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**CONFIRMED
PRIVATE SCHOOL
REVIEW REPORT**

ST CUTHBERT'S COLLEGE (EPSOM)

October 2009



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**CONFIRMED PRIVATE SCHOOL REVIEW REPORT:
ST CUTHBERT'S COLLEGE (EPSOM)**

1 Background

Introduction

The Chief Review Officer has a statutory duty to report on the performance of private schools throughout New Zealand.

Under section 35A of the Education Act 1989, private schools are required to be "efficient". The Act defines "efficient", in relation to a private school as -

- (a) Having suitable premises, staffing, equipment, and curriculum; and
- (b) Usually providing tuition for 9 or more students who have turned 5 but are under 16; and
- (c) Providing suitably for the inculcation in the minds of students of sentiments of patriotism and loyalty; and
- (d) Giving students tuition of a standard no lower than that of the tuition given to students enrolled at composite schools of the same class.

This report focuses on the extent to which the school meets this requirement and other statutory obligations.

This review report was prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

About the School

Location	Epsom, Auckland
Ministry of Education profile number	68
School type	Composite Private School (Year 1-15) with boarding facilities
Decile rating ¹	10
Numbers of teachers	137
School roll	1474
Number of international students	15
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 71%, Māori 3%, Chinese 9%, Indian 3%, Korean 2%, other European 2%, British/Irish 1%, Australian 1%, Cook Island Māori 1%, Samoan 1%, other South East Asian 1%, other Asian 1%, Tongan 1%, other 3%
Gender composition	Girls 100%
Review team on site	August 2009
Date of this report	23 October 2009
Previous ERO reports	Private School Review, September 2006 Statutory Review, September 2003 Statutory Review, August 2000 Statutory Review, August 1997 Assurance Audit, September 1993 Audit, September 1991

2 Efficient

St Cuthbert's College provides high quality education that promotes academic excellence and encourages students to become motivated and successful learners who contribute positively to society. The school's motto '*By Love Serve*', and its commitment to the Christian faith and Presbyterian traditions, are clearly evident in daily programmes and activities. School values are well documented in the College Compass, which was developed in consultation with students, parents, staff and

¹ Decile 1 schools draw their students from areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage, Decile 10 from areas of least socio-economic disadvantage.

school community during 2006 and 2007. The Compass provides a focal point for guiding college directions and determining strategic priorities. Its emphasis on striving for excellence, developing student potential across a wide range of dimensions, valuing both innovation and tradition, and fostering connectedness with the New Zealand and international community, is clearly reflected in the school's approach to teaching and learning.

Priority is placed on catering for the diverse abilities, interests and aspirations of students. The curriculum offers a wide range of academic, cultural and sporting options in keeping with the school's mission of 'creating remarkable futures'. Students benefit from a caring, stimulating environment and instructional programmes that develop sequentially as students progress through the school.

Skilled, effective leadership, outstanding student achievement, and a well established culture of reflection and systematic self review are significant features of the college. Decision making about all aspects of school management is soundly based on review findings and relevant research and literature. The trust board receives comprehensive reports on student achievement, school management, and health and safety provisions. The trust board invests well in staff professional development and its strategic planning is responsive to priorities identified through community consultation. These good practices foster ongoing improvement in school performance and help to ensure that the college continues to provide students with enriching and enjoyable learning experiences.

Suitable curriculum

The principal and staff have continued to build on the good curriculum practices noted at the time of the 2006 ERO review. Developments in the junior school (new entrants to Year 8) include the creation of new curriculum and pastoral care leadership roles, and further development of gifted and talented programmes. Reviews of programmes for students in Years 7 and 8, and improved arrangements for transition between the junior and senior school, have increased opportunities for Year 7 and 8 students to work with specialist teachers. As a result, they are even better placed to be successful in their senior school studies.

Developments in the senior school include the establishment of a curriculum manager position, continued growth of subject options, and the introduction of the '*Kahunui programme*' for Year 10 students at the school's new remote campus at Kahunui. This popular programme combines academic studies with a range of challenging outdoor education activities. It teaches appreciation of the natural environment and sustainability concepts, and helps to build students' resilience, and their self-management and social skills.

Further notable curriculum developments can be seen in work done by teachers to prepare for the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This work has been complemented by preparations to offer students in Years 12 and 13 opportunities to study for an International Baccalaureate Diploma from 2010. Courses leading to National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) will continue to be offered and the principal and staff envisage that senior secondary students will choose between these two qualifications, both of which provide sound foundations for future academic studies and career development.

Curriculum provisions are closely linked with the school's pastoral care services as part of initiatives to foster holistic development, social responsibility and personal excellence. The appointment of a director of student services, and the restructuring of the school's student services since 2006, are indicative of continuing efforts by senior managers and staff to ensure that students are provided with a nurturing and supportive environment. The emphasis placed on student health and wellbeing is a continuing strength of the school, and ERO notes a high level of interconnectedness between its teaching, learning and student support provisions.

The promotion of co-curricular activities remains a strength of the school, enabling students to participate in an extensive range of sporting, performing arts, cultural and community service activities. Students experience significant success in these areas and staff make a valuable contribution towards developing students' creative, artistic and sporting abilities.

Suitable staffing and tuition

The principal is a very capable and knowledgeable professional leader, who is well supported by a competent and experienced senior management team. She is respected by staff and students, and has established robust quality assurance and self-review processes to promote ongoing improvements in school performance.

The board invests well in staff professional learning, resourcing a comprehensive staff development programme and offering a range of incentives to encourage innovation and teaching excellence. This culture of valuing and encouraging staff to extend their professional skills and abilities is clearly endorsed by the principal and senior managers. The school's weekly 'Horizon Hour' serves as a valuable forum for engaging teachers in professional discussion and developing shared understandings about effective teaching and learning. Opportunities to reflect on new developments in education and to share good practice also feature strongly in numerous other departmental, special interest and whole-school teacher development initiatives.

Staff induction and performance management programmes provide both teaching and non-teaching staff with access to a range of internal and external training options that facilitate the achievement of individual professional goals and school-wide strategic objectives. Rigorous self review, which includes the use of staff satisfaction surveys and student evaluations of teaching programmes, helps to ensure that the school continues to provide a supportive and professionally motivating environment for staff.

The benefits of this investment in staff are reflected in the quality of school programmes and in student achievement. Teaching practice throughout the college is of a high to very high standard. Relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves are affirming and mutually respectful. Lessons are well planned and include explicit acts of teaching that build on students' interests and prior knowledge. Feedback is used effectively to help students to reflect on and further improve their work. The school's emphasis on fostering independent learning, developing students' thinking skills, and using ICT effectively to support learning is a notable feature of teaching programmes.

Reggio Emilia approaches, new at the time of the 2006 ERO review, have continued to strengthen child-centred teaching practices. These approaches are now firmly established in all new entrant to Year 4 programmes. They are well integrated into religious education programmes in the junior school. Trans-disciplinary inquiry

learning strategies are used to good effect in the junior school and in Years 9 and 10 to provide opportunities for students to explore topics of interest and to extend their understandings about the inter-relatedness of studies across the curriculum.

Timetabling changes have brought further improvements to the daily programme, providing many senior students with specific tuition time for scholarship studies within the school day and eliminating the need for before and after school classes.

The board's generous funding for support staff impacts positively on teaching provisions. The employment of many skilled individuals who assist with classroom programmes and carry out essential administrative, resource management, library and e-learning tasks has a significant impact on academic achievement and on the efficient operation of the school. The provision of capable support staff enables teachers to focus on core teaching activities and ensures that classroom programmes are underpinned by a well functioning infrastructure and high quality information and communication systems.

These high quality staffing and tuition provisions help to create a challenging and stimulating learning environment that motivates students to achieve well. Their progress is carefully monitored at all year levels and the school has good systems to assist students who are experiencing difficulties with their learning.

Achievement data show clear evidence of value added as students move up through the school. Most students in Years 1 to 10 perform well above national expectations, with significant numbers attaining ratings in the superior achievement bands. NCEA results show extremely high levels of student success. Student achievement has continued to improve since 2006, with increasing numbers gaining merit and excellence endorsements for individual achievement standards and for their NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications. Also evident is a particularly impressive rise in the number of students gaining scholarship and outstanding scholarship awards.

Suitable premises and equipment

Generous resourcing provisions contribute significantly to the high standard of education evident in the school. Students and teachers have ready access to a wide variety of paper-based resources, practical equipment and e-learning technologies. Resources are used effectively to enrich learning experiences and ongoing improvements in resource provision, storage and management are evident. Student use of the school's intranet and a range of other computer-based learning tools is a strong feature of classes for students in Years 5 to 13. Access to computers continues to improve for younger students in Years 1 to 4 as part of school-wide initiatives to encourage the development of self-management and independent learning skills.

The board attends well to its health, safety and property-related responsibilities. Classroom environments are well organised and attractively presented. School grounds are carefully maintained and are much enjoyed by students and their families. Strong accountability and reporting measures ensure that facilities are well cared for and that trustees have good information to guide decision making about future renovation and renewal needs.

Property development and improvement has also been a significant component of the board's work over the past three years. The Kahunui Campus construction has been a high priority and the campus is now a fully functioning part of school facilities. Plans for a new performing arts centre have been completed and building is due to

commence early in 2010 for completion in late 2011. Future priorities include the provision of a new aquatic centre and more long-term board planning has identified the need to renew the school's boarding hostels.

Patriotism and loyalty

School programmes, the school values statement, and Presbyterian traditions encourage students to contribute positively to New Zealand society and the wider global community. Te reo Māori programmes are an established part of the school curriculum and feature as an option subject at all levels of the secondary school. The emphasis placed on developing an appreciation of New Zealand's bicultural heritage, and on the importance of caring for the natural environment and adopting sustainable lifestyle practices, also encourages responsible citizenship. Students show real awareness of the school's values and the importance of caring for and giving service to others. The value placed on service is evident in the enthusiasm and responsibility that students show for perpetuating many well established charitable and community service activities initiated by the school.

3 Statutory Obligations

St Cuthbert's College fulfils its statutory obligations and requirements. It continues to be well governed and well managed. Good systems of reporting enable the governing body to be well informed about school matters.

4 Other Matters

Provision for International Students

Compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* and the Provision of English Language Support

St Cuthbert's College (Epsom) is a signatory to the *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* (the Code) established under section 238F of the Education Act 1989. This is a requirement of all schools that enrol international students in terms of the Act. Schools are also required to provide English language support for their international students.

The school complies with all aspects of the Code. It has 15 international students, including three exchange students. All international students are accommodated in the school's boarding hostels. They receive individualised support, as required, for their English language learning needs and have regular contact with the international student coordinator.

International students are valued members of the school community and care is taken to ensure that their educational, social and emotional needs are met. Their involvement in all aspects of school life is encouraged and their presence and contribution is acknowledged. The positive participation of international students in the life of the school is evidenced in the appointment of an international student prefect and in the many invitations international students receive to share their cultural heritage and life experiences with other members of the school community.

International students spoken to during the course of this review commented that they enjoy being at the college. They report that they feel well supported by teachers, have good relationships with other students, and participate actively in co-curricular activities.

Provision for Students in the School Hostels

In this review ERO evaluated the extent to which the school hostel provides a safe physical and emotional environment that supports learning for students accommodated in the hostel.

From 1 March 2007 school hostels are required to be licensed by the Ministry of Education and to comply with minimum standards specified in the hostel regulations.

The school hostels, Dunblane, Elgin, Iona, and Melrose, accommodate 138 students, or 9% of the school roll. They are owned by the college trust board and are licensed by the Ministry of Education.

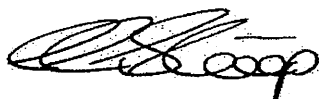
Hostel administrative and operational systems are well documented and implemented, and comply with the regulatory requirements. Students are provided with home-like accommodation and a number of new initiatives have been introduced since 2008, when a new boarding director was appointed. Three new student-led committees provide boarders with opportunities to have input into decision-making about the hostel environment, social activities and events. A process for surveying student opinions about hostel provisions further ensures student participation in relevant aspects of hostel review processes.

Homework arrangements for students in Years 9 and 10 have been restructured and prep sessions are now supervised by tutors who are trained teachers. A weekly newsletter, *Heart of the College*, was introduced in 2007 and expanded in 2008 to improve information sharing with parents, guardians and hostel students.

Students interviewed during this review reported that they enjoy being in the hostels. They spoke of the lasting friendships they develop with fellow boarders and expressed appreciation for the opportunities that the hostel provides for leadership and social development.

5 Conclusion

St Cuthbert's College operates efficiently under the terms of the Education Act 1989, sections 35A and 35B.



Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer

23 October 2009