



**Education REVIEW REPORT:
SOUTHLAND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL**

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 School

Location	Invercargill
Ministry of Education profile number	405

School type	Secondary (Years 7 to 13)
Decile rating [1]	5
Teaching staff:	
Roll generated entitlement	73.07
Number of teachers	73
School roll	1143
Number of international students	9
Gender composition	Female 100%
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/P•keh• 84%; M•ori 11%; Pacific 2%; Asian 1%; Other 2%
Special features	School Hostel
Review team on site	August 2009
Date of this report	16 October 2009
Previous ERO reports	Education Review, August 2006 Accountability Review, March 2000 Effectiveness Review, February 1996 Assurance Audit, November 1993

2. The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Southland Girls' High School is now a well-established Year 7 to 13 school on a single site in Invercargill. Students from each year level mix well with each other. Their learning occurs across all classroom areas so that the younger students feel fully integrated into the school as a whole.

The school focuses on creating a learning community and on building good quality relationships, and a culture of 'personal excellence' for each student is promoted. The shared aim for each student is to strive for excellence in all aspects of school life: academic, sporting, cultural, service to others and leadership. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for students to achieve this aim. Teachers support the concept of tuakana teina, where older and younger students help and learn from each other in a variety of ways. The high levels of achievement by

students in a wide variety of areas help maintain a high profile for the school in the local community and beyond.

Students achieve well above their peers in similar schools nationally at all levels of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Although it is a decile 5 school, it aims to match its achievement levels to those of decile 8 girls' schools. Over the last four years, students have consistently met these high expectations in certificates gained at Levels 1, 2 and 3, in literacy and numeracy at Level 1, and in gaining University Entrance.

Overall, M•ori students achieve well compared to students in similar schools. All M•ori students enrolled achieved their Level 1 NCEA literacy and numeracy qualifications in 2008. NCEA results show increasingly high levels of achievement for M•ori students over time.

Teachers are making increased use of student achievement information to plan how to improve learning for students. They track students' progress towards the achievement of NCEA certificates. They then analyse in detail how well students have achieved, draw conclusions about strengths and weaknesses, and report to the board how they intend to address the next steps in progress and achievement.

The school's well developed self-review processes make direct links between the strategic directions and what happens for students in the classroom. The school's achievement targets are carefully chosen and linked through appropriate professional learning and development to the expected changes in teaching and learning. Trustees work with senior leaders in the school to maintain a focus on continuous improvement, the resourcing to achieve this, and a robust evaluation of the impact of all initiatives on outcomes for students.

Students receive a high quality of education. ERO observed students highly engaged in the learning that was skilfully facilitated by teachers. Senior leaders in the school have worked with staff to refine the school's curriculum plan so that it now:

- incorporates the vision, values, key competencies and principles of the revised New Zealand Curriculum;
- offers students a range of personal choices as they plan their pathways through learning steps to meet their individual needs; and
- provides a series of well-planned foundations for learning at each level, culminating in Year 13 students being challenged to graduate beyond school with the confidence to make mature, independent decisions about their future.

Teachers provide students with a range of learning, thinking and goal setting strategies that are well used at all levels. They plan many ways to tailor the learning to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the students in each class. Students often have opportunities to make choices and contribute to decisions about their learning.

Trustees, senior leaders and the many middle management groups and individuals who work to

improve practices in teaching, learning and pastoral support lead the school competently. The goals set by the board are implemented at each level of the school's operation. Senior leaders provide clear guidelines, high expectations and useful feedback to staff about the various aspects of teaching and learning. The board assured ERO that it is confidently managing the school's financial position.

Students told ERO they feel safe at the school and well cared for by the staff. The school's highly developed pastoral network supports students effectively. Students are encouraged to develop a high level of independence by the time they are ready to leave Year 13 as confident, life-long learners ready for the challenges beyond school.

Since the 2006 ERO review, the school has maintained its focus on high quality performance and ongoing improvement. Trustees, staff and students work effectively, in their quest for excellence in all areas.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

3. The Focus of the Review

Student Achievement Overall

ERO's education reviews focus on student achievement. What follows is a statement about what the school knows about student achievement overall.

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The school reports that most Years 7 and 8 students achieve well above the national mean in standardised tests for reading. Standardised writing tests are soon to be introduced.

A 2009 report to the board about the achievement of Years 7 and 8 students stated that 16% of Year 7 students were receiving additional support for literacy, with 6% being targeted for extra numeracy support. At Year 8, the figures were eleven and seven percent respectively for literacy and numeracy.

The school's 2008 achievement information for the mathematics strand in Year 7 showed good progression in assessments covering geometry, statistics and measurement. The Year 7 numeracy results at the end of 2008 identified 51% of all students were achieving at or above expectations,

with 6% at the high achievement level. The needs of the 49% not meeting the school's expectations are currently being addressed by a school-based numeracy initiative across Years 7 to 10 to increase teachers' numeracy teaching skills and to streamline teaching and assessment practices across the school. In 2008, the Year 9 and 10 students were not meeting national or the school's own expectations of achievement. The school has therefore included Year 9 and 10 within the numeracy initiative to enhance achievement levels.

The school has been tracking student achievement at Years 7 and 8 in relation to the inquiry skills of questioning, communicating ideas, reflection, evaluation and generating creative ideas. This achievement information is also used to identify students with particular aptitude in the field of inquiry and to monitor their ongoing performance.

NCEA results over the last four years (2005 to 2008) show that students are gaining certificates in all three levels in significantly higher percentages than students in similar schools. The school's stated aim is to achieve as well as a decile 8 school. In many aspects of NCEA achievement Southland Girls' High compares favourably. In 2008, 73.8% of enrolled Year 11 students gained a Level 1 certificate. In Year 12, 87% achieved a Level 2 certificate and in Year 13, 79.7% gained a Level 3 certificate. University Entrance was achieved by 71.2% of eligible students, well above the national comparison for similar schools. In 2008, 100% of M•ori students achieved their literacy and numeracy qualifications at Level 1.

School Specific Priorities

Before the review, the board of Southland Girls' High School was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the school 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 board of trustees. This discussion focused on existing information held by the school (including student achievement and self•review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to the achievement of the students at Southland Girls' High School.

ERO and the board have agreed on the following focus area for the review:

- promoting student engagement and achievement.

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

Promoting Student Engagement and Achievement

Background

The school has developed a framework for teaching the curriculum and a pastoral network to

provide holistically for the needs of all students. These include focusing on ‘learning to learn’ and ‘learning for living’. The board wanted an external view of how well this holistic approach was meeting the varied needs of students.

Areas of good performance

- *Focus on personal excellence.* Students benefit from a learning environment that consistently supports them in aiming for and achieving their own profile of excellence. The school has high expectations of teachers and for students. NCEA results show that a significant percentage of students achieve to much higher levels than students in comparable schools. Many students achieve very well in a wide range of activities beyond the classroom. These many achievements are celebrated in the school. Students told ERO that achieving personal excellence in a wide range of activities is an accepted and important part of the culture of the school.
- *Range of teaching and learning strategies.* Students benefit from teaching practices that range from good to very high quality. ERO observed best practice when learning was student centred, interactive and made up of a variety of activities. Students were more fully engaged in their learning when the purpose of the learning was clear, they had set personal goals for achievement and had helped set the criteria to know when they had been successful. Students who were effectively using a range of information and communication technologies (ICT), such as wiki pages and interactive whiteboards, were increasing their levels of engagement and independence through self-directed learning opportunities.
- *Integrated curriculum.* Students continue to experience a curriculum that provides significant choice and many opportunities to direct their own learning. Teachers continue to refine the way learning is packaged so that students are exposed to the richness of the curriculum through a variety of innovative approaches. Students are encouraged to extend their thinking skills and develop big ideas and key understandings. An increasing focus on the teaching, assessment and reporting of inquiry skills contributes to high levels of student engagement in their learning, particularly in the Years 7 and 8 homeroom programmes.
- *Development of the student’s full potential.* The board, staff and students aim to have each student reach her full potential. Students increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and achievements as they progress through the year levels. They are encouraged to achieve academic, sporting and cultural excellence. Students at all levels of the school have many opportunities for leadership in these aspects of the school’s life.
- *Relationships.* Effective relationships underpin the pursuit of excellence in this learning community. Teachers relate positively to their students as they seek to facilitate rather than direct their learning. Staff collegiality is strong. Support staff work effectively with teachers and managers. Teachers participate in a wide range of professional development initiatives. Participation in staff professional learning groups contributes to teachers being able and

willing to learn from each other. A comprehensive programme for provisionally registered teachers helps them develop effective professional relationships with other staff. Positive relationships among staff support the development of successful learning pathways with and for the students.

- *Tuakana-teina.* The value of tuakana-teina relationships is central to the school's philosophy of teaching and learning within a carefully designed pastoral framework. The organisation of the curriculum allows students to guide and mentor other students and to act as role models. Students are expected to give back to others through the sharing of skills and knowledge. Year 13 students mentor juniors, and Year 9 students participate in peer support initiatives with Year 12 girls. Each year, every student establishes a connection with a girl from the previous year level by writing a personal letter to share learning experiences and expectations.
- *Connected curriculum.* Students benefit from a coherent learning programme that increases their understanding, independence and confidence. Senior leaders have worked with teachers over recent years to develop the school's own curriculum 'grid'. Students experience the full range of learning areas, are engaging with aspects of the revised New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), and make choices among the learning 'packages' available. Students gain increasing levels of knowledge of the learning process and control of their learning goals, as they progress through the school.
- *Student voice.* Students have a range of opportunities to contribute to decisions that affect them. The board, senior leaders, teachers and senior students have all recently sought the views of all or groups of students. Students have an opportunity to have their say about how well their learning is being facilitated by teachers. Students told ERO they knew that their voice was heard because they saw changes in the way things happened as a result.
- *Focus on learning.* Students "learn to learn and learn for living" in an increasingly seamless programme. Flexible timetabling, multi levelling and wide subject choice provide students with opportunities to learn at their appropriate level. Teachers continue to improve and refine learning pathways from Years 7 to 10. Students have many opportunities to be involved in determining the direction of their learning. Student-centred learning is evident in those classes where students help decide what they need to learn and how they will know when they have achieved success. The organisation of the programme for Years 7 and 8 is particularly effective in encouraging students to reflect on their own learning processes. At all levels of the school's operation, processes and practices are being continually refined to support students' learning and achievement.
- *Strategic planning.* The school has well developed self-review processes. There are direct links between the strategic directions set by the board and the detailed reports about what happens for students in the classroom. The school's achievement targets are chosen after careful consideration of the most recent curriculum reports. The actions selected to

achieve these targets are specifically linked through appropriate professional learning and development (PLD) to the expected changes in teaching and learning. Trustees work with senior leaders to maintain a focus on continuous improvement, resourcing, and evaluation of the impact on outcomes for students.

Areas for improvement

ERO and the board agree that these are the next steps for the school.

- *Extending best practice in numeracy in Years 7 to 10.* Teachers need to make better use of current teaching and learning theory and practice in numeracy. The school's achievement data show that students are not progressing at expected rates in Years 7 to 10. Although ERO observed some good teaching practice, there is a need for effective practice to be extended so that all students benefit from the most up-to-date teaching strategies. The school has identified the need for further professional development in numeracy. Teachers are involved in a current initiative, and two teachers are trialling new practices in some Year 8 and 9 classes. All teachers of Years 7 to 10 classes need to use up-to-date teaching strategies in order to improve student achievement in numeracy. *[Recommendation 6.1]*
- *Extending good teaching practice.* Although ERO observed some very effective teaching in most of the classes sampled across the school, the quality of teaching practice in a few other classes was not consistently high. In these classes, students were less likely to be well engaged with their learning. Lack of engagement sometimes happened when students were unsure of the purpose of their learning, or what they needed to do to achieve the expected outcome. Students were also observed to be less involved in their learning if teachers dominated the learning process or did not manage the pace of the lesson well. Senior leaders have developed some good systems for managing teachers' performance and for identifying areas for teacher improvement. Any teacher experiencing ongoing difficulty receives appropriate support. The senior leadership team is determined that no student should be disadvantaged through any teaching that falls short of the school's high standards. *[Recommendation 6.2]*
- *Assessment practices.* Senior leaders and teachers in Years 7 to 10 acknowledge that they have yet to clearly align assessment practices across all learning areas. Teachers plan to complete the school's review of assessment practices before final steps to implement the revised NZC in 2010. Teachers need to extend and clarify the indicators for inquiry learning, create greater consistency across departments in the use of curriculum levels, and refine the ways student achievement information is reported to parents. *[Recommendation 6.3]*
- *Bicultural presence throughout the school.* The board and senior leaders acknowledge that more could be done to promote biculturalism within and across the school. Since the last review, some progress has been made with the establishment of a kapahaka group, and the incorporation of a powhiri at the beginning of the year to welcome new students. Some

curriculum areas have included a bicultural dimension into their planning. These practices need to be extended so that a bicultural perspective is more evident throughout school activities. [*Recommendation 6.4*]

4. Areas of National Interest

Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole to Government to be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement. ERO also provides information about the education sector for schools, parents and the community through its national reports.

To do this ERO decides on topics and investigates them for a specific period in all applicable schools nationally.

During the review of Southland Girls' High School ERO investigated and reported on the following areas of national interest. The findings are included in this report so that information about the school is transparent and widely available.

Success for M•ori Students: Progress

In this review, ERO evaluated the extent to which the school was familiar with the *M•ori Education Strategy – Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success* and progress made since the last review in promoting success at school for M•ori students.

The school reports it has taken *Ka Hikitia* into account when revising planning documents for this year.

Background

At the time of this review, there were 122 M•ori students enrolled at the school, making about 11% of the school population. Overall, M•ori students achieve well compared to students in similar schools nationally, particularly as they progress to the senior school. NCEA achievement results show high and increased levels of achievement for M•ori students over time. This is particularly so for M•ori students studying at NCEA Levels 2 and 3. In 2008, all enrolled M•ori students achieved NCEA literacy and numeracy qualifications. A comparison of NCEA data over time show that non-M•ori students continue to achieve more highly than M•ori students. The board's plans and targets are aimed at raising levels of achievement for all students, including reducing the disparity in achievement for M•ori students.

Areas of progress

- *Individual goals for achievement.* The school closely monitors and supports individual M•ori students to achieve. Teachers are required to review goals that they regularly set with

their M•ori students. M•ori students learn to take increased responsibility for their learning and set pathways to achieve success. M•ori students' achievement is closely monitored. Those at risk of not achieving, or who are not achieving to expected levels, are readily identified. The learning and career pathways of these students are targeted and reviewed. M•ori students spoken with at all year levels said that they benefitted greatly from the *tuakana teina* relationships and the personal levels of support and mentoring between senior and junior students. They also said that they felt well supported and had many opportunities for achieving.

- *Integrating te reo and tikanga M•ori.* The school is increasingly providing an environment in which success for M•ori is fostered. The board's plans outline a range of sound strategies, initiatives and opportunities for promoting success for M•ori students. Trustees and staff seek to meaningfully involve the M•ori students, parents and community in the life of the school. The principal uses and models respect for te reo and tikanga M•ori. M•ori students told ERO that they appreciate the respect demonstrated for their culture.
- *Opportunities for leadership and success.* Students have many opportunities to develop confidence and competence in their skills, talents and abilities. For example, a M•ori students' focus group has identified ways in which M•ori students and their culture may have a greater profile within the school. The school kapahaka group provides increasing opportunities to show students' abilities and celebrate M•ori culture within the school and community. Students participate and compete at significant regional and national M•ori events. Students' educational pathways may be explored through junior and senior M•ori careers forums. Students' educational and social outcomes are enhanced by the involvement of wh•nau and skilled M•ori personnel and role models from other organisations and the wider community.

Area for improvement

- *Strategies for reducing disparity.* Achievement information over time shows that, while M•ori students achieve highly at the school, they continue to achieve less well than their non-M•ori peers. Teachers have undertaken professional development in ways to meaningfully engage M•ori students in their learning and improve M•ori achievement levels. Ongoing teacher learning and development in this area is voluntary. A next step is to ensure all teachers are effectively supported in developing increasing proficiency and competency in the areas of focus identified by the school and by departments for reducing the disparity in achievement for M•ori students.

Recommendation

The board and staff undertake ongoing training to increase their confidence and competence in promoting success for M•ori students.

The Achievement of Pacific Students: Progress

In this review ERO evaluated the progress the school has made since the last review in improving the achievement of its Pacific students and in initiatives designed to promote improved achievement.

Background

At the time of this review, there were 23 Pacific students enrolled at the school. Pacific students make up about 2% of the school population. There are small numbers of Pacific students at each year level.

Area of good performance

- *Focus on individual students.* The school's achievement data indicate that, at all year levels, Pacific students generally achieve well compared to students in similar schools nationally. This reflects the effective monitoring and support processes that are provided for all students. As a result, Pacific students who are at risk of not achieving are quickly identified, closely monitored and supported to improve in their achievement. Opportunities are also provided to support students' wider learning and achievement. For example, some students perform in a Pacific cultural group with students from a neighbouring school.

Area for improvement

- *Plans to promote Pacific achievement.* The school has yet to fully implement its plan for improving the achievement of Pacific students. The board and senior leaders have set a number of specific objectives for improving the achievement of Pacific students. The plan covers a range of initiatives for increasing the engagement of Pacific students in their learning and for involving their families and community in the life of the school. As a result, the school has a strategic plan for Pacific education that provides a sound basis for development and self review.

Recommendation

The board implements its plan for Pacific education.

Preparing to Give Effect to the New Zealand Curriculum

Schools are currently working towards implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* by February 2010. During this review ERO investigated the progress Southland Girls' High School is making towards giving full effect to the curriculum as part of its planning, organisation and teaching practice.

ERO found that school leaders and teachers at Southland Girls' High School are making good progress towards giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in their planning, organisation and teaching.

Including Students with High Needs

During this review ERO investigated the extent to which the board and school leaders of Southland Girls' High School provide an inclusive education for students with high needs. This included collecting evidence about the school's policies, processes and practices to support the enrolment and induction of students with high needs and to support their participation and achievement at school. The information collected during this review will contribute to information that will be reported in a national education evaluation report.

Prior to a review, a board of trustees and principal attest in the Board Assurance Statement that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal requirements including those detailed in Ministry of Education circulars and other documents.

The board of Southland Girls' High School was asked to attest to whether it had *'ensured that teachers of students with disabilities, and other contact staff, have a sound understanding of the learning needs of students with disabilities and, where necessary, have put in place support systems centred on each individual with disabilities.'* The board was also asked to attest that *'policies and procedures that relate to students who have special education needs are implemented without discrimination'*.

ERO's findings confirm these attestations.

Thinking about the Future

ERO is currently discussing with secondary schools how they are thinking about the future and what it might mean for their students.

The school reports that, after thinking about the future and what it might mean for students, it has done the following:

- developed over time a curriculum grid that shows how students from Years 7 to 13 learn to learn and learn for living in a variety of contexts. The sequence of learning is being continually refined. It includes a focus on future visions and laying a foundation for the future; and
- surveyed staff for their views on what constitutes an effective classroom in the 21st century as part of an ongoing consideration of the implications for property development.

In line with the board's focus on future thinking, advocacy and monitoring, and initiatives to promote student achievement, the school is also planning to continue to:

- develop its technological capacity and increase students' capability in the use of new technologies, including opportunities to learn on line;
- extend personalised learning opportunities for individual students as part of its commitment to strive for excellence and to be leaders of learning;
- strengthen the process of the inquiry approach to teaching and learning;
- reflect how curriculum decision making embodies a future focus through making appropriate provision for such issues as sustainability and financial literacy; and
- enhance connections with the wider school community as part of its mission to develop a high quality learning community where relationships count and excellence is expected.

Provision for International Students

Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and the Provision of English Language Support

Southland Girls' High 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. This is a requirement of all schools that enrol international students in terms of the Act. Schools are also required to provide English language support for their international students.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code.

Areas of good performance

- *Pastoral care.* Students receive high levels of individualised care and support during their time at the school. An extensive pastoral network supports their welfare. The experienced director of international students develops strong personal connections with the girls. She is constantly available to support them in and out of school hours. She establishes and maintains very effective relationships with their parents and their homestay families. Students, parents, caregivers and staff have high regard for the level of pastoral support that the director provides. Many view her as fulfilling a significant coparenting role for students far away from home.
- *Accommodation provision.* Students are carefully placed in accommodation that is most likely to meet their developing needs. Many students initially stay in the school hostel, where they receive good levels of peer and adult support. The hostel is often a gathering place for international students, with some choosing to return at weekends for cooking sessions in the hostel kitchen. Students in homestay accommodation appear to be very well integrated into family life. They express high levels of satisfaction with their homestays. Caregivers respond warmly to the needs and interests of the students who live with them.

They establish effective relationships with the girls' families. Many keep in regular contact with former students and their families long after the students have returned home.

- *English language support.* Students have many opportunities to develop their English skills through regular and supplementary classroom programmes. All students participate in a well-structured programme for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). An experienced ESOL teacher delivers the programme. Students receive appropriate individual and small group tuition in ESOL classes to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Their learning is effectively assessed to establish their next learning steps. Assessment records show that students make good progress over time and achieve success in a growing range of ESOL qualifications. An ESOL teacher aide provides additional tutorial support for exam candidates. The school reports that most graduating students meet literacy requirements for university entrance.
- *Additional support.* Students benefit from a range of initiatives designed to support their academic, cultural and sporting interests and needs. Students who require additional support are carefully identified and monitored. Staff members work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for students. Subject-specific assistance is readily available in and out of class time. The principal is part of the tutorial network. Students are encouraged to pursue their cocurricular strengths and to develop new interests. International students receive additional support from their peers, including those with a particular interest in promoting global citizenship.

Area for improvement

- *Compliance review.* The evidential base for the school's regular review of its compliance with the Code could be strengthened so that it better meets the Administrator's expectations. The director acknowledges that there is scope for more consistent use of available templates to record, for example, the outcomes of her ongoing discussions with students and meetings with caregivers. High levels of informal review already occur. Any concerns are promptly addressed.

Recommendation

That the director keeps more detailed records of the process used to show compliance with the Code.

Provision for Students in the School Hostel

In this review ERO evaluated the extent to which the school hostel provides a safe physical and emotional environment that supports learning for students accommodated in the hostel.

School hostels are required to be licensed by the Ministry of Education and comply with

minimum standards specified in the hostel regulations.

The school hostel Enwood House, accommodates 89 students, 8% of the school roll. It is owned by the Southland Girls High School Board of Trustees.

Areas of good performance

- *Relationships among students.* There are warm caring relationships among students. Older students are supportive of younger students. They organise activities for them and help with their studies. Students spoken with by ERO said that students in the hostel were friendly and helpful, and developed close friendships, especially within their year levels. Older girls indicated that they also learned from younger students.
- *Links between hostel and school.* Students benefit from the close and multiple links between hostel and school personnel. A hostel committee comprising of the hostel manger and board of trustees, parent and student representatives meets monthly to discuss hostel matters. The manager has regular contact with senior managers, year level coordinators, the director of international students, and the school counsellors. The hostel is also responsible for running the school canteen.

Area for improvement

- *Evening meal times.* Students and hostel staff need to review the way that time during the evening meal is organised. ERO observed, and girls confirmed, that meal time is often rushed and there is insufficient time to enjoy the meal. Routines around cleaning up after the meal tend to replace the opportunity to relax and enjoy meal time. The layout of the dining room does not help to create a sense of occasion or a family atmosphere. Students spoke highly of the quality of the food provided. They need to have time to be able to fully appreciate it and socialise with their peers.

Recommendation

That the hostel staff and students review and change the way that evening meal times are organised so that they make the most of the opportunity to enjoy the meal and each other's company.

5. Board Assurance on Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of Southland Girls' High School completed an ERO *Board Assurance Statement* and *Self-Audit Checklist*. 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; and
- 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;
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions; and
- attendance.

Compliance

During the course of the review ERO discussed with the board and senior leaders the work to be carried out and reviewed in relation to:

- keeping a file of any complaints;
- the minuting and reporting of the delegation for signing Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) risk forms;
- extending police-vetting procedures; and
- ensuring earthquake drills, as well as the fire drills currently carried out, are recorded, analysed and reported on.

ERO's investigations did not identify any areas of concern.

6. Recommendations

ERO and the board have developed the following recommendations to further improve student achievement. That:

- 6.1 teachers extend best practices in numeracy teaching and evaluate the impact on levels of student achievement and progress over time;
- 6.2 senior leaders and teachers further extend good teaching practices to improve outcomes for students across the school;

6.3 senior leaders and teachers continue to improve the consistency of assessment practices across all learning areas in Years 7 to 10; and

6.4 senior leaders and teachers develop and extend bicultural practices throughout the school.

7. Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

16 October 2009

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To the Parents and Community of Southland Girls' High School

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **Southland Girls' High School**.

Southland Girls' High School is now a well-established Year 7 to 13 school on a single site in Invercargill. Students from each year level mix well with each other. Their learning occurs across all classroom areas so that the younger students feel fully integrated into the school as a whole.

The school focuses on creating a learning community and on building good quality relationships, and a culture of 'personal excellence' for each student is promoted. The shared aim for each

student is to strive for excellence in all aspects of school life: academic, sporting, cultural, service to others and leadership. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for students to achieve this aim. Teachers support the concept of tuakana teina, where older and younger students help and learn from each other in a variety of ways. The high levels of achievement by students in a wide variety of areas help maintain a high profile for the school in the local community and beyond.

Students achieve well above their peers in similar schools nationally at all levels of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Although it is a decile 5 school, it aims to match its achievement levels to those of decile 8 girls' schools. Over the last four years, students have consistently met these high expectations in certificates gained at Levels 1, 2 and 3, in literacy and numeracy at Level 1, and in gaining University Entrance.

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Teachers are making increased use of student achievement information to plan how to improve learning for students. They track students' progress towards the achievement of NCEA certificates. They then analyse in detail how well students have achieved, draw conclusions about strengths and weaknesses, and report to the board how they intend to address the next steps in progress and achievement.

The school's well developed self-review processes make direct links between the strategic directions and what happens for students in the classroom. The school's achievement targets are carefully chosen and linked through appropriate professional learning and development to the expected changes in teaching and learning. Trustees work with senior leaders in the school to maintain a focus on continuous improvement, the resourcing to achieve this, and a robust evaluation of the impact of all initiatives on outcomes for students.

Students receive a high quality of education. ERO observed students highly engaged in the learning that was skilfully facilitated by teachers. Senior leaders in the school have worked with staff to refine the school's curriculum plan so that it now:

- incorporates the vision, values, key competencies and principles of the revised New Zealand Curriculum;
- offers students a range of personal choices as they plan their pathways through learning steps to meet their individual needs; and
- provides a series of well-planned foundations for learning at each level, culminating in Year 13 students being challenged to graduate beyond school with the confidence to make mature, independent decisions about their future.

Teachers provide students with a range of learning, thinking and goal setting strategies that are

well used at all levels. They plan many ways to tailor the learning to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the students in each class. Students often have opportunities to make choices and contribute to decisions about their learning.

Trustees, senior leaders and the many middle management groups and individuals who work to improve practices in teaching, learning and pastoral support lead the school competently. The goals set by the board are implemented at each level of the school's operation. Senior leaders provide clear guidelines, high expectations and useful feedback to staff about the various aspects of teaching and learning. The board assured ERO that it is confidently managing the school's financial position.

Students told ERO they feel safe at the school and well cared for by the staff. The school's highly developed pastoral network supports students effectively. Students are encouraged to develop a high level of independence by the time they are ready to leave Year 13 as confident, life-long learners ready for the challenges beyond school.

Since the 2006 ERO review, the school has maintained its focus on high quality performance and ongoing improvement. Trustees, staff and students work effectively, in their quest for excellence in all areas.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can govern the school in the interest of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report. ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the school or see the ERO website, 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 educational achievement in schools; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on student achievement and build on each school's self review.

Review Focus

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

- **School Specific Priorities** – the quality of education and the impact of school policies and practices on student achievement.
- **Areas of National Interest** – information about how Government policies are working in schools.
- **Compliance with Legal Requirements** – assurance that this school has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

Review Recommendations

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

[\[1\]](#) Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.