

Confirmed Report

NEW SCHOOL ASSURANCE REVIEW REPORT
South Auckland Middle School

Location: Manurewa, Auckland

Ministry of Education profile number: 690

New School Assurance Review Report

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1 Introduction

A New School Assurance Review is a review of particular areas of school performance and is undertaken to specific terms of reference.

New School Assurance Reviews are generally undertaken within the first year of the school's opening.

Terms of Reference

This review is based on an evaluation of the performance of South Auckland Middle School. The terms of reference for the review are to provide assurance to the community:

- that the school is well placed to provide for students
- that the school is operating in accordance with the vision articulated by the sponsor.

2 Context

South Auckland Middle School is the one of the first five Partnership Schools Kura Hourua (PSKH) in New Zealand. These schools are a new type of school in the existing network that are designed to bring together the education, business and community sectors to provide new opportunities for students to achieve educational success.

The most significant difference between partnership schools and existing schools (both state and private) is that they are given more flexibility to make decisions about how they operate and use funding to deliver specific targets. Each school is bound by its Partnership Contract with the Crown to deliver defined outcomes, particularly in regard to student achievement and engagement in learning. Quarterly reporting protocols are in place between the sponsor and the Ministry of Education. The performance of the school is also monitored by the PSKH Authorisation Board.

3 Background

South Auckland Middle School provides for students from Years 7 to 10. There are currently 106 students enrolled, almost all of whom are Maōri, Pacific or from a low socio-economic background. The sponsors' vision is to provide a strong academic foundation for students, coupled with an emphasis on personal growth and development.

The school's sponsors serve as the school's business manager and academic advisor. They work closely with the school's principal who has overall responsibility for the teaching and learning programme. An advisory board, the Villa Trust, is in place to support governance. A community liaison officer is seen as an important part of the school's management team.

The school curriculum integrates the essential learning areas of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and uses project-based learning to help students develop cognitive and personal skills.

The school premises in Manurewa, South Auckland provide generous open space for sport and recreation. Attractive classrooms and specialist facilities for science, art and technology have been developed, as well as areas where students are able to work independently.

Nine teaching staff are registered or provisionally registered teachers. They have been recruited for their specific subject expertise. One staff member currently holds Limited Authority to Teach, and teaches music part time. In accordance with contractual undertakings at least 80% of the school curriculum is taught by registered teachers.

4 Findings

Students at South Auckland Middle School are responding positively to teachers' high expectations. Small class sizes, the well organised timetable and teacher expertise in subject areas contribute to a sense of academic purpose for the students. The school curriculum, and teaching and learning practices, clearly reflect the sponsor's philosophy and are aligned with values and key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

The school's curriculum focus on developing inquiry skills within a prescribed area of study is helping students to broaden their knowledge as well as developing their ability to undertake independent study. The curriculum also includes English, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, art and music, and each subject area is linked to the main project for the term. The school's commitment to Christian values is more evident in the school ethos and behavioural expectations than in formal curriculum content.

Teachers encourage students to use digital resources and the school is well equipped to support this model of learning. Students use their independent study time well and are developing useful skills in working together and managing their own learning.

The school day is well paced and purposeful. Physical activity and fitness is a central element in the programme for students and takes place in the afternoons. While younger students may not be accustomed to having separate subject teachers, good processes have been used to establish routines and expectations. Worthwhile induction processes are in place for new students.

Students interviewed were very positive about their experiences at SAMS, including the expectation that they would be involved in community service. They appreciate the respectful supportive relationships evident between adults and students, and among students. School leaders will formally monitor student wellbeing and achievement as part of their contractual undertakings.

The community liaison officer has a background in sports and sports administration. This experience has opened doors in the community and helped to build relationships with families and businesses. A recent strategy, providing parent education sessions on using computers in the home, was very successful. A whānau advisory group is being developed and is a worthwhile initiative to allow parents to have increased input into the school. The sponsors provide meeting spaces in the school to engage community groups further in the life of the school.

Provision for pastoral care is made through the community liaison officer and a part time counsellor. Disciplinary issues have been handled in a way that is consistent with contractual undertakings and Ministry of Education guidelines. Where parents have concerns, the sponsors and principal have a

process in place that allows most matters to be easily resolved. Making the school complaints policy and procedure more publicly available on the school website will be a useful next step.

Careers guidance, particularly for Year 10 students, is in place to help students make considered choices about senior secondary education. School leaders are keen to develop records of students' destinations and future academic success to help them evaluate the effectiveness of the school curriculum.

Student attendance figures are very good and reflect students' engagement in the school. Most students live within 10 kilometres of the school, but 12 percent travel a significant distance to get to school. Student transience is low and occurs mostly as the result of families moving out of the area.

Accessing worthwhile data about student achievement on entry has been challenging. Teachers are developing expertise in using diagnostic assessment tools that will support them to make judgements about student achievement against the National Standards. It will also help them as they design accelerated learning programmes for students whose entry level achievement is significantly below national expectations for their age group.

Reports to parents on students' progress acknowledge effort and achievement in the completion of projects, as well as providing feedback on students' particular skills and interests. The parents of students in Years 7 and 8 receive useful information about progress in regard to National Standards.

School staff are enjoying building a new school within an existing operational framework. The principal's enthusiastic leadership of learning is well supported by the sponsors in their respective roles. There is a culture of collaboration among staff to meet the learning needs of students. Good progress is being made in the school goal of developing a shared understanding of good teaching and learning in the context of this school. Staff are aware of the challenge to make the school curriculum more culturally responsive and to find ways within the curriculum to promote success for Māori as Māori.

School policies and procedures initially developed are now undergoing review as students and staff settle into the school. In reviewing policies and procedures it would be useful to seek staff and student input, particularly in regard to policies that relate to student safety and well being.

The respective roles of the Trust and the sponsors have been clearly defined and there is now a clear foundation for governance as the school continues to grow.

Sponsor assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the sponsor and principal of the school completed the *ERO Sponsor 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:

- school management and reporting
- 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 students' 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

South Auckland Middle School has made a good start to delivering its sponsors' vision of providing pathways to opportunity. Staff and students are working well together and enjoying shared teaching and learning.

ERO is likely to carry out the first full review of the school within 18 months of the school opening as specified in the PSKH contract.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Bailey".

Dale Bailey
National Manager Review Services
Northern Region

About the School

Location	Manurewa, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	690	
School type	Partnership School Kura Hourua	
School roll	106	
Gender composition	Boys 53% Girls 47%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	36%
	NZ European/Pākehā	19%
	Samoan	25%
	Tongan	9%
	other Pacific	5%
	other	6%
Review team on site	August 2014	
Date of this report	15 October 2014	