



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Education and Workforce Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Kuranga, Take Hunga Mahi

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**Review briefing on the 2022/23 annual
review of the Education Review Office**

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Katie Nimon, Chairperson

Contents

Recommendation.....	3
About the Education Review Office Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga	3
Summary of 2022/23 performance and audit results	3
Financial trends	3
Non-financial performance.....	4
Audit results.....	4
Conducting institution reviews to lift education outcomes.....	4
Reviewing early childhood education providers	5
Supporting new principals	5
Easing administrative burdens on principals of small schools.....	6
Curriculum and assessment.....	6
Other matters considered.....	7
Police vetting.....	7
Supporting Māori learners	7
ERO's new evidence hub	7
Appendix.....	8

Education Review Office

Recommendation

The Education and Workforce Committee has conducted a review briefing on the annual review of the Education Review Office for 2022/23, and recommends that the House take note of its report.

About the Education Review Office | Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department and is New Zealand's education evaluation agency. It reviews the performance and assesses the quality of all pre-tertiary education providers. ERO has a mandate to review state, state-integrated, and private schools, kura, and early learning services. ERO carries out system-wide inquiries, evaluation, and research on areas that affect equitable participation, engagement, and achievement by learners. It also performs home-schooling reviews and special reviews.

Nicholas Pole is ERO's chief executive. The chief executive is also New Zealand's Chief Review Officer. ERO employs approximately 250 staff, including 127 review officers.

Summary of 2022/23 performance and audit results

In 2022/23, ERO's total revenue was \$42.532 million, compared to \$35.582 million the previous year. The increase was largely because ERO received an additional \$1.850 million to establish Aroturuki Tamariki,¹ as well as \$2.8 million to fund this newly established agency from 1 May to 30 June 2023. An additional \$2 million was obtained in Budget 2022 to carry out evaluations on Māori-immersion in English-medium schools. ERO's total expenditure also increased in 2022/23 due to salary increases.

Financial trends

	2019/20 \$million	2020/21 \$million	2021/22 \$million	2022/23 \$million	Change in 2022/23
Revenue	32.923	35.148	35.582	42.532	19.5%
Expenditure	30.636	34.621	34.514	39.337	14.0%
Net surplus or (deficit)	2.287	0.527	1.068	3.195	—

¹ Aroturuki Tamariki is the Independent Children's Monitor, which is responsible for monitoring the Oranga Tamariki system and providing insights to drive system improvement, and improved outcomes for tamariki.

Non-financial performance

ERO missed the targets for four of its performance measures:

- progress in bringing schools onto the new schooling review approach
- the percentage of schools that indicate that ERO's evaluations contribute to their decisions about how to improve outcomes for learners
- the percentage of schools that indicate that their ERO evaluation helped to identify or confirm opportunities for improvement
- key audiences reporting that ERO's national evaluations are informative and useful for identifying or planning improvement within the system.

Audit results

The Appointed Auditor issued a standard audit report on behalf of the Auditor-General. The Appointed Auditor rated the management control environment and financial information systems and controls as "very good". He rated the performance information and associated systems and controls as "good".

Conducting institution reviews to lift education outcomes

ERO told us that it has changed its approach to institution reviews. Rather than simply going into schools and identifying areas of concern, ERO wants to focus on working alongside schools to improve outcomes. We asked for an update on this partnership approach. ERO said that the approach has received positive feedback and it is starting to see some shifts in schools' improvement.

ERO's role is to emphasise critical issues in schools and find solutions to lift outcomes in the education system. However, while it ensures that accountabilities exist in the system, schools and other learning services are not accountable to ERO. We asked how it ensures that its expectations carry weight if it cannot hold schools to account. ERO said it engages with the school leadership teams in its partnership approach to address issues. Further, ERO's evaluation reports are publicly available on its website. These reports highlight areas of concern and compliance with regulatory requirements, as well as the quality of teaching and learning.² ERO refers any significant concerns to the ministry.

We would like to see a clear correlation between reviews and improvement in outcomes. ERO told us that this will be evident over time. COVID-19 has had a considerable impact on the education system, exacerbating declines in attendance, behaviour, and performance. ERO will continue to work alongside schools to address these challenges. It acknowledged that some of these challenges, such as chronic truancy, will require system change as schools cannot address them on their own. We heard that recent shifts in the system have been significant, such as the establishment of Te Mahau in 2021 as a separate business unit within the ministry. The unit works with frontline staff to provide services and support to learners, their whānau, and their local communities.

² Some of the common themes identified in the past year include internal evaluation and the use or absence of assessment tools, as well as the quality of teaching and learning specifically in literacy and numeracy.

We are concerned that some schools may have an internal evaluation framework that differs from ERO's. In those cases, ERO said, it works directly with schools to better align evaluation systems. It was unclear to us whether this influences how student performance is reviewed. ERO told us that it has not notified the ministry where schools are using different evaluation frameworks; rather, it is working with schools to improve their frameworks.

Reviewing early childhood education providers

Currently, ERO has two types of review approaches in the early learning education sector.³ "Akanuku" assurance reviews are carried out if the early childhood education provider (ECE) is undergoing its first ERO review. They assess whether a service meets and maintains regulatory standards and licensing criteria. "Akarangi" quality evaluations evaluate the extent to which the ECE has the learning and organisational conditions to support equitable and excellent outcomes for learners.

We asked about Akanuku reviews and what happens when ECEs do not meet basic levels of assurance. ERO said that most providers are meeting compliance regulations, but an unacceptable risk to children has been identified in around 12 percent of providers. This is largely due to ECEs failing to do safety checks and vet staff. ERO said that it refers these concerns to the ministry. In some cases, the ministry may place the provider under a provisional licence while it works with them to address the issues.

We asked ERO how it communicates expectations and feedback to ECEs. Prior to reviews, ERO offers information sessions to discuss what its requirements are. It has also publicised a framework with the sector to ensure it is clear what is being assessed. Following a review, the expectations are translated into a quality improvement plan which highlights any areas that need strengthening. When ERO returns to that education provider, it assesses progress against that plan.

Supporting new principals

Using research carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, ERO found that some new principals were struggling with workloads. The report outlines that in 2022, one third of principals are new principals, meaning that they have been in the role for less than five years. Many of these principals work in small and very small schools. 18 percent of new principals felt very unprepared or unprepared for the role when they first started, and 13 percent felt somewhat unprepared. The new principals felt the least prepared for working in partnership with Māori, and for the administrative and legal aspects of the role. We heard that 4 out of 10 new principals need more support.

The increased need for support for new principals is also, in part, a result of the devolved nature of the education system which has placed more responsibilities on principals. ERO noted that principals who have held previous leadership roles, for example as a deputy principal or a head of department, were three times more prepared than those who had not. Further, they were able to manage the workload better. We heard that principals felt unprepared navigating legal requirements and obligations.

³ A third review approach, "Akamatua", Evaluating Excellence and Innovation, was being developed in 2023.

To better support principals, ERO told us that it has identified areas for action to encourage leadership development. The first develops clearer pathways to becoming a principal. The second is a programme of development for aspiring principals. These changes would better emphasise the career path to becoming a principal and provide support to reaching that goal. The third focus area is a package of support for new principals and the fourth is more accessible support for small and isolated schools. The last area for action is supporting aspiring Māori leaders into leadership roles.

Easing administrative burdens on principals of small schools

ERO said that principals in smaller schools may struggle more because they do not have enough staff within their teams to delegate some of the more administrative tasks to. Further, in some small schools, principals may also spend time teaching in the classroom. Legal and administrative tasks may therefore be more challenging to complete since the requirements are the same regardless of a school's size. ERO recommends peer support and mentoring networks to help mitigate this issue. It said that there are opportunities to connect new principals of small schools with experienced principals of small schools, to answer questions and share experiences of how to manage their workload efficiently. ERO is focused on ensuring that principals maximise their time to focus on driving the quality of teaching within their school.

Curriculum and assessment

ERO emphasised that the education system needs to be well aligned to ensure a consistent approach to the curriculum. We heard that evidence-based teaching and learning practices are becoming more apparent within the system. This evidence is also becoming increasingly grounded in how academic outcomes can be improved. ERO said that continuing to develop a common practice model is important.

ERO told us that it is “absolutely critical” for schools to have nationwide standardised norm-referenced assessment. While there are nationwide tools to measure students’ performance including PATs (Progressive Achievement Tests)⁴ and e-asTTle⁵, ERO said that only about half of schools use them. It said that if schools do not use national assessment tools, there is no way of measuring a student’s progress against students from other schools. Many parents are increasingly frustrated with the lack of knowledge about their child’s achievement. ERO said that good assessment should be linked to progression markers so that teachers, the school, and parents know how well a child is progressing.

ERO said it will carry out a thorough evaluation of assessments and their use to provide richer insights and recommendations to schools. We look forward to inviting ERO back to our committee to report on current and future reviews.

⁴ Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) are standardised tests that assess student achievement in mathematics, listening comprehension, punctuation and grammar, reading comprehension, and reading vocabulary.

⁵ e-asTTle is an online assessment tool that assesses student achievement and progress in reading, mathematics and writing, and in pānui, pāngarau, and tuhituhi at curriculum levels 2–6.

Other matters considered

We also discussed the following matters with ERO. For more detail, refer to the pages noted below in the [*Hansard* transcript of our hearing](#), available on the Parliament website.

Police vetting

For early childhood education, teachers must be vetted each time they start a new job. We heard that 12 percent of ECE providers did not meet compliance requirements, some of which relate to police vetting. Some providers who are desperate to hire new staff may avoid the vetting process. ERO told us that it is focusing on ensuring there is policy compliance. (See *transcript p 5.*)

Supporting Māori learners

ERO is focused on emphasising the needs of Māori learners in all schools. It said that Māori children thrive in environments that reflect their values, identity, and culture—students in Māori and Kura kaupapa Māori settings outperform those in English medium-schools. ERO has developed the Poutama Reo framework which supports English medium-schools to review and improve their provision of te reo Māori. (See *transcript pp 13–15.*)

ERO's new evidence hub

ERO recently launched a one-stop evidence hub for practitioners to access research and sector insights.⁶ The website features guides, top tips, and information sheets to make research more relevant, useful, practical, and accessible given the time constraints teachers and principals face. (See *transcript pp 12–13.*)

⁶ [Evidence and Insights | Education Review Office](#)

Appendix

Committee procedure

We decided to conduct the 2022/23 annual review of the Education Review Office as a review briefing. We met between 20 March and 8 May 2024 to consider the review briefing on the 2022/23 annual review of the Education Review Office. We heard evidence from the Education Review Office on 20 March 2024 for 63 minutes. We received advice from the Office of the Auditor-General.

Committee members

Katie Nimon (Chairperson)

Carl Bates

Camilla Belich

Mike Butterick

Grant McCallum

Dr Parmjeet Parmar

Hon James Shaw (from 6 March 2024 until 27 March 2024)

Hon Jan Tinetti

Teanau Tuiono (until 21 February 2024)

Hon Phil Twyford

Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan (from 27 March 2024)

Miles Anderson also participated in this review briefing.

Related resources

We received the [Education Review Office's responses to the initial set of written questions](#) as part of our 2022/23 Annual review of the Education Review Office.

The following documents were received as advice and evidence for this review briefing.

They are available on the [Parliament website](#), along with the [Hansard transcript](#) and [recording of our meeting on 20 March 2024](#).

- Office of the Auditor-General (Briefing on the Education Review Office).
- Education Review Office (Responses to additional written questions).