

Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke Education Review

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25 July 2012

To the Parents and Community of Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke.

Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke opened in September 2009 and is one of two licences operating out of the same purpose-built facility. The privately-owned centre is located in Plimmerton, north of Wellington. It caters for the needs of infants and toddlers under three years of age.

The centre consists of two developmental groups, Koiti and Mahira. Each group provides age-appropriate programmes. This is the first ERO review of the centre.

The centre's philosophy emphasises the importance of education and care working side-by-side to empower children's learning. Respectful relationships and communication among families, teachers and children are regarded as pivotal.

There is a strong commitment to fostering genuine partnerships with families whose input and contributions are highly valued. Parents are warmly welcomed by staff and a family atmosphere is evident.

The environment clearly promotes children's engagement and independence in learning. The high-quality, purpose-built facility is bright, cheerful and well resourced. There is a safe and inviting space for infants with many sensory and tactile displays. The outdoor area is spacious and attractive with natural resources to develop children's creativity and appreciation of their surroundings. Staff clearly support a sustainable culture and promote healthy eating choices. Nutritional meals and snacks are provided.

The atmosphere is calm and teachers are enthusiastic, warm and caring. Toddlers are relaxed learners who display trust in teachers and their surroundings. Strategies to foster creative thinking and engagement are evident.

The child-centred programme responds to children's strengths and interests. Their well-being and sense of belonging is promoted. Teachers develop authentic experiences, based on play activities, that enable children to explore, engage and be motivated learners. Early literacy and mathematics are thoughtfully integrated at appropriate levels through sounds, non verbal cues, rich oral language and listening skills.

ERO and centre management agree that self review and adding depth to children's learning should continue to be strengthened.

Future Action

ERO is likely to review the service again in three years.

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>.

Joyce Gebbie
National Manager Review Services
Central Region (Acting)

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.
- 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.

Disclaimer

Individual ERO school and early childhood centre reports are public information and may be copied or sent electronically. However, the Education Review Office can guarantee only the authenticity of original documents which have been obtained in hard copy directly from either the local ERO office or ERO National Office in Wellington. Please consult your telephone book, or see the ERO web page, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>, for ERO office addresses.

1 The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

Confirmed Education Review Report: Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke

Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke opened in September 2009 and is one of two licences operating out of the same purpose-built facility. The privately-owned centre is located in Plimmerton, north of Wellington. It caters for the needs of infants and toddlers under three years of age.

The centre consists of two developmental groups, Koiti and Mahira. Each group provides age-appropriate programmes. This is the first ERO review of the centre.

The centre's philosophy emphasises the importance of education and care working side-by-side to empower children's learning. Respectful relationships and communication among families, teachers and children are regarded as pivotal.

There is a strong commitment to fostering genuine partnerships with families whose input and contributions are highly valued. Parents are warmly welcomed by staff and a family atmosphere is evident.

The environment clearly promotes children's engagement and independence in learning. The high-quality, purpose-built facility is bright, cheerful and well resourced. There is a safe and inviting space for infants with many sensory and tactile displays. The outdoor area is spacious and attractive with natural resources to develop children's creativity and appreciation of their surroundings. Staff clearly support a sustainable culture and promote healthy eating choices. Nutritional meals and snacks are provided.

The atmosphere is calm and teachers are enthusiastic, warm and caring. Toddlers are relaxed learners who display trust in teachers and their surroundings. Strategies to foster creative thinking and engagement are evident.

The child-centred programme responds to children's strengths and interests. Their well-being and sense of belonging is promoted. Teachers develop authentic experiences, based on play activities, that enable children to explore, engage and be motivated learners. Early literacy and mathematics are thoughtfully integrated at appropriate levels through sounds, non verbal cues, rich oral language and listening skills.

ERO and centre management agree that self review and adding depth to children's learning should continue to be strengthened.

Future Action

ERO is likely to review the service again in three years.

2 Review Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke 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 Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke.

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 Quality of Education

Background

The centre includes two learning areas, Koiti and Mahira that cater for infants and toddlers. Age-appropriate programmes are provided. Each of the areas is led by an assistant manager.

The teaching team comprises 14 teachers including six provisionally registered teachers and four in training. Staff also work in the adjacent centre for older children to assist with smooth transitions.

This is the centre's first ERO review. On the day of the review there were no infants at the centre.

Areas of strength

Guiding principles

The centre's philosophy appropriately emphasises the importance of education and care working side-by-side to empower children's learning. Respectful relationships and communication among families, teachers and children are regarded as pivotal to children's well-being.

Learning environment

The environment clearly promotes children's engagement and independence in learning. The high-quality, purpose-built facility is bright, cheerful and well resourced.

Indoor areas have ample provision for easy movement to a variety of interesting activities including early literacy resources, nature exploration and imaginative play. Wall displays reflect children's interests and are informative for parents. There is a safe and inviting space for infants, with many sensory and tactile displays. The layout allows them to see and hear their siblings and friends nearby.

The outdoor area is spacious and attractive. Natural resources to develop children's creativity and appreciation of their surroundings, include tending their own edible garden. In keeping with this, the teaching team is exploring the option of introducing a 'Petting Zoo' to provide opportunities for children to care for animals. Staff clearly support a sustainable culture and promote healthy eating choices.

Home partnership

There is a strong commitment to fostering genuine partnerships with families. Their input and contributions are highly valued. Parents are warmly welcomed by staff. They are kept well informed about centre life and their children's progress and learning. Interesting newsletters, email communication and on-line access enhance this provision. Attractive profiles are sent home to encourage parents to participate in their child's learning.

A family atmosphere is evident. Infants and toddlers, along with their teachers, visit each other and participate in group experiences to create a sense of homeliness.

Interactions

The atmosphere is calm and teachers are enthusiastic, warm and caring. High adult-to-child ratios help promote opportunities for quality one-to-one interactions and sustained conversations. Toddlers are relaxed learners who display trust in teachers and their surroundings. Strategies to foster creative thinking and engagement are evident. Teachers model verbal and non-verbal language, encourage children's participation in group sessions and mealtime routines, and recognise sleep needs.

Children are regarded as competent learners capable of decision making. Many teachers allow time for children to respond and develop at their own pace.

Transitions

A very well-considered approach is taken for infants coming into the centre and transitioning to the toddlers' area. The layout of the areas assists this process considerably. Parents

receive informative induction and transition packs. Meetings seek parent input and a four phase approach to transition ensures it is an unhurried and positive experience. A tuakana teina model is fostered.

Programme

The child-centred programme responds to children's strengths and interests. Their well-being and sense of belonging is promoted. Teachers develop authentic experiences, based on play activities, that enable children to explore, engage and be motivated learners.

The narrative approach to planning is used to show children's engagement in the programme and developing friendships. Teachers are committed to quality assessment practices. There is continuity in profile entries showing how teachers respond to emerging interests.

Te reo me ngā tikanga Māori is effectively integrated into conversations. Children are familiar with key vocabulary, waiata and karakia. An attractive wharenuī is a prominent feature in the infants' area. A pōwhiri is conducted for new families and children visit the local marae. The importance of respecting biculturalism is evident.

Early literacy and mathematics are thoughtfully integrated at appropriate levels through sounds, non verbal cues, rich oral language and listening skills.

Leadership and teaching team

The centre manager leads her team effectively. Good guidelines that focus on best practice are provided to teachers. Management meet regularly to discuss centre operations. Teachers regularly communicate in a collaborative manner to share information about children's growth and development. Staff are well supported through robust appraisal. There are private facilities for formal parent and teacher interviews.

Areas for development and review

Self review is valued. A systematic framework has been developed to foster continuous quality improvement. Management have identified that there is a need to enhance the process by:

- clearly distinguishing between development and review
- asking an initial key evaluative question to guide the review.

Expectations for assessment are clear. There is a need to show how all teachers can add more depth and complexity to children's learning to demonstrate progress over time.

3 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff of Sand Dunes Early Learning Centre Harakeke completed an ERO Centre Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

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

During the review, ERO looked at the service's documentation, including policies, procedures and records of recent use of procedures. ERO also checked elements of the following areas that 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.

4 Future Action

ERO is likely to review the service again in three years.

Joyce Gebbie
National Manager Review Services
Central Region (Acting)

About the Centre

Location	Plimmerton
Ministry of Education profile number	45103
Type	Education and Care Service
Licensed under	Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008
Number licensed for	48 children, including up to 25 aged under 2
Roll number	40
Gender composition	Girls 21 Boys 19
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 36 Māori 2 Other ethnic groups 2
Review team on site	June 2012
Date of this report	25 July 2012
Previous three ERO reports	This is the centre's first review