

**EDUCATION REVIEW REPORT:
TUAHIWI COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL**

OCTOBER 2009

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This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

1. About the Centre

Location	Tuahiwi, North Canterbury
Ministry of Education profile number	70478
Type	Education and Care Service
Number licensed for	50 children over two
Roll number	75
Gender composition	Girls 38; Boys 37
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 57; Māori 13; Asian 1; Other 4
Review team on site	June 2009
Date of this report	5 October 2009

2. The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Tuahiwi Community Preschool caters for children aged from two to five years old. In 2008, the original building was replaced by a new purpose-built facility. It is spacious and allows staff to supervise the children effectively. It includes two separate classrooms and utility areas. The children share the outdoor play space and the whānau room. Children are grouped in classes according to their age. They move freely between the classrooms during the self-choice times of the programme.

A parent committee operates the centre. The licensee is also the administrator. In March 2009, a new supervisor started. Qualified and experienced early childhood teachers are employed in each classroom. Teacher aides support children in the programme and tend to domestic duties. This enables the teachers to focus on the children's learning.

Since the 2006 ERO review, the managers and teachers have improved their processes for completing and sharing learning stories with families. They have participated in professional development to increase their knowledge and understanding of te reo and tikanga Māori. Teachers also told ERO that they have a strong team culture that has been further strengthened under the leadership of the new supervisor.

Children participate in positive, friendly and sustained interactions with each other. They enjoy caring, nurturing and affirming relationships with their teachers. Parents often visit the classrooms and share their interests and skills with the children. The preschool maintains a close relationship with the neighbouring school. This includes weekly visits to each other's classrooms.

Other key features of this centre include:

- the wide range of activities and resources available to the children in the classrooms and outdoor areas;
- the varied and interesting programmes that include music, physical activity programmes, brain gym, and regular, planned excursions away from the centre; and
- the teachers' commitment to increasing the use of te reo and tikanga Māori in the programme.

The teachers have identified and ERO agrees that the next step is to involve children more in assessing and planning their learning. This should focus the programme more on children's interests and how teachers help children develop the skills and attitudes for effective life-long learning. More understanding of curriculum self review and a more rigorous staff appraisal system should provide direction to further improve the quality of learning and teaching.

The managers have a few health and safety issues to address. These relate to improving the guidelines for property inspections, developing a racial and sexual harassment policy and ensuring parents agree with ratios for excursions from the centre. Since the onsite stage of the review, centre managers have assured ERO that they have improved these procedures.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

3. Review Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of Tuahiwi Community Preschool was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the centre to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the management and staff. This discussion focused on existing information held by the centre (including self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to positive outcomes for children at Tuahiwi Community Preschool.

All ERO education reviews in early childhood focus on the quality of education. For ERO this includes the quality of:

- the programme provided for children;
- the learning environment; and
- the interactions between children and adults.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

The Quality of Education

Background

The centre philosophy outlines expectations for the quality of education and care that it will provide for children. It states that children will be supported and challenged in their learning. The programme will promote self-esteem and fun. It will empower children while encouraging them to care for and respect each other and the environment. Families and the community will be warmly welcomed and their contributions valued. Children's cultural heritage will also be acknowledged.

Areas of good performance

- *Relationships among children.* Children participate in positive, friendly and sustained interactions with each other. ERO observed children playing cooperatively in small groups. Many children showed considerable skills in negotiating and including other children's ideas into the group's play. Children had opportunities to move freely between the two classrooms. This meant that siblings could play together and all children could benefit from socialising with children who were younger or older than themselves.
- *Relationships between children and teachers.* The centre atmosphere is welcoming and supportive of children, teachers and parents. Children enjoy caring, nurturing and affirming relationships with their teachers. They model these characteristics in their relationships with each other. Teachers work collaboratively. They share information and support each other in the programme. The centre makes good use of part-time staff as relievers. Teachers are well supported by staff who tend to domestic duties so that teachers can focus on being with the children and building relationships.
- *Range of learning experiences.* Children learn and play in an environment that is well resourced and provides many interesting experiences. ERO observed children confidently selecting from resources that are good quality, well maintained and easy to access. Children have regular opportunities to take part in music, physical activity programmes and baking. Parents and other members of the community regularly visit and share their interests and expertise. Teachers also organise excursions to places that they think will interest children.

For example, a visit to the fire station started with children identifying what they thought they would see and, after the visit, comparing this list with what they had seen at the fire station.

- *Bicultural perspectives.* Children have good opportunities to learn about Māori language and culture. Some teachers use te reo Māori regularly in their conversations with children. During group times, children often say their mihi, greet, count and respond to simple commands in te reo Māori. All teachers are committed to improving their skills in this area of the curriculum. They participate in regular professional development, and receive support from the local school and marae. Māori parents also help with pronunciation and protocol. Children in the Kowhai room (four to six year old children) benefit from the inclusion of natural resources and displays that reflect New Zealand's bicultural heritage.
- *Routines.* Teachers make good use of daily routines to help children take responsibility for their own wellbeing and to feel a sense of belonging. They ensure kai and group times are social and enjoyable. They encourage children to wash their hands before meals, collect and return their own lunch boxes and choose where they will sit. Teachers sit with the children and engage them in conversation. Children are familiar with the daily routines and confidently participate in them.
- *Profiles.* Children's profile books are well organised and include a range of information about activities children are involved in. Teachers have clear expectations about what should be included in the profile books. They are given sufficient paid time to complete the books. Profile books include individual and group stories. Some parents add stories and photographs about home events. Children, parents and teachers can easily access the profile books in the classrooms to revisit and share experiences.
- *Links to local school.* The preschool, the teachers at the school and the children have a close relationship. The buildings are located beside each other. The preschool and school children visit each other twice a week. During these times, they join in each other's programmes. Story reading and singing are popular during these times and often include songs and stories in Māori. Preschool children are able to make meaningful connections between what they learn at preschool and what they will learn at school.
- *Centre building.* The centre is new, well designed and spacious for children and staff. Children benefit from a plan that had significant committee, staff and community consultation and support during the project. Children learn in two large classrooms. They share the whānau room and outdoor area. This enables children to build close relationships with their peers and older or younger children in the other classroom. The large covered veranda and range of movable equipment is well used, particularly on wet days. Staff enjoy a separate staff room and resource spaces. Large entry and management spaces provide space for parents to socialise and learn more about the programme and their child's learning.

Areas for improvement

- *Child-focused learning.* Teachers identified, and ERO agreed, that the structured programme planned by the teachers does not effectively incorporate children's interests, dispositions (attitudes to learning) or ways that teachers could build on the learning initiated by the children. Teachers plan programmes around activities and resources that they think will interest children. More discussion with children about the learning occurring and how they want to extend this learning should make the programme more interesting and challenging for children and teachers. Making better use of learning records to identifying closer links between home and centre learning could further strengthen this partnership.
[Recommendation 6.1]
- *Strategies to strengthen children's learning.* ERO observed variation in the quality of interactions that teachers have with children, across the structured and self-choice components of the programme. Some teachers made good use of open-ended questions during group times but did not consistently continue to use these kinds of questions when

working with individuals or small groups. Teachers did not often have sustained conversations with children that promoted problem solving, prediction and deeper thinking. More opportunities for teachers to identify and share good teaching practices, and to critically reflect on their practices, should improve consistency. *[Recommendation 6.2]*

- *Curriculum self review.* Self review has yet to focus sufficiently on children's learning. Curriculum reviews currently focus on improving the equipment and environment. Managers have established practices for reviewing policies and aspects of compliance. They are in the early stages of exploring a range of formats to guide their self-review practices. A better understanding of what constitutes effective curriculum self review, and more challenging and robust staff appraisal, should improve the quality of learning and teaching. *[Recommendation 6.3]*

4. Area of National Interest

Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole through its national reports. This information will be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement.

Māori Children

As part of this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which this service carries out a process to identify and respond to the aspirations and expectations of the parents and whānau of Māori children and focuses on the potential of Māori children to develop as competent and capable learners.

Area of good performance

- *System to find out about parents' aspirations.* Managers ask parents about their aspirations for their children as part of the enrolment process. The information is recorded in the children's profile books.

Area for improvement

- *Making better use of information about parents' aspirations.* Managers and teachers acknowledged that they seldom revisit the information that they gather on parents' aspirations for their children. They need to discuss with Māori parents what they want for their children and how well the programme is helping to achieve this on a more regular basis. This should enable parents to become more involved in decisions about their child and their learning. *[Recommendation 6.4]*

5. Management Assurance on Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the licensee and staff of Tuahiwi Community Preschool completed an ERO *Centre Management Assurance Statement* and *Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they have attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

- administration;
- health, safety and welfare;
- personnel management; and
- financial and property management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on outcomes for children:

- emotional safety (including behaviour management, prevention of bullying and abuse);
- physical safety (including behaviour management, sleeping and supervision practices; accidents and medication; hygiene and routines; travel and excursion policies and procedures);
- staff qualifications and organisation; and
- evacuation procedures and practices for fire and earthquake.

During the course of the review, ERO identified three areas of non-compliance and one area where health and safety could be improved.

Managers have yet to establish procedures to guide staff in dealing with any form of harassment, including racial and sexual harassment. The centre has detailed procedures for preparing for an excursion and identifying potential hazards. However, the consent forms do not state the adult to child ratios so that parents can give written consent to these ratios.

ERO noted that the climbing equipment on the veranda did not always have adequate soft fall (gym mats). The check lists used for regular property inspections provided little information for identifying a hazard. This could mean that hazards were not always consistently identified when different teachers had responsibility for the inspections.

In order to address these, the centre management must:

- 5.1 develop an harassment policy;
[462, s68, s69 Human Rights Act 1993; s108, s117, s118 Employment Relations Act 2000]
- 5.2 ensure that if children are taken on any excursions or activity outside the centre while in the care of the centre the parent or guardian of each child has given written approval of the ratio to be used; and
[3(b) Education (ECC) Regulations 1998]
- 5.3 ensure that as far as reasonably practicable, hazards to the safety of the children are corrected, repaired, removed or made inaccessible to children.
[24(4) Education (ECC) Regulations 1998]

Since the onsite stage of the review centre managers have assured ERO that they have addressed these health and safety issues.

6. Recommendations

In order to improve outcomes for children, ERO and the centre management agreed that:

- 6.1 teachers improve the way they plan the programme to include children's interests and dispositions more effectively;
- 6.2 teachers use strategies to extend children's learning more consistently throughout the programme;
- 6.3 managers and teachers develop and use more effective practices for curriculum self review; and
- 6.4 teachers formalise systems for responding to and revisiting parents' aspirations for their child's learning.

7. Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

5 October 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Tuahiwi Community Preschool

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **Tuahiwi Community Preschool**.

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When ERO has reviewed an early childhood centre we encourage management to inform their community of any follow up action they plan to take. You should talk to the management or licensee if you have any questions about this evaluation, the full ERO report or their future intentions.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the centre or see the ERO website, <http://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 quality of education for children in early childhood centres; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on outcomes for children and build on each centre's self review.

Review Focus

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

- **Quality of Education** – including the quality of the programme provided for children, the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the interactions between staff and children and how these impact on outcomes for children.

- **Additional Review Priorities** – other aspects of the operation of a centre, may be included in the review. ERO will not include this strand in all reviews.
- **Areas of National Interest** – information about how Government policies are working in early childhood centres.
- **Compliance with Legal Requirements** – assurance that this centre has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of centre performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to positive outcomes for children and useful to this centre.

Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a centre 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 centre.