



# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): Educational Provision in Oranga Tamariki Residential Care Settings: Initial Findings

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Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
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**Associate  
Minister of  
Education**

It is recommended that you:

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Minister of  
Education**

- a) **Note** ERO's evaluation of education of students in Oranga Tamariki residential care has identified a number of areas of concern.
- b) **Note** that ERO intends to develop recommendations for improving education provision for these priority students as part of its report on our investigation.
- c) **Note** that ERO plans to run targeted wānanga with key stakeholder groups to develop its recommendations.
- d) **Note** that given the requirement for further consultation, the publication of the suite of reports from this work will be delayed from May to June 2021.
- e) **Note** that this briefing is recommended for proactive release at the time of publication of the final report and may be subject to redaction.



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):  
Educational Provision in Oranga  
Tamariki Residential Care Settings***



Comments:

### Minister's Office to complete

Noted

Seen

Approved

Referred to:

Date signed by Minister:



Our Ref: M21-10

31 March 2021

**Hon Kelvin Davis**  
**Associate Minister of Education**

**Hon Jan Tinetti**  
**Associate Minister of Education**

### **Educational Provision in Oranga Tamariki Residential Care Settings: Initial Findings**

#### **Purpose**

1. This briefing updates you on the high level findings from the ERO system evaluation of educational provision in Oranga Tamariki residential care settings. It also notes that we will carry out a series of wānanga with key stakeholders to inform the recommendations from this evaluation.

#### **Background**

2. ERO is evaluating the education provided to children in Oranga Tamariki residences. It is looking at the quality of education provision by individual providers and how well the system delivers education for these priority students. Appendix A describes the system for education provision for students in Oranga Tamariki residences.
3. The review focuses on four key questions:
  - a) What learning and wellbeing outcomes are being achieved by the current educational provision and system?
  - b) How well are the key levers (e.g. pedagogy, transitions) influencing students' outcomes at the local, organisational and system level?
  - c) How effective, coherent and aligned is the system?
  - d) Are recent system changes (e.g. recent legislative changes) contributing to shifts in practices, processes and actions?
4. Education Providers have received draft reports summarising the findings for their entities. Their Errors of Fact response is due to ERO this week. We will update you on these draft reports once we have addressed the Errors of Fact. This will include proposed actions for where provision is not adequate.
5. Data collection and analysis for the overall report are complete. Draft findings have been developed and have been shared with the project's Expert Reference Group and have begun to be shared with agencies. [Appendix B sets out the Expert Reference Group membership].

## **What informed the findings**

6. The findings were based on robust and broad evidence including:
  - a) Site visits to eight residential sites, undertaken in October/November 2020. The fieldwork included:
    - i. observations of teaching and learning
    - ii. in-depth interviews of some students at each site
    - iii. interviews with principals/managers and several trustees
    - iv. interviews and meetings with all leaders and most teachers at each site
    - v. interviews with some residential managers, staff, case leaders and workers
    - vi. document analysis of student learning records, planning for learning, strategic and curriculum documents.
  - b) Interviews with Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki staff (operation and policy).
  - c) Surveys of all students and teachers in residences.
  - d) Analysis of NZQA achievement outcomes for students enrolled in these residences from November 2019 - November 2020.
7. The evaluation had a strong focus on assessing provision and outcomes for Māori students.

## **Students in residential care have complex needs and require a high level of educational support**

8. Our review of the New Zealand evidence base showed that these students:
  - a) Have high levels of transience, both in terms of their homes and their school placements.
  - b) Have a history of disrupted attachment, trauma and neglect, and disengagement from health and education services.
  - c) Are over-represented in levels of learning support needs, language difficulties and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.
  - d) Have high rates of parental substance abuse, difficult child-parent relationships and mental health problems.
9. Two thirds of the students in residential care are Māori. They are more likely to be male.

## **Findings overview**

10. From the evaluation we have reached seven key findings:
  - a) Students in residential care are positive about their education and achieve educational outcomes.
  - b) There is insufficient involvement of whānau and caregivers in their children's learning.
  - c) Providers are committed to improving outcomes for Māori and culturally responsive practice, but practice is variable.
  - d) There is no agreed education model or a clear picture of what high quality education provision looks like for these students and currently some provision is inadequate.
  - e) Students' learning is often disrupted due to lack of continuity in their learning as they transition between schools and/or placements.

- f) The way education provision in residences is contracted is leading to inconsistencies in access to learning support services for students, and these services are not integrated into the model of practice of these services.
- g) There has not been a significant improvement over the 11 years ERO has been reviewing provision for these students.

**Finding 1. Students in residential care are positive about their education and achieve educational outcomes**

- 11. ERO looked at the three years of NZQA assessment data of students enrolled in a residence over the past three years. This data showed that the students had a higher pass rate for NZQA assessments while they were enrolled in Oranga Tamariki residential care schooling, compared to when they were enrolled in non-residential schools.
- 12. We are currently carrying out further analysis to understand what lies behind this. For example, students were more likely to be enrolled in unit standards in the residential schools and achievement standards in mainstream schools.
- 13. Students were generally positive about their learning in the residential schools. 92% of students agreed with the statement 'My teachers help me learn here'. There were some differences between groups:
  - a) Māori students were less positive than non-Māori.
  - b) Students in Youth Justice residences were less positive than those in care and protection residences.
  - c) Older students were more positive than younger students.
- 14. When asked what the best thing was about learning in residential care, students most commonly said: their learning progress and achievement; their relationships with teachers; and having a say in what and how they learn.

**Finding 2. There is insufficient involvement of whānau and caregivers in their children's learning**

- 15. The literature shows children and young people in care want greater involvement of their whānau in their learning. Around a third of students that we surveyed, said that there was little involvement of their whānau or caregivers in their learning.
- 16. Whilst we found good examples of educational connections with whānau/caregivers, overall there were minimal opportunities for regular and meaningful whānau/caregiver involvement. The most frequent involvement with whānau was during transition in or out of the residence.
- 17. We also found that while social workers are provided with updates from teaching staff there is limited use of these, and they may not be passed on to whanau/caregivers.

**Finding 3. Providers are committed to improving outcomes for Māori and culturally responsive practice, but practice is variable**

- 18. The providers we evaluated had a focus on building capability and cultural competence to deliver education provision which is responsive to Māori students. Many students talked positively about engaging with their culture while in residence including:
  - a) Feeling proud about being Māori in the residence.
  - b) Having a sense of belonging and learning a lot more about their culture.

- c) Going on visits to their own Marae, learning te reo and taking part in cultural activities.
19. Whānau, hapū and iwi have opportunities to input into school decision-making, curriculum and kawa/tikanga practices, but these are not always meaningful, coordinated or culturally responsive.
  20. We heard a commitment and evidence of progress in working with mana whenua when developing education provision in new and existing sites. In some instances, a history of poor relationships is a barrier to meaningful collaboration. Generally, we found that engagement was mostly 'consultation' rather than co-design or partnering.

**Finding 4. There is no agreed education model or a clear picture of what high quality education provision looks like for these students and currently some provision is inadequate**

21. There is no agreed educational model for the current youth justice and care and protection residences, or the future community-based homes.
22. All stakeholders spoke of the lack of clarity about education provision and what it looks like for these students. There is no overarching picture of what good looks like to guide operations or policy.
23. There are also different understandings of the importance of educational attainment compared to other outcomes including inclusiveness, reducing recidivism and connection with culture. With no agreed overarching evidence-based picture of what good looks like, the locally developed approaches lead to variation in what is expected of the providers and residence staff.
24. Our review of providers found provision in two of the sites inadequate.

**Finding 5. Students' learning is often disrupted due to lack of continuity in their learning as they transition between schools and/or placements**

25. There are significant challenges in partnering with mainstream schools when transitioning students or when children and young people move between placements, which compromise the continuity of students' learning, including:
  - a) Some students have been disengaged from school prior to placement, resulting in a lack of recent educational information.
  - b) Multiple plans and different systems for sharing student data means there is incomplete or confusing educational information available.
  - c) Strained relationships between the mainstream school and the student/their whānau and a reluctance to work together or to enrol them back on release.
  - d) When students leave a residence, schools can lack the capability to support them to re-engage or provide trauma-informed pedagogy.
  - e) Specialist learning support, curriculum options leading to credits, and vocational or training programmes underway in residence are often not available after transition.
26. Localised attempts to improve students' transition or ongoing engagement in learning are occurring. However, these initiatives tend to lack clarity of process and purpose.

**Finding 6. The way education provision in residences is contracted is leading to inconsistencies in access to learning support services for students, and these services are not integrated into the model of practice of these services**

27. There is confusion about the status of the providers and whether they are operating as a contractor or a school. Two of the providers are specialist state schools, the other is an NGO.
28. The specialist schools and the NGO provider are confused about the staffing and resourcing they can access. This resource is not integrated into the model of education provision, or with the other interventions provided through Oranga Tamariki. Consequently, the students do not have the same access as students in mainstream schools to specialist supports that follows the students, such as psychologists or ORs support.
29. The specialist schools and provider have a high ratio of teachers, but it is not clear to them that they are expected to fund teacher aide support through this funding. Instead they are reliant on funding that moves with the students and by the time a student has a teacher aide assigned, the student has often left, and the teacher aide funding has gone with them. This provides challenges for schools and delays for new students accessing teacher aide support.
30. The specialist schools and provider report that significant energy is spent on navigating RFP processes to operate as educational providers and to get contracts for various types of educational provision (e.g. community-based schools and remand homes), that other state schools do not have to do.

**Finding 7. There has not been a significant improvement over the 11 years ERO has been reviewing provision for these students**

31. ERO has been reviewing education in these residences since 2010. The findings of this evaluation are consistent with previous findings and ERO has not seen a significant improvement.

**Developing Recommendations**

32. Given the history of previous reports not leading to improvement, the Expert Reference Group has asked that ERO should include in the report, recommendations on how education for these students could be strengthened.
33. ERO proposes, on a confidential basis to:
  - a) Share interim findings with key stakeholders.
  - b) Engage with stakeholders on the implications of these for the current and future arrangements for these learners. This recommendation needs careful consideration.
34. We recommend that ERO carry out a series of wānanga with key stakeholders to gain their perspectives on changes needed. The table below lists the stakeholders that we intend to engage with.

Stakeholders	Association of Social Workers VOYCE Oranga Tamariki Māori Design Group MSD's Kahu Advisory Group (overseeing the Independent Children's Monitor) Oranga Tamariki Pasifika panel
Government agencies	Ministry of Education Oranga Tamariki (underway) Independent Children's Monitor
Interested parties	Providers (Kingslea School, Central Regional Health School, Barnados) Office of the Children's Commissioner

35. Engaging key stakeholders will require us to share the initial findings with them. We will be clear that the findings are embargoed and we will carefully manage all information shared, but it does involve some risk.

### Next steps

36. If you agree to targeted engagement with key stakeholders, we will:

- a) Work with the key stakeholders to develop implications and recommendations in April.
- b) Will provide you with a copy of the final report by mid-May.
- c) Publish and launch the report in mid-June.

37. We will also provide you with copies of the three reports on individual providers by Wednesday, 14 April.

### Recommendations

38. It is recommended that you:

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- b) **Note** that ERO intends to develop recommendations for improving education provision for these priority students as part of its report on our investigation.
- c) **Note** that ERO plans to run targeted wānanga with key stakeholder groups to develop its recommendations.
- d) **Note** that given the requirement for further consultation, the publication of the suite of reports from this work will be delayed from May to June 2021.

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**noted**



Nicholas Pole  
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED

Hon Kelvin Davis  
Associate Minister of Education

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NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education

31/03/2021