



## ERO External Evaluation

### Blue Mountain College, Tapanui

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

Blue Mountain College is a Years 7 to 13 secondary school situated in Tapanui, a rural town in West Otago. Students attend from the surrounding area.

The school's vision is to help every student develop academic and practical life skills to a level of their personal best, through a broad, individualised curriculum.

Valued outcomes are for learners to develop as well-balanced citizens with qualities of personal confidence, self-respect, responsibility and open mindedness.

To achieve these valued outcomes the board has set the strategic priorities of:

- engaging their community
- maintaining and enhancing strong National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) results
- teachers maintaining and growing positive learning relationships.

These strategic priorities are linked to goals that emphasise personalised learning for senior students, progress for students in Years 7 and 8 with particular reference to literacy and numeracy, building resilience as learners for Years 9 and 10 students, and providing appropriate career education for all students.

Leaders and teachers regularly report to the board schoolwide information about outcomes for students in the following areas:

- senior students' achievement in NCEA
- achievement in all learning areas, in relation to expected levels of the *New Zealand Curriculum*
- aspects of wellbeing
- progress for groups targeted for improvement
- success in wider curriculum activities.

Since the 2016 ERO review, all but one of the trustees are new to the board. The senior leadership team is unchanged and there have been some changes in teaching staff. The school is a member of the Pomahaka Kāhui Ako | Community of Learning.

## 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?

The school is very effective in achieving equitable and excellent outcomes for its students.

NCEA achievement for students in Years 11 to 13 shows that between 2016 and 2018:

- almost all students achieved Levels 1 and 2 at their year level
- most students achieved Level 3
- most school leavers achieved at least Level 2
- all students achieved Level 1 literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 12, almost all during Year 11.

Māori students achieved well.

In the junior and middle school there is a pattern of mixed achievement in reading and writing and mathematics. Overtime disparity reduces. This is evident in students' achievement of NCEA and in the way the board, leaders and teachers have implemented deliberate approaches and programmes to improve boys' engagement and subsequent achievement.

Students report that their wellbeing is supported. They achieve many successes in school events, sporting and cultural activities, and competitions.

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

The school can show it effectively accelerates the progress of any students who need this.

Over a two year period, from the beginning of 2017 to the end of 2018, the school was highly effective in accelerating the progress of any Years 7 and 8 students who needed this in reading, and effective in mathematics. The acceleration interventions have been particularly successful for boys.

The school can show that over time it has been highly effective in accelerating the progress of students who need this in reading as they progress from Year 7 through to Year 10.

The school is highly effective in accelerating the progress of the students who need this to gain Level 1 literacy. By mid-2019 almost all Year 11 students had achieved the numeracy and literacy requirements for NCEA Level 1. Half of year 11 students needed to improve in literacy to meet the expectations, and by mid-2019, almost all had done so.

Over time students in Years 9 and 10 needing to accelerate their progress in order to gain NCEA, do so. All NCEA students who have special assessment conditions achieve at their respective levels.

## **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?**

The school is highly effective in providing personalised and inclusive learning opportunities for each student. Learning programmes are increasingly personalised to students' needs, abilities and interests as they progress through the school. Senior students are particularly well supported as they progress within and beyond the school through tracking, monitoring and celebrating their successes. Students with additional needs are cared for as individuals, and their aspirations are known by the teachers. Their programmes are adapted to use a wide range of interventions and resources.

Student assessment for and of learning is meaningful and fit for purpose. Assessments cater for a wide variety of learning styles and occurs in authentic contexts. Teachers and leaders know each student's needs, abilities and interests very well. Students feel valued as individuals and have a strong sense of belonging to their school.

The focus on building and supporting positive learning relationships is evident throughout the school. Agreed values are visible and enacted through the whole school community. Students acknowledge the importance of these values and hold each other to account and strive to enact them in ongoing ways. Māori concepts, such as manaakitanga and whanaugatanga, are an integral part of school culture.

An authentic, responsive curriculum meets the current needs and future pathways of students. Teachers and leaders appropriately prioritise building students' foundations for learning across the curriculum. They do this through developing student engagement and learning to learn strategies. Senior students learn and succeed in meaningful contexts that reflect the local community. They experience a wider curriculum within the school and beyond West Otago through academic, artistic, sporting, cultural and leadership opportunities. This can be seen in local, regional, national and sometimes international contexts. Students have increasing opportunities to learn about aspects of te ao Māori.

Coherent leadership and stewardship for improvement is highly evident. The central focus of leaders, teachers and the board is to promote and support positive outcomes for learners. School goals and objectives are clearly aligned to policies, practices, resourcing and outcomes for students. The board is effective in its governance role in the way it increasingly scrutinises progress and resourcing, caring for individuals, supporting the principal, and promoting its vision for learners. Internal evaluation enables improvement and appropriately focuses on the impact of decisions. It is rigorous and comprehensive, gathering information widely, particularly using and responding to student voice.

Leaders place a strong focus on enabling and supporting staff professional practice and capability building. This includes collaboration and targeted professional learning, teachers mentoring teachers, and leadership development. Deliberate conversations about teaching and learning support reflective professional practice for improvement. Leaders have built useful educationally-focused relationships with other educational and community organisations to increase opportunities for student learning and success.

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

Leaders and the board should continue to strengthen aspects of internal evaluation to sustain improvement. Better use could be made of existing student achievement and progress information the school has for its learners. This should include systematically analysing and reporting valued achievement and progress information for students collectively and in specific groupings. It would be useful for school leaders and the board to know more about the sufficiency of progress that all students (and specific groups of students) are making, within the year and over longer periods of time.

## 3 Other Matters

### Provision for international students

Blue Mountain College 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 was one international student attending the school.

International students are well supported through their induction, language programme and homestay provision. The learning community is inclusive and values other cultures. Students are integrated into the academic and wider life of the school and experience much that the region has to offer.

## 4 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 Children's Act 2014.

## 5 ERO's Overall Judgement

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO's overall evaluation judgement of Blue Mountain College's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Strong

[ERO's Framework: Overall School Performance is available on ERO's website.](#)

## 6 Going forward

Key strengths of the school

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

- the schoolwide provision for student success that is the basis for all decision making
- an inclusive culture that prioritises student progress and achievement through personalised learning
- an authentic curriculum that is responsive to the wellbeing, learning needs of students
- leadership and governance that links strategic priorities to operational processes
- improvement-focused practices that benefit teachers and learners.

Next steps

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

- extending analysis and reporting of students' achievement and progress information over time, and for identified groups, to inform internal evaluation.



Dr Lesley Patterson  
Director Review and Improvement Services Southern  
Southern Region  
10 October 2019

## About the school

|  |   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
|--|---|------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|---------|----|---------------------|----|
| Location                                       | Tapanui   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Ministry of Education profile number           | 391   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| School type                                    | Secondary (Years 7 to 13)   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| School roll                                    | 217   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Gender composition                             | Boys 52%, Girls 48%   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Ethnic composition                             | <table> <tr> <td>Māori</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NZ European/Pākehā</td> <td>82%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pacific</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other ethnic groups</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </table> | Māori            | 13%           | NZ European/Pākehā | 82%         | Pacific | 2% | Other ethnic groups | 3% |
| Māori  | 13%   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| NZ European/Pākehā                             | 82%   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Pacific  | 2%  |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Other ethnic groups                            | 3%  |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Students with Ongoing Resourcing Funding (ORS) | Yes   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Provision of Māori medium education            | No  |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Review team on site                            | August 2019   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Date of this report                            | 10 October 2019   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Most recent ERO reports                        | <table> <tr> <td>Education Review</td> <td>February 2016</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education Review</td> <td>August 2012</td> </tr> </table>  | Education Review | February 2016 | Education Review   | August 2012 |         |    |                     |    |
| Education Review                               | February 2016   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |
| Education Review                               | August 2012   |                  |               |                    |             |         |    |                     |    |