are achieving below expected levels.

During 2015 the board undertook a focused review of communication and consultation within the school and wider community. Trustees have had valuable training about their governance role and been involved in iwi facilitated training to increase their knowledge and understanding about *Ka Hikitia* and the *Ngai Te Rangī Education Plan*. There has been a marked increase in the presence and profile of kapa haka and involvement with the Tauranga Moana Ngā Kura Katorika whānau group.

3 Accelerating achievement

How effectively does this school respond to children whose learning and achievement need acceleration?

The school effectively responds to children whose learning and achievement needs acceleration.

Leaders and teachers use an appropriate range of assessment tools and strategies to identify individuals and groups of children whose progress requires acceleration.

They gather substantial information about student progress and achievement and make effective use of it to support children who are achieving below expected levels. Information gathered and analysed by the school clearly identifies what children's learning needs are. Teachers and school leaders respond effectively to this information by planning and implementing a range of interventions and strategies to accelerate progress for these children. These include:

- targeted in-class support
- involvement with specialist withdrawal programmes
- differentiated teaching and learning groups
- identification of targeted students in each class used as a focus for improving teacher practice
- reviewing the school curriculum to ensure that learning programmes are more authentic for Māori children.

The school's achievement information shows that most of these children make better than expected progress during the year. In addition, a small number of students have been identified with high needs. Individual plans are developed for them and specialist support is used as required. The SENCO and a committee monitor and review the effectiveness of interventions and specialist support. Children with high needs have individual learning plans developed for them, are well supported and effectively integrated into classrooms and the wider school life.

4 School conditions

How effectively do the school's curriculum and other organisational processes and practices develop and enact the school's vision, values, goals and priorities for equity and excellence?

All children, Māori and non-Māori, benefit from a curriculum that places priority on their wellbeing and the provision of equitable opportunities to learn and experience success.

Features of the curriculum that supports equity and excellence for Māori and other children include:

- broad and holistic learning experiences that are focused on literacy, mathematics and science are strongly reflective of the school's special Catholic character
- opportunities for children to succeed in sporting and cultural activities and events
- effectively supporting and acknowledging the culture, identity and language of Māori children and other children from a diverse range of ethnicities.

The curriculum also supports all children to feel included, cared for, safe and secure.

School conditions that contribute to equity and excellence:

1. The school has been proactive in establishing and nurturing positive relationships with parents and whānau who are well informed about their children's achievement and progress. Relationships between teachers and students are respectful, inclusive and focused on improving outcomes for children.
2. Leadership in the school is collaborative and focused on accelerating progress for all children. Leaders have adopted a well-managed approach to building teacher capability as they implement major changes to the school environment, curriculum and teaching practice.
3. Governance is effective and trustees make very good use of achievement information to make appropriate resourcing decisions and set targets that support children whose progress requires acceleration.
4. There are robust systems for reporting children's levels of achievement and progress to parents and whānau.

Trustees and school leaders have developed effective systems for self-review at all levels of the school. Collectively, they have a good understanding of the relationship between self-review and outcomes for all children particularly for those whose progress requires acceleration.

5 Going forward

How well placed is the school to achieve and sustain equitable and excellent outcomes for all children?

Leaders and teachers:

- know the children whose learning and achievement need to be accelerated
- respond effectively to the strengths, needs and interests of each child
- regularly evaluate how well teaching is working for these children
- act on what they know works well for each child
- build teacher capability effectively to achieve equitable outcomes for all children
- are well placed to achieve and sustain equitable and excellent outcomes for all children.

The school is well placed to achieve and sustain equitable and excellent outcomes for all children.

The key next step for the school is to further accelerate the progress for children who are at risk of poor educational outcomes. These are as follows:

- explore assessment tools that build teachers knowledge about student learning progressions in reading, writing and mathematics. This is likely to enable more targeted teaching more focused feedback and feedforward to children and empower them to become motivated self-managing learners.
- establish a shared understanding amongst teachers, students and whānau about teaching and learning in modern learning environments and use these expectations to further develop the powerful connections for learning between school, student and whānau.

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

6 Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review the board of trustees and principal of the school completed the ERO board assurance statement and Self Audit Checklists. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to the following:

- Board administration
- Curriculum
- Management of health, safety and welfare
- Personnel management
- 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
- Processes for appointing staff
- Stand down, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- Attendance
- Compliance with the provisions of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014
- Provision for international students
- Provision for students in school hostels.



Lynda Pura-Watson
Deputy Chief Review Officer

24 May 2016

About the school

Location	Mount Maunganui	
Ministry of Education profile number	1636	
School type	Contributing (Years 1 to 6)	
School roll	206	
Gender composition	Girls 51% Boys 49%	
Ethnic composition	Pākehā	58%
	Māori	18%
	Samoan	2%
	Chinese	1%
	Other Asian	5%
	Other European	6%
	Other	10%
Review team on site	March 2016	
Date of this report	24 May 2016	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	March 2013