

# South Otago High School Education Review

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## About the School

Location	Balclutha	
Ministry of Education profile number	393	
School type	Secondary (Years 9 to 13)	
Decile [1]	6	
School roll	493	
Number of international students	10	
Gender composition	Male 50% Female 50%	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākeha	79%
	Māori	15%
	Asian	2%
	Pacific	1%
	Other	3%
Special Features	Years 7 and 8 technology centre	
Review team on site	September 2011	
Date of this report	31 October 2011	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	September 2009

Education Review  
Education Review

August 2006  
May 2003

## The Purpose of an ERO Report

The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school report answers the question "How effectively is this school's curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?" Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school's systems for sustaining and continuing improvements.

[1]

School deciles range from 1 to 10. Decile 1 schools draw their students from low socio-economic communities and at the other end of the range, decile 10 schools draw their students from high socio-economic communities. Deciles are used to provide funding to state and state integrated schools. The lower the school's decile the more funding it receives. A school's decile is in no way linked to the quality of education it provides.

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# 1 Context

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

South Otago High School has a broad academic, cultural and sporting curriculum designed to cater for the needs and interests of its students, who come from local service towns and rural areas. The school has responded most positively to the 2009 ERO review. It has successfully improved classroom teaching, put in place new approaches to manage students' behaviour and strengthened the recognition of Māori culture. Links between the school and community are strong. Students are encouraged to make the most of the wide range of learning opportunities the school offers. The principal and teachers are pushing all students to achieve as highly as possible. They have developed new ways of linking with the whānau of Māori students to monitor and encourage their achievement.

## 2 Learning

How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Levels of student engagement have increased significantly since the last review. Improvements are most evident in the junior part of the school, the area identified in the last report as needing the most change.

The principal has a clear focus on promoting students' progress and achievement in the junior school to help those students have the greatest chance of success in Year 11 and beyond.

Senior-school National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) data indicates student-achievement levels are comparable to those of similar schools. This is particularly the case for the number of students achieving:

- certificates at Levels 1 and 2
- the literacy and numeracy requirements at Level 1.

Teachers' contribution to student engagement. Staff members take part in professional learning and development (PLD) with an emphasis on improving the quality of their teaching and students' learning. They continually look for new ways to ensure their high expectations for student achievement can be met.

Teachers' strategies to improve levels of student engagement include:

- goal setting to help students take more responsibility for their learning
- a system where junior students gain credits for showing positive attitudes to learning
- well-coordinated pastoral systems, including an increasing use of restorative practices.

Senior managers monitor aspects of teaching through mini-visits to class. Professional discussions around what makes effective teaching are ongoing.

Use of achievement data. Teachers make good use of achievement information to plan ways to meet the needs of students. Teachers and department leaders:

- have purposeful discussions with students about their achievement, goals, and progress
- identify gaps in students' learning and their next learning steps
- plan to address students' learning needs

- focus on raising the achievement of groups of students most at risk of not meeting the school-wide student achievement targets.

#### Area for review and development

Collation, analysis and use of data. Students' opinions are sought and while this provides good information to the principal and teachers, this could be even more useful if the ways the information is collated and analysed are widened. This would strengthen the ability of senior managers to make effective use of school-wide achievement information, including the tracking of progress of student year groups over time. Whenever data is collected, a useful outcome would be to inform students and teachers about what is happening on students' behalf as a result of their views having been collected. Improved collation and analysis of data would also provide a better basis for goal setting with students. The extent and quality of goal setting with and for students could be further developed.

How well does the school promote Māori student success and success as Māori?

The school is well aware of the underachievement and lack of engagement of some Māori students. School leaders and teachers are implementing ongoing strategies to address this. The school is making good progress toward achieving its aims for improving the achievement of Māori students.

Relating with students and whānau. Teachers and senior leaders are establishing clear pathways for learning in all areas with students and their whānau. This typically involves purposeful conversations about each student's learning. The goals set are informed by up-to-date information about the student's learning and engagement. This strategy is working to strengthen relationships with the students and their whānau.

School culture. There has been significant development in the way the school's values and tikanga Māori are promoted by staff and students. This is attributed to a concerted focus on values education by school leaders, teachers and students. The Māori and kapa haka programmes are valued aspects of the life of the school. These provide meaningful opportunities for cultural learning and academic achievement for students and their whānau. Teachers could further benefit from ongoing opportunities to develop their confidence and competence in using te reo and tikanga Māori and by sharing the ways that have been most effective in engaging with Māori students.

Focus on improvement. The school leaders have strengthened their focus on improving learning and achievement for Māori students. Curriculum leaders and classroom teachers are continually reflecting on ways they can improve teaching and learning. Senior managers are

continuing to find more ways to promote the achievement of Māori students. They have made improvements to teaching and learning and improved the quality of information collected about progress towards achieving the target for Māori students.

#### Areas for review and development

Review of effectiveness. Information from staff and students about the quality of learning for Māori students could be more explicitly used to inform departmental and school review. The feedback teachers obtain from students about the quality of their classroom programmes could be collated to provide a more collective view of learning in subject areas and/or year levels. The last ERO report indicated the benefit of extracting the views of Māori students from all information gathered to better inform school review. This is strongly recommended.

Target setting. School leaders are in a good position to strengthen the way the school's target for Māori is to be achieved. The individual-student goal-setting initiative provides a good way for teachers to explicitly show how they are lifting the performance of Māori students in their classrooms, particularly Years 9 and 10 students. Curriculum and subject leaders could make further use of school-wide and classroom achievement data to set targets for Māori achievement, particularly at Years 9 and 10. This should provide a closer alignment across departments and year levels to meet the school's target for Māori students by the end of Year 11.

### 3 Curriculum

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

The school's curriculum effectively promotes engagement and learning for students.

Curriculum definition. The school's curriculum is defined widely with culture and sports used to support and encourage academic achievement. The principles, values and key competencies of The New Zealand Curriculum are strongly evident in teachers' planning and classroom practices. The new behaviour-management initiative encourages students to better manage themselves, relate to others and understand the effect of their actions on others. The school offers a wide range of courses to meet the academic and vocational needs of senior students. Some options are taught remotely via OtagoNet. Other students are able to take advantage of the nearby Telford campus of Lincoln University.

## 4 Sustainable Performance

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

The school is capable of sustaining and improving its performance. Key reasons for this are the significant improvement since the last ERO report and the good levels of student engagement and achievement. Board strategic goals include a clear focus on raising levels of student achievement. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to achieve these goals. Self-review practices have been strengthened, resulting in improved information for trustees' decision making.

### Provision for international students

The school is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code) established under section 238F of the education Act 1989. At the time of this review there were 10 international students attending the school. The school has attested that it complies with all aspects of the Code. ERO's investigations confirmed that the school's self-review process for international students is thorough.

### 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

- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

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

Graham Randell  
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Southern Region

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