

CRHS - Te Au Rere a te Tonga Youth Justice - 15/07/2016

Findings

Te Au Rere a te Tonga places a strong focus on meeting the individual learning needs of students to help them to transition back successfully to mainstream education, or training and employment. It provides targeted teaching and a rich curriculum in a supportive environment to achieve this goal. Perceptive internal evaluation identifies key areas that will assist staff to further improve outcomes for students.

1 Context

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

Te Au Rere a te Tonga is a Youth Justice residence located in Palmerston North. It provides 24-hour, safe and secure care for up to 40 young people aged from 14 to 17 years who have been placed by the courts. The school receives little warning of new students arriving and can receive up to ten students in a week. The period the young people are in residence ranges from two days to over a year. The average stay at the time of the review was 24 days.

Child Youth and Family (CYF) is responsible for running the residence and Central Regional Health School (CRHS) provides education on-site for the young people. The principal is responsible for the 14 CRHS sites, including the Epuni Care and Protection facility school. An assistant principal is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Te Au Rere a te Tonga.

Students are divided into three mixed gender classes, which take into account their particular learning needs. 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 the residence?

Student transitions into the residence and school are effectively managed. The student is placed in an assessment unit for the first three days where they are assessed for their education, health and social needs, and strengths and interests.

This process is comprehensive and thorough. Transition is supported by the assessment unit teacher, and a team of CYF specialists, including health and forensic professionals, the case

leader, the site social worker, the whānau engagement coordinator and the CYF employment coordinator. The team work together, closely focusing on, and consulting with, the young person, to determine their education, employment and/or training goals.

Contact is made, where possible, with the previous school, or alternative education provider, for any information about a student's learning and strengths and needs. This is often difficult because the student is likely to have been disengaged from school for a substantial period of time. The CYF whānau engagement coordinator may contact the whānau to learn more about the needs of the young person. Their New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) record of learning is also considered.

At the end of the three days the assessment unit teacher discusses the student with the teachers and identifies the appropriate class, based on their needs and goals. An initial CYF Individual Care Plan (ICP) and school Individual Education Plan (IEP) are developed and aligned.

Teachers are very practiced at building rapport and focus on developing positive relationships with and between students, using a range of effective methods. Each class has an agreed treaty or set of expectations 'of self', 'of others' and 'of staff'. The student-teacher relationship is respectful and supportive of learning.

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

Transitions out of the residential school are a particular strength. The school and CYF case leader work together closely to provide positive outcomes for the student. The school liaises with the CYF social worker in the community that the young person will be transitioning to about the support the student will need in the mainstream or alternative education classroom, or in employment.

A discharge portfolio, that contains comprehensive information about the student, including an overview of education needs, entry and exit assessments for literacy and numeracy, NZQA record of achievement, IEP and work portfolio, is shared with staff at the new school or vocational provider. A communication passport that summarises the student's communication needs, is developed in cooperation with the student and travels with them to future schools. CYF staff value the information the school provides to facilitate the transition process.

The school sometimes successfully assists the new school to access resources from the Ministry of Education to support the student's transition to, and learning in, the new school. The school has recently resourced a person to monitor and report back to CRHS on the outcomes for the student after they have transitioned out. This role includes ongoing contact with some students who have been placed locally. When the student's placement is further afield, neither CYF nor the Ministry provides a mechanism for ongoing monitoring of the student's progress.

School staff acknowledge that on occasions working in partnership with the student's 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, on how to best meet the students' teaching and learning needs.

3 Curriculum

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

Based on information collected in the assessment class, the student is placed in one of three purpose-designed classes.

- Education - This is for young people who wish to return to school or alternative education. The focus is on literacy, numeracy, inquiry learning and science. A high quality of teaching was evident in this class.
- Vocational - This is for students who want to follow a course that will lead to a vocation, but their literacy and numeracy needs improving. The assistant principal acknowledges that the purpose and focus of this group is not well defined and requires further review and improvement. A review of teaching strategies would help strengthen students' ownership of their learning and their engagement.
- Work ready - This is for young people who have little interest in returning to school and would like to enter the work force. Students learn work readiness and independent living skills while continuing to improve their literacy and numeracy. These students are well engaged and motivated.

Overall class planning and the programme are appropriately linked to a student's individual plan. Learning in the morning is based on the student's individual literacy and numeracy needs as identified in their IEP. All teachers provide one-to-one teaching and support in these areas. Students work at an appropriate level and are challenged in a positive way.

The wider programme is related to the students' own interests. They are provided with opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities from across the curriculum that reflect their interests and strengths. Both CYF and school leaders are proactive in finding ways for students to access the curriculum and learning through activities that they would experience in a mainstream school, while taking into consideration safety in this secure environment. Opportunities vary according to the focus of the specific class and include:

- inquiry learning project work based on student interests where the quality of work showed high expectations from teachers and students
- literacy and numeracy and work-based NCEA credits
- hands-on practical learning including science activities
- the use of information technology
- on site Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) and Gateway classes with external providers

- a monthly, three-day programme, which includes STAR and Gateway programmes, designed to meet specific individual or group needs in relation to employment and life skills.

Teachers provide a culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. A staff member teaches te reo Māori to all students. Students have opportunities to mihi and whaikōrero. Some students explore Māori topics in inquiry project work. Good quality Māori art work, much of it by students, is evident throughout the school. A Māori colleague regularly assists teachers to develop their cultural responsiveness and a kuia is present three days a week to support students and staff. The kapa haka group and Tongan and Samoan groups perform at school celebrations.

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

Teaching approaches and the curriculum are effective for engaging these at-risk students. Students are engaged in their learning whether working individually, cooperatively in groups or in whole-class activities. They have clearly identified learning and social competency goals in their IEPs. These goals are evident in two of the three classes where they are displayed on the walls and used as a teaching tool to focus students on their learning. Students are able to state what these goals are and how far away, or close they are to achieving them. Progress towards goals is evaluated regularly, acknowledged and ticked off during class time.

Students who are in the school more than a month are formally assessed at four weekly intervals in literacy and numeracy. Data from these assessments shows that the programme accelerates student achievement, especially in writing and to a lesser extent reading, and numeracy knowledge, but not yet in numeracy strategies. Students feel they are making progress and achieving. Students are achieving credits, licences and/or certificates in work related areas such as first aid, forklift licences, food safety, scaffolding and traffic management.

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 very positive. They work in a mutually respectful, integrated way, with a focus on the needs of the student. They collaborate on the ICP and IEP plans for students, which are comprehensive, closely aligned and coherent. The assessment unit, with its interagency team, strengthens collaboration and raises the quality of the conversations about the young person, their needs, strengths and interests.

There is a consistent and positive approach to student behaviour with a behaviour management system that operates across both the school and residence. The approach

supports the social and emotional wellbeing of students and builds their social competence. Teachers and CYF staff:

- model appropriate behaviour
- provide clear expectations
- allocate consequences which are short term
- reward good behaviour
- acknowledge student achievement at joint celebrations.

The school and residence provide a cohesive curriculum across both environments. School and CYF staff work together to provide some students with work-related experiences and opportunities related to their goals. CYF have an employment coordinator who works with their programme coordinator to provide a vocationally-based programme. This forms a part of the three day programmes that the teachers and CYF staff run together, providing students with opportunities to gain credits or certificates. A further example of collaboration for learning is CYF staff videoing student activities in the residence for teachers to assess as an aspect of the students' school programme.

5 Sustainable performance

How effectively do programme leaders conduct internal evaluation?

CRHS has a formalised process for internal evaluation across their 14 sites. The assistant principal regularly reports to the board, through the principal, using a template that prompts reflection about achievements, what is going well and what needs to improve, reporting against the CRHS strategic goals.

The residential school informally reviews its own operations and responds to emerging needs, providing opportunities to respond rapidly and for ongoing improvement. For example, in 2014 the assistant principal noticed teachers needed professional learning and development (PLD) to accelerate student progress in literacy. A PLD provider was engaged to focus on the use of e-asTTle and effective practice in teaching literacy. Since that PLD, student achievement in literacy has improved. The assistant principal has identified that a next step is development of literacy in other curriculum areas such as science, and this is a focus in 2016.

Other areas for development identified through the school's internal evaluation processes include:

- numeracy teaching
- strengthening teacher inquiry to include all teachers
- increased student agency by sharing more information with students about their learning
- a review of the purpose of the vocation class.

The school's internal evaluation processes focus on improving outcomes for students.

The school has an appropriate performance management process common to CRHS. The quality of peer and self review is variable but generally the process is robust.

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 and school 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 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

Te Au Rere a te Tonga places a strong focus on meeting the individual learning needs of students to help them to transition back successfully to mainstream education, or training and employment. It provides targeted teaching and a rich curriculum in a supportive environment to achieve this goal. Perceptive internal evaluation identifies key areas that will assist staff to further improve outcomes for students.

Recommendations

ERO and the assistant principal agree that the school should review the purpose of the vocational class, and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used with these students, in engaging them in their learning.

CYF and the Ministry should review processes for transitioning out of residential schools to ensure better continuity of learning that meets students' needs

The timing of the next ERO review of Te Au Rere a te Tonga will be decided in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Child Youth and Family.

Joyce Gebbie
Deputy Chief Review Officer Central

15 July 2016

About the School

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| Location | Palmerston North |
| Profile No | 1630 (Central Regional Health School) |
| School type | Special School, |
| School roll | Up to 40 |
| Special features | Youth Justice Residence operated by Child Youth and Family |
| Review team on site | April 2016 |
| Date of this report | 15 July, 2016 |
| Most recent ERO reports | Education Review December 2012 |

CRHS - Te Au Rere a te Tonga Youth Justice reports