

Onerahi Free Kindergarten Education Review

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Location: Onerahi, Whangarei

Ministry of Education profile number: 5014

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

The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Onerahi Kindergarten, in Whangarei, operates as part of the Northland Kindergarten Association and provides good quality education and care for up to forty children over two years of age. The head teacher is skilled at motivating the comparatively new teaching team to work collaboratively for the benefit of children.

Children participate enthusiastically in the programme. They make choices confidently, play well alongside their peers, and sometimes play collaboratively. Children communicate well with adults, and make good use of opportunities to express themselves creatively.

Teachers' interactions with children are respectful, supportive and caring. They provide good support for the development of children's social and language skills, and their early learning about mathematical and literacy concepts. Teachers have made very good progress in incorporating Māori, and the languages and cultures of other children, into the programme.

The learning environment is attractive, spacious and generally very well resourced. Teachers plan to further resource the centre to stimulate more in-depth exploration of carpentry, science, and information and communication technologies.

Teachers are keen to develop strategies to support children to set challenges, identify research questions and to extend their play. These strategies could assist them to develop a much more stimulating and challenging learning programme based on in-depth, child-initiated exploration of children's emerging strengths and interests.

Parents appreciate the time that teachers spend on assessment portfolios and talking to them about their children. Parents participate willingly in the programme and participate in regular fundraising and social occasions. Teachers could now consider ways to further involve families, children and the community in programme planning.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interest of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again within three years.

Review Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the teaching team of Onerahi Kindergarten was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the kindergarten to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team, head teacher and teachers. This discussion focused on existing information held by the kindergarten (including self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to positive outcomes for children at Onerahi 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.

The teachers suggested that within these areas, ERO could consider the quality of their team work.

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

The Quality of Education

Background

The 2007 ERO report found that teachers supported and resourced children's emerging interests. ERO acknowledged teachers' intention to strengthen their engagement with children and to involve children more in decisions about their learning. The 2007 ERO report also identified the need to make assessment portfolios more family friendly and to include more parent and child comments in learning stories.

The head teacher and most members of the teaching team are comparatively new to the kindergarten.

Areas of good performance

Team work. The head teacher and teaching team have made very good use of professional development to improve the quality of leadership and team work. The head teacher appreciates individual teacher's strengths and uses them effectively. Teachers value and respect each other's capabilities and work well as a team for the benefit of the children. They model respectful and cooperative relationships.

Enthusiastic participators. Children participate enthusiastically in the programme. They confidently make choices, communicate with adults, and express themselves creatively. Most engage well in parallel play, but there are some instances of sustained cooperative play. Higher quality interactions between children are evident when children play collaboratively.

Support. Teachers work at child level. Their interactions with children are respectful, supportive and caring, and child management strategies are effective. Teachers engage children in extended conversations to support their involvement in the programme and to encourage the development of their oral and social skills. They incorporate mathematical concepts incidentally into the programme.

Culturally appropriate programme. Teachers are committed to providing a programme that is culturally inclusive. With Association support, they have made good progress in implementing a comprehensive plan to teach the children phrases, greetings and waiata in te reo Māori. A Mandarin-speaking teacher is skilled at communicating with Chinese children and families, and has taught the staff and children phrases and songs in Mandarin. Parents and children have responded very positively to these initiatives. As teachers' confidence grows, their incidental use of te reo Māori in the programme should also increase.

Environment. The learning environment is attractive, spacious and generally well resourced. Significant improvements have been made to the outdoor area, including extension of the deck to provide a large transitional space between the indoor and outdoor play areas. Several areas of play are particularly well resourced.

Assessment portfolios. Teachers have significantly improved the quality of portfolios and have made them easier for children and parents to read. Teachers sometimes include comments in Māori or record or translate learning stories for parents in the family's home language. Children's input is evident, and children share their portfolios enthusiastically with friends and family members.

Parent input. Teachers have well developed strategies for sharing information about the children with their parents, and encourage parents to contribute to their children's portfolios. They make families feel welcome in the centre, and family and other community members often participate in the programme. Parents have opportunities to participate in education workshops and in regular fundraising and social occasions.

Areas for development and review

More challenging learning environment. Teachers have identified the need to provide children with more challenging opportunities to investigate and explore aspects of science, and to use information and communication technologies. They could also reflect on ways to support children to make more creative use of the carpentry area.

Extending cooperative play. Teachers tend to leave children alone when they are playing well together. It is important for teachers to move between groups of children engaged in play to identify opportunities to foster more complex play and to extend emerging interests.

Increasing child input. Teachers are keen to identify children's interests more specifically and to find out what more children would like to know. They could consider supporting children to set their own challenges and to identify ways to extend their play. These strategies would enable teachers to develop a more stimulating and challenging programme that is based on in-depth exploration of children's interests and ideas.

Making planning more visible. Teachers could use displays to inform parents about the origin and development of children's interests, and about plans to extend these interests. They could also use planning displays to invite and acknowledge the contributions and ideas of children, their families, and the community. .

Enhancing assessment portfolios. Teachers could consider reviewing the extent to which learning stories provide in-depth information about children and the ways in which this information is used. They could also consider cross-referencing portfolio items to highlight the development of children's learning and interests over time.

Documentation of self review. The teaching team has identified the need to improve the documentation of self review and ongoing team reflections about teaching practices. It would also be good practice to develop more comprehensive annual plans for improvement that cover teachers' interactions, the programme, routines and areas of play.

National Evaluation Topics

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.

Literacy Teaching and Learning

When children understand, enjoy, engage with, and use language and symbols they are better able to express their individual identity and become active participants in a literate society. As part of this review ERO looked at literacy practices, particularly the opportunities provided for children to develop strong literacy learning foundations.

In this service, children's literacy learning opportunities include:

- participating in reciprocal conversations;
- experimenting with writing, dictating stories and explanations, and making books;
- using print in the context of play and other meaningful contexts;
- collaboratively constructing plays and performing them;
- for children for whom English is an additional language, learning to speak and sing in English, as well as speaking and writing in their first language;
- learning to recognise, write and spell names, and to recognise the letters of the alphabet;
- with teacher assistance, accessing the internet for information;
- performing waiata and poi, and creatively expressing themselves through art, puppetry, dance, music and active movement; and
- being read to, reading to themselves and others, and using a library bus.

Management Assurance On Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff of Onerahi Kindergarten completed an ERO Centre Management Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. In these documents they have attested that they have 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.

In order to improve current practice, teachers could consider ways to monitor the centre for potential hazards, and ensure that all possible risks are well managed.

Recommendations

ERO agrees with the teachers that they should consider ways to further involve families, children and the community in processes for programme planning.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interest of the children. Therefore ERO is likely to review the service again within three years.

Richard Thornton

National Manager Review Services

Northern Region

About The Centre

Type	Free Kindergarten
Number licensed for	40 children over 2 years old
Roll number	68
Gender composition	Girls 40, Boys 28
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 48, Māori 13, Chinese 4, Australian 1, Cook Island 1, Samoan 1
Review team on site	February 2010
Date of this report	5 May 2010
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, February 2007 Education Review, April 2004 Accountability Review, February 2000 Assurance Audit, March 1994 Review, July 1991

5 May 2010

To the Parents and Community of Onerahi Kindergarten

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Onerahi 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 contact person 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>.

Richard Thornton

National Manager Review Services

Northern Region

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.
- National Evaluation Topics - This strand contribute to the development of education policies and their effective implementation. The information from this strand is aggregated

by ERO for its national evaluation reports. Topics for investigation are changed regularly to provide up-to-date information.

- 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.