

12 February 2010

To the Parents and Community of Hillcrest Normal School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **Hillcrest Normal School**.

Hillcrest Normal School is a large urban primary school that has close ties with the University of Waikato, particularly in the area of pre-service teacher education. The school has a growing roll and an enrolment scheme has been put in place at the request of the Ministry of Education. Currently, 552 students attend, with 6% being of Māori descent, and 20% Asian.

There is significant ongoing property development, including three additional classrooms, designed to accommodate a curriculum that fully reflects the values and principles of the New Zealand Curriculum, including e learning.

The buildings, grounds and facilities are well presented and equipped to support the holistic development of students in cultural, sporting and academic pursuits that includes a strong focus on the arts. A notable feature of the school is its status as a silver award Enviro School. This context for learning provides many worthwhile experiences for students, engenders pride in the school environment and enables the school to forge further worthwhile links with the local community.

The school sets high expectations for student achievement. Achievement data in reading, writing and mathematics shows that overall, the significant majority of students is achieving at and above expected levels. The recent focus on raising literacy achievement in Years 1 and 2 (2008/2009) has been successful, with 72% of students achieving the expected level in reading after two years at school. Current data (2009) shows further improvement, with 98% achieving the expectation after two years at school.

Learner-centred education is central to the school's ethos. A team of conscientious and skilful teachers provides learning programmes that foster and promote inquiry. They use authentic contexts, acknowledge student diversity and enable students to develop as confident and resilient learners. There are many opportunities for students to assume responsibility and to grow and develop as leaders within a supportive and challenging culture for learning.

The knowledgeable and experienced principal provides inspirational leadership for the school community. Under her leadership, and with support from a professional senior leadership team, there has been exceptional development about best teaching and learning practice and as a result the school is now well placed to implement the New Zealand Curriculum in 2010. School leaders recognise that taking time to embed and sustain teaching practice will enhance continuous improvement.

The board continues to provide effective governance. Sound strategic and financial planning is ensuring that the school is able to achieve its priorities for ongoing educational development in the school.

Future Action

ERO is very confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in four to five years.

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the school or see the ERO website, www.ero.govt.nz.



Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS

About ERO

ERO is an independent, external evaluation agency that undertakes reviews of schools and early childhood services throughout New Zealand.

About ERO Reviews

ERO follows a set of standard procedures to conduct reviews. The purpose of each review is to:

- improve educational achievement in schools; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on student achievement and build on each school's self review.

Review Focus

ERO's framework for reviewing and reporting is based on three review strands.

- **School Specific Priorities** – the quality of education and the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement.
- **Areas of National Interest** – information about how Government policies are working in schools.
- **Compliance with Legal Requirements** – assurance that this school has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

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Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a school is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this school.