

17 February 2009

To the Parents and Community of Howick Primary School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Howick Primary School.

Howick Primary School board of trustees and principal have, since 2006, led a process of in-depth review and development of the school's strategic vision. The school community now has a shared understanding of the vision, which underpins decision making and strategic planning. Aspects of the vision statement are reflected in teaching and learning programmes and are clearly implemented throughout the school. The collaboratively developed, comprehensive vision document provides a strong foundation for the future direction of the school. The board asked ERO to focus this review on the implementation of the school vision, particularly with regard to its focus on improving students' literacy levels through a targeted school-wide writing programme.

The school benefits from the principal's professional leadership style, which has resulted in the development of an increasingly inclusive and collaborative school culture. The senior management team is taking an appropriately increasing role in school leadership and development. The principal has fostered reflective practice and a commitment to ongoing staff professional development. Self-review processes are well established and a sense of cohesive, purposeful teamwork is evident. The board also accesses appropriate professional advice and support, and has taken steps to ensure that stable and effective governance practices can be sustained.

The clear vision of the board and senior managers, and the school culture of contribution and ownership, is reflected in students' engagement in learning, high levels of social interaction and responsibility, and in their work, which is displayed and celebrated throughout the school. Students report that they enjoy school activities and the variety of opportunities offered, and particularly appreciate changes that have resulted in the recent successes of school sports teams.

Parents and families are included in a variety of school activities and are well informed about developments such as the writing programme and the implementation of a virtues programme. Board members maintain in-class contact with students and teachers and have a good understanding of day-to-day school activities. This parent and board involvement is a positive feature of the school's inclusive learning community.

Teachers have good knowledge about the achievement of students in reading, writing and mathematics. Appropriate school targets are set and teachers use valid and reliable tools to analyse and track school-wide achievement. Teachers in the Montessori unit follow school-wide processes for tracking student achievement in literacy and numeracy. Regular, comprehensive reports to parents and the board show that most students achieve at or above national age-related expectations in mathematics, reading and writing.

As part of its strategic development plan, the school has identified appropriate processes and professional development for 2009 to enhance teaching strategies and incorporate the concept of inquiry learning. This professional support should enable teachers to personalise learning for students to a greater extent and should help them to continue to align curriculum delivery with the school's vision for students to be self-directed learners who are skilled in making decisions about their own learning pathways.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

ERO is likely to review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

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, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

Elizabeth Ellis

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer