



Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Confirmed

NEW SCHOOL ASSURANCE REVIEW REPORT

Central Auckland Specialist School

Location: Mt Roskill, Auckland

Ministry of Education profile number: 840

December 2019

New School Assurance Review Report

Central Auckland Specialist School

1 Introduction

A New School Assurance Review is a review of particular areas of school performance and is undertaken to specific terms of reference.

New School Assurance Reviews are generally undertaken within the first year of the school's opening.

Terms of Reference

This review is based on an evaluation of the performance of Central Auckland Specialist School. The terms of reference for the review are to provide assurance to the community:

- that the school is well placed to provide for students
- that the school is operating in accordance with the vision articulated by the board of trustees.

2 Context

Central Auckland Specialist School (CASS) opened in January 2018. CASS provides education and therapy programmes for students from five to 21 years of age, who have high special educational needs.

Currently 140 students learn in the different sites across CASS. These locations are the base school at Smallfield Road, St Andrews Road (STAR) and satellite classes in Onehunga High School, Waikowhai Intermediate, Balmoral School, Dominion Road School, May Road School and Oranga Primary School.

3 Background

CASS has been established from the merger of the former Carlson and Sunnyside special schools. This has enabled a unique opportunity for sharing expertise, resources and communities to form the new school.

In preparation for the merger, trustees from the two schools initially worked as a combined board. The individual school entities ceased to exist from January 2018. A limited statutory manager (LSM) was appointed in 2017 to support the establishment board with employment and finance matters. This intervention was revoked at the beginning of 2019.

The school's vision is: Inspiring Engagement – Realising Potential. The school's values include Communication, Contribution and Creativity.

4 Findings

Preparatory work to establish the new school has been very well managed, particularly after the principal was appointed at the end of 2017. The pace of change and sequence of development have been well considered and strategically led by the principal. The LSM and a governance facilitator provided good support for the principal and leaders during the early establishment phase.

In 2018, leaders and staff worked collaboratively to establish the CASS vision and values. This work provided a valuable context for staff from both former schools to develop relationships and a shared purpose. The vision and values now underpin the school's ongoing development and direction.

Leaders are committed to developing approaches that are meaningful and fit for purpose across the wide range of staff roles. Therapists, teachers and teacher aides work together to provide students with well-considered learning experiences and programmes. Staff and leaders are developing an increasingly clear understanding of management and leadership roles. Leadership opportunities are being offered to staff across a range of development areas.

During 2019 leaders and staff have worked together to design the CASS curriculum, develop a student leavers' profile, and establish clear expectations around teaching practices in the school's context. These developments are well considered, underpinned by research, and well-aligned with the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC). Useful and relevant frameworks are being implemented to guide learning programmes. The school curriculum is based around core and exploratory learning areas. Core learning area progressions have been developed to guide learning programmes and assessment for individual and groups of students.

Curriculum development has included a rethinking of the school's communication and relationships with parents. As a result, staff and parents are engaging in increasingly learning-focused partnerships, with a strong focus on children's learning programmes and achievement.

The recently elected board now operates under a standard constitution. Trustees are committed to the school's vision and valued outcomes for students. They are very supportive of senior leaders' comprehensive work to establish an innovative curriculum and teaching approaches that are strongly focused on students as learners. Trustees demonstrate a sound understanding of their governance roles. They are guided by relevant systems and documentation. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and tailored to the CASS context. Trustees are continuing to access external training and advice as needed.

The principal and board are working with the Ministry of Education and architects at an early design phase for the construction of purpose-built premises on the school's new confirmed site. The school is not expected to be in this new facility until 2022. In the interim, the Ministry is supporting the refurbishment of aspects of both former base schools to ensure that students and staff work in environments that are conducive to learning. Considerable work is also underway to improve facilities for some satellite classes in their host schools.

Senior leaders have identified relevant next steps that include continuing to:

- embed the curriculum and teaching and learning developments
- develop assessment and reporting of student achievement
- grow the capability of leaders, teachers and the board to evaluate the impact of practices and initiatives on outcomes for learners.

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:

- school management and reporting
- 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 students' 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

Preparatory work for the opening of Central Auckland Specialist School has been very well managed by the establishment board, Limited Statutory Manager, governance facilitator, principal and leaders. An elected board of trustees is now in place and this good management continues. The school is well placed to support students' learning and wellbeing. The charter's vision and valued outcomes are evident in leadership and teaching practices and in inclusive learning environments.

ERO is likely to carry out the first full review of the school by the end of the third year of the school's operation.



Steve Tanner
Director Review and Improvement Services
Northern Region

19 December 2019

About the School

Location	Mt Roskill, Auckland	
Ministry of Education profile number	840	
School type	Special School	
School roll	140	
Gender composition	Boys 67% Girls 33%	
Ethnic composition	Māori	14%
	NZ European/Pākehā	19%
	Samoan	15%
	Indian	9%
	Tongan	8%
	Chinese	6%
	Cook Island Māori	5%
	other Asian	12%
	other Pacific	4%
	other ethnic groups	8%
Review team on site	November 2019	
Date of this report	19 December 2019	