



# ERO Early Childhood Service Akarangi | Quality Evaluation Report

Early Childhood Service Name: The DEN: Discover Education in Nature

Profile Number: 47593

Location: Tamatea, Napier

## 1 ERO's judgement of The DEN: Discover Education in Nature is as follows:

Domains: Ngā Akatoro	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
The learner and their learning He Whāriki Motuhake	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability Whakangungu Ngaio	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement Kaihautū	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Stewardship through effective governance and management Te Whakaruruhau	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling

For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation.

Children's health and safety

Improvement required

Taking reasonable steps

## 2 ERO's Judgements

[\*Akarangi | Quality Evaluations\*](#) evaluate the extent to which early childhood services have the learning and organisational conditions to support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. [\*Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most\*](#) and [\*Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Improvement Framework \(teacher led services\)\*](#) are the basis for making judgements about the quality of the service in achieving equity and excellence for all learners. Evaluations for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above domains.

## 3 About the Service

The DEN: Discover Education in Nature is a privately-owned early childhood service for children aged three years to school-age. The owner is responsible for governance and supports the leadership team. A centre manager oversees the daily operations of the service and a team leader is responsible for teaching and learning. The service's philosophy focuses on relationships within a nature-based environment that support children's independence and respects their learner identity.

## 4 Progress since the previous ERO report

The 2021 ERO report identified three improvement actions related to aligning the strategic plan, internal evaluation and teacher inquiry to ensure practices lead to ongoing improvement based on priorities and outcomes for children; working alongside mana whenua to develop a localised curriculum that reflects the people and places that matter to tamariki and whānau Māori; and continuing to develop assessment and evaluation practices that affirm and reflect individual children's culture and identity, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners. The impact of Cyclone Gabrielle and staffing changes have contributed to the level of progress made in relation to the quality improvement actions.

There is a clear alignment between the strategic plan, internal evaluation and teacher inquiry showing good progress has been made. Priorities for learners have been developed that are outcome focussed. These are yet to be evaluated to know the impact of any changes. Leaders recognise the skills and cultural knowledge of teachers to lead each other and children in their understanding of the localised curriculum. There has been limited progress made in relation to working alongside mana whenua and in responding to children's individual cultures, languages and identities.

## 5 Learning Conditions

### The learner and their learning | He Whāriki Motuhake

Children are well supported by a curriculum that challenges them to explore and to become fully involved in a wide variety of nature-based learning experiences that reflect the service philosophy.

- Children take responsibility for their own learning. They have time and space to revisit their interests, make sense of their world through play and develop their knowledge.
- Teachers meaningfully respond to children's interests and developing capabilities using a range of intentional teaching strategies to progress children's learning. Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are evident in routines and daily interactions, however how teachers respond to children's cultures is not as evident within assessment records for individual children.
- Assessment for learning reflects children's interests, capabilities, parent aspirations and the service's philosophy. The learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki* the early childhood curriculum are not yet well evidenced within individual planning.

### Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability | Whakangungu Ngaio

Children's learning is fostered by leaders' and teachers' participation in relevant professional learning and development aligned to the service's priorities for curriculum.

- Teachers show a commitment to ongoing learning and inquire into their own practice.
- Collaborative relationships support the team to share their ideas, skills and knowledge that contributes to curriculum planning and assessment.
- A range of reviews have taken place that are change and improvement focused. Leaders and teachers continue to build their understanding of internal evaluation processes, to guide their knowledge and use of evaluation for improvement.

## 6 Organisational conditions

### Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement | Kaihautū

Leaders are implementing systems and processes that promote ongoing improvement.

- A newly implemented leadership structure shares responsibility for decision making with a focus on improvement.
- Relational trust between leaders and teachers contributes to collaborative team wellbeing.
- Leaders prioritise the wellbeing and learning of children at the service.

Service plans and priorities for improvement continue to be progressed as new systems and processes are implemented.

- Well considered and resourced learning environments and good adult: child ratios reflect the service's philosophy.
- Leaders work collaboratively to enact the service's vision, philosophy and strategic priorities.
- Those responsible for governance are yet to evaluate how well the service is meeting its goals and priorities.

## 7 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff and management of The DEN: Discover Education in Nature completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management and administration.

During the review, ERO looked at the service's system for managing the following areas that have a potentially high impact on children's health and safety:

- emotional safety (including positive guidance and child protection)
- physical safety (including supervision; sleep procedures; accidents; medication; excursion policies and procedures)
- suitable staffing (safety checking of staff, ratios)
- relevant evacuation procedures and practices.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

## 8 Where to next for improvement?

The DEN: Discover Education in Nature will include the following actions in its quality improvement planning:

- Build learning-focused partnerships with parents and whānau so that teachers are better placed to respond to children's individual languages, cultures and identities, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners.
- Further develop collective capacity and capability in evaluation across the teaching team to know how effective shifts in teaching practice have been. This includes identifying what has worked and not worked, for which individuals and groups of children.
- Monitor the service's strategic goals and priorities to know what progress has been made and evaluate the impact these changes have had on learner outcomes.

#### Activities undertaken by the evaluation team

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/manager.
- Reading documentation and records of children's learning and development.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

[\*Further information about how ERO evaluates early childhood services is available here.\*](#)

*Lisa Oldridge*

Lisa Oldridge  
Director of Early Childhood Education (Acting)

28 April 2025

## 9 Information About the Service

Service Type	Education and care service
Number licenced for	65 children aged 2 and over
Percentage of qualified teachers	100%
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 18%, NZ European/Pākehā 64%, Korean 4%, English 3%, other ethnic groups 11%
Service roll	78
Review team on site	March 2025
Date of this report	28 April 2025
Most recent ERO report (s) These are available at <a href="http://www.ero.govt.nz">www.ero.govt.nz</a>	Akarangi   Quality Evaluation, December 2021; Akanuku   Assurance Review, November 2020

### Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	<b>Above the threshold for quality</b>
Excelling	The service is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The service has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement to the quality of education and care for children.
	<b>Below the threshold for quality</b>
Working towards	The service is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the quality of education and care for children.
Improvement required	The service has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support quality education and care for children.