

EDUCATION REVIEW REPORT:  
ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL  
NOVEMBER 2009

[1..... About the School](#)

[2..... The Education Review Office \(ERO\) Evaluation](#)

[3..... The Focus of the Review](#)

[4..... Areas of National Interest](#)

[5..... Board Assurance on Compliance Areas](#)

[6..... Recommendations](#)

[7..... Future Action](#)

[Community Page](#)

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

**1. About the School**

Location	Nelson
Ministry of Education profile number	3221
School type	State Integrated Full Primary (Years 1 - 8)
Decile rating <sup>[1]</sup>	8
Teaching staff:	
Roll generated	16.60
entitlement	1.15
Other	22

Number of teachers		
School roll	348	
Gender composition	Girls	53%
	Boys	47%
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā	76%
	Other European	9%
	Māori	8%
	Asian	5%
	Other ethnic groups	2%
Review team on site	August – September 2009	
Date of this report	4 November 2009	
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, September 2006	
	Supplementary Review, August 2003	
	Education Review, August 2002	
	Accountability Review, December 1997	
	Effectiveness Review, April 1995	
	Assurance Audit, October 1992	

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

Located in Nelson city, St. Joseph's School provides a Catholic based education for new entrants to students up to year 8. At the time of this review in September 2009, of the 348 students enrolled, 46 identified as Māori.

The Board of Trustees has worked with staff to review its charter and incorporate the principles of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The importance of fostering students' holistic development is reflected in the vision statement. The school's values and strategic goals emphasise Catholic beliefs, provision of well-resourced programmes based on proven teaching methodologies, and working with the parish and wider community to support improved student achievement. The board allocates funding so that every junior class has at least one teacher aide. This enables students to receive high levels of one-to-one assistance in their foundation years.

Teachers are reflective practitioners who work collegially and are well supported to remain up to date with current knowledge and teaching strategies. Since 2006, they have undertaken school-wide professional learning and development in numeracy and the use of strategies to foster the development of students' higher order thinking. Staff are developing their approaches to teaching inquiry and increasing their use of information and communication technologies to support learning.

High quality teaching practices foster students' involvement in and understanding of learning. Teachers use a range of assessments to inform programme planning to meet identified needs. Generally, student achievement in aspects of literacy and mathematics is at or above national expectations, and compares favourably with schools of a similar decile.

The school's buildings are well presented and the spacious grounds feature mature trees and a sheltered outside area for performances. Well-resourced, positive and stimulating classrooms

support learning. There are many displays of high quality student art, literary and investigative topic work. Students have access to a central library, a large sports field and swimming pool.

An inclusive and supportive school culture promotes effective relationships between students and their teachers, teacher aides and their peers. This assists in their academic, sporting and social development. Students are articulate, confident, feel safe at school and have many opportunities for leadership.

Throughout the review, ERO had positive and constructive discussions with trustees, staff and students. The board with ERO has developed recommendations to support school improvement by working with parents to further raise and maintain student achievement.

### ***Future Action***

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

## **3. The Focus of the Review**

### ***Student Achievement Overall***

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

Nationally-referenced assessment results are analysed and include a breakdown by gender and for Māori. Information has been tracked from 2007 to 2009 to discover trends and patterns of achievement in aspects of literacy and mathematics. The data for mathematics are reported under the school specific priorities section of this report.

Overall, student achievement is at or above national expectations, and compares favourably with schools of a similar decile.

Analysis of Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) results for reading shows that generally students are making a significant improvement in finding information, and even greater improvement in reading for understanding.

Data from 2007 and 2008 show that for all year levels, the average reading and spelling ages are consistently above chronological age expectations.

Assessments used in the junior school to monitor progress and determine student needs in literacy are not collated school wide nor reported to the board.

While the school has a series of 2009 annual targets related to improving students' fitness, these and analysed achievement information for other curriculum areas, have not yet been reported the board.

### ***School Specific Priorities***

Before the review, the board of St Joseph's School was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the

school to contribute to the scope of the review.

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

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

- the quality of teaching of mathematics, in particular numeracy.

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

## ***The Quality of Teaching of Mathematics***

### **Background**

The board of trustees has worked with staff to review its charter and incorporate the principles of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The importance of fostering students' holistic development is reflected in the vision statement. The values and strategic goals emphasise Catholic beliefs, provision of well-resourced programmes based on proven teaching methodologies, and working with the parish and wider community to support improved student achievement.

For a number of years, the school has had a focus on professional learning and development (PLD) in numeracy and promoting thinking skills. As a result of their involvement in a local PLD cluster, staff are also developing their approach to teaching inquiry and increasing their use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support learning.

In preparing for this ERO evaluation, the board used its self-review information to identify a specific school focus and consider possible investigative questions. After discussion with trustees, ERO agreed to evaluate the quality of teaching of mathematics, with a particular focus on the impact of ongoing professional development in numeracy on student achievement. ERO's investigation and findings are based on class observations, discussions with the board, staff and students, and consideration of documentation.

### **Student progress and achievement**

In general, students are achieving at or above national comparisons in mathematics.

Of two annual targets set for mathematics in 2008, one, to improve the accuracy rate in basic facts for year 7 and 8 students, was met. The second, to improve achievement in fractions for years 5 and 6, was exceeded. Over the year, the percentage of students two stages below expectations, dropped significantly from 29% to less than 2.5%. The percentage of those one stage below expectations dropped from 29% to 11.5%. Teachers commented on the positive difference emphasising fractions in 2008 is making on student achievement in 2009.

AsTTle results for number knowledge, number operations, and measurement have been collated, presented by gender and for Māori. March 2009 data show that all year levels, except year 4 which was slightly below, performed at or above national comparisons.

In 2009 a group of year 7 students, the first cohort to benefit from Numeracy Project teaching, won

the regional Mathix competition.

### **Areas of good performance**

- Mathematics planning is of high quality and a consistent approach is evident. There is a clear relationship between curriculum documents, school expectations and classroom implementation. Lesson planning is informed by teacher analysis of achievement information and used to provide differentiated programmes to meet the identified needs of all students. Classes are streamed within syndicates. The school-designed planning template has sections for the inclusion of key competencies, thinking skills and unit evaluation.
- Teachers are reflective practitioners who work collegially and are well supported to remain up-to-date with current knowledge and teaching strategies. Aply assisted by the lead teacher of mathematics, this is sustained through professional discussion and the sharing of good models.
- Teaching practice demonstrates ongoing involvement in numeracy professional development and use of the associated numeracy framework. Number knowledge gaps are targeted through flexible strategy groupings within streamed classes. Other examples of good quality practice include:
  - structuring lessons for a balance of new learning, practice and maintenance activities;
  - discussing and teaching stage-specific strategies in small group and paired situations;
  - questioning effectively to elicit responses, extend thinking and encourage reflection;
  - using modelling and concrete materials to introduce concepts, affirm student understanding and develop ideas; and
  - providing appropriate group box activities to allow students to practise strategies and use number knowledge.

Teachers value students' input and ideas and encourage them to discuss their problem-solving strategies and reflect on their learning. Students enjoy and are highly engaged in mathematics lessons.

- Classroom environments are inclusive, well resourced and make effective use of available space. Colourful and specific displays include material to support learning in mathematics. Resources are easily accessed by the students.
- Regular reports to the board include information about programmes and student achievement in mathematics. These provide a good basis for decision making in relation to future resourcing and staff professional development.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Management and staff have identified the need to consider how curriculum programmes should be adapted to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum by 2010*. They are aware, and ERO agrees, that for mathematics this will require:
  - reviewing curriculum delivery documents;

- choosing achievement objectives to fit the learning needs of students;
  - finding ways to further challenge and extend more able students;
  - considering how links between other learning areas will be explored and developed; and
  - determining how they will assess student achievement in the future.
- Staff are aware that the policies, procedures and programmes for identified gifted and talented students have not been reviewed to reflect the school’s new approaches in teaching and learning.
  - The school has documented expectations that students, along with their parents, will set and evaluate learning goals. However, this is not yet a well-established practice. The principal acknowledges that, in order to do this effectively, there is a need for staff to develop a considered and planned school-wide approach. This is likely to empower students to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

## **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 Joseph's School ERO investigated and reported on the following areas of national interest. The findings are included in this report so that information about the school is transparent and widely available.

### ***Success for Māori Students: Progress***

In this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school was familiar with the *Māori Education Strategy – Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success* and progress made since the 2006 ERO review in promoting success at school for Māori students.

The school reports it has not yet discussed the document but expects to do so in the near future.

There are 28 students, eight percent of the school roll, who identify as Māori.

### **Areas of progress**

- Māori students’ progress continues to be well monitored. Analysis of achievement in Progressive Assessment Tests for listening, asTTle reading and spelling indicates that overall they achieve at similar levels to their non-Māori peers. They achieve above non-Māori cohorts in asTTle mathematics. Appropriate interventions are provided for those identified as needing additional support.
- As identified in ERO’s 2006 review, school policies and procedures reflect the unique place of

Māori as tangata whenua. Instruction in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga is provided. Teachers make good use of the local and wider community to introduce Māori perspectives. Students have recently visited local and other marae, museums and art galleries that feature Māori displays. These approaches help foster self belief and an increasing awareness of the importance of Māori values in bicultural New Zealand.

- Māori students are articulate in expressing how much they enjoy their studies and appreciate opportunities to learn te reo Māori. They interact respectfully with teachers and other students and actively participate in school life.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- While the board has continued in its endeavour to engage and communicate with its Māori families, this is still not meeting the requirements of National Administration Guideline 1(v). There has been no consultation with the community other than reporting Māori student achievement overall to whānau.
- Although some teachers use aspects of te reo Māori during class lessons, this, plus the integration of a Māori perspective into classroom environments, is not consistent school wide.

### **Recommendations**

ERO recommends that the board:

- reviews how it consults with its Māori community to more effectively ascertain their wishes and aspirations and set targets for further improving Māori student achievement; and
- ensures that teaching staff are supported to develop and increase their confidence in the use of te reo Māori and reflect Māori perspectives in classroom environments.

### ***Preparing to Give Effect to The New Zealand Curriculum***

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

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

### ***Including Students with High Needs***

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

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

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

ERO's findings confirm these attestations.

The inclusive and supportive school culture promotes effective relationships between the personnel who provide help and learning support and the students. Parental inclusion and involvement in decision making about their child's learning, and the accepting and caring relationships these students have with teachers, teacher aides and peers, assist in their academic, sporting and social development.

## **5. Board Assurance on Compliance Areas**

### ***Overview***

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of St Joseph's School completed an ERO *Board Assurance Statement* and *Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

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

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

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

### ***Compliance***

During the course of the review ERO identified areas of non-compliance.

- The need to consult with its Māori community to comply with National Administration

Guideline 1(v) referred to earlier in this report was also an area for improvement in the 2006 ERO review.

- Apart from the principal there are two board members, one of whom is also a proprietor's representative, who are also permanent employees. This contravenes sections 94C(4) and 103(3) of the *Education Act 1989*.

In order to address these matters the board of trustees must:

- 5.1 Take action to establish communications with its Māori community in order to ascertain their wishes and aspirations and set achievement targets for their children.  
*[National Administration Guideline 1(v)]*
- 5.2 Review the board's composition and ensure that apart from the principal only one full time staff member is appointed or co-opted on to the board.  
*[94C(4) and 103(3) Education Act 1989]*

In addition, to improve current practice, the board of trustees should also ensure that the monitoring and implementation of the school's appraisal processes are strengthened. The principal identified a 2009 goal to review appraisal and, while both he and the deputy principal have attended related courses, they have yet to commence the review. There are sound guidelines and procedures for most aspects, and the appraisal process for the principal, conducted by the board, was thorough. However, ERO had difficulty in verifying the quality of the implementation of the process for staff. Not all teachers with responsibility are appraised against management goals and many teachers are not keeping adequate records. It is difficult to see the links between the outcomes of one year's appraisal and the personal goals set in the next. The decision to review the system is timely.

## **6. Recommendations**

ERO and the board of trustees have developed the following recommendations. That:

- 6.1 Management and staff will consider how curriculum programmes should be adapted to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.
- 6.2 The board will support management and staff in seeking professional development to assist in establishing a system for effectively involving students and their parents in setting and evaluating learning goals.

## **7. Future Action**

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

Dr Graham Stoop  
Chief Review Officer

4 November 2009

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4 November 2009

## **To the Parents and Community of St Joseph's School**

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **St Joseph's School**.

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## ***Review Coverage***

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

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

Dr Graham Stoop  
**Chief Review Officer**

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## ***GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS***

### ***About ERO***

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

### ***About ERO Reviews***

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

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

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

### ***Review Focus***

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

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

## ***Review Coverage***

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## ***Review Recommendations***

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

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