

# Provision for Students in Activity Centres

October 2018



**Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa**

The Child – the Heart of the Matter

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## New Zealand Government

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## Background

There are 14 activity centres in New Zealand that cater for secondary school students (Years 9 - 13) who are at risk of disengaging from mainstream schooling and at risk of low educational, social and vocational outcomes (see [Appendix 1](#)). Activity centres are established by agreement of the Minister of Education. Priority is given to those students whose behaviour is likely to impede their own learning and the learning of others, and who are most likely to benefit from the programme. The objectives are to prepare these students to return to their enrolling school, to re-engage with their education and experience success.

The Ministry funds the board of the managing school for the Activity Centre based on a notional roll of 20 students. This includes operational funding at a Decile 1A rate and staffing and management units at a 1:10 ratio. Activity centre enrolments are also counted on their home school roll for funding purposes.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, activity centres were funded approximately \$13,000 per notional student, totalling about \$3.6 million for the year. Students in alternative education were funded approximately \$11,000 per notional student<sup>2</sup> (total of about \$21 million) and secondary school students are funded on average about \$8000 per year.

Students attend centres for varying lengths of time and many more than 20 students pass through each activity centre in each year. In 2016, 429 students attended activity centres, many successfully transitioning back to their enrolling school. In the first half of 2018, 273 students took up the 240 places available across the 14 centres. In this six-month period, 88 percent of students attended for more than three weeks, with the average attendance at 14 weeks. Activity centres have a staffing entitlement that generates a full-time director with two salary units, plus a full-time base scale teaching position.

The specialised learning programme in activity centres is designed to improve student attendance, engagement and achievement at school, improve social outcomes, and achieve successful transitions back to education, further training or employment. Registered teachers, guided by Individual Learning Programmes (ILPs), support students to increase their achievement and engagement in education. The ILP should be responsive to the needs of each student by detailing their learning goals, developed in partnership with the student, teacher, parents and whānau, and the enrolling school. The learning goals should address academic, social and emotional development as well as promoting students' health and wellbeing.

Each activity centre is managed by a school. That school's Board of Trustees (board) holds governance responsibility for the activity centre and provision of a high quality educational service in a physically and emotionally safe learning environment.

ERO reviewed every activity centre to determine **how effective each one was in promoting positive outcomes for students**. The following terms of reference were developed with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and guided the evaluations.

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<sup>1</sup> Activity centre students remain on their enrolling school's roll as the enrolling school is accountable for the student's learning and wellbeing; and many students attend an activity centre for a short period of time.

<sup>2</sup> Note direct comparisons are difficult to make as activity centres' funding includes funding for property, teachers' salaries and the additional units paid. The alternative education notional student funding does not include any allowance for property and tutors do not have to be registered teachers. It does, however, include an allowance for pedagogical leadership and there is an additional allowance, across all alternative education providers, for annual professional learning and development not available to activity centres.

ERO looked at the:

- management and governance practices, including planning, internal evaluation and professional capacity building<sup>3</sup>
- use of information to plan and implement individual programmes for, and with, students, and to monitor their progress
- support for students to achieve improved social and educational outcomes
- educational and social outcomes, including the extent to which students' learning has been accelerated
- students' experience of interagency support for them and their families
- transitions in and out of the activity centre.

In ERO's 2013 review, we found that only one activity centre was using the activity Centre Policy Toolkit that set out the key responsibilities and reporting requirements for activity centres. The quality of provision in activity centres was variable with some major concerns identified. Since the 2013 review of activity centres, the Ministry has replaced the activity Centre Policy Toolkit with a clear Memorandum of Understanding to guide centres in their operations.

For this review, ERO developed **evaluative questions** for each of the domains identified in [School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success](#) (ERO, 2016) and aligned them to the agreed terms of reference. Reviewers used **investigative questions** to prompt discussions and identify good practice associated with each domain. See [Appendix 2](#) for this framework.

Each activity centre received an individual report about their performance. Links to these reports are in [Appendix 1](#). The individual reports and their evidence base inform this national report.

Data was analysed by the review team and activity centres grouped according to a final moderated judgement of performance. The judgements of good or very good were made if processes and outcomes for students were almost all good. Exemplar practice was shared, and anomalies, trends and areas for improvement identified.

ERO's judgements are based on the data held by activity centres and the Ministry of Education. In the absence of long-term outcomes data, ERO was only able to make judgements about how well centres were promoting positive outcomes for these students. As such, this first phase evaluation about the current state of activity centres will be complemented by a wider investigation about the place of activity centres and other alternative education provision in the New Zealand education system.

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<sup>3</sup> Accountability for operational funding was not a part of the scope of this evaluation. Each centre provides the Ministry with an Annual Financial Statement.

## Findings

In the first section of the findings, we summarise the national picture. We focus on students, their experience of the activity centres and the progress they make, and then evaluate the systems in place to enable the effective operation of the activity centres. This study does not identify long-term impacts that attending the activity centres have on students' educational success.

The second section highlights effective practice, illustrating the positive impact on students. ERO acknowledges that good practices are often centre-dependent and may not be directly transferrable. Nevertheless, we share them in the hope they will be useful for others to inform improvements in practice within their own contexts. We also share some inconsistencies we found, areas for improvement and recommendations to enhance provision for these vulnerable students.

### National picture

#### Students' experience

ERO found the majority<sup>4</sup> of activity centres were promoting positive outcomes for their students, effectively transitioning most back into mainstream schooling (a few go on to other training or employment or leave the area). [Appendix 2](#) outlines ERO's criteria for effective promotion of positive outcomes for students enrolled in activity centres.

The first step to promoting positive outcomes is identifying the students most likely to benefit from this sort of intervention. Almost all activity centres had good guidelines and clear processes that enabled teachers and leaders to select the most appropriate students.

The activity centres work on an early intervention model. Schools identify and refer those students who need support as soon as possible. Consequently the majority of students in the centres come from Years 9 and 10. As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), almost all were selected on the basis of behavioural issues that impeded their own and others' learning. Students had fair and equitable access to individual activity centres.

Students reported that staff were compassionate and actively listened to them, and many felt they had been 'heard' for the first time. Students commented that having someone who took time to know them, care for them, and believed in their ability to change was both affirming and motivating. The stability of the relationships between adults and students was an important contributor to students' improvement. A few activity centres noted that when teachers moved on or links with external agency support ceased students became unsettled and found it difficult to maintain their trust in adults.

The welcoming environment and carefully planned transitions helped students settle quickly into the centres. Students, their parents and whānau all understood the different pathways and options available to the students at the activity centres and how the activity centre could support them to re-engage with their learning.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to [Appendix 3](#) for clarification on the terms used in this report to describe quantity.



In a few centres ERO had concerns about the environment. These were being addressed and improvements were underway.

In the majority of the centres, the curriculum was strong, however it was not always well tailored to the individual's needs. Teachers made connections to students' lives, prior understandings, out-of-school experiences and real-world contexts, with the result that most were engaged in their learning. Teachers particularly focused on the development of [key competencies \(NZC\)](#) and students learned to work collaboratively, discussing ideas and reaching conclusions together. Teachers provided timely feedback to students about their progress, particularly relating to achievement in their behavioural characteristics. Feedback usually related to students' goals, their next steps, and what success looked like. Students responded well to feedback, learning to monitor their own behaviour, work productively with others and take increased responsibility for their own learning.

Students were referred to activity centres primarily for behavioural concerns and these were effectively addressed in the centres. Students generally improved their attendance and ability to self regulate. The majority developed their sense of worth and confidence as a learner, and for some, confidence in their identity, language and culture.

Commonly, students' academic focus was on lifting their skills in literacy and numeracy. Over half of the centres could demonstrate improvements in students' literacy and numeracy achievement. Some students worked on and gained [National Certificate of Educational Achievement \(NCEA\)](#) credits.

Given the relatively short time students were enrolled in the activity centres, it was difficult to determine if achievement had been accelerated and improvements could be sustained. Most students reported they were more motivated and better able to learn than when they arrived at the centre, and importantly were keen to re-engage with education in their enrolling schools. Some did have anxiety that a few teachers might not welcome them back or see how they had changed.

*We're concerned that the teachers at school won't recognise the changes we have made and just treat us like before.*

Students

Most activity centres dealt with this through their transition processes. The majority of students successfully returned to school or on to alternative training or education.

The activity centres clearly cater for students who would otherwise most likely be lost from their enrolling schools. Time in the centres gives students an opportunity to reset their social patterns and experience a second chance to engage with their learning. In the short term, activity centres are effective in promoting positive outcomes for most students. Students develop a sense of belonging; of having a place in, and contributing to, a community.

*This is family. It's a place of acceptance.*

*The activity centre hasn't given up on us.*

Students

Students surprised themselves with what they could achieve when they were not distracted, and many became more confident about their future.

*I am actually doing work.*

*I look forward to Friday's test where I can see my improvement.*

*I've changed my choice in words to less swearing like I would when I'm not in school.*

*If I wasn't here, I'd be on the street.*

*I'm not prepared to be a statistic.*

*What makes me happy is that after activity centre I know that I'm still going somewhere rather than not knowing at all.*

Students

*I've never seen him happier to be learning.*

*We need the activity centres for our children to survive.*

Parents

These positive experiences were not limited to the students attending the centres but extended to classmates in their enrolling school too. The centres are valued by principals of the cluster schools.

*We value the operation of the activity centre and would seek to maintain it even if the funding is withdrawn.*

*The activity centre is an integral part of responding to the diverse needs of all of our students.*

*The activity centre operating is a necessary and vital service for the schools. The schools need the programme as it benefits all students.*

Principals

This letter of appreciation sums up what a difference activity centres can make:

*I cannot thank you enough for all your support in helping me pass Level 1. If it wasn't for you I would have no work done and refused to ask for help in class (which I have no problem doing now) Thank you Thank you Thank you.*

Student



## Operation

ERO determined that four of the activity centres were performing well with only minor shortcomings, which staff knew about and were dealing with. Another six were performing satisfactorily though we identified areas for further development. Three had some poor practices but were clearly on improvement trajectories. Only one activity centre was of concern. We recommend additional support from the Ministry for these four centres to establish and maintain necessary improvements.

## Changes since 2013

The introduction of the Memorandum of Understanding has increased managing schools' awareness of their responsibilities. However, issues remain regarding consistent and coordinated provision of support to improve the health and wellbeing of students attending activity centres.

Overall, the next steps suggested in ERO's 2013 report have been addressed. However, there remains a concern about the effectiveness of internal evaluation to inform ongoing improvement.<sup>5</sup>

## Stewardship

The majority of boards of trustees (boards) of managing schools were well informed about their statutory obligations regarding their activity centre and met these. All had a current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry). The written agreements these boards established with their cluster schools were of high quality, and clearly outlined expectations. However, only some of the boards actually checked if these agreements with enrolling schools were upheld.

Almost all of the most effective activity centres had management committees. There were several different models, but commonly they included representatives from each cluster school. For example, one management committee comprised all the guidance counsellors from cluster schools and they were also the liaison people for students attending the centre. Another committee was made up of principals from each cluster school who took turns to chair the committee. This ensured everyone had a clear understanding and shared responsibility for the activity centre.

While some boards included the management of the activity centre in their principal's performance agreement, this was not the norm, nor was the inclusion of the activity centre in their school's strategic planning. Good practice suggests that boards should not treat the centre separately but include it in their school's provision for professional learning and development (PLD), appraisal and resource allocation.

Generally, reports provided to the board informed decisions about resource allocation but were not of sufficient detail to enable evaluation of the centre's overall effectiveness or to identify areas for improvement. *This is an area for future development.*

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<sup>5</sup> See ERO's publication [Effective Internal Evaluation for Improvement](#).

### Leadership

In 2013, ERO identified pedagogical leadership of activity centres as an area for improvement, and it has certainly strengthened since then. High quality leadership promotes teacher learning and development in the majority of activity centres. Most teachers are well qualified and have relevant curriculum and pedagogical knowledge. The majority of centres have coherent performance management processes, identifying and responding to teachers' learning and development needs. Leaders provide teachers with appropriate resources and learning opportunities to inform and support their work. Where ERO found issues regarding appraisal or reflective practice, ERO identified these as areas for improvement in the individual centre's report.

School leaders and activity centre management work closely together to the benefit of students. Leaders have high expectations for student success. They provide activity centre staff with clear guidelines about respectful behaviour management strategies. These guidelines are important, given that a key criterion for referral to activity centres is student behaviour that needs to change to no longer impede but support learning.

Many of the cluster-school principals ERO spoke with commented on the importance of the open and uncompromising nature of communications between activity centres, liaison teachers, enrolling schools, and parents and whānau. The clarity of discussions about students, their needs, strengths and progress helped to realise shared responsibility for each student.

### Establishing the environment

The learning environment was a significant strength in all but a few centres. Interactions within the activity centres were characterised by empathy, relational trust, cooperation and teamwork. Leaders and staff established and managed the environment in ways that supported student participation, engagement and agency in learning. Relationships were respectful and productive; difference and diversity were valued.

Staff in these centres were student-focussed, actively listening to students and reflecting their points of view. The educational environment reflected manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, ako, and mahi tahi.

Consequently, students expressed a sense of security and comfort with being at the centre and generally settled well to their learning.

In most activity centres, staff employed strategies that enhanced students' social skills and sense of belonging. These ranged from students gardening and cleaning the centre to participating in shared mealtimes, and taking responsibility for preparing and the serving food. Students learnt through these life skills to become part of the centre's collaborative learning community.

### Individualised curriculum

Most activity centres had sound processes for gathering useful information about the students referred to them. Sources of information included enrolling schools, parents and whānau, and agencies who had worked with the students. When they arrived, teachers talked with students about their interests, strengths, what they perceived they needed to work on, and what helped them to learn.

Staff in most centres were very good at establishing the specific priorities for students with behavioural challenges, or physical, sensory, psychological, neurological or intellectual impairments. Only half of the activity centres actively identified specific cultural needs or aspirations for Māori or Pacific students. *This is an area for future development.*

Information gained through these transition processes informed the development of Individual Learning Programmes (ILPs) quite promptly after the student's arrival at the centre. However, the ILPs were not always of high quality. While half of the activity centres developed ILPs that met the minimum standards set out in the MoU, even these were variable in their usefulness. Certainly most had specific and measurable goals, especially focusing on building self-esteem and self-regulation but only some included career planning or a focus on te ao Māori for relevant students.

ILPs are intended to guide the curriculum, tailored to the individual needs of each student, and yet the curriculum in some centres did not align tasks, teaching activities and resources to individual students' learning priorities. Some centres made good use of external programmes (for example Te Kura<sup>6</sup>) to supplement curriculum choices. Typically, these were literacy, numeracy and life skills units of work. One activity centre made use of trade-related units from a tertiary provider. A few activity centres reported that students found it hard to complete the tasks on their own, and especially so if they were online. While ERO recognises it is challenging to cater for those students who attend the centre only for a relatively short period of time, some centres need to look more closely at the appropriateness of their curriculum design. *This is an area for future development.*

The majority of teachers and students formally and regularly reviewed progress towards goals in ILPs. This practice helped students become aware of, and take pride in, their achievements and learn to manage their work. Generally, the goals were revised in line with students' progress and ongoing needs.

### Managing return to school

Sound transition processes supported students on their return to school. Several strategies were common across the centres. Many carefully planned each student's transition, working with a liaison teacher in the enrolling school. The liaison teacher worked in turn with teachers in the school, appraising them of the student's progress and how to best support them on their return to class. Where transitions worked particularly smoothly there had been strong, ongoing connections with the enrolling school, for example, teachers or guidance counsellors visited students in the centre, or the centre sent regular reports of students' progress to enrolling schools. These schools and centres had a shared responsibility for the student. This was often clearly defined in the written agreements with cluster schools.

Students and adults collaborated to develop good transition plans. These ensured continuity of interagency support as students returned to school and clarity for parents and whānau.

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<sup>6</sup> There is an example of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School (Te Kura) programmes being used exceptionally well in a later section of this report.

A few plans also included career pathways mapped out with students that enhanced their confidence and sense of purpose as they re-engaged with mainstream schooling.

Some centres kept in touch with students either directly or through the liaison teacher to monitor their progress back in the mainstream school. Occasionally students even returned to the centre for a brief refocusing if they had regressed or needed additional support, sometimes at their own request. The flexibility shown by these activity centres supported students to sustain improvements.

### Evaluation for improvement

The majority of centres collected valid data about students' progress appropriately collecting information from parents and whānau, agencies who may have been working with students, teachers and the students themselves. Reports to boards typically included sufficient information for them to identify students' progress, understand challenges and make informed decisions about resource allocation.

Most centres could demonstrate the achievement of intermediate outcomes for students: improvements in behaviour, re-engagement with learning and successful transitions back to school, education or further training. This information did not usually extend to achievement of the longer-term objective for students' education success after returning to school, nor was it used to inform internal evaluation to improve practice within the centres. Some activity centres and managing schools did have sound evaluation, inquiry and knowledge-building processes embedded in their practice, and these were well used to review and refine their operations.

The collection of ongoing data about longer-term educational outcomes of ex-activity centre students is essential if the Ministry is to gauge the overall effectiveness of the centres. *Improving internal evaluation and its use to improve practice is an area for development for most activity centres.*

### Opportunities for improvement

In this section we share examples of effective practices, outlining how they improved outcomes for students or enhanced the operation of the activity centre. Primarily we chose ones that have potential to inform practice in other centres.

We also highlight some inconsistencies we came across and the impacts of those. The Ministry could usefully explore them to consider possible future action to improve provision.

### Effective practice

The most effective activity centres have good management systems, and the shared responsibility for students is evident in practice. Transitions, both into and from the centres, are flexible and managed sensitively, with student input on the suitability and timing of their transitions. Some have a trial period after which students, with their parents and whānau, can decide if they think the centre will work for them. The enrolling schools maintain contact with the student and, with involved agencies and parents/whānau, they work with the students to improve their attitude to learning and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to achieve educational success.

### *Maintaining connections with the enrolling school*

Most activity centres deliberately nurture students' sense of belonging to their enrolling school. This plays out in different ways in different centres. Examples include:

- students wearing their enrolling school's uniform to the centre
- students continuing to participate in their school's sporting and cultural activities
- students attending specialised classes at their enrolling school
- liaison teachers from the school, often the guidance counsellors, being involved in the development of ILPs and regularly visiting their students at the centre.

Maintaining these links helps students stay connected with the school, reminds them of their goal to return there, and smooths transitions both into and back from the centre.

### *Support for students*

While most centres have health nurses onsite or at least nurses who visit the centre regularly, there were examples of extensive wrap-around support for students. These included:

- Tūranganui-a-kiwa has a whānau support person attached to the centre, paid for by the Ministry of Social Development. This social worker coordinates overall support for students and their whānau
- Hutt Valley Activity Centre has a permanently employed youth worker
- the Integrated Student Support Network (ISSN) in Invercargill works across support agencies, and is overseen by a trust that includes the board and principal of the managing school. The ISSN provides a suite of effective interventions that include two short courses for students before attending the activity centre. Once students are there, a specialised case manager, with links to the agencies, identifies and facilitates appropriate additional support for each student
- Dunedin Secondary Schools' Partnership is an integrated support network. The network manager coordinates partnership programmes for students. The activity centre delivers two of these programmes, one that runs for one week and the other for six weeks. Enrolling schools refer students first to the short programme and then, if concerns remain, they can be referred to the longer intervention for a more individualised programme
- several of the centres provide transport, or bus cards, to improve student attendance
- Auckland Secondary School Centre employs an educational psychologist one day per week. She completes an initial assessment of individual students on their arrival to identify their literacy needs and works with students to address these needs.



### *Relevance of curriculum and pedagogy*

Some examples of effective practice that help students engage in their learning are:

- students develop a mihi, including their pepeha<sup>7</sup>
- ILPs note which strategies help the student learn and which to avoid
- progress is measured not by completion of work but by the quality of the completed work
- making curriculum authentic, such as:
  - using local issues or breaking news as starting points for literacy work or discussions about different points of view
  - making one course per term relevant to future work (e.g. safety in the workplace, first aid)
  - work placements
- making the curriculum relevant to academic and personal growth, such as:
  - Audio Visual Achievement in Literacy, Language and Learning ([AVAILLL](#)) to increase literacy skills and improve attitudes to reading
  - [Travellers programme](#) to promote resilience
  - Mana Potential, a strengths-based tool for behaviour change, now revised as [Te Ara Whakamana: The Mana Enhancement Model](#)
  - anger management courses
  - mindfulness sessions.

### *A vignette of Te Ara (formerly Wellington Activity Centre)*

Te Ara has several innovative practices that contribute to its overall effectiveness in promoting and producing very positive outcomes for students. Examples chosen here cover *management, support for students, curriculum design, community trust, and the use of a dashboard*.

Responsibility for management of the centre rotates on a deliberate, three-yearly cycle that closely involves every school in the cluster in its operation. The principal of the previous managing school, the current principal and principal-in-waiting are all members of the governance group, providing strong continuity. Policies and procedures are tailored to the needs of the centre and not merely subsumed under the managing school's policies. Staff have clearly defined the timetable, routines and expectations for students. This predictability provides security for students and is part of the process that settles them into the centre's community.

Support services are available on site, when needed, including an [Evolve nurse](#), and a [Kotahitanga clinical psychologist](#). Students also have weekly visits by a music therapist, monthly dental health visits, access to a female Evolve nurse if necessary, a sexual health awareness educator, and their school guidance counsellors and Te Kura liaison teachers who visit regularly. The centre developed a good agreement with the Attendance Service who agreed to keep students on their caseload and provide additional follow up to improve students' attendance.

Forming positive, trusting relationships with adults is a significant contributor to student success. The Friends of the School are important motivators for students. These local volunteers befriend one or two students, taking a genuine interest in them, sharing skills and knowledge, often helping them with resources and sometimes even long-term goals.

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<sup>7</sup> In Māori, a mihi is a greeting and the pepeha is introducing yourself, making links to ancestors and places.



Teachers use [Lucid](#) to identify literacy strengths and needs, enabling close targeting of the student's ILP to build on strengths and meet needs. ILPs do not just include goals (long-, medium- and short-term) but the reason why these are important for the student, the interventions to be used, and how named staff and other adults will support learning.

Teachers make extensive use of Te Kura resources, with many learning programmes developed and provided by Te Kura. The key to their success is their long-term relationship with Te Kura that includes professional development sessions with staff. Te Kura staff, including a Te Kura teacher appointed to a maternity leave position at Te Ara, are very supportive of teachers and students and their institutional and specific subject knowledge facilitates the selection of appropriate pathways for students.

A community trust, separate from the operation of the activity centre, raises considerable funds that support its work, including paying for learning activities, trips and student travel.

The trust also funded the research and development of *Thrive*, a comprehensive software programme used to monitor students' academic, social and emotional wellbeing, to identify where their potential is capped and work towards uncapping it through the use of expert strategies. *Thrive* was a response to the need for a tool to enhance the centre's capability to improve outcomes for students. It has since been patented and is being trialled overseas.

Staff and students work together, using *Thrive*, to identify where the student sits in relation to four key areas identified as essential for them to thrive in life: autonomy, deep learning, skilled communication and strong foundation skills.<sup>8</sup> Indicator detail within each area enables staff and students to make consistently reliable judgements about the student's current state, next steps and rate of progress. The programme generates a dashboard that is a graphic display of the outcomes. Staff find the tool very useful, as the dashboard provides the basis of discussion at weekly progress meetings with the student and liaison teacher. The dashboard is also shared with parents and whānau. Students value seeing the progress they are making, being able to identify what they need to do to address barriers, and the ability to discuss all of this with the adults helping them. They are true partners in their own learning. *Thrive* helps students manage themselves as learners and affirms their progress, helping to build their self-esteem and confidence as learners.

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<sup>8</sup> The foundation skills cover the key competencies in [The New Zealand Curriculum](#).

An example of a novel and successful extra in the curriculum is teaching the students to crochet. The garments are donated to [Little Sprouts](#), a charity providing baby packs to families in need. Students, all of them, including the boys, take great pride in their work. They especially appreciate their ability to make a positive contribution to others. This in turn strengthens their sense of worth and belonging to a wider community.



The staff called the sessions '*Don't do drugs, do crochet!*'

#### Variability of provision

##### *The Ministry of Education*

Leaders in activity centres reported receiving mixed messages about their future. For example, one centre has property development approved for 2018 while another, in the same region, reported they had the impression they would not exist after 2019. This uncertainty about the future has had a negative impact for some centres when trying to recruit staff.

Ministry contact and involvement did not always meet the obligations set out in the MoU. For example, there were centres who reported never having had contact from Ministry personnel (Obligations of the Ministry 4.6 and 4.7). This certainly limits the opportunity for centres and the Ministry to work together effectively to benefit students. It limits the Ministry's ability to hold centres accountable, or identify or provide support. This may have changed since the time of the reviews.

One managing school reported they have been encouraged by the Ministry to enrol students who would then go directly to the activity centre. These students had not attended the managing school and had no connections with staff there, often being new into the area and coming from difficult circumstances.

While enabling such a student to attend an activity centre is a positive initiative, it can impact negatively on the effectiveness of the activity centre and outcomes for the student. It can limit the information available about the student and so delay the development of an ILP and effectively tailored curriculum.

The absence of an established relationship with a liaison teacher can compromise the work with parents and whānau and the ability of the liaison teacher to act as advocate for the student while attending the centre and when later transitioning 'back' to school.

#### *Provision for students with mental health issues*

The MoU is very clear that "entry criteria must ensure students are referred because their behaviour impedes their own learning outcomes, or that of others." Qualifying that the MoU states, "further entry criteria are to be developed by the managing school in consultation with the cluster of schools in the area."<sup>9</sup> This has resulted in some anomalies nationally where students with mental health issues fit the broad entry criteria regarding behaviour and yet some activity centres deliberately exclude them under the further entry criteria developed by the managing school. This conforms to the terms of the MoU, and is understandable where an activity centre may not have the internal capability or sufficient external agency support to make a difference for such students, and enrolling them could also compromise the progress of others. Nevertheless, this raises a question about the alternative support available, and provided, for those students who are unable to attend activity centres.

Five centres reported difficulties getting the external support they needed for students. In particular, difficulties referred to accessing mental health support. This was further compounded by an increase in demand for mental health support services as more students referred had anxiety issues and sometimes high levels of mental health issues. ERO could not investigate this but we are concerned that students' mental health needs are not being adequately addressed.

Additionally we noted that the services of some external agencies were suspended while students attended the activity centre. Notably this applied to Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL) services in some centres, but in at least one centre support from Learning Support was also suspended. The risk of breaking the continuity of support is that students can become distrustful of adults, feeling they have been let down, and this can also compromise their transitions back to mainstream schooling.

#### *Early intervention*

One centre was given dispensation to accept a Year 8 student. This student is making good progress at the centre. Almost all centre leaders noted the importance of early intervention for students at risk of disengaging from education, hence the predominance of Year 9 and 10 students attending activity centres. This is not an aspect we investigated, however it raises a question about the need for similar provision for younger students nationwide.

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<sup>9</sup> Memorandum of Understanding 2.2.

*Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School (Te Kura)*

There remains a wide disparity in the effective use of Te Kura programmes. Te Ara makes best use of the programmes available, tailoring them well to students' needs. However, other centres variously report they find the units of work are out of date, insufficiently stimulating to engage students' interest, and difficult for students if they have to complete online work on their own.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, many centres have opted not to use Te Kura programmes. Even when Te Kura programmes were being used some centre staff did not select the programmes most appropriate for the individual, more often opting for generic literacy, numeracy and life skills programmes. In ERO's national report [Provision for Students in Activity Centres](#) (2013) we suggested Te Kura should review the extent to which its programmes and associated liaison with staff in activity centres is contributing to positive outcomes for students. This remains a valuable next step, together with determining what it is that works so well in Te Ara to see if that can be transferred effectively to other centres.

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<sup>10</sup> ERO did not review Te Kura programmes and has no judgement about their quality.

## Conclusion

ERO found considerable positive changes in the performance of activity centres since the review in 2013. We found evidence of the impact many activity centres have on achieving and promoting outcomes for the students who are referred to them. While there is still variability in practice across the country most of the activity centres we had concerns for last time are now on a trajectory of improvement.

Several centres reported increased demand for their services and the different nature of students needing those services. There was general agreement that an increasing number of students referred were presenting with mental health problems. Often the students came from complex home situations that contributed negatively to their wellbeing.

Most centres provide considerable support for students. They have regular access to health nurses, and some to dental care. There are examples of different ways that activity centres have effectively established interagency support. However, access to support varies across the country and six of the centres reported difficulties in accessing the services they needed for their students. Of particular concern is the access to mental health services, especially given the reported rise in demand for such support.

Management and governance practices in place are generally sound with appropriate planning and resource allocation for the centres. Leaders work with teachers to build their professional capacity. Boards of trustees of managing schools are clear about their responsibilities regarding the activity centre and receive reasonable reporting about the achievements of students attending the centre. The reports do not generally provide sufficient information to enable evaluation for improvement in practice.

Teachers at the centres generally obtain sufficient and useful information about the needs of each student referred to them. These are used to develop individual learning programmes (ILPs), as required by the MoU, but these ILPs are variable in both quality and usefulness. Although the curriculum in most centres engages students, it is not always tailored as well as it could be. This is sometimes attributable to constraints posed by the duration of a student's time in the centre or the availability of suitable curriculum resources to select from or develop. The main focus of curriculum for most students has appropriately common threads in socialising their behaviour, developing self-regulatory skills and equipping them with strategies to learn. Students generally leave with an improved sense of worth and attitude to learning, ready and keen to re-engage with mainstream schooling. Many students also work to improve their literacy and numeracy and most centres can demonstrate students' achievement in these areas. However, few centres can demonstrate acceleration. This is not surprising given the short duration of most of the interventions. The general lack of ongoing monitoring means it is difficult to ascertain if gains made at the centre are sustained, or if students have experienced educational success by the time they leave school.

Importantly, most students attending the centres clearly benefit from the intervention and are effectively supported to successful transitions out of the centre. These short-term outcomes are clear, but longer-term outcomes are not. Students attending the activity centres are those identified at risk of low educational, social and vocational outcomes.

The enrolling schools could usefully consider continuation of the strategies that worked for these students in the activity centres to help sustain improvements on their return to school. Monitoring at a system level is needed to determine these longer-term outcomes, the overall effectiveness of activity centres and subsequent schooling in removing students from that risk.





## Discussion

ERO wants this evaluation to contribute to a discourse about the role of activity centres and other forms of interventions aimed at supporting positive outcomes for at-risk learners. The resources dedicated to activity centres make this intervention one of the most intensive available to New Zealand schools.

As an intervention external to mainstream education, students in activity centres in the past might have been regarded as 'leaving education'. However, this report identifies key aspects of highly effective activity centres. When activity centres are successful they can respond to vulnerable young people, ensuring these students are not stigmatised or isolated from engagement in broader manifestations of school life such as drama, sport and cultural endeavours, and that they have access to prosocial role models. These key aspects include developing strong positive learning relationships, personalised learning programmes, authentic curriculum, well-focused pastoral care, and positive behaviour management. We found that in highly effective activity centres students can thrive, when previously they only experienced disengagement from education. It is critical that **all** activity centres demonstrate these key aspects if they are to respond effectively to all the students referred to them.

This evaluation raises important questions at a system level and for all activity centres that warrant further investigation.

What are the long-term consequences of an activity centre intervention on the future prospects for this group of learners? In this investigation, we have looked at the quality of the programmes operated by the existing centres, but have not assessed whether the impacts made for these learners are sustained once they return to their enrolling school and a regular class programme as intended. An important question that remains is what might the outcomes have been without activity centre intervention? This in itself requires a set of broader measures - broader than NCEA attainment. If we are to assess the effectiveness of activity centres in developing prosocial behaviour, self-confidence, personal resilience, perseverance and life skills, then longer-term outcomes must be determined.

Equally, it is difficult to attribute these outcomes solely to the impact of involvement in an activity centre programme. Longer-term outcomes will clearly be a consequence of the changes effected for the young people while in the activity centre programme, but equally because of comprehensive reengagement back into their enrolling schools, and the associated supports wrapped around them in an ongoing way.

However, not all students return to mainstream schooling. Data from 2014 show that 20 percent of students who attended activity centres also spent time in Alternative Education.<sup>11</sup> By 2016, Ministry of Education destination outcomes data show that only 10 percent went to Alternative Education. Fifty-seven percent of activity centre students returned to school, 15 percent returned to the activity centre, with a further five percent entered a training programme.<sup>12</sup> The balance left school, went to a Regional Health School or moved out of the region and their destination data was lost.

Activity centres and enrolling schools need to more actively measure and monitor all of the longer-term outcomes for those learners who engage in their programmes to better understand their impact and where they might improve their programmes and practice.

Across activity centres, practices vary in terms of the amount of time learners participate in the centre with differences in the nature and intensity of the programmes.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Information-releases/All-for-release.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Ministry of Education.

Building a better understanding of the success or otherwise of these various approaches will be important to grow and refine the nature of these interventions, and to get stronger agreement across activity centres and schools of what constitutes effective practice.

As a sector, we need to explore the extent to which the positive elements of the activity centres reviewed here might be replicated in mainstream school settings. This includes those elements that ensure personalised teaching and learning practices, the effective relationships developed with these learners, an engaging curriculum, well-focused pastoral care, and positive behaviour management.

Students are referred to activity centres primarily for behavioural issues. Additional referral information gives us some insight into the needs of this group of students:

- an increasing number of students are exhibiting mental health problems – many school principals and managers of the activity centres noted the difficulty in getting timely support for such students
- students often present from complex family situations that impact negatively on their ability to engage with learning, and prosocial skills are limited
- some students, as a consequence of family circumstances, have attended multiple schools, never properly able to establish a sense of belonging and settle in their learning
- students frequently have low levels of literacy and may have learning difficulties that have not been addressed earlier in their education.

Schools should focus on intervening as early as possible to support students presenting with indicators of risk. This raises important questions about how the system supports leaders and teachers to respond similarly to these vulnerable young people in mainstream settings. Are there sufficient and appropriate opportunities for school-based interventions to provide support for such students before referring them to activity centres or alternative education? However, these young people may present with a plethora of health, family, housing, and learning difficulties that require earlier intervention, and there is an onus not just on schools and activity centres, but also on the wider health and social sector to support these students.



## Recommendations

ERO recommends the Ministry:

- provide clear expectations and support to boards about performance improvements required as per their Memorandum of Understanding
- collect and monitor data on the long-term outcomes for students to determine the overall effectiveness of the activity centres in contributing to students' educational success
- set in place measures to ensure Ministry feedback and monitoring visits to activity centres occur in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding
- consider their response to the inequity of access to activity centres nationwide, giving thought to earlier intervention
- explore options for evidence-based interventions with these students
- work with the Ministry of Health and Oranga Tamariki to ensure that sufficient, timely services are provided to meet students' needs, especially around mental health and wrap-around support to address the complex home situations of some students
- support activity centres to share best practice about teaching and learning, in particular making the most appropriate use of Te Kura resources.

ERO recommends boards of trustees of all managing schools:

- be aware of and clearly state performance improvement requirements for their activity centre and monitor those improvements
- establish processes for internal evaluation to inform ongoing improvement in the effectiveness of their activity centre.

ERO recommends all enrolling schools:

- make sure there is continuity of support from agencies as students transition to and from activity centres
- consider continuation of the strategies that worked for these students in the activity centre to sustain improvements after their return to school.

ERO recommends leaders and teachers of activity centres:

- ensure the appropriateness of the curriculum design,
- with support from the Ministry, improve both the quality and usefulness of ILPs to personalise the curriculum and associated interventions, and establish clear outcomes measures to monitor success for individual learners
- pay attention to identifying the cultural needs and aspirations of their students.

ERO recommends that Te Kura:

- work with activity centres to support their pedagogy and practice to use Te Kura resources to improve teaching and learning outcomes for students.

ERO acknowledges the formation of a national body for activity centres and their intent to build on the increased consistency of practices ERO has identified due to the shift from the Toolkit to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Further evaluation, beyond the scope of this initial investigation, is required to examine how schools use available resourcing to address the behavioural and learning needs of vulnerable students, and what more could be done to better support these students within mainstream school settings.

## Appendix 1: Activity centres

ERO visited all 14 activity centres during Term 3, 2017 and the centres' individual review reports are available on [ERO's website](#) and via the hyperlinks below.

The centres are:

Activity centre	Effectiveness	Managing School
<a href="#">Invercargill Activity Centre</a>	4	<a href="#">James Hargest College</a>
<a href="#">Napier Community Activity Centre</a>	4	<a href="#">Napier Boys' High School</a>
<a href="#">Taranaki Activity Centre</a>	4	<a href="#">Spotswood College</a>
<a href="#">Te Ara</a>	4	<a href="#">St Patrick's College</a>
<a href="#">Akina Activity Centre</a>	3	<a href="#">Karamu High School</a>
<a href="#">Auckland Secondary Schools Centre</a>	3	<a href="#">Western Springs College</a>
<a href="#">London House Learning Centre</a>	3	<a href="#">Bayfield High School</a>
<a href="#">Manawatu Community High School</a>	3	<a href="#">Palmerston North Boys' High School</a>
<a href="#">Papakura Activity Centre</a>	3	<a href="#">Papakura High School</a>
<a href="#">Turanganui-a-Kiwa Activity Centre</a>	3	<a href="#">Gisborne Girls' High School</a>
<a href="#">Hutt Valley Activity Centre</a>	2	<a href="#">Hutt Valley High School</a>
<a href="#">Porirua Activity Centre</a>	2	<a href="#">Tawa College</a>
<a href="#">Rotorua (Awhina) Activity Centre</a>	2	<a href="#">Rotorua Boys' High School</a>
<a href="#">Te Kura o Waipuna</a>	1	<a href="#">Otahuhu College</a>

### Effectiveness key:

4 Highly effective, some minor suggestions for improvement

3 Mostly positive with some clear areas for development

2 Some concerns, with evidence of improvement that is likely to be sustainable

1 Some serious concerns, some action being taken but too early to judge improvement

**Note** The activity centres are not ranked within each effectiveness category, but presented alphabetically.

## Appendix 2: Evaluation framework and synthesis tools

The overarching evaluative question was: **How effective are activity centres in promoting positive outcomes for students?**

Exploring:

- What is working well?
- Who does it work for?
- How does it work i.e. what is good practice?
- What, if anything, impedes the achievement and promotion of positive student outcomes?

ERO domain	Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>1. Stewardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To what extent is the Board of Trustees of the managing school involved in the operation of the activity centres?</li> <li>● How well does the managing school ensure quality outcomes for students?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What info does the Board of Trustees require/receive?</li> <li>● What strategic direction does the board give?</li> <li>● How does it know how if the 'right' students are being supported by attending the activity centre?</li> <li>● How does it know how well students do?</li> <li>● How is information used?</li> <li>● How does the managing school's board govern the activity centre?</li> <li>● What reporting is undertaken by the activity centre? To whom does this reporting go? How frequently does reporting to the board, or to the principal, occur?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The board is proactive in meeting its statutory obligations:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ awareness of MoU and acts on its responsibilities regarding the activity centre</li> <li>○ written agreements with enrolling schools, as per MoU, are explicit about expectations and responsibilities for students (including selection and transition processes and access to ongoing extra-curricular activities at their enrolling school)</li> <li>○ the board checks that these agreements are upheld and follows up if there are issues</li> <li>○ collective responsibility for students is evident.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Board scrutinises the effectiveness of the activity centre in achieving valued student outcomes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Host principal is held accountable – activity centre in the principal's performance agreement</li> <li>○ Strategic planning includes activity centre (alignment to appraisal, PLD, improvement, resources)</li> <li>○ Internal evaluation re effectiveness of activity centre is of high quality – including seeking feedback from enrolling schools, teachers, students and whānau</li> <li>○ Reports to board include sufficient information to make informed decisions (incl Accountability, effectiveness and challenges)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

ERO domain	Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>2. Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effectively does the leader of the managing school (or management committee of activity centre) support equity and excellence for students in the activity centre?</li> <li>• How effectively do the managing principal and director of the activity centre ensure:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the environment is orderly and supportive, conducive to student learning and wellbeing?</li> <li>○ effective planning and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does managing school leader support activity centre director and staff?</li> <li>• Are there clear guidelines for staff at the activity centre?</li> <li>• How is teacher capacity improved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership establishes clear and consistent expectations for student behaviour and respectful behaviour management strategies.</li> <li>• Leaders have high expectation for student success.</li> <li>• High quality leadership promotes teacher learning and development               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ managing school principal is professionally engaged with the director of the activity centre</li> <li>○ managing principal supports the activity centre with appropriate resources, PLD, access to curriculum .</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Leadership provides an accurate and defensible evaluation of the activity centre's performance.</li> <li>• Leadership engages constructively with external evaluation.</li> </ul>





ERO domain		Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>3. Educationally powerful connections and relationships</b>	<b>Selection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively are the connections with parents/whānau, enrolling schools and external agencies used to inform suitability of student for the activity centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the students that will benefit the most the ones being identified to attend the activity centre?</li> <li>How are decisions made with regard to which students to take?</li> <li>Do all schools follow criteria for selection?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity centre leadership has clear understanding of reasons for each student being there.</li> <li>Students, parents/whānau and teachers know the different pathways, programmes and options and supports available and participate in decision making at critical transition points.</li> <li>Selection processes are consistently followed across enrolling schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students have fair and equitable access to the activity centre.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective are the transition processes into the activity centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What steps do they take to connect with students, parents/whānau to introduce them to the activity centre and its purpose?</li> <li>How are students settled into the centre?</li> <li>How is te ao Māori reflected in the activity centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students, parents/whānau and teachers know the different pathways, programmes and options and supports available and participate in decision making at critical transition points.</li> <li>Transitions are well managed, enabling students to settle quickly into the centre and to their learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transition processes actively involve parents/whānau</li> <li>ILPs are developed in a timely manner.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Students are well settled.</li> <li>Activity centres are culturally welcoming environments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Knowing the students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does the activity centre identify and address each student's specific needs, interests and strengths, background and experiences?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who do they get information from?</li> <li>What is the quality/reliability of the information?</li> <li>How do they develop learning partnerships with student and parents/whānau and other agencies involved?</li> <li>What assessments, if any, do they do themselves?</li> <li>How do they build relationships and trust with their students?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity centre receives a variety of good information to learn about their students (social, emotional and academic): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are asked about themselves: interests, strengths, areas to work on and what supports their learning</li> <li>parents/whānau provide information about their child and aspirations for them</li> <li>enrolling schools provide detailed information</li> <li>teachers from enrolling schools visit their students at the activity centre</li> <li>agencies involved contribute to understanding the student.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Teachers and leaders use valid and reliable approaches to identify the educational strengths and areas for development of students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>including identifying the needs of students with any physical, sensory, psychological, neurological, behavioural or intellectual impairments</li> <li>processes to identify and support the needs and aspirations of Māori and Pacific students and their parents whānau are culturally responsive and embedded in the tikanga of the centre.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

ERO domain		Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>4. Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn</b>	<b>ILPs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do ILPs support students to achieve positive outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the development process and who is involved?</li> <li>How are focus areas chosen?</li> <li>Do ILPs reflect how Māori students are encouraged to gain success as Māori?</li> <li>How often are these reviewed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/whānau and teachers work together with students to identify their strengths and learning needs, set goals, and plan responsive learning strategies and activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>minimum ILPs criteria met as in Memorandum of Understanding</li> <li>goals are specific and measurable</li> <li>goals include a focus on building self-regulation and self esteem</li> <li>where appropriate there is a te ao Māori focus for the student.</li> </ul> </li> <li>ILPs contain set challenging and appropriate expectations for learning and social and emotional development:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>they identify the support (strategies &amp; agencies) to help students achieve their goals</li> <li>student agency and responsibility for learning are featured in the ILPs</li> <li>ILPs are regularly and formally reviewed in partnership with students, parents/whānau, and revised in line with student progress and needs</li> <li>there is a plan for transition to future education/training/employment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Curriculum design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the relevance and quality of the curriculum in relation to the ILPs?</li> <li>To what extent is the activity centre focused on improving educational and social outcomes for each student?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the curriculum link to ILPs, pathways and transitions out of the activity centre?</li> <li>What cross curricular access is there (e.g. <i>to managing school curriculum</i>)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers are making good use of the ILPs to plan, implement and review the curriculum for them:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>educational activities include contexts that are authentic and relevant to individual students</li> <li>teachers promote achievement by deliberately aligning tasks design, teaching activities and resources</li> <li>appropriate use is made of external programmes to support students – e.g. te Kura courses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Management of the curriculum ensures it is coherent and students have sufficient opportunity to learn.</li> <li>Curriculum offered to students engages them in learning.</li> <li>Students are aware of the progress they are making.</li> <li>There are processes for accessing and maintaining coherent interagency support for students while they are in activity centres.</li> </ul>

ERO domain	Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>4. Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn</b>	<b>Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the culture of the activity centre focused on improving educational and social outcomes for each student?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well settled are the students?</li> <li>How safe, supportive and affirming is the environment?</li> <li>How are students' wellbeing needs addressed?</li> <li>Do staff use the wellbeing indicators?</li> <li>How is the Health and PE curriculum delivered for these young people (including sexuality education)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The learning environment is:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>safe emotionally and physically</li> <li>managed in ways that support participation, engagement and agency in learning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Relationships are respectful and productive; difference and diversity are valued:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff are compassionate, actively listening to students and reflecting their points of view.</li> <li>students express a sense of security and comfort with the environment and relationships.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Educational environment reflects manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, ako, mahi tahi.</li> <li>The learning community is characterised by respect, empathy, relational trust, cooperation and teamwork.</li> <li>Students participate and learn in caring, collaborative, inclusive learning communities.</li> </ul>
	<b>Curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the pedagogical approach in the centre supporting positive outcomes for students?</li> <li>How effective are external programmes in improving student outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the quality of the curriculum?</li> <li>How is the curriculum impacted by the capacity and quality of teachers in the activity centre?</li> <li>What cultural emphasis is integrated into the curriculum (te ao Māori) to support Māori succeeding as Māori?</li> <li>Is the use of external programmes appropriately linked to ILPs?</li> <li>How are students supported in managing successful completion?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student identities, whānau and community knowledge, language and culture are represented in curriculum materials and enacted curriculum.</li> <li>The curriculum makes connections to learner's lives, prior understandings, out of school experiences and real world contexts:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are engaged in their learning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Curriculum supports the development of the key competencies (NZC):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are able to work together in some situations, discussing ideas, reaching conclusions and teaching each other</li> <li>students develop dialogue and group work skills.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Assessment activities are inclusive, authentic and fit for purpose:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing meaningful evidence of achievement</li> <li>students receive and give timely, specific and descriptive feedback to determine their goals, progress, next steps and success criteria</li> <li>students are taught to evaluate their own learning and are aware of their achievements and next steps.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Students identify their own learning needs and take responsibility for their own learning.</li> <li>Any significant social or health issues are addressed through appropriate agencies.</li> <li>External programmes are well linked to ILPs.</li> <li>Students manage the completion of external programmes well.</li> </ul>

ERO domain	Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
<b>5. Professional capability and capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective is the curriculum delivery at the activity centre?</li> <li>• How effective is the pedagogical leadership in the activity centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the capacity and quality of teachers in the activity centre?</li> <li>• What are the processes for managing teacher performance?</li> <li>• What pedagogically focussed PLD is available for staff?</li> <li>• How are teachers supported to manage behaviour and motivate students to learn?</li> <li>• Where is this PLD sourced/ delivered from?</li> <li>• What pedagogic resources are available to staff in the centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are well qualified and have relevant curriculum, assessment and pedagogical knowledge:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ staff have positive expectations and enthusiastic about making a difference for students</li> <li>○ staff demonstrate the importance of social and pastoral care as a pathway to support achievement of students</li> <li>○ assessment information (including narratives) demonstrate progress made by students – progress measured again social adjustment, behaviour and academic achievement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teachers are skilled at employing the appropriate strategies to engage, manage and extend these learners:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ teachers employ the appropriate strategies to engage, manage and extend these learners</li> <li>○ teachers form positive professional relationships with students, focused on learning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coherent performance management processes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ identify teachers' learning and development needs</li> <li>○ provide professional learning opportunities that are responsive to identified needs and align with the school/activity centre strategic plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teachers have professional learning opportunities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ teachers inquire into their practice</li> <li>○ teachers receive appropriate PLD to support them in their work</li> <li>○ teachers have the resources they need and make effective use of them</li> <li>○ teachers are culturally sensitive, enabling Māori to succeed as Māori.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

ERO domain		Evaluation questions	Possible investigative questions	Indicators of what 'good' could look like
6. Evaluation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively does the activity centre work with outcome and transition information to continually improve processes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do staff evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum?</li> <li>How do they know how well their students succeed beyond the activity centre?</li> <li>What evaluation for improvement do they do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation, inquiry and knowledge building are embedded in processes and practices in the activity centre and managing school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>processes are systematic and coherent at every level.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Appropriate tools and methods are used to gather valid data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information to inform evaluation is sought from students, parent/whānau, teachers, enrolling school and external agencies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The activity centre tracks students beyond their time in the centre, using indicators about behaviour, attendance and academic progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses this information in their internal evaluation to improve practice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Student outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective is the activity centre in achieving and promoting positive outcomes for the students?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do the activity centres define 'success' and valued outcomes for students?</li> <li>What evidence is there of improved outcomes for students?</li> <li>What data do they have on successes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confident in their identity, language and culture</li> <li>socially and emotionally competent</li> <li>resilient</li> <li>optimistic about their future.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Students improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attendance – attending regularly</li> <li>behaviour – self regulate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>They have confidence in themselves as learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students manage their learning</li> <li>key competencies</li> <li>literacy and numeracy gains</li> </ul> </li> <li>NCEA credits – where applicable</li> </ul>
	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective are transition processes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do they define an effective transition?</li> <li>How are successes and outcomes communicated to the managing and enrolling schools, to students and parents/whānau?</li> <li>What processes are in place for students to transition out of the activity centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition processes are set up to ensure ongoing interagency support for students when they leave the activity centre.</li> <li>High quality career education and guidance is given with an emphasis on transition to the workplace or further education/training.</li> <li>Students know about their pathways to further education, training or employment.</li> <li>Students are confident about their next steps after the activity centre.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3 Explanation of terms of quantity

The following terms of quantity are used in this report:

TERMS USED	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF ACTIVITY CENTRES
All	100%	14
Almost all	91% – 99%	13
Most	75% – 90%	11-12
Majority /Generally/Many	50% – 74%	7-10
Minority/Less than half/Some	15% – 49%	3-6
A few	less than 15%	1-2

Adapted from Education Scotland

