

Sand Dunes Quality Early Learning Centre Education Review

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

About The Centre

Location	Plimmerton, Porirua
Ministry of Education profile number	60064
Type	All Day, Education and Care Service
Number licensed for	Under 2 10 Over 2 27
Roll number	50
Gender composition	Girls 25 Boys 25
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 42 Māori 3 Other ethnic groups 5
Review team on site	April 2007
Date of this report	28 May 2007
Previous ERO reports	First review

The Education Review Office (ero) Evaluation

Sand Dunes Quality Early Learning Centre is purpose built, privately owned and located near Plimmerton in a rapidly developing commercial and residential area. It is an all day facility opened in February 2006, catering for 27 children who are over, and 10 who are under, the age of two. This is its first ERO review.

The centre management employs more staff than is required for licensing. Of the eight full time staff, four are trained and registered teachers, two are in training and another due to start in 2008. Teachers are given four hours a week in which to maintain records on children's learning. The licensee also works at the centre.

This review evaluates the quality of education provided for young children, including the programme, learning environment and interactions between adults and children. The report includes comments on the quality of assessment and areas of compliance related to children's safety and well-being.

Sound strategic and annual plans covering all areas of operation provide a platform for ongoing improvement. A shared understanding of teaching practices underpins the centre philosophy and is evident in the programme in action. Curriculum provision caters appropriately for the range of children's development. This includes activities that incorporate early literacy and numeracy, the use of te reo Māori and a wide range of indoor and outdoor experiences. Suitable transition activities are provided as children move from the under two to over two areas and in preparation for school. The centre is well resourced with appropriate materials that are frequently replaced or replenished to maintain children's interest. The owner/licensee has purchased an adjacent property to expand centre operations.

High quality relationships among staff promote positive and supportive interactions. Children are happy in their play and are friendly and confident with each other and adults. Management and staff encourage and welcome a high level of parent involvement.

The centre caters appropriately for children's learning, strengths and interests. There are clearly documented expectations for the keeping of individual children's profiles. They are attractively presented and provide a comprehensive and informative record of their learning over time.

The licensee and centre management are being proactive in addressing the findings of the review. They have already taken significant steps to improve the standard of health and hygiene routines and are also supporting teachers to be reflective about their practice to improve outcomes for children.

Future Action

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

Review Priorities

The Focus of the Review

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

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

Sand Dunes Quality Early Learning Centre is a privately owned service that opened in February 2006. Management welcomed the opportunity for an external evaluation of the provision made for children enrolled. The centre is an all day facility catering for children from six months to five years of age.

ERO evaluated the quality of education through observing the programme in action, and interviewing key personnel including the owner/licensee, supervising teachers, staff and parents. Related documentation was also considered.

Areas of good performance

- Sound strategic and annual plans covering all areas of operation provide a platform for ongoing improvement. Appropriate policies and procedures have been developed. Under the leadership of the owner/licensee, a collaborative approach to self review is being

established and a culture of reflective practice actively promoted.

- A shared understanding of teaching practices underpins the centre philosophy and is evident in the programme in action. Children are consulted and their input is considered when planning general themes and providing activities that effectively develop their emergent interests. Teachers use many formal and informal avenues, including reflective journals, to discuss how programmes will be implemented to motivate children's learning.
- Programme provision caters appropriately for the different ages and stages of children's development. They experience activities that:
 - incorporate early literacy and numeracy. Children select from a wide range of books which they read on their own, with adults and in groups. Writing is encouraged and exposure to concepts of number, measurement and time is fully utilised in authentic contexts throughout the day;
 - integrate te reo Māori and English. Children are becoming familiar with frequently used greetings and phrases. Protocols, such as karakia before eating and those associated with visiting a marae, show respect for tikanga Māori and foster a growing understanding of New Zealand's bicultural heritage;
 - offer a wide range of well-organised indoor and outdoor activities to provide choice and encourage creativity, exploration and dramatic play. Children move frequently from one activity to another and are meaningfully engaged, often for longer periods of time, independently and in small groups;
 - enrich learning through trips to places of interest. The centre also welcomes visitors who share their knowledge and skills. For example, parents talking about their involvement in emergency services and demonstrating harakeke weaving; and
 - provide suitable transition experiences as children progress through the centre and in preparation for school.
- Routines for children under two, such as mat, meal and sleep times, are well established. Infants and toddlers' developing skills and interests are affirmed in their interactions with teachers. Staff model the use of a wide range of appropriate equipment which invites children's participation and engagement. Daily contact with parents is supplemented by each child's personal home-centre notebook.
- The centre is well resourced with high quality materials. Careful consideration has been given to include child-sized furniture, mirrors and shelving. Equipment set out for inside activities is frequently changed or replenished to maintain children's interest. Readily accessible laminated books and colourful photographic displays show that children's experiences are valued and allow them, and their parents, to revisit prior learning.

- High quality relationships among staff promote positive and supportive interactions. They model rich use of language and show consideration for others. Ongoing conversations with children effectively build on their previous learning.
- Children are happy in their play and are friendly and confident with adults and each other. On arrival they are warmly greeted and, where necessary, assisted to settle into activities. They interact well and many demonstrate the development of good social skills. The older ones are confident, articulate, care for each other and demonstrate a sense of belonging.
- Management and staff encourage and welcome a high level of parent involvement. Teachers are receptive to parent suggestions to ensure continuity of learning experiences for children and reinforce the partnership with homes. Families are invited to contribute to developing policies and procedures through newsletters, information displayed in the foyer and personal contact with staff.

Areas for improvement

- The owner/licensee is aware that:
 - centre practice has moved beyond the initially prepared policies. While these are being reviewed, there is no clear schedule to ensure all are covered in a timely manner; and
 - space, especially for the children under two, is limited. An adjacent property has been purchased to expand centre operations.
- Systems for ensuring suitable levels of cleanliness for health and hygiene are not adequate. For example, during the review:
 - spills on the floor such as water, paint and dough were not promptly cleaned up. Consequently, they were spread throughout the over two area on to carpets and the furniture;
 - tables used for core activities were not appropriately cleaned before being used at mealtimes;
 - the flushing of toilets, cleaning of basins and the collection of bins for used nappies were not timely, particularly on the first day of the review.
- Sun safe practices are not always followed. While staff ensured children used sun block, not all children and no staff wore sun hats. Although there is shade over the sand pit, there is as yet, no other protection from the sun apart from the veranda attached to the building and shadows cast by fences surrounding the centre.

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.

The Quality of Assessment in Early Childhood Services

Background

ERO is currently evaluating the quality of assessment practice in early childhood services.

Educators and parents use assessment information to support children in their learning. They notice, recognise and respond to children's strengths and interests.

The Ministry of Education is currently funding professional development over a five year period starting from 2005. Early childhood services are at varying stages in their understanding and implementation of effective assessment practice.

Areas of good performance

- There are clearly documented expectations for the keeping of individual children's profiles. Staff use a narrative approach to assessment practices that reflects the centre's philosophy and the principles of Te Whāriki, and captures children's learning in context. Generous non-contact time is provided for teachers to complete assessment records, which have been recently reviewed and strengthened by the introduction of a new format for the regular six monthly assessments of all children.
- The centre appropriately caters for children's learning, strengths and interests. Teaching staff have responsibility for maintaining the records for designated children. In addition, other staff contribute entries about activities and interactions. The children's attractively presented portfolios provide a comprehensive and informative record of their learning over time. They contain:
 - regular entries, photographs, work samples and some general information for parents; and
 - feedback on children's knowledge, physical, social, language and attitudinal development.
- This, along with parental input, provides multiple perspectives on children's interests,

progress and development.

Area for improvement

- The evaluation of children's learning is largely descriptive and there is variation in the quality of written entries. While teachers identify what they can do to support children's learning, they do not always clearly identify the child's next steps. The parents' voice section is not always documented.

Management Assurance On Compliance Areas

Overview

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

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

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

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

During the course of the review, ERO identified areas of non-compliance. A number of safety issues relating to cleanliness and hygiene are referred to in the Quality of Education section of this report.

In order to address these, the centre management must:

5.1 Ensure that the premises, furniture, fittings, equipment and materials to which the children have access, are kept safe and hygienic at all times.

[R24(1)(a - c), (k), (n - q), Education (ECC) Regulations 1998]

Recommendation

ERO and the licensee agreed that:

- 6.1 Centre management, together with staff, will:
- ensure all policies and procedures are reviewed in a regular cycle;
- strengthen the monitoring of health and safety procedures; and
- continue to support staff in focused professional development to improve outcomes for children.

Future Action

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

SIGNED

Lennane Kent

Acting Area Manager

for Chief Review Officer

28 May 2007

28 May 2007

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

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

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>.

SIGNED

Lennane Kent

Acting 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.