



**Francis Douglas Memorial College  
New Plymouth**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Francis Douglas Memorial College

The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school report answers the question "How effectively is this school's curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?" Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school's systems for sustaining and continuing improvements. The report answers four key questions about the school.

## Findings

### 1 Context

#### **What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?**

Francis Douglas Memorial College is a state integrated Catholic boys' secondary school in New Plymouth. It caters for 792 students from Years 7 to 13, 14% of whom are Māori. The school hostel, La Salle House, currently has 121 boarders.

In accordance with the special character, students are invited to lead lives based on Christian values and encouraged to participate in the religious life of the College. Values seek to prepare young men for further education, work and life.

In 2015, the Proprietor supplied new art and science buildings. These learning areas are well resourced and provide a valuable addition for the delivery of the curriculum.

The College has a positive reporting history with ERO and stable governance, leadership and staffing.

### 2 Learning

#### **How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement?**

Building on positive achievement outcomes, school leaders and teachers are exploring further ways to use assessment data for teaching, learning and programme evaluation.

School information for the end of 2014 shows that most students in Years 7 and 8 achieved the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Māori students achieve positively in literacy, with particularly high numbers achieving in mathematics.

An appropriate intermediate department goal is to further develop moderation of assessment in writing. Creating guidelines for assessment in reading, writing and mathematics should also assist in ensuring the reliability and sustainability of teachers' practice for making overall teacher judgments about students' achievement in relation to National Standards.

Senior leaders and heads of departments (HODs) use data to celebrate, reflect on and report about achievement.

Many students achieve very well in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs). Information for 2014 shows that Māori students achieve well overall and in relation to national comparisons, and mostly at levels similar to their peers in the college. Progress and achievement for the small numbers of Pacific students are suitably tracked, monitored and reported.

Increasing the numbers of students who gain New Zealand Scholarship awards and raising NCEA merit and excellence endorsements is a focus for the college.

School leaders have identified the need to make better use of data at Years 9 and 10. Development should include extending current achievement targets to also focus on groups of students at risk of underachieving at all levels, including Years 7 to 10, and retention of Māori students to Year 13. Better targeting and tracking is likely to assist staff and trustees to know how well any actions that are taken promote accelerated student progress or greater retention.

Teachers have access to a range of data when planning for the individual needs of students. Some teachers use this data well to consider individuals and groups with different learning needs. Promoting consistent and effective use of data to plan for teaching should help ensure that learning is well matched to individuals.

Individual learning plans have been introduced for students in Year 10. The aim is to assist students and form teachers to collaboratively reflect on achievement and discuss possible individual courses and pathways. As implementation is strengthened, the ability to individualise learning is likely to benefit students.

Parents and whānau receive useful information to support their knowledge of student achievement. A high level of parent attendance at interviews during the year promotes discussion about academic progress. The parent portal allows families to access up-to-date information about their child.

### **3 Curriculum**

#### **How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?**

Student learning, progress and achievement are effectively promoted by the school curriculum. A clearly stated vision and mission underpins the provision of education through the college's special character.

Students' skills, abilities and competencies at Years 7 to 10 are fostered through teaching and learning aligned to achievement of the college's Junior Certificate.

A wide range of courses encourages high retention of students in the senior school. Courses provide for meaningful academic and vocational pathways. Career advice and guidance effectively supports students. Involvement in sports, cultural experiences, service and leadership is valued.

Students learn about te reo Māori and tikanga in Years 7 and 8, with further optional modules in Years 9 and 10. A small number of students learn te reo Māori for NCEA. The Māori department is working to increase numbers taking senior courses.

Staff appropriately cater for student wellbeing. Relationships are based on mutual respect and shared expectations for positive participation. Teachers in charge of form groups are enhancing their role in supporting and facilitating inclusion. Restorative practice is emerging to promote students' positive engagement.

Students with additional learning needs are well supported. There are comprehensive processes to identify the needs of individuals, then track and monitor their progress. Parents and whānau contribute to individual education plans for students with more complex needs.

Students participate positively in the classroom. Teachers encourage students to share their ideas and ask relevant questions to support their understanding. The school has implemented actions to further develop the range of strategies that teachers use to meet diverse learning needs.

As part of an inquiry process, teachers are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their practice on student achievement. Staff collaboratively share strategies in professional learning groups. The appointment of a professional learning and development facilitator further supports development of teachers' practice.

Teacher appraisal has been reviewed in 2015 to make it more rigorous. Staff are increasingly gathering evidence of their performance aligned to the requirements of the Practising Teacher Criteria. The appraisal process should be further strengthened by ensuring that teachers receive timely and relevant feedback from observations, and by linking expected appraisal outcomes at all levels of responsibility to whole-school priorities, targets and performance indicators.

A next step is collaborative review by leaders and teachers of the school's curriculum in relation to the intent of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC). This should aim for closer alignment with, and to build shared understandings of, the NZC principles. During the review, it should also be useful to develop clear statements of expectations for effective teaching practice and use of assessment information, especially at Years 7 to 10.

### **How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?**

Māori student's participate in leadership and have a positive presence in the college. There is opportunity to be involved in tikanga Māori. Contexts that reflect Māori student's culture and language are included in aspects of the curriculum. Annual whānau meetings provide information about Māori student achievement and outline curriculum experiences linked to aspects of culture, language and celebrating identity.

It is timely for trustees, leaders and teachers to establish a clear, strategic response to further promote the cultural aspirations of Māori learners and their whānau. They should:

- further investigate methods for gathering whānau and Māori student voice to support review and include in curriculum expectations
- continue to work with teachers to develop shared expectations of appropriate evidence to demonstrate cultural competence
- develop shared expectations for the use of relevant contexts that recognise Māori students culture, language and identity across curriculum subjects.

## **4 Sustainable Performance**

### **How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?**

The college is well placed to strengthen review and evaluation practice to sustain its performance and continue to build student success.

Senior leaders recognise the benefits of reviewing strategic and annual planning. Collaborative review should ensure that all stakeholders are involved in setting priorities and contributing to ongoing development.

Trustees bring a range of valuable skills to their governance role. Elected trustees work with proprietors' representatives to support school operation and development. They review policies and procedures on a planned cycle to meet their legislative obligations.

HOD reports about subject areas provide an overview of successes and barriers to student achievement. Senior leaders and trustees are considering the benefits of a common format for these reports. As part of proposed changes, leaders should increasingly strengthen HODs' review capability by establishing the need for departmental reports to make clear links to the school's annual achievement targets.

Initial consideration of leadership roles and expectations has occurred. To sustain current good practice and support change management, expectations for performance, that are currently often implicit, need to be made explicit. This should provide a clear basis for evaluation of effectiveness and inform strategic approaches to building effective leadership practice.

### **Provision for international students**

The school 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. At the time of this review, there were eight international students attending the school. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

Policies and procedures are well documented to guide provision for international students. Students are supported to participate in sporting and cultural activities. Their progress is carefully monitored and there is strong support for their wellbeing and pastoral care. Students spoken with during the review were positive about their experiences in the college.

### **Provision for students in the school hostel**

The school hostel, La Salle House, accommodates 125 students, 15% of the school roll. It is owned by the Trust Board of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in New Zealand. The hostel owner has attested that all requirements of the Hostel Regulations are met.

Boarding is from Monday to Friday. Each Year group is accommodated separately. Students, their parents and whānau receive clear, useful information about how the hostel operates and what is expected of them. Suitable, stable staffing ensures that students' wellbeing and learning are well supported.

Boarders enjoy good facilities that are being appropriately refurbished over time. The hostel environment closely reflects the school's special character with its emphasis on helping students to develop self-management skills. Living on the school campus contributes to boarders' sense of belonging.

## 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:

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

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

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

## Conclusion

The Catholic special character is central to college life. Students experience a wide range of educational pathways to suit their interests and aspirations. Overall, students achieve well. Provision for wellbeing is responsive to individual student needs. Leaders and teachers continue to develop evaluation to further strengthen curriculum expectations and outcomes for students.

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



Joyce Gebbie  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central

10 September 2015

## About the School

Location	New Plymouth	
Ministry of Education profile number	175	
School type	State Integrated Secondary (Years 7 to 13)	
School roll	792	
Number of international students	8	
Gender composition	Male 100%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	14%
	NZ European/Pākehā	77%
	Pacific	2%
	Asian	6%
	Other ethnic groups	1%
Special features	Catholic special character Boarding hostel	
Review team on site	July 2015	
Date of this report	10 September 2015	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	September 2012
	Education Review	August 2009
	Education Review	July 2005