

# CRHS - Epuni Care and Protection Residence - 11/08/2016

---

## Findings

CRHS – Epuni has a very strong focus on meeting students’ social and emotional needs. Transition in and out, through a close partnership with the CYF residential staff, is a particular strength. The school has identified the need to strengthen evidence-based practice and this should lead to further individualisation of teaching and learning programmes to increase students’ engagement and achievement.

## 1 Context

**What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?**

CRHS - Epuni is at Epuni Child Youth and Family (CYF) Care and Protection Residence, located in Lower Hutt. It provides safe and secure care for up to 20 young people aged from 10 to 17 years. All are severely at risk with varied and complex needs. The average stay in the residence is 100 days.

CYF is responsible for running the residence and Central Regional Health School (CRHS) provides education on-site for the young people. The principal leads CRHS over 14 sites, including the Youth Justice facility Te Au Rere a Te Tonga. A team leader is responsible for the day-to-day running of CRHS - Epuni.

The 12 students enrolled at the time of ERO’s visit were allocated to one coeducational class. Student to teacher ratios are low to allow for attention to students’ individual needs. Teachers are supported in classroom management by CYF residential staff.

## 2 Transitions

**How effectively managed are the transitions students make into residence?**

Transitions students make into the residence are effectively managed. The school has sound processes in place to collect information about incoming students. The CYF case worker provides a range of information that includes history, specialised reports, information on the student’s behaviours and, on occasions, some achievement information.

Where possible the school team leader makes contact with the previous school to determine students' interests, achievement levels and identified strategies effective for their learning. Making such contact can be a challenge as many students have been out of school for some time.

Carefully considered induction processes help students settle into the school and residence. The school begins the transition process with the student while they are still in the residential unit.

The team leader meets with the student and uses the well-designed induction package, which was developed with some input from students, to learn more about the student, their interests, needs, behavioural challenges, and cultural knowledge and affiliations. At this time students are introduced to the expectations that the school has for them. This process may take between one and four days.

Transition processes focus on understanding students' strengths and needs. Communication needs are assessed by the school speech language therapist. She develops a communication plan for each student that includes goals and supports aspects of students' social and emotional wellbeing. The school recognises that behaviour and communication needs are closely related. The speech language therapist assists staff to make the curriculum more accessible for students.

During the first two weeks students' learning needs are assessed. Relevant information is then provided to, and discussed by, teachers. This information, along with teacher observations, is used to write the student's Individual Plan (IP).

### **How effectively managed are the transitions students make out of the residence?**

Transitions out of the residential school are very effectively managed. The over-arching goal for every student is to transition back successfully to mainstream education, further training or employment.

The school and residence case leaders work together closely to promote positive outcomes for the student. They liaise about the support the student will need in the mainstream classroom. A communications passport, that summarises the students' communication needs, is developed collaboratively with students and travels with them to future schools.

Considerable care is taken to ensure that the student has the best possible chance to continue their schooling. The principal negotiates directly with the new school principal to enrol the student. The team leader and residence case worker often travel with the student to the new school on a familiarisation visit.

When the new school is further afield the wider CRHS network may be used to support the student as they transition to a new school. The school is proactive in supporting the new school to access resources from the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) to support the student's transition to, and learning in, the new school.

Transitions are managed flexibly to support individual students' circumstances. On occasions the transition out may be staged with students moving to a Supervised Group Home but continuing to attend the residential school for a time. Another approach has been for the student to remain in the residence for a time while being supported to attend an

outside school. In another case, school staff worked alongside a student in their new school following their transition from the residence.

Both residence and school staff acknowledge that on occasions working in partnership with the student's site case worker and the local CYF office can be a challenge. Decisions made at this level do not always reflect the priorities and recommendations made by the school or residential staff about how to best meet the students' needs.

### **3 Curriculum**

#### **How responsive is the programme to the strengths, needs and interests of each student?**

Teaching and residence staff use a Trauma Informed approach that 'creates opportunities for the young people to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment'. Most of the students come to the residence suffering from trauma.

The presence, participation and then achievement philosophy of the school reflects that of the Ministry, which gives primacy to supporting students' social and emotional wellbeing as a prerequisite for learning.

This philosophy is reflected in the IPs where there is an initial focus on behavioural goals, which the school sees as essential to ensuring the student is ready for learning. Students have a key competency goal relating to managing self on their desks. The teacher and student reflect daily and weekly on progress in achieving this goal.

Teachers model appropriate interactions that are calm, supportive and non-confrontational. A negotiated class treaty provides a framework for appropriate student behaviour.

Although the school has considerable information about individual students' learning and achievement, planning for learning is on a whole-class basis. Teachers keep notes on the needs of individual students. Some differentiation is provided in reading and numeracy, and some choices are available in other curriculum areas. Generally the approach is that students do the same work, but teachers expect different outcomes. Greater opportunities for capable students to manage more of their learning should improve levels of engagement. The favourable adult: child ratios should support teachers in providing individualised teaching and learning.

Learning opportunities for students are broadened by the provision of other activities such as a guitar tutor and some weekly off-site activities. The school makes appropriate use of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu to provide some students with further opportunities that reflect their interests, including study for National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) credits. Some students studying at NCEA level achieve credits in areas such as literacy, numeracy and the visual arts.

The school has identified strengthening cultural responsiveness as a priority and professional learning and development (PLD) is supporting staff in this area. Currently, staff

provide a number of cultural opportunities for students, including karakia, inquiry learning related to tikanga and students' cultural backgrounds, and some weaving.

The school appropriately accesses specialist ancillary support for students using CRHS funding as the Ministry Special Education Strategy and Service Improvement does not provide support for students in residential schools. The school works with the Ministry's Behaviour Support Team to support students transitioning to local schools.

### **How effectively is the programme improving students' engagement and educational achievement?**

During the on-site phase of this ERO evaluation, student engagement was variable. Room layout and size limited the range of engaging pedagogies used. Desks were arranged in rows and the close proximity of students to each other could lead to distraction and disengagement on occasions. More individual space would allow for more individualised, engaging learning.

Much of the teaching observed was whole-class, short blocks of work. Some activities provided for higher levels of student engagement, including an individual student inquiry project, using laptops, with some student choice about the topic. IPs outline learning goals, but students were not aware of these goals and they were not well used by teachers to motivate students.

Students make variable progress overall due to the diverse nature of their experiences and trauma before arriving at the residence. Revisions of IPs show the progress that students make in their social competencies, but leaders and teachers were not able to clearly demonstrate the extent to which students make academic progress. The school could make more effective use of formal assessment data in a way that shows progress since the initial assessment.

The school has identified the need to strengthen evidence-based practice and teachers are engaged in a two-year PLD programme on teaching as inquiry.

## **4 Internal and external relationships**

### **How effectively do internal and external relationships support the programme for each student?**

The relationship between CYF and teaching staff is strong with a focus on the student. Both groups show respect for the contribution the other makes to the students' wellbeing. Teachers work closely with CYF staff to exchange information so as to better meet students' needs.

Daily and weekly planning is shared with CYF, and the IP and the overall CYF plan for the student closely align. They work together on off-site activities such as gym attendance and sports. They participate in joint assemblies to recognise students' achievements.

The residence manager says that she wants to promote more consistency between the school and the residence on approaches to behaviour management.

## **5 Sustainable performance**

### **How effectively do programme leaders conduct internal evaluation?**

As a new provider since ERO's previous review, CRHS has made considerable progress on strengthening internal evaluation since that time.

CRHS has a formalised process for internal evaluation across their 14 sites. The team leader regularly reports to the board through the principal using a template that prompts reflection about achievements, what is going well, what needs to improve, and reporting against the CRHS strategic goals. The school informally reviews its own operations and makes changes responsively.

A similar strengthening of performance management processes is evident. The school now has a suitable appraisal process common to CRHS. Staff have ongoing access as part of CRHS to a wide range of specialised and appropriate PLD to help them to better understand, and cater for, students' particular needs. This generally reflects CRHS priorities although it is possible for a teacher to be assisted to participate in PLD that reflects their individual needs.

### **Board assurance on legal requirements**

Before the recent CRHS review, the board of trustees and principal of the school completed the ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists. 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
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

## Conclusion

CRHS – Epuni has a very strong focus on meeting students’ social and emotional needs. Transition in and out, through a close partnership with the CYF residential staff, is a particular strength. The school has identified the need to strengthen evidence-based practice and this should lead to further individualisation of teaching and learning programmes to increase students’ engagement and achievement.

## Recommendations

Teachers should develop additional strategies to strengthen student engagement in learning through the focus on their individual interests and needs.

ERO and the school identify a need to strengthen evidence-based practice to enable teachers to better evaluate the impact of their teaching strategies on student achievement.

CYF staff should work closely with school staff to develop a behaviour management approach that is more consistent with the high trust model evident at the school.

The timing of the next review will be decided in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Child Youth and Family.

Joyce  
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central

Gebbie

11 August 2016

## About the School

Location	Epuni, Lower Hutt
Profile No	1630 (Central Regional Health School)
School type	Special School
School roll	Up to 20
Special features	Care and Protection facility operated by Child, Youth and Family (CYF)
Review team on site	April 2016
Date of this report	11 August 2016
Most recent ERO reports	Education Review

This is the first review at this residence since CRHS became the education provider.