

An Evaluation of Service Academies

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Overview

Service academies provide military-focused education for secondary students who have had average to limited success at school. Education at a service academy involves academic study, outdoor education and physical fitness, goal setting, leadership and life skills.

This report discusses the performance of 16 service academies funded by the Ministry of Education funded. These are located at 16 predominantly low decile secondary schools across the country. Most have been in operation only since the beginning of 2008. They are staffed by directors, and in many cases by assistant directors, who typically have experience in the military and who are not formally trained teachers.

Service academies are funded for up to 20 students, most of whom are in Years 12 and 13. Seventy percent of the students are male. Eighty percent of the students are Māori or Pacific, which is consistent with the ethnicity of the schools where the academies are located. Different academies tend to have slightly different priorities with some focusing more on preparing students for a career in the armed forces and others focusing more on engaging students who have underachieved at school.

ERO found that most of the 16 service academies provided high quality education and support for their students. The motivation, academic achievement, demeanour and physical fitness of many students had improved greatly through being part of an academy. Changes made by these students were often seen as transformational by whānau members, teachers and the students themselves.

The leadership of academy directors was a key factor in students making social and academic gains. Effective academies had capable directors who established excellent relationships with students and the leadership of the host schools. While most directors were not trained as teachers, their skills as academy leaders included an ability to mentor previously struggling students, help them set goals and demand high standards in students' discipline and application to learning activities.

In addition to the leadership of the academy and school staff, factors in the effectiveness of academies included the organisation and support of the host school, the contribution of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), the quality of teaching in the academy programme and the supportive aspects of the academy culture.

Common areas for improvement were found across the service academies. Some of these areas were already being addressed. For example work had started to ensure that student learning with the NZDF was reflected in the credits they gained on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). School leaders also needed to ensure that the school-based learning at academies was also assessed in terms of the NQF where applicable.

ERO also identified appraisal, professional development and self review as areas for improvement. The development of these systems should be led by the host school responsible for the service academy. Similarly, host schools could also work with academy staff to develop processes for supporting the exit transitions of academy students. Opportunities exist to monitor the success of the many academy students

who return to mainstream to see if the gains they have made are sustained in more traditional education. Exit transitions could also be one of the more important ways in which academies could also build their relationships with parents and whānau.

ERO suggests ways that the Ministry of Education could enhance the work of service academies. This report raises questions about the registration, training and employment conditions of academy staff. Schools' milestone reports to the Ministry could support academy self-review processes. Moreover, because schools have spent the service academy funding in different ways there is also a need to include financial reports as part of the milestone reporting process.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is difficult for students from some schools to get a placement at an academy hosted by another school. This raises questions for this and other Youth Guarantee initiatives.

Next steps

ERO recommends that academy directors:

- continue to work with NZDF and school personnel to identify ways to formally assess student learning in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

On the basis of this report, ERO suggests that schools with service academies:

- work with academy staff to coordinate, document and monitor student goal-setting, including goals related to career aspirations, academic progress, fitness, values and social/personal goals
- continue to work with academy directors to identify ways to formally assess student learning in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- monitor the progress of students who return to school following their year in a service academy
- develop processes that support students leaving a service academy
- use the indicators in this report, along with student achievement information, the monitoring of student goals and destination data, to analyse how service academy programmes can be developed.

On the basis of this report the Ministry of Education should consider:

- modifying the milestone reporting requirements so that they also support the self-review of service academies
- exploring how induction courses and/or professional development for academy staff (especially those without formal teaching qualifications) could be used to enhance their work, including their understanding of school operations
- support schools and academies in establishing systems to monitor the progress of students who return to school following a year in a service academy
- include, as part of the milestone reporting process, information on how service academy money is spent by schools

- as part of the milestone reporting process for service academies, collate and analyse information on success of students who return to school after a year in a service academy
- consider the implications for Youth Guarantee of the resource issues for principals not wanting to be seen ‘poaching’ students from neighbouring schools or releasing students to attend a service academy at another school.

Introduction

Service Academies

Service academies are school-based initiatives that offer a combination of academic and military-focused education. The purpose of service academies is to:

- encourage students to stay engaged in learning by providing a motivating and disciplined programme
- help students to gain improved qualifications
- help them prepare to move successfully into the workforce or further education and training.

The target student group for service academies is Years 12 and 13 students who are at risk of disengaging from school. Schools are able to enrol students in Year 11 who are turning 16 during the year and who would benefit from a military-focused programme.

Each service academy is provided with funding for 20 students to complete a 12-month programme during which time students will be expected to:

- work towards and attain a minimum of NCEA Level 1 mathematics and English as well as other credits from the National Qualifications Framework appropriate to their interests and career choices
- participate in a range of motivating and challenging learning experiences provided in association with the New Zealand Defence Force including Youth Life Skills units
- participate in a two-week induction course, a leadership course and advanced leadership course, a coast-to-coast course and/or other outdoor-based activities.

The service academies were originally established by the Ministry of Social Development. The original focus was weighted towards social and employment outcomes for disengaged students. The Ministry of Education took over the funding and oversight of service academies in June 2010.

Sixteen service academies receive funding from the Ministry of Education. Eight of these were established in 2007 and 2008.

- Glenfield College, Auckland (2008)
- James Cook High School, Auckland (2007)
- Kelston Boys' High School, Auckland (2008)
- Onehunga High School, Auckland (2008)
- Wairoa College (2008)
- Horowhenua College, Levin (2008)
- Mana College, Porirua (2008)
- Aranui High School, Christchurch (2008)

Another eight academies were established in 2010.

- Tikipunga High School
- Waitakere College
- Tamaki College
- Otahuhu College
- Tokoroa High School
- Te Kuiti High School
- Wanganui City College
- Gisborne Girls' High School

Schools operating service academies receive a grant of \$90,000 each year. This funding is to:

- employ an academy director to run the academy. The academy director will be employed by the school board and report to the principal
- cover costs of uniforms, travel to courses and purchasing additional courses for students.

Schools report to the Ministry of Education in milestone reports three times a year. The first two reports ask schools to report on aspects such as student numbers, the achievement of individual students to date and an outline of the military-focused courses completed so far. The end of year milestone report includes information about:

- destination of students
- participation rates in the academy
- student achievement including NCEA, NQF qualifications
- other courses attended and what has or has not worked well.

Other Service Academies

In addition to the service academies at the schools named above the Ministry has announced funding for an additional eight. Service academies are seen as one of the ways to keep more 16 and 17-year-olds engaged in education and training as part of Youth Guarantee.

Three additional services academies are funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). These academies, hosted by Opihi College, Greymouth High School and Logan Park High School, are not part of this evaluation.

Methodology

Approach to this study

ERO visited each of the 16 Ministry-funded service academies. Reviewers investigated the quality of education at each academy, focusing specifically on the following questions:

- How effective is each service academy at supporting student learning?

- What are the strengths of each service academy programme?
- What are the areas for development at each service academy programme?
- What are the factors that support their effectiveness?
- What are the barriers and challenges that limit their effectiveness?

In particular ERO examined the following in evaluating the performance of each academy:

- the academic, social and destination outcomes of students
- the quality of teaching and support for students
- leadership and management from the school and in the academy
- the culture and environment of each service academy
- the connections with whānau.

Each of the host schools were also given a special review report about the quality of education at their service academy. These reports are publicly available on ERO's website (www.ero.govt.nz).

In collecting evidence for these review reports and the overall evaluation, ERO interviewed the school and academy leaders as well as academy students. ERO also collected documentation from schools and observed academy classes.

Findings

This section sets out the findings from ERO's review of each of the 16 Ministry-funded service academies. This section covers:

- Context of the service academies
- Contribution of the New Zealand Defence Force
- Student outcomes
- The quality of teaching
- Leadership and management
- Culture of the service academies
- Engaging whānau and families.

Overall most of the 16 service academies provided high quality education and support for their students. Three of the 16 were highly effective providers and another nine showed good levels of effectiveness. Three were effective across some aspects, albeit significant improvement could have been made in several areas. One of the service academies demonstrated limited effectiveness.

The context of Service Academies

The academies have different approaches which reflect their different students, priorities and objectives. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the host schools and the Ministry of Education sets out the broad structure of service academies. This document outlines the basic programme structure, how funding is to be used and the expected age and school background of academy students. Despite the expectations of the MoU, differences were found in the type of students attending the different service academies. Across the country service academy cohorts ranged from students who have essentially been alienated from school to those who have acquired Level 2 NCEA.

The academy programmes also have different objectives in line with their different cohorts. Some academies are focused on students entering the military as a career option. Others see the service academy as a way for disengaged students to make a step forward in their education and training pathway. Some academies cater for a range of student outcomes.

The amount of time students spend together as an academy class also varies between schools. While the academies all generally keep to the one third academic, one third military and one third discretionary programmes expected in the MoU, some academies keep students together for most or all of their programme, while others have very little time together as a classroom unit. Similarly some academies strictly enforce a stay of one year on the programme while others are more flexible in letting students stay for additional time.

The ethnic makeup of academy students reflects that of their schools. Approximately 80 percent of the service academy students are Māori or Pacific. Males make up approximately 70 percent of the students. Eighty percent of students are in Years 12 and 13. There are also students in Year 11 and Year 14 at some schools.

The service academy directors are not usually fully registered trained teachers. They all have some form of services background and many have also been instructors in the services.

Contribution of the New Zealand Defence Force

Students in the service academies have considerable contact with the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). Students experience an induction course held either in the South Island (Burnham Camp or West Melton) or, in the North Island, at Hobsonville (Auckland). This course is typically for 12 days. Most students also take part in a five-day outdoor challenge course (Mil Skills) course. Selected students will also complete leadership courses hosted by NZDF.

Evidence from the academies strongly indicates that the NZDF are highly effective in achieving the aims of the induction course. These include introducing students to significant life skills and values, and fostering the degree of teamwork that can serve as a foundation for the remainder of the academic year. The induction programme was a key element in setting the culture for the academies and providing an authentic (real) context for developing their attitude and motivation for success.

The induction course was awesome. Academy student

At the time of this evaluation NZDF was surveying directors to help with the review of its work with the service academies. This survey is one of the ways the NZDF can review its contribution to the service academies. The academy directors have a good understanding of the needs of the students and their services background can help inform the nature of the NZDF courses. Their input can help to enhance the quality of the NZDF contribution in the future.

An area for improvement identified by military and academy staff is the need for student learning from the NZDF courses to be recognised through the qualifications framework. There have been some initial discussions between NZDF staff and the academy directors about how this can proceed. This work is expected to increase the number of credits students can gain during their time in a service academy.

Student outcomes

Social and academic outcomes

ERO found high levels of student engagement across the service academies. Almost all students demonstrated high levels of commitment to their service academy programme. This was typically reflected in the attendance and behavioural data of the academies.

In many cases the motivational and social changes of students in the service academies could be considered transformational. Many anecdotes provided evidence of students who had gone from being poorly behaved, low achievers to successful students and role models in the school. The comments from the students below were

indicative of those from a majority of academy students, their previous teachers and parents.

I can get on better with my father now and I do what my mother asks me. I used to hit and swear at my parents.

I help around the house and keep my room tidy. I'm proud of what I've learned in the academy. I am respectful of my family and they are proud of me.

I can see a better path for myself. It's very positive and uplifting.

I was suspended from school for fighting. I was always angry and hated myself. I'm not going back there again. I've changed. I've got a purpose now. My parents are very happy and proud.

I used to hate my teachers but staff¹ really cares about us even though he is very strict, I'd do anything for him because he takes an interest in me.

The social transformation led to better academic outcomes for academy students. Twelve of the 16 academies demonstrated good levels of achievement, especially in areas such as numeracy and literacy. Three of the 16 academies provided very high quality education. At two of these academies students gained a considerable number of Level 2 and 3 credits in addition to NCEA Level 1. At the third a majority of the students moved from being alienated from school to achieving Level 1 NCEA and returning to mainstream education.

Most of the students at the other academies were on track to make significant academic achievements as a result of their improved motivation and behaviour in the service academy. The specific achievements of students depended on their cohort. For example, where students were expected to have achieved their Level 1 numeracy and literacy credits as an academy pre-requisite, a majority of students were likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 passes by the end of 2011. Students who had fewer academic achievements were typically making good progress towards NCEA Level 1.

Lower levels of student achievement were observed in four of the academies. Students at these academies tended to achieve fewer NCEA credits than their peers at more effective academies. These academies had lower levels of student engagement and attendance. They also had a lower quality of programme planning, and academy staff used a limited range of teaching strategies.

The analysis of achievement information

ERO identified the analysis of academic data as a key area for review and development across the academies. None of the academies had fully developed their analysis of academic achievement and their subsequent self-review systems. While

¹ 'Staff' was a common term students used to refer to academy directors and assistant directors.

some directors monitored student performance during the academic year, academy staff did not examine student achievement patterns systematically and make changes to their programme.

Academies established in 2010 need time to build up their annual records of student achievement. Once annual information is prepared then academy staff will have a baseline to consider student outcomes from year to year.

Host schools also need to assist academy staff to develop self-review systems. Given that most academy staff have well-developed goal-setting strategies for students then school-based knowledge about aspects such as assessment and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) could be used to create more detailed student records of achievement over time that combined the academic, social, physical fitness and personal goals of students.

Destination information

The information on students' destinations is typically not analysed or used to improve the quality of teaching in the academies. This is despite the fact that directors provide destination information to the Ministry in their milestone reports.

Where directors had destination information available there were indications that almost all students go on to further education and employment. To some extent the destination outcomes of students were influenced by the student cohort. Students who could be considered more at risk were less likely to go on to education or employment compared to those who had been more successful at school.

From juvenile detention to school prefect and beyond

In 2009 a student from one of the academy host schools was charged with aggravated assault. He was placed in a juvenile detention centre although his lawyer and staff from the school sought to have him transferred to the school hostel where he would have 24-hour supervision. The court agreed although a condition of his release included that the student must wear an ankle bracelet.

The boy made progress under this arrangement and joined the academy which opened in 2010. The boy continued to make progress while at the academy. He also continued to wear his ankle bracelet. He was elected a prefect of the school and became the Military Academy platoon sergeant. During his time in the academy the bracelet came off and his attitude and demeanour were exemplary. In 2011 he won a position in a local sports academy.

The boy's school principal stated, "We are very proud of this boy's achievements... the Military Academy was the icing on the cake for this boy and came at the right time for him. We are all very proud of him."

School-wide outcomes

The positive social and academic outcomes of students also benefited the culture of most schools where the academies were hosted. Academy students were typically role models who made significant contributions to the life of the school. For example, non-academy teachers commented to ERO on how much they enjoyed having academy students in their classes and that their academy classes were their best.

Academy students also acted as leaders in the school. ERO was given examples of academy students intervening in playground disputes and helping to run school events. At three schools the leadership skills of academy students were developed through their work as mentors for younger students. At one of these schools, each academy student worked in a seven-week block with a Year 10 student to build their motivation for school. Students from this academy also took classes of younger students for physical fitness activities.

The academies were also a source of pride or mana for most schools. In some ways this status is analogous to the position a first XV has in some schools. For example, at one school the status of the academy, and the leadership skills of students, was evident in academy students tutoring the whole school in marching. The academy students subsequently led a march of the whole school down the town's main street during a celebration.

The importance of health and physical fitness

Central to the student engagement at the academies was the role of health and physical fitness. The values, discipline, leadership and sense of pride and achievement felt by so many of the academy students related strongly to improvements they made in their overall well being.

In the first instance physical fitness gave students an excellent context for developing and measuring personal goals. Goal setting is a significant aspect of academy life. The experience of directors in setting and meeting health and fitness goals was a key motivator for students. The intrinsic motivation students held towards their physical fitness goals meant that many students developed personal training programmes that took place before school, after school and in the weekends.

Many students ERO talked to showed pride in their physical training (PT) regimes and the gains they had made in fitness as well the weight they had lost. In this sense some students not only made social and academic transformations in the academy but physical transformations too.

I used to mock my friends, and hit them in a 'friendly' way. It wasn't too friendly actually. I was more of a bully. No one would hit me back because I was a lot bigger and louder. Now I've lost weight, about 15 kgs, and my friends hardly recognise me because I've changed so much - they admire me." I like how I have changed and so do my family. I've got a lot more pride in myself and I feel like I've got a future to look forward to.

Female academy student

At one academy the health and fitness achievements of students were supported by the school's health department. Staff from this area of the school gave curriculum and assessment support to the director so that students could gain Level 2 and 3 credits in health and physical education. A partnership such as this could potentially work well at other host schools.

Student success stories from one academy*

Wiremu was a Year 12 student who was thinking about going to university but always had an interest in going to the military. He was highly academic and decided to stay on at Year 13 so he could pursue this interest through the academy. Wiremu was one of three students who entered the military recruitment course at Waiouru in June 2011. He was one of two successful students from his academy who 'marched out' of the course. As his family was on a limited income it was important for him to achieve well at the recruitment camp and thereby be placed on the army payroll.

Lance's dad was a keen outdoors man and was injured in a shooting accident when Lance was 12 years old. His dad became physically dependent as a result of the accident. Lance was very angry about losing his opportunity to enjoy the outdoors with his father. Lance has been in the academy in 2011. He has really enjoyed his outdoor education and his mother, who talked with ERO, discussed what it has meant for the family for Lance to have the opportunities offered in the academy.

Hine is a Year 13 student who has suffered with a speech impediment. As a result of her challenges she has completely lacked confidence. Her Dean said that at Year 11 she was going to drop out of school. As a result of the academy she now has confidence to instruct students. Hine won the drill sergeant award at camp and has no difficulty instructing and drilling students. She has also become a school prefect. The deputy principal said that when she was in Year 9 her confidence was so low that there was no way she would have been considered to be a school prefect or leader.

Gail is a Year 13 student. The deputy principal and Year 13 Dean said that she came to the school from a very difficult background. She liked what she saw in the service academy programme. She would have left school but wanted to come back and try the Service Academy. She is now determined to do something for young students through the programme. She is deputy head girl at school and a mature student leader. She is very committed to the academy and is modelling leadership for students in the academy and the wider school.

**The actual names of students have been changed*

The quality of teaching

Academy staff

Directors and assistant directors are fundamental to the quality of teaching at service academies. All academy staff had developed good relationships with students. Generally they were stern or strict with students, in terms of their expectations, while also acting as mentors in one-to-one interactions. The strictness of staff did not,

however, prevent them from being supportive of students' development. Indeed their mentoring and support and helped to build up students' self-esteem.

Despite this, ERO observed differences in the discipline standards and routines among academies. In the most effective academies there were ongoing high standards for drills, physical fitness and behaviour that provided an excellent basis for student learning and development. Well-documented programmes set out the objectives and timelines for the year. This included details about academic, military and off-site learning and the contributions each of these components made to student learning and NCEA credits.

In four academies the quality of teaching was limited. Little or no documented programme planning was evident. This often meant that it was not clear to students how they were to gain credits or reach other goals during their time in the academy. These academies also tended to have lower expectations for discipline and routine compared with the more organised examples.

The overall contribution made by academy staff to the quality of teaching has to be seen in light of the fact that almost all of the directors and assistant directors were not trained teachers. The lack of a teaching qualification was not, in any way, a barrier to directors' and assistant directors' effectiveness. However, academies that had better links with their host school were more likely to show the levels of coordination and organisation necessary for a high quality programme. The features of this coordination included academy staff working in partnership with school staff to provide careers advice and support, and specific teaching programmes.

Multi-level teaching

A feature of the effective academies was the ability of staff to meet the diverse needs of students, especially in literacy and numeracy. Staff developed programmes that catered for students' individual strengths, interests and needs and the different NQF standards they had gained before entering the academy programme.

ERO observed some benefits when academy students stayed together for a majority of their programme. This made it easier to maintain academy routines, establish the culture of the academies and build literacy and numeracy programmes around the academy's attendance at off-site components of the programme. Having a whole-academy literacy and numeracy programme meant that academy students' attendance at off-site courses did not affect the programmes taught by mainstream teachers.

Significantly the academy-based literacy and numeracy programmes were often taught by experienced and effective teachers. This included heads of department and members of the senior leadership team from the host school. Their experience as teachers was useful in the multi-level design of these programmes and helped ensure that literacy and numeracy were successful parts of the overall academy programme.

Assessment of all learning

One of the key challenges for the academies is developing an assessment approach that adequately acknowledges student learning in terms of NCEA and NQF credits. Some academies were better at aspects of this than others.

Central to this is the assessment of student learning during their defence force instruction. The directors have started working with members of the NZDF to identify how students can receive NQF credits for this learning.

Other dimensions of student learning have not been consistently captured in terms of NCEA credits. This varies according to the academy, but there is scope for academies to use standards from health and physical education, core generics, outdoor education and leadership. Other domains are also likely to provide opportunities for students to map their learning to the qualifications framework.

Programme coordination, careers and goal setting

Effective support for student goals involved directors helping students to identify goals in the following sorts of areas:

- Careers
- Physical fitness (and well-being)
- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Other academic study
- Personal goals
- Military course components
- Outdoor education knowledge and skills.

Although students typically identified goals in these areas, different levels of support and coordination was observed for different goals in each of the academies. For example, some academies did not regularly review student goals. Many did not adequately help students identify the steps needed to reach significant goals such as their career aspirations. Some academies had detailed processes for monitoring and achieving fitness goals but were far less detailed in other areas. In some cases careers staff helped students develop goals, but these did not necessarily follow the steps a student needed to take to achieve them. None of the academies used an IEP model for supporting student goals across a range of areas.

Interestingly the patchy coordination and support for the specific goals of students, especially those outside of physical fitness, was a contrast to the intrinsic motivation students demonstrated towards reaching their overall goals. In this regard academy staff were generally successful at building the determination of students to strive for goals, such as a 'career in the police force', although they were not always good at monitoring the overall progress of a student and responding to specific barriers to student progress. At least part of the reason for students being motivated during their time in the academy was linked to the generally good levels of verbal feedback academy staff gave students for their day-to-day achievements, behaviour and motivation.

The effective goal-setting approaches that were used included the work of a director at one academy who met with individual students each week to monitor their progress towards academic, social and physical goals. This director also prepared a weekly report on each student's attendance, progress and the development of their attitudes, skills and personal qualities.

In another academy students prepared presentations to their class on the progress they were making towards their goals. This process helped students to take responsibility for their goals. The 'public' quality of students' goals echoed the common practice of students' physical fitness standards being displayed, as part of the overall academy fitness levels, in the academy classroom.

One of the less effective goal-setting processes was observed at a school that used host school teachers to monitor the goals of academy students. This had the effect of distancing the academy staff from student goal-setting and undermined a key aspect of the programme. Other processes affecting the quality of student goal-setting included the lack of follow up by academy staff, inaccessible student achievement information and a lack of detail about the steps students needed to take to both reach goals and make a successful transition from the academy programme.

Life after the academy

Although the available destination information from academies indicates that a high proportion of students go on to employment or further education and training, ERO found some areas for development related to students leaving at the end of their academy programmes. In general academies had limited processes for supporting the transition of students to work, training or future employment.

ERO also found that there were no processes to track the outcomes of students who had left the academy programme and returned to mainstream education. While it can be difficult to track the ongoing progress of students who have left school following their year in the academy, those who return to the mainstream provide a sample of students who could be closely monitored. An analysis of the outcomes reached by students who return to the mainstream would help identify the sustainability of the motivation and achievement gains made by students during their time in the academy.

Some schools found that students benefited from another year in the service academy. Some of these schools allowed second year students to act as leaders in the following year's programme. The 'promotion' of previous year's students allowed them to be role models to the current year's academy intake, gave them ongoing contact with the academy staff and provided an opportunity to benefit from staff's mentoring and support. It did however use up an academy place that could have gone to a new student. Schools have to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of repeat years to make sure that the best use is being made of the academy resources.

Academy spaces

Most of the academies were comfortably housed in their own classroom spaces, in which students could take pride. They had space to store outdoor gear and to also allow for a range of learning activities. They had networked computers so that

students could complete a variety of work in class. Some academy classrooms had kitchen areas to make it easier to welcome guests. Some academies had also made allowance for academy uniforms and had irons and ironing boards to help students look their best in their 'number ones' or formal uniforms.

There were advantages if academies were on site. Being on site typically gave students access to parade grounds, libraries and, most importantly, gymnasiums, showers and fitness equipment. Flag poles were important at some academies and were used in specific flag raising ceremonies. Some academies also had good careers resources, or were located close to careers offices in the school. The association with the careers department facilitated the goal-setting of students.

Where academy spaces were of lower quality there were difficulties getting basic classroom equipment, including curtains and computing resources. There were also issues getting gymnasium time and equipment for some academies.

Leadership and management

As is set out in the quality of teaching section of this report, directors were generally effective leaders of the academy programmes. Their leadership helped to build student motivation and achievement. Despite this there were some significant gaps in the way most academies were managed or supported by their host schools.

In the most effective cases academy directors worked well with the school principals to make sure that academies had a strong profile in the school. Teachers understood the value of the service academy and appreciated the role this had in building up the achievement of its students.

This is the most valuable programme the school has had to influence students' lives.

School Principal

The other features of effective management found in academies were:

- clear student entry criteria
- high expectations for what students would achieve
- entry pathways for academy students
- effective management systems
- detailed planning and programme documentation
- suitable self-review systems
- regular and developmental appraisal of the director
- support and professional development for the director
- integration between the academy and the main school.

None of the academies had all these features in place, although three had most of them. However systems for appraisal, professional development and support, self

review and long term planning were typically not strong in the academies. Primarily these are the responsibility of the leaders of the host schools who can be expected to induct and support academy staff who are, on the whole, new to the systems and management of schools.

The lack of management support for academies was in contrast to the high regard and appreciation shown by principals towards academy staff. This situation is somewhat analogous to that in Alternative Education (AE) where ERO has found that many secondary schools are not working with AE providers sufficiently to ensure that students achieve useful outcomes.

The lack of appraisal and professional development and support for academy staff needs to be seen against their LAT status. School leaders should be providing additional support for academy staff so they can build on their existing knowledge (which frequently includes experience as instructors).

The status of directors and other academy staff also raises questions about their employment conditions. ERO found some differences in the salaries of academy directors. These salary differences were part of an inconsistent approach to funding from the host school principals. While some schools provided additional resources, others primarily used the Ministry's tagged funding to meet the academy costs. In some cases principals did not seem to appreciate that they also received staffing and operational funding for academy students in addition to the Ministry service academy grant.² It should be pointed out that schools do not report on their use of the \$90,000 service academy grant as part of their milestone reporting to the Ministry.

Another management issue relates to the placement of academies. While not strictly a school management issue it is important to note that some principals were reluctant to be seen 'poaching' students from neighbouring schools to enrol at the academy. Schools that host academy students also receive the staffing and operational funding that comes with having these students on the roll. There are also likely to be schools that are reluctant to send students to service academies at other schools because of the funding they may lose. This suggests that not all the students who would benefit most from academies are able to access these programmes. Potentially this is a management issue for the overall Youth Guarantee policy and not just service academies.

Culture of the service academies

The culture of the service academies was typically supportive and inclusive. Students talked about a quality of 'brotherhood', whānau or teamwork in operation in their academies. This quality was strongly developed by the induction courses held by the military and was continued by the ethos of the academy staff.

² This has implications for other Youth Guarantee monies in that there are questions about who gets what funding once students start moving between campuses.

I used to get picked on at school, but I don't in the service academy – it is quite peaceful here...My parents think I am more self reliant and independent now.
Special needs student at one academy

Physical fitness was a central element to the supportive and inclusive culture of the service academies. Students actively encouraged each other to reach their fitness goals and strive to achieve new ones. This was seen, for example, in the teamwork that has operated in the end of year outdoor excursions (such as the 'coast to coast') where students work together to get their team to the end.

Linked to the physical fitness was the discipline expected at most of the academies. Correction training (CT) and physical training (PT) were core ways in which the high expectations of students were translated into specific goals and consequences from letting the rest of the class down. Specifically students might be expected to 'carry logs' around the field for lateness or incorrect uniform. In some cases an individual's punishment was extended to the whole class to underline the importance of everyone meeting expectations. Students' also had opportunities to lead their classmates by acting as a 'second in charge'.

Staff is always on our case. It was a bit of a shock when we joined and not fun for a start but it was a good hard shock.

Strictness made the difference

It helps us to take responsibility for ourselves

The service academy affected my attitude to school

My parents were pleased – they could see the changes in me.

These expectations were well accepted by almost all students. It is important to point out that while the academies were strict, they were not punitive, bullying or based on individual humiliation. Indeed teamwork, support and inclusion were observed in the many examples of students who had gained self-esteem, friendships, success and role-model status through their time in the academy.

In 2010 a male student was encouraged to enrol at the nearby service academy by the careers counsellor of his school. The student was verbally and physically capable but had very poor social skills. He had not made any friends and was depressed and withdrawn. After joining the academy he made friends who have supported him as a member of the academy team. They accepted his differences and have included him in their social and physical activities, including at the weekend. His parents are very happy that he has friends and a social network that look after him. He re-joined the academy in 2011 and is more confident, outgoing and is completing NCEA Level 2.

A male student from an Auckland academy had struggled at school in 2010. He had significant absences and poor achievement. In 2011 he joined the service academy and has transformed his attitude, attendance and cooperation. As he said "I used to be really naughty, I hated my teachers and caused lots of trouble in my classes. My teachers didn't like me and I used to hide so I couldn't go to class. I felt useless and never was any good in tests or anything. Why have I changed? I can't explain it, it's a miracle".

Significantly, those academies with lower levels of student 'morale', pride and success were those that were also less strict. One of the factors which is likely to have affected this was the lower number of students applying to enter the academy programme. In schools with higher numbers of applicants it is easier to set high expectations so that only students accepting certain demands can enter the programme.

An element in some academies was their community involvement or community service element. This added to the culture of the academy and helped build a sense of pride in the community and in the academy itself. One academy, which had an off-site classroom, did several marches down the main street to get to their classes back on the main school site. This was received, by community members. Other academies participated in community work such as providing firewood to the elderly, security for a community event and helping out at the supermarket. They participated in the ANZAC celebrations and have regular contact with RSA members. They also run the school breakfast club.

Engaging whānau and families

Links with whānau and families was variable in the service academies. All of the academies could build stronger partnerships with parents in relation to the exit transitions of students. Notwithstanding this, nine of the academies had good relationships with whānau and parents, albeit with minor areas for improvement. Seven of the academies had more limited relationships with parents and could make significant improvements in this area.

At the academies that made the best connections to families, whānau were seen as a key element to changing student lives. For example at one academy the director developed a range of formal and informal ways to connect with families. The

director's wife and the local kaumatua were part of this process as they formed a collective with parents to attend academy celebrations, inductions and powhiri. The quality of these relationships meant that there was a common understanding about the academy drug-free policy for students, and student attendance in after-hours classes, camps and training.

Other strategies for engaging families included a meeting with the whānau as part of each student's induction. These meetings were used to explain the nature and expectations of the service academy. They were also used to outline the support parents needed to give to their son or daughter during their time in the academy. Most academies included regular academy newsletters, school reports, report evenings as well as visits and phone calls home. One director had set up a Facebook page to assist parents, and ex-students, to keep in contact with both the director and events at the academy. At another academy there were monthly meetings for parents to hear about activities at the academy.

Where families were less engaged with service academies ERO observed that academy staff had not seen the opportunities or benefits to be gained through better relationships with parents. As a result the connections with parents tended to be minimal. Parents might be part of the induction process at these academies but had little involvement other than receiving school reports.

The variability in the links with families is perhaps connected to the experience of the academy directors themselves. In their military backgrounds these people have dealt directly with recruits and therefore have not needed to develop partnerships with parents.

Conclusion

Service academies are a highly effective secondary school initiative. Across the 16 Ministry funded service academies in this evaluation, ERO found evidence that the motivation, academic achievement, demeanour and physical fitness of many students had improved greatly through being part of an academy. The changes made by these students were often seen as transformational by whānau members, teachers and the students themselves.

Most of the 16 service academies were found to provide high quality education and support for their students. Three of the 16 were highly effective providers and another nine showed good levels of effectiveness. Three were effective in some aspects but significant improvement would be made in several areas. One of the service academies demonstrated limited effectiveness.

The level of effectiveness found across the service academies marks them as a highly successful initiative for secondary schools. A majority of the students in the academy have previously had some difficulties in maintaining satisfactory levels of engagement with schooling. Their time in the service academies has turned this around and helped them to identify and demonstrate their potential.

The key factors supporting the effectiveness of the academies were the leadership of the directors, the contribution made by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), the quality of teaching in the academy programme and the development of a supportive academy culture.

Effective academy directors established excellent relationships with students and the leadership of the host school. While most directors were not trained as teachers, their skills as academy leaders included an ability to mentor previously struggling students, help them set goals and demand high standards in students' discipline and application to learning activities.

The NZDF 12-day induction camp at the beginning of the year helped to establish the discipline, focus and values of the academies. Other NZDF camps and outdoor activities enabled students to develop outdoor skills, gain leadership skills and test themselves.

High quality teaching at the academies encompassed several elements. It involved the 'stern but fair' discipline of the academy staff and the high standards expected of students. Linked to this were the skills academy staff had in helping students set and achieve goals, especially in physical fitness. These programmes also set objectives with suitable planning.

These programmes demonstrated high quality, multi-level teaching. Typically this occurred during numeracy and literacy teaching, when academy students were taught as a group. Teaching the academy as a group helped to avoid the issues arising from these students being away from mainstream classes because they were off-site (for example at the 12-day induction camp). In order to manage the various abilities of the academy classes some schools effectively used heads of department and members of

the school's leadership team to deliver lessons that would allow for the different strengths of students.

The culture in the academies was a key factor in student engagement and achievement. While there were high expectations and high disciplinary standards, the overall culture was inclusive and supportive. This was built by the approach of the academy directors, the NZDF contribution and the time students spent together. An ethic of teamwork and collaboration was demonstrated across the academies. Students looked after each other, encouraged one another and built strong friendships. Students who had not been included well in mainstream education were fully included in the academies.

As might be expected with a relatively new educational initiative, there are some important areas for development. Academy directors have been working with NZDF personnel to establish how students could gain National Qualifications Framework credits for what they learnt during NZDF training courses. Some schools have also started work with academy staff to ensure that the programme planning for their service academy allows students to gain credits.

Schools also need to work with their academy staff to develop appraisal, professional development and self review systems. Because academy staff often have different professional backgrounds to conventionally trained teachers these systems will need to be specifically developed for these staff. School staff should also support directors to establish systems for supporting the exit transitions of students and to monitor the success of students who return to mainstream education. The analysis of returning students could provide valuable information on the sustainability of the gains students make in the academy programme. Exit transitions are also one of the important ways in which academies could build their relationships with parents and whānau.

This report raises questions about the registration, training and employment conditions of academy staff. This is an area for the Ministry of Education and schools to consider, as are the milestone reporting processes. Milestone reports should assist schools to develop self-review processes. Because of the different ways schools have spent their service academy money there is also a need for milestone reports to include data on how schools have used this money.

At a system level ERO noted that there were some complications relating to student access and the funding of service academies. Some of the host school principals were conscious of not to be seen 'poaching' students from other schools by offering them a place in a service academy. Likewise there was anecdotal evidence that students from schools without service academies were not offering these places as an option for their students – because they would lose funding if these students left their school. These examples suggest that some of the places in the service academies may not necessarily go to the students who would most benefit. Moreover, this raises questions about the extent to which other Youth Guarantee initiatives may also be affected by schools making financial decisions ahead of educational ones.

Next steps

ERO recommends that academy directors:

- continue to work with NZDF and school personnel to identify ways to formally assess student learning in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

On the basis of this report, ERO suggests that schools with service academies:

- work with academy staff to coordinate, document and monitor student goal-setting, including goals related to career aspirations, academic progress, fitness, values and social/personal goals
- continue to work with academy directors to identify ways to formally assess student learning in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- monitor the progress of students who return to school following their year in a service academy
- develop processes that support students leaving a service academy
- use the indicators in this report, along with student achievement information, the monitoring of student goals and destination data, to analyse how service academy programmes can be developed.

On the basis of this report the Ministry of Education should consider:

- modifying the milestone reporting requirements so that they also support the self-review of service academies
- exploring how induction courses and/or professional development for academy staff (especially those without formal teaching qualifications) could be used to enhance their work, including their understanding of school operations
- support schools and academies in establishing systems to monitor the progress of students who return to school following a year in a service academy
- include, as part of the milestone reporting process, information on how service academy money is spent by schools
- as part of the milestone reporting process for service academies, collate and analyse information on success of students who return to school after a year in a service academy
- consider the implications for Youth Guarantee of the resource issues for principals not wanting to be seen 'poaching' students from neighbouring schools or releasing students to attend a service academy at another school.

Appendix 1: Effective service academy indicators

Host school leadership	
Professional support for academy staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host schools provide a comprehensive induction for new academy staff based on the school's systems, including those for attendance, qualifications and Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) • Academy staff are appraised and provided with a supportive professional development programme • Academy staff are given appropriate support from a senior manager and/or head of department to establish a management document, annual plans, targets and programme plans • There are regular (departmental) meetings between the academy director a senior manager and/or head of department
Integration with the host school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources of the host school are used to enhance the quality of the academy programme, these could include resources connected to computer suites, the school library, careers and academic departments • Directors are part of a collaborative school culture
Academy resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academy is given appropriate resources to complete each aspect of the programme
Quality of teaching/Academy leadership	
Relationships with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academy staff build positive relationships with students. These relationships are characterised by respect and support • Directors support students to set and achieve goals across a range of areas, including social, physical, health, academic, career and personal domains
Multi-level teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student's of diverse abilities are catered for
Programme planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a documented programme plans which sets out the nature, structure and priorities of the academy programme • There are clear entry criteria for which students will enter the programme • The programme has clear objectives and there is planning in place to help achieve these objectives
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning is reflected in the credits gained through the New Zealand Qualifications framework
Academy culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students participate in the NZDF courses • Students do a majority of their learning together to support the teamwork and collaboration expected of academy students • There are high expectations for students to achieve across a range of domains including academic, physical fitness and social skills/leadership • Student's support one another to achieve and there is a strong ethic of teamwork, collaboration and support shown by students • Stern but fair discipline
Exit transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are processes in place that support students to transition to further education, employment or a career in the services. • These processes prepare students to be successful in their new contexts following their time in the academy • Exit transitions identify how whānau can support a student • Students who return to schooling following a year in the academy are

	tracked and, where appropriate supported, to succeed
Student outcomes	
Academic and social outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence that some students have transformed their behaviour, engagement and achievement through their participation in the academy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students are achieving their academic goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make significant health and physical fitness gains over their time in the academy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy students are seen as role models in the school
Student goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students set goals and develop plans to achieve these goals across a range of areas, including social, physical, health, academic, career and personal domains Students monitor their achievement in terms of their social, physical, health, academic, career and personal goals Students are supported by their whānau to achieve their goals
Destination outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy students go on to positive outcomes including employment, further education or careers in the services
School-wide outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy students positively contribute to the culture of the host school The academy is a source of pride for the school community
Analysis of data and self review	
Achievement information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic outcomes are monitored and analysed to improve the quality of teaching and support received by academy students
Individual education plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy directors monitor and report on student social, physical, health, academic, career and personal goals The extent to which students reach their goals is used to inform self-review about the quality of the academy programme
Destination information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are processes in place to monitor, record and analyse the destination outcomes of students Information about student's destinations is analysed and used to inform self-review about the quality of the academy programme
Self-review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The board of trustees receives an annual report from academies outlining the academic, social and destination outcomes of students. Included in this report is an analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement and a plan for how the academy programme has been developed in light of outcome data; student, teacher and whānau feedback; and programme analysis and evaluations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self review leads to improvements in student outcomes
Engaging families	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is regular formal and informal contact for student families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families understand how they can support students to achieve their social, physical, health, academic, career and personal goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families understand how they can support student exit transitions

Appendix 2: Expectations of Service Academies

The following table is taken from the Memorandum of Understanding between schools and the Ministry regarding the expectations for the provision of service academies for 2010 and 2011.

Service Academies in schools - 2010 and 2011

Service Academies are military focused programmes in schools. They are about creating opportunities for young people who might otherwise leave school and find it difficult to find a job or continue with their education.

Expected Outcomes	<p>Students enrolled in the Service Academy are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work towards and attain NCEA Level 1 Mathematics and English as a very minimum, as well as other appropriate credits from the National Qualifications Framework. return to mainstream education, go on to tertiary education or gain sustainable employment (this may be in the Services but could also be in other areas of employment) on completion of the programme.
Students	<p>The intention is that selection of students for Service Academies will give priority to Year 12 and 13 students who are disengaging, at risk of disengaging or have disengaged from education and would benefit from a disciplined military-focused programme.</p> <p>Note that school principals and academy directors would have discretion to decide whether other students turning 16 during the year, at their school, or from their community, would benefit from the Service Academy programme.</p> <p>Service Academies should accommodate up to 20 students.</p> <p>Note that schools may choose to recruit additional students but there will be no additional funding provided for these students.</p> <p>Schools will have the discretion to re-fill places if students decide to withdraw from the programme during the year.</p>
Attendance	<p>Students enrolled in the academy will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be enrolled full time at the Service Academy school continue to attend school full time, primarily on the school site. <p>When students do external training courses, such as the induction course at the Military base, boards of trustees can use section 71 of the Education Act 1989 to approve this. This section allows boards to approve students undertaking courses or making visits outside school premises.</p>
Programme structure	<p>The Service Academy will offer a twelve month programme, broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one third of students' time is to be spent on curriculum subjects including English and Mathematics, and other subjects appropriate to the needs of individual students and which will provide credits from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Another third of students' time will be spent on military-focused courses and activities. These courses include the military Youth Life Skills programme provided by the New Zealand Defence Force.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will have the discretion to manage the remaining third of students' time for either subject classes or military-focused courses to suit the needs of the students. <p>The Academy Director will develop and maintain an individual assessment plan for each course participant in the Service Academy, outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expected outcomes for the individual students each student's aspirations and expected goals a clear career pathway at the completion of the programme <p>The Academy Director will also develop a Progress Report template that will clearly outline;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the participants' development pathway the participants' goals the participants' learning needs as they arise any barriers that arise for the participants and how these will be addressed any qualifications or external programmes that the participant has completed. <p>Student achievement will continue to be reported through the normal channels used for all other students at the school. Likewise, reporting to parents, caregivers, family and whanau will be conducted in the same manner as the school uses for all other students.</p>
Staffing	<p>The school will employ a full time Academy Director who will report to the principal and be responsible for running the programme. The Director should have a military background and have experience working with young people.</p> <p>Note that schools may choose to employ an assistant director to assist with running the programme.</p> <p>If the Service Academy staff are not registered teachers, schools will need to apply for a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) from the New Zealand Teachers Council.</p> <p>The Course Director's duties and responsibilities, as a minimum, must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of the Academy training programme. Oversight and management of the day to day activities of any staff assigned to the Academy. Provision of mentoring, development and leadership for the students of the Academy. Development and maintenance of individual plans for students. Provision of pastoral care to the students for the duration of the course. Establishment and maintenance of appropriate working relationships with New Zealand Defence Force staff. Management of all safety, health and well being requirements associated with any programmes the academy runs including compliance with all health and safety regulations.
Accommodation	<p>Schools will provide a classroom specifically for the Service Academy students.</p> <p>Access to a gymnasium should also be available.</p>
Funding	<p>The Ministry of Education will fund each Service Academy at the rate of \$90,000 per full calendar year. Funding will be available as part of the</p>

	<p>student entitlement paid quarterly to schools.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the funding is used to fund the costs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a full time Director for the academy • transport to Service Academy related courses • uniforms • relevant courses purchased for students at the academy.
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