

# Greymouth High School Education Review

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# 1 Context

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

Greymouth High School is the largest school on the West Coast of the South Island. Students attend the school from a wide geographical area.

This is the first ERO review of the school since the re-establishment of a full board and appointment of a new senior leadership team in 2014. The quality of support provided at statutory and other levels has enabled the school to make the progress needed to resume self governance and leadership.

The board, principal and senior leaders have been proactive about managing changes in the school that focus on strengthening students' learning, achievement and wellbeing. This includes the re-structuring of some roles and responsibilities and the introduction of a range of initiatives, many of which are at an early stage of development. Many new staff have commenced at the school in recent years. The number of students with moderate to high needs is continuing to increase.

A deliberate focus on building constructive relationships with the local community is helping to strengthen links that benefit students and their learning. The strong focus on diverse education pathways, including the academies, is a positive outcome for students and the community. Active involvement with two school clusters, one of which has an e-learning focus, is also helping the school to further develop educational networks, and relationships that are supporting improvements to teaching and learning.

The new board, principal and senior leadership team have participated fully in this education review. ERO's investigations show that they have responded very well to the recommendations for improvement that were identified in the 2014 ERO review. They recognise that although significant progress has been made, considerable work has yet to be done to realise the school's identified strategic goals for ongoing, high quality improvement at school-wide and classroom levels.

## 2 Learning

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

The school is continuing to improve the way achievement information is used to make positive changes to learners' engagement, progress and achievement. Examples of this progress include:

- improved data analysis for setting annual priorities and targets that are well focused, specific and well known by teachers
- better practices for identifying and supporting students who are underperforming
- the increased focus on lifting the achievement of targeted students through more effective tracking and monitoring of their performance
- improvements in the quality, rigour and regularity of reporting student progress and achievement to the board.

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) information reflects a trend of improving achievement at Levels 1 and 2. This data also shows that 2014 NCEA literacy and numeracy achievement is very good. In 2014 Māori students achieved well at Level 1. Over time, Māori achievement across Levels 1 to 3 has fluctuated. Leaders are responsive to the need to raise achievement at NCEA Level 3 for all students, and have initiatives in place to address this.

Other school-wide information indicates a considerable improvement in student engagement. For example, there is a significant reduction in referrals out of class, stand downs and suspensions.

The increased focus on raising literacy achievement for targeted students at Year 9 to accelerate progress should now be extended to other junior students.

### Areas for review and development

Senior and curriculum leaders should now focus on consolidating, embedding and evaluating the impact of recent initiatives and changes to achievement information practices. They should also:

- identify clear expectations and guidelines for the collection, analysis, use and reporting of achievement information of Year 9 and 10 students across learning areas
- increase students' understanding of their own learning and performance against

clearly-identified expectations and progressions of learning across year levels

- review the use of national assessment tools at Years 9 and 10 to ensure that there are reliable, external points of reference for assessing student progress in literacy and mathematics
- continue to improve the consistency and effective use of achievement and other data at senior levels, including making more strategic use of destination data
- extend the strategies currently used for target groups of Māori and other priority learner groups to raise achievement to increasingly higher levels.

### 3 Curriculum

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

Together with ongoing improvements to curriculum programmes and practices, the good range of learning opportunities within and beyond the school is helping to promote and support student learning and engagement.

The curriculum is becoming increasingly flexible and responsive to students' learning needs and interests. Programmes such as distance learning, service and trade academies and other work-related training pathways and opportunities are available. New senior courses in place for 2016 will further expand learning and vocational choices for students. Literacy is a strong focus across the school.

A school-wide framework to strengthen students' understanding of their learning is likely to support the development of the New Zealand Curriculum's key competencies such as critical thinking and self management. ERO recommends that school and curriculum leaders continue to strengthen this framework in ways that challenge, motivate and enable students to be increasingly capable, self-directed learners.

Senior leaders have developed effective walk-through processes for providing teachers with active, targeted and regular feedback about teaching and learning in all classrooms. Teachers appreciate the increasing opportunities they have to adapt curriculum programmes to better meet students' learning needs and interests.

Other improvements made by the school that are likely to benefit students' learning and wellbeing include:

- a range of initiatives for transitions into the school
- the introduction of mentoring programmes
- a comprehensive review of learning support for students with high needs (and the implementation of follow-up improvements)
- investigating cross-curricula collaboration to improve outcomes for targeted students
- the revitalised emphasis and practice by teachers on the skills, strategies and attitudes students need to be positive and successful learners.

A wide range of staff provide students with regular support and guidance for their wellbeing. A number of initiatives are carefully targeted at providing support that matches students' needs. It is now timely for the board and leaders to consider the inclusion of the pastoral care system in the school's review and reporting cycle.

## Areas for review and development

Many aspects of curriculum programmes and practices have been the focus of ongoing improvement. To further strengthen and enrich the school's curriculum, a collaborative review could evaluate and respond to how well the curriculum:

- includes a coherent approach to bicultural perspectives across programmes and practices
- clarifies the purpose, nature and provision of Year 9 and 10 curriculum programmes
- identifies the characteristics of successful learners at Greymouth High School
- meets the needs of senior students' ongoing interests, aspirations and vocational pathways
- encourages and promotes the effective use of student voice in learning and at school-wide levels
- meets the needs of learners in a global, digitally-connected world.

Curriculum leaders' reports to the board should consistently include information about:

- what teachers are doing differently to meet the needs of groups of students who are most at risk of under achievement
- the outcomes of interventions and what has been having the greatest impact on students' learning progress, acceleration and achievement.

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

The school is at an early stage of developing effective approaches for educational success for Māori, as Māori. Examples of progress over recent times include:

- the ongoing development of relationships with the Māori community
- the way some senior leaders and staff are independently building their capacity to understand and use te reo Māori
- the range of opportunities for Māori students to participate in cultural events
- new senior leadership opportunities for Māori students
- the way the board is prioritising representation of Māori views at a governance level.

## Area for review and development

In consultation with Māori whānau and students, the board, principal, senior leaders and staff should now develop a coherent plan for success as Māori at the school. The inclusion of priorities, goals and structures designed to strengthen the language, culture and identity of Māori students over time would be a significant part of such a plan. Progress towards identified goals should then be evaluated through the school's regular cycle of self review and reported to the board and Māori community.

## 4 Sustainable Performance

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

The significant improvements already made and the considerable potential and strengths at governance and leadership levels mean that the school is now better placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The new board is making meaningful progress with building and strengthening its governance capacity and capability. Examples of this include:

- the effective use of external expertise, ongoing training and the development of a useful governance manual to guide board operations
- significant improvements to the school's financial situation
- increased community consultation, especially regarding charter development
- improving scrutiny of achievement and other information reported to the board
- the development of clear priorities and goals for ongoing school improvement and the forward direction of the school.

The board, principal and senior leaders work well together to promote positive outcomes for learners. The principal is effectively leading and modelling a culture of openness, transparency and improvement that is soundly focused on raising achievement and improving student wellbeing. Strategic use of the school's annual plan by the principal and senior leaders is promoting a shared purpose and a more coherent focus on school goals and priorities.

The principal and senior leaders have a deliberate approach to managing the changes that have been occurring at the school. They are well focused on building relational trust. This is leading to improving staff morale, developing leadership capability and improving school systems and practices.

Other improvements include:

- targeted professional learning programmes that are aimed at continuing to raise the quality of teaching and learning practices so that all students benefit
- a more robust appraisal system that places learners at the centre of teacher reflections and inquiry
- the use of high quality external expertise that has helped to identify priorities and actions for improved teaching and learning

- the increasing use of evidence and research-based approaches to lift student progress and achievement.

The ongoing improvement of self-review practices will be further strengthened by evaluating and reporting what is having the greatest impact on positive outcomes for students.

#### Areas for review and development

The board and ERO agree that it is now timely for the board to:

- clarify reporting requirements, and continue to strengthen the board's ability to inquire more deeply into the information presented
- continue to develop rigorous self-review practices that also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of school governance, and of the senior leadership as a team
- increase the leadership capacity of middle managers, and strengthen the collaboration and consistency of practices across leadership groups
- maintain the deliberate pace and momentum of positive change and improvement in a planned way, to support sustainability, staff and student wellbeing and positive relationships across the school.

#### 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

Greymouth High School returned to full self governance and leadership in 2014. Considerable improvements at these levels reflect a significantly increased capacity for effective school management and direction setting. Learners are at the centre of school and classroom improvement initiatives. Student achievement is highest at NCEA Levels 1 and 2. The board and leaders are aware of the next steps the school needs to take to consolidate, and extend the momentum of the good progress being made.

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

Chris Rowe

Deputy Chief Review Officer Southern (Acting)

19 October 2015

## School Statistics

Location	Greymouth	
Ministry of Education profile number	303	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
School roll	541	
Gender composition	Boys 51%; Girls 49%	
Ethnic composition	Pākehā	74%
	Māori	20%
	Other ethnicities	6%
Special Features	Learning Centre for High Needs Students	
	Mawhera Services Academy	
	Lead provider for West Coast Trades Academy	
	Alternative Education Provider	
Review team on site	September 2015	
Date of this report	19 October 2015	
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review	April 2014
	Education Review	February 2013
	Education Review	July 2011