



ERO Early Childhood Service Akarangi | Quality Evaluation Report

Early Childhood Service Name: Saplings Early Learning Limited

Profile Number: 45174

Location: Half Moon Bay, Auckland

1 ERO's judgement of Saplings Early Learning Limited 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

Saplings Early Learning Limited is a privately owned service, led by an actively involved owner who works closely with a newly qualified centre director and curriculum manager. Together, they are responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations and administration of the service. This includes curriculum planning and implementation, as well as leading professional learning and development for the teaching team.

The service's philosophy promotes inclusive and collaborative approaches with whānau and celebrates the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to foster respectful and nurturing relationships with children, by providing an environment that is thoughtfully resourced and developmentally appropriate for the numbers and ages of children enrolled.

4 Progress since the previous ERO report

The 2021 ERO report identified two key improvement actions. These were to continue lifting the quality of the curriculum through more deliberate decision-making when planning learning programmes for identified priority learners, and to consistently monitor how well the service is meeting regulatory requirements. Since that time, significant progress has been made in both areas, demonstrating the service's commitment to continuous improvement.

Service leaders have a documented process that demonstrated all improvement actions have been planned, actioned, and their outcomes closely monitored. Ongoing monitoring shows changes in practice, reflected through teachers' professional growth cycle goals, internal evaluation findings, and curriculum documentation. Leaders have been intentional in building the capability and capacity of the team, as evidenced by teacher reflections, inquiries and professional discussions. These shifts in practice have led to more responsive and intentional teaching strategies, resulting in children's increased engagement and learning progress, and including evidence of outcomes for identified priority learners. Assessment and planning documentation now more clearly reflects these learners' needs, strengths, and next steps, ensuring they are better supported in their learning journey.

5 Learning Conditions

The learner and their learning | He Whāriki Motuhake

Children engage with a responsive and intentional curriculum that consistently promotes their learning and development and aligns with the service's philosophy.

- The service's inclusive and well-resourced environment supports children to engage in meaningful play and fosters rich opportunities for exploration. Strong collaboration with whānau ensures that learning priorities are clearly identified, while younger children experience consistent care and aroha that fosters their sense of wellbeing and belonging.
- A range of intentional teaching strategies positively support children's sense of belonging. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of each child's abilities and respond thoughtfully to their interests, needs and strengths.
- Teachers are developing a shared understanding of assessment and evaluation practices that illustrate children's learning and progress over time. Leaders recognise that assessment documentation is not yet consistently capturing children's learning progression or the intentional teaching strategies used by teachers.

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

Service leaders are intentional in their approach and promote a collective commitment to targeted professional learning and development.

- Professional learning and development provide opportunities for teachers to share new knowledge. This contributes to a shared understanding of curriculum expectations and strengthens intentional teaching practices.
- An established system supports the professional growth cycle, providing clear guidance and expectations for both leaders and teachers. Individual teaching goals are meaningfully aligned with the service's strategic and annual priorities.
- Coaching and mentoring from service leaders positively influences teachers' thinking, supports shifts in practice and enhances outcomes for children.

6 Organisational conditions

Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement | Kaihautū

Delegated leadership approach contribute to building team capability, with high relational trust enabling collaboration and ongoing improvement.

- Leaders work collaboratively with the teaching team to grow their individual and collective capacity. They have access to both internal and external expertise to build capability and to grow leadership.
- Leaders and teachers maintain a positive working environment that supports collective responsibility and a positive team culture.
- A process is in place for internal evaluation that is collaborative and improvement focused. Service leaders acknowledge that their evaluative capability is still developing and not yet consistently used to monitor the impact of improvements on outcomes for children.

Governance and management are effectively guided by the service's vision, values and strategic direction.

- Strategic priorities are clearly defined with a strong focus on children's learning and wellbeing. These improvement goals are informed by the perspectives of teachers and whānau.
- Ongoing monitoring of the service's strategic priorities informs decision-making and the allocation of resourcing.
- Well-structured systems for induction, professional learning and performance development are increasingly effective in building leadership capability and supporting consistent, high-quality management and governance practices.

7 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff and management of Saplings Early Learning Limited 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?

Saplings Early Learning Limited will include the following actions in its quality improvement planning:

- Build teacher capability to consistently document children's learning and progress using intentional teaching strategies.
- Refine internal evaluation processes to clearly show the impact of improvements on learner outcomes, using specific quality indicators.

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)

21 May 2025

9 Information About the Service

Service Type	Education and care service
Number licenced for	100 children, including up to 44 aged under 2
Percentage of qualified teachers	80-99%
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 4%; Chinese 55%; NZ European/Pākehā 20%; Indian 5%; South African 5%; other ethnic groups 11%.
Service roll	102
Review team on site	March 2025
Date of this report	21 May 2025
Most recent ERO report (s) These are available at www.ero.govt.nz	Akarangi Quality Evaluation, August 2021; Education Review, October 2015

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)*.

	Above the threshold for quality
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.
	Below the threshold for quality
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.