

# Portland Kindergarten Education Review

- About The Centre
- The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation
- Review Priorities
- Areas Of National Interest
- Management Assurance On Compliance Areas
- Recommendations
- Future Action
- Community Page

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

## About The Centre

Location	Portland, Whangarei
Ministry of Education profile number	5016
Type	Free Kindergarten
Number licensed for	30 children over 2 years old
Roll number	33
Gender composition	Girls 16, Boys 17
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 29, Māori 4
Review team on site	November 2008
Date of this report	13 February 2009
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, March 2006 Education Review, December 2002 Assurance Audit, March 1997 Review, April 1991

## The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Portland Kindergarten is a well established early childhood education service. A licence change in 2008 has resulted in longer session hours and an improved teacher to child ratio. Recent development of the playground has significantly enhanced the quality of children's outdoor experiences and has provided a culturally sensitive environment. The newly formed teaching team has participated in professional development together and works collaboratively to provide programmes that are responsive to children's interests. The kindergarten operates under the umbrella of the Northland Kindergarten Association, which provides a policy and management framework and professional support.

Children participate in good quality programmes and are relaxed and confident in the kindergarten. The positive relationships that they share with teachers and their peers encourage social play. Programmes enable children to enjoy early literacy, numeracy and science experiences and teachers support children's interest in music particularly well.

Teachers consistently work with children to encourage their interests and to support their play. Adults foster genuine conversations with children, asking questions that invite thoughtful answers. Teachers continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of te reo me ōna tikanga Māori. Some use te reo Māori confidently in conversations, and integrate the use of Māori words and phrases into mat time and games. Māori values are incorporated in centre practices and are reflected in resources and kindergarten displays. Whānau are pleased with teachers' response to their aspirations for their children to learn te reo.

Teachers are developing effective systems for planning and assessment. They observe children regularly and identify their individual interests. Teachers provide suitable resources and activities to follow up on children's ideas and develop attractive displays of information about learning to share with parents and to further prompt children. Teachers should now increase the focus on their role as adults in helping children to extend their skills and knowledge.

The learning environment is inviting and well resourced. Teachers have used space effectively, providing a wide range of play areas between which children can move easily. Children make very good use of the new sandpit, swings and climbing equipment. Further development of the indoor environment is planned. Teachers should consider improving the variety of books and children's use of the computer. They should also address a small number of health and safety matters.

This report evaluates the quality of education for children, including adults' interactions with children and the learning environment. The report also evaluates the extent to which teachers respond to the aspirations and expectations of the parents and whānau of Māori children.

Several areas of good performance have been identified and some improvements for enhancing practices are suggested. ERO recommends that teachers document a planning framework that will help them to extend children's learning and will prompt them to reflect on Māori interests as part of their self-review processes.

### 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.

## Review Priorities

### The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of Portland Kindergarten 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 Portland Kindergarten.

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

Since the 2006 ERO review, the kindergarten has undergone several changes. Early in 2008, the centre applied for a change in its licence so that it could meet the requirements of a full-day early childhood service. It now provides a 4.5 hour session each day and is staffed with three teachers and a part-time administrator. There has also been a major redevelopment of the outdoor environment. Teachers have recently been involved in professional development to extend their knowledge and understanding of Kei Tua o te Pae, the Ministry of Education early childhood assessment exemplars.

#### Areas of good performance

Wellbeing and belonging. Children are relaxed and confident in the kindergarten. They arrive eager to explore the environment and connect with their friends. They demonstrate trusting relationships with teachers and have high expectations that adults will support them in their play. Children understand rules relating to routines and sun safety and most have effective

strategies for managing their own behaviour. Adults treat children with respect and value their interests. These factors contribute to children's obvious sense of wellbeing and belonging in the kindergarten.

**Programme implementation.** Teachers have developed programmes that provide variety and novelty for children, often integrating literacy, numeracy and science experiences. Children enjoy prolonged periods of uninterrupted play, choosing when they will have snacks or rest if required. A brief morning mat time enables children to celebrate achievements, share news and enjoy music and movement together. Teachers refresh activities throughout the sessions, encourage spontaneous group games and also allow time for solitary exploration. The flexible pace and routines support children to make meaningful choices about their play and help to ensure that they manage the longer sessions well.

**Supportive teachers.** Children benefit from a high level of adult support for their play. Teachers consistently work with children to encourage their initiatives, foster new ideas and suggest possible additional resources. They become involved in games and activities, sharing children's enjoyment and providing opportunities for taking turns and making decisions. Teachers show considerable understanding of children's interests and conscientiously support these with follow-up activities, the purchase of new equipment, or guided research, using reference books or internet information. Children are perceived as capable and independent learners.

**Interactions.** Teachers consistently talk with children about their play. While they often describe things that are happening, teachers also ask questions that help children to explore their own ideas and consider alternatives. Children participate confidently in conversations, knowing that adults will listen to them and be responsive to their contributions. They also interact well with their peers, frequently participating in sustained social play and imaginative games. Children often integrate extensive conversations with related play experiences, developing group skills and learning to negotiate and compromise in a range of contexts.

**Music.** Teachers support children's skills and interest in music very well. Beyond many opportunities for lively song and dance, teachers also foster skills with instruments and song writing. At the time of this review, a small group of children were being encouraged to play guitars and ukuleles and teachers were putting song writing efforts to music so that the songs could be learnt by the whole group. Children showed pride and a sense of accomplishment when their work was celebrated and affirmed in this way.

**Learning environment.** The kindergarten is an inviting learning environment for children. The redevelopment of the playground has incorporated attractive features, such as a koru shaped sandpit with a large central platform. Mature trees have been integrated with landscaping to provide shade, and the layout has been thoughtfully designed to allow spacious areas for

swings and movable climbing equipment. Appealing elements such as a 'mud pie' corner and windows in the wooden fence reflect the effort shown to consider children's interests and curiosity. Although planned indoor renovations have not yet started, the play areas are well organised with a wide range of resources that are easily accessible to children. Teachers make very good use of a covered deck area to extend the scope of indoor activities.

Collaborative programme management. Teachers work cooperatively to manage the programme. They discuss their observations of children each day to identify emerging interests, make decisions about recording narratives, and consider ideas for supporting play. They share the management of assessment portfolios and maintain a system to monitor the frequency of stories for each child. This collaboration has resulted in very good recognition of children's ongoing interests and evidence of follow-up activities that enable children to explore different aspects of a topic or resource. Teachers display many of the narratives they write about children's experiences to foster further interest and to enable parents and whānau to follow the child's progression of learning. Teachers could now build on these good practices by developing some measurable learning intentions that will enhance children's skills and knowledge.

Portfolios. Teachers have developed attractive assessment records for children. Portfolios include some good information for parents and whānau about Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, and about the purposes for the records. Teachers assess children's participation across a wide range of experiences, including their involvement in group activities and excursions. In the best examples of narratives, teachers analyse progression in learning over time and add value to group stories by identifying the contribution of individual children. Families contribute profile information about their children and their aspirations for learning at kindergarten. Teachers encourage families to comment on narratives and add information about home experiences. Portfolios are valuable keepsakes for families and act as good prompts for supporting children's interests.

Strategic planning. Teachers have recently developed a strategic plan that identifies some long-term goals and a range of areas for continued development over the next five years. Staff agree that their next step is to define more measurable goals that could form the basis of an annual action plan. The action plan should enable teachers to monitor progress more effectively so that goals are achieved.

## Areas for improvement

Philosophy statement. Teachers' commitment to extending children's learning is not explicit in the centre's philosophy statement. Although the statement specifies support for children's strengths and interests and identifies teachers' respect for cultures, languages and family contributions, the teaching role is not clear. Teachers should clarify this aspect of their philosophy and identify more specifically their commitment to tikanga and te reo Māori.

Documenting teaching strategies. Teachers record and display considerable information about children's play experiences and interests, but the narratives seldom indicate possible directions for learning extension. Assessment material provides evidence that teachers notice and recognise learning, but often the documented response has been to wait and see what happens next. Teachers could foster more complexity in children's play and support further collaborative problem solving if they planned and initiated stimulating challenges relating to children's interests. It may be useful for teachers to develop a notice, recognise, respond and revisit framework to help them focus on each stage of this strategy for learning and assessment.

Developing play areas. Teachers could improve aspects of some play areas. In particular, they should consider extending the range of non-fiction books available to children and further develop the use of the computer as a learning tool. Teachers have explored various strategies for supporting literacy in the context of play and have found a movable resource trolley a useful means to distribute writing and creative materials throughout the centre. They could now extend children's understanding of the purposes for print by attaching more of children's own stories to their displayed artwork.

Evaluation. Teachers' programme evaluations are based largely on informal shared daily reflections. Although this regular discussion clearly enables staff to consider the effectiveness of programmes, a documented record would help them to revisit decisions, identify significant learning experiences, and clarify ideas for future learning intentions.

Self review. Teachers have not yet established a formal self-review process. They identify a focus topic for self review each term and record their ongoing discussions in staff minutes. Teachers recognise that they should also establish a more extensive, formal review cycle and keep records of their processes, findings and follow-up actions.

## Areas 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.

### Areas of good performance

Ongoing development. Teachers acknowledge their ongoing awareness of biculturalism. Formerly, they were supported by a Māori staff member as they developed skills in te reo and tikanga Māori. Since that staff member has left the centre, teachers have continued to build on their knowledge of te reo Māori vocabulary and to develop resources that incorporate Māori themes or language. This initiative has included the design of the playground, the display of artefacts, posters and signs, and the recognition of cultural protocols in recently developed policies. Some teachers are confidently integrating te reo Māori into their conversations and are using games that involve a sophisticated level of te reo. Children sing waiata enthusiastically, and show familiarity with many phrases and instructions in te reo. These practices provide an environment in which Māori children can feel a sense of belonging.

Community relationships. Teachers have a meaningful relationship with the local Māori community. With practices dating back to a high level of Māori involvement in the establishment of the kindergarten, teachers have welcomed whānau, invited their participation in programme and show respect for protocols in the community. Although only a small number of Māori children currently attend the kindergarten, their parents and whānau express considerable satisfaction with the service. Whānau are pleased with the extent of te reo their children are learning, some noting that the children are also teaching other whānau members. Parents report that they are consulted about their children's learning and have good opportunities to share their aspirations with teachers.

### Area for improvement

Goals for Māori education. Teachers should now formalise goals for improving learning

outcomes for Māori children. Specific goals should become part of strategic planning and intentions that are incorporated in the kindergarten philosophy. Teachers could also reinforce Māori traditions with a pepeha in the portfolios and by establishing a photo board to affirm children's whānau relationships. Teachers agree that they should investigate ways to recognise Matariki and establish this celebration as an annual kindergarten event.

## Management Assurance On Compliance Areas

### Overview

Before the review, the licensee and staff of Portland Kindergarten 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;
- 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.

ERO's investigations did not identify any areas of significant concern. However, in order to further improve practices, teachers should check the environment for any potential earthquake hazards and establish earthquake procedures. They should also secure the kitchen door, and identify the concrete edge of the sandpit as a hazard to be monitored. Teachers should remove any reference to a stationery fee from the parents information leaflet and ensure that required information is displayed with the licence. The Association should provide updated and extended procedures for child abuse prevention and for laying complaints.

## Recommendations

ERO recommends that teachers:

- 6.1 document a planning framework based on the notice, recognise, respond and revisit methodology to enhance their responses to children's interests in ways that extend the children's learning; and
- 6.2 formally include reflection on Māori aspirations as an integral part of all self-review processes.

## 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.

Signed

Elizabeth Ellis

Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

13 February 2009

13 February 2009

To the Parents and Community of Portland Kindergarten

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Portland Kindergarten.

## Community Page

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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>.

Elizabeth Ellis

Area Manager

for 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.