

Francis Douglas Memorial College Education Review

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About the School

Location	New Plymouth, Taranaki	
Ministry of Education profile number	175	
School type	State Integrated Roman Catholic School (Years 7 to 13)	
School roll	733	
Number of international students	0	
Gender composition	Boys 100%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	77%
	Māori	13%
	Other European	3%
	Pacific	2%
	Southeast Asian	2%
	Other	3%
Special Features	Boarding Hostel	
Review team on site	July 2012	
Date of this report	21 September 2012	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	June 2009
	Education Review	July 2005
	Education Review	September 2002

The Purpose of an ERO Report

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.

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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, Roman Catholic boys' school in New Plymouth, Taranaki. It has 733 Year 7 to 13 students, of whom 97 are Māori. The school hostel, La Salle House, has 118 students. Students in the hostel come mainly from farms in Taranaki.

The college encourages students to lead lives based on Christian values in keeping with the school's Lasallian tradition and courageous spirit of Father Francis Douglas. It aims to prepare young men for further education, work and life. Students achieve well academically. Their participation in cocurricular activities is high. The college has a settled tone and seeks to challenge students to achieve well, and to respect and serve others, especially the poor.

The school has a supportive board of trustees, experienced principal and stable staff. The areas of good performance identified in the 2009 ERO report have been sustained. The Lasallian ethos continues to permeate the culture of the school and hostel. Learning programmes tap into boys' interests in and beyond school. The principal and senior managers continue to guide and encourage teachers to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning.

2 Learning

How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Students are learning very well. In class, they have a good work ethic. Attendance rates are high and most students complete their schooling at the end of Year 13. Student engagement is promoted through learning-focused classrooms. Many opportunities are provided for students to participate in sports and cultural activities, to serve as leaders, and to support local, national and overseas missions. The school has introduced a Junior Certificate for Years 7 to 10 students. This award promotes academic achievement and key competencies, such as self management and relating to others.

The school's information indicates that Year 7 and 8 students, including Māori and Pacific students, achieved well in National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2011. In the same year, senior student achievement rates in National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) were above that of boys nationally, and at or above that of boys from schools of a similar kind. High levels were achieved in literacy, numeracy and the attainment of NCEA Level 1 qualifications. Māori students achieved especially well in Level 1 NCEA compared to Māori students nationally. It is noteworthy that in 2011, all Māori, Pacific and Asian leavers left school with qualifications and only two students left without qualifications.

The school makes good use of assessment information. On entry to Years 7 and 9 students are identified for specialist reading support, as needed. Senior managers monitor the effectiveness of each subject in promoting learning and achievement in Years 7 to 10. Leaders of Learning review the effectiveness of teaching programmes in Year 11 to 13 using NCEA results. Teachers of Year 7 and 8 students are beginning to find ways to moderate their assessment of writing for National Standards.

The next steps for the school are:

- to ascertain more accurately the progress of students in Years 7 to 10, especially in literacy and numeracy, so that the learning of under-achieving students can be accelerated by classroom teachers in meaningful and appropriate ways
- to use assessment information to set measurable achievement targets in the school's charter and annual plan for the government's priority learners, namely Māori, Pacific and students with special needs, and under-achieving groups of students.

3 Curriculum

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

The school curriculum effectively promotes and supports student learning. It is well balanced in providing for boys' spiritual, academic, physical, cultural, vocational and social development.

The curriculum is well designed so that it prepares students for academic success and helps guide their learning pathways to employment, training and tertiary education. It is responsive to the boys' interests and subject choices, and is regularly reviewed. Recent curriculum developments include the expansion of enterprise studies and programmes for gifted and talented students. The availability of te reo Māori studies has been extended to through to Year 13.

Positive respectful relationships typify classroom teaching and learning. Teachers have high expectations of student learning and behaviour. They are experienced and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Pockets of high quality teaching are evident where teachers share their passion and enthusiasm for learning and work with students to help them know about learning processes.

The next step is for teachers to develop a wider variety of teaching methods in line with current educational research. In particular, they could focus on finding ways to give students more responsibility for their learning so they are equipped to become lifelong, 21st century learners. Senior managers and curriculum leaders should develop an effective school-wide professional learning and development programme to advance the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum.

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

The school effectively promotes educational success for Māori students. They are well supported to achieve National Standards in Years 7 and 8 and to gain NCEA qualifications in the senior school. The school now provides staffing for the teaching of te reo Māori through to NCEA Level 3, as requested by whānau. NCEA results in te reo Māori at all levels are very positive.

Students have their identity and culture affirmed in a variety of ways. Opportunities include noho marae for te reo Māori students and the four waka ama teams representing the school in regional and national competitions. School haka have become an accepted practice, especially for supporting rugby teams and for groups travelling overseas. This year a pōwhiri welcomed students and staff into the school. The 2011 head boy and past students provide

positive role models for the boys, encouraging them to realise their potential and be successful.

Teachers' knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori and local history is growing, especially as a result of the visit to Parihaka in 2011. Teachers could benefit from continued professional learning and development, including using Tātaiako, a Ministry of Education publication about cultural competencies for teaching Māori learners. This could help them to incorporate key Māori concepts and practices into their teaching and enhance their support for Māori learners.

4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has a well developed culture of loyalty, respect and support. Students speak of the strong school spirit, of knowing everyone, of comradeship and brotherhood. They readily access and value the careers, guidance and health services. Some would like a student council to be formed. Senior managers continue to review and develop pastoral support and behaviour management systems. They are considering the introduction of academic counselling and restorative practices.

The school is well led and managed. Sound self-review processes have resulted in continued curriculum review and development in each of the learning areas, especially teaching programmes in Years 9 to 13. Teacher performance appraisal processes have been redeveloped. Various approaches to teacher professional learning and development have been tried to support teachers to adopt modern teaching practices. Management of student data has progressed and a 'parent portal' is being trialled. These, and other developments, are more likely to be sustained if they are aligned to the school's charter and policies, and if the outcomes are evaluated in reports to the board of trustees.

The school has a supportive board and parent community. The school charter has clear aims and priorities consistent with the school's mission and values. The board receives informative reports about student achievement and the school curriculum to inform its resourcing decisions. Parents of Māori students were consulted in 2010 and a hui supported the extension of te reo Māori teaching in the senior school. Another hui is planned for later this year. The board could consider forming links with local iwi as it begins to develop policies, plans and targets for Māori achievement.

The board of trustees has sound policies and procedures that provide direction and support for most school operations. The board may wish to refer to the foundation curriculum policy statements in section 60A of the Education Act 1989 as it develops policies to support curriculum development and the implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum. The board has a three-year cycle of policy review. The board could improve this self-review process by reviewing some policies on an annual basis. It should seek assurance through the principal as to the extent to which its policies have been implemented, especially policies relating to teacher professional development and performance appraisal.

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. No international students were enrolled at the time of the ERO review.

Provision for students in the school hostel

The school hostel, La Salle House, has 118 students who comprise sixteen percent of the school roll. The hostel is owned by the Trust Board of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in New Zealand.

- Positive, respectful relationships characterise hostel life. The boys enjoy the family-like atmosphere and the opportunities to make friends. They have a committee through which they can make suggestions for improvements.
- Very good systems operate to promote the boys' welfare and safety. They look after each other and are supervised in caring ways by hostel staff. They are encouraged to be responsible and self managing.
- The hostel environment is clean, well kept and orderly. It is being renovated and upgraded systematically. It provides well for the boys' privacy and security. Students have access to the school library and computers after school and during prep sessions.

The caring atmosphere and smooth operation of the hostel supports boys' learning and achievement at school. Incentives are in place to promote their reading. Older students help younger students. Arrangements are made so that the boys can participate fully in the school's co-curricular activities.

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
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

To improve current practice, the board should ensure that:

- in addition to the final signed approval of Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) opportunities, pre-planning proposal forms are signed and dated
- board guidelines for dealing with harassment refer to proactive anti-bullying strategies used by the college.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

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21 September 2012