

## ERO External Evaluation

### Aquinas College, Tauranga

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

Aquinas College is a co-educational, Catholic secondary school providing special character education for students from Years 7 to 13. It is located in Pyes Pa, in Tauranga. The roll of 737 includes 109 Māori students. At the time of this ERO review, 15 international students attended the school.

The school's vision statement is 'educating Catholic leaders through faith and action' and the touchstones - truth, prayer, service, family, joy and scholarship - underpin all aspects of school life.

Aquinas College's strategic goals for 2018 include:

- ensuring the junior curriculum is coherent, connected and future focused
- developing a school-wide approach to improving student achievement with a specific focus on priority learners
- improving student achievement and engagement in Year 11 through the implementation of a digital technology environment
- providing a supportive mentoring programme for all students that engages students and their whānau.

Student achievement goals for 2018 include:

- removing disparity for Year 9 Māori students' achievement in numeracy
- improving the quality and achievement in writing for boys, with a particular focus on the Year 9 cohort
- reducing disparity in certificate endorsements in NCEA between boys and girls
- reducing the disparity in University Entrance (UE) for boys and Māori.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board, school-wide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- achievement within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- REACH data (Years 9 and 10 Reaching Excellence at Aquinas College certificate)
- special Catholic character
- student wellbeing.

Since the previous ERO review in 2015, there have been several personnel changes. A new principal began at the start of 2018, a new deputy principal began in 2017, and two new internal appointments have been made to the senior leadership team. The board of trustees has several new first-term representatives.

Leaders and teachers have recently been involved in professional learning and development (PLD) in school-wide literacy strategies focused on writing, the integration of digital technologies, and culturally responsive practices.

The school is a member of the Rotorua Catholic Faith Based Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako (CoL).

## 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?

Achievement data over the last three years shows that most students achieve well at all levels of NCEA and in University Entrance.

In 2017, roll-based achievement data shows that almost all students achieved at NCEA Levels 1 and 2, and most students achieved at NCEA Level 3 and UE. More than three quarters of Aquinas College students achieved merit or excellence endorsements in Level 1, and two thirds achieved merit or excellence endorsements in Levels 2 and 3.

Data over time shows disparity at NCEA Level 3 and in UE where Māori students are achieving less well than their Pākehā peers. Girls continue to outperform boys in University Entrance, however, boys' achievement in both NCEA Level 3 and UE has increased significantly since 2015.

School leavers' data since 2015 shows that most students leave the school with a minimum of a NCEA Level 2 qualification.

The school continues to achieve a number of scholarships each year across a range of subject areas in the New Zealand Scholarship examinations.

The school's 2017 junior achievement data shows that most students in Years 9 and 10 achieved at or above expected curriculum levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics, social science and science. In Year 10, significant disparity exists in all four subjects where girls outperformed boys, and Māori students achieved less well than their Pākehā peers.

Almost all students in Year 7 achieved at or above expected curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 8, almost all students achieved at or above the expected curriculum level in reading, and most students achieved at or above the expected curriculum levels in writing and mathematics. Data over time shows disparity in mathematics where Māori students achieved less

well than Pākehā students. There is also significant disparity in reading and writing where boys achieve less well than girls.

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

The school is able to show accelerated progress for Māori and other students who need this.

The school's achievement data for 2016 and 2017 shows that almost all students who began at Aquinas College in Years 7 or 8, and whose learning was at risk, made sufficient accelerated progress to achieve a minimum of an NCEA Level 2 qualification. This included all Māori students and most boys who remained at the school for at least five years.

## **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?**

Effective systems and processes support student wellbeing. Intensive wrap-around pastoral and guidance networks are in place to promote the positive social and emotional welfare of students. The school provides extra hours of guidance counsellor support and makes good use of appropriate external agencies. School touchstones are highly visible and students describe feeling valued and well supported in a family-like atmosphere. Transition processes into the school include strong links with local schools and a buddy system that pairs senior students with junior students. Restorative practice contributes to the positive relationships evident throughout the school.

A wide range of learning opportunities support a diverse curriculum. Positive relationships are valued and evident in settled classrooms where students learn in respectful and unhurried environments. Students demonstrate a willingness to participate and engage in learning. Aspects of the curriculum allow for some student choice in what and how they learn, and include examples where students learn in meaningful, authentic contexts. Teachers know students well and provide individual and group support inside and outside the lesson times. Students also support one another in their learning. There is a wide range of co-curricular opportunities with high levels of student participation.

Trustees and leaders collaboratively develop and pursue the school's vision and goals. These are clearly communicated. Distributed leadership and a collaborative approach are used to develop staff capacity and shared ownership of the direction of the school. Professional learning is schoolwide and is clearly aligned with annual goals. Purposeful consultation with teachers, parents, whānau and students is helping inform internal evaluation. Trustees have a wide range of useful expertise and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have undertaken appropriate professional learning, including recent workshops on the Treaty of Waitangi and culturally responsive leadership. The school's Catholic character is prioritised through representation on the board and a specific senior leadership portfolio.

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

School leaders and ERO agree that key next steps are to:

- increase the presence of te ao Māori in the curriculum and strengthen te reo and tikanga Māori practices schoolwide
- strengthen the response to individual student needs, particularly for at-risk learners, including Māori and students with additional needs.

## **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 international students**

The school is a signatory to the *Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code.

At the time of this review there were 15 long-stay international students attending the school. The school has effective and supportive systems and practices in place for international students to support their integration into a positive school culture and promote appropriate learning opportunities.

## 4 Going forward

### Key strengths of the school

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

- pastoral care that effectively supports student wellbeing
- learning opportunities that provide a holistic experience for students
- strategic decision-making that provides clear direction and focuses on continuous improvement.

### Next steps

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

- a school curriculum that effectively responds to students' language, culture and identity
- building capacity to address disparity and improve outcomes for priority learners.

### ERO's next external evaluation process and timing

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



Phil Cowie  
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Central Region

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## About the school

Location	Tauranga
Ministry of Education profile number	482
School type	Secondary (Years 7 – 13)
School roll	737
Gender composition	Boys 45% Girls 55%
Ethnic composition	Māori 15% Pākehā 75% Asian 7% Other 3%
Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS)	Yes
Provision of Māori medium education	No
Review team on site	October 2018
Date of this report	23 January 2019
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review September 2015 Education Review September 2012 Education Review October 2010