



Wesley College

Education institution number:

104

School type:

Secondary (Year 7-15)

Website:

<http://www.wesley.school.nz>

School gender:

Co-Educational

Telephone:

[09 237 0224](tel:092370224)

Definition:

School with Boarding Facilities

Address:

State Highway 22, Pukekohe

[View on map](#)

Total roll:

355

Reports for Wesley College

Most recent reports

[Special Review Report June 2023](#)

[Special Review Report Hostel June 2023](#)

Previous reports

[Wesley College November 2015](#)

Wesley College

09 Jun 2023

Special Review Report

Background

The Chief Review Officer of the Education Review Office, using their function under section 463 the Education and Training Act 2020, initiated a special review of Wesley College (104) in relation to particular matters as set out in the *Terms of Reference* below.

- How well the school provides for the emotional and physical safety of its students.
- How well the systems and practices for behaviour management are implemented.
- The process, systems, and management of complaints.
- Any other matters that the team see relevant to the review.

The Education and Training Act, 2020, s127, requires that boards in governing schools provide a physically and emotionally safe place for all its students and takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying and any other forms of discrimination within the school.

The Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand) requires all teachers have a commitment to learners that includes promoting the wellbeing of learners and protecting them from harm and promoting inclusive practices.

It is the Education Review Office's (ERO) expectation, as for all schools, that Wesley College has robust policies, guidelines and systems that support leaders and teachers to provide a safe and inclusive living and learning environment.

Context

Wesley College is an historic state-integrated school established in 1844. The school is located on the outskirts of Pukekohe and caters for around 360 students in Years 9 to 13. The roll is made up of 25% female and 75% male and the majority of students are drawn from areas of South Auckland. The school offers both boarding and day provision.

Wesley College has a special character and Christian ethos, based on a relationship with the Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa. It has a traditional commitment to providing for students of Māori and Pacific descent, as reflected in the roll of 22% Māori and 75% Pacific students. Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa The Child – the Heart of the Matter

The Wesley College School Board is responsible for the governance and management of the school and for providing a safe environment for students during school opening hours.

The *Wesley College Trust Board* (Proprietor/owner) is responsible for ensuring the safety of students who reside in the hostels. There are six hostel buildings on the school grounds, five for boys and one for girls. The hostels are licenced for 305 students, and they currently accommodate around 240 students (approximately two thirds of the school roll).

Following a range of concerns raised by ERO and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) about the provision for the safety for all students in Wesley College and its hostel, ERO initiated a special review. This report aligns to the *Wesley College Hostel Special Review Report* published at the same time.

The school board reports that it has prioritised the resettlement of learners following the significant impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Wesley College School Board should take note of the findings and recommendations of the Wesley College Hostel special review report.

Findings

ERO has a range of concerns about the provision for health and safety of all students at the college. Although on the decline, there is evidence that entrenched practices and harmful traditions continue to persist that place students at risk of violence, bullying and discrimination.

The presiding member of the school board and school leaders, express a strong commitment to addressing the college's historical challenges; they are working towards improving learning and providing a safe environment for all students.

Changes to school conditions have occurred in recent years, resulting in some improvements. Steps have been taken to re-establish connections to the school's traditional principles, mission, and values from the Methodist tradition, in order to uphold its Wesleyan special character. Frameworks based on the Ministry's *Positive Behaviour for Learning* (PB4L) model support the implementation of the reviewed and refreshed *Kairangi* (school) values. These are visibly promoted across the learning and living environments. An increased awareness of the need to promote student wellbeing is evident amongst the school staff, many of whom are new to the school.

However, the school is yet to develop effective and cohesive systems and processes to ensure students are entirely safe. The management of risks to student safety is not thoroughly documented or regularly reviewed for the purpose of eliminating, or at the very least, reducing harm.

Recently introduced initiatives and practices to increase students access to pastoral care and support, aimed at promoting improvements in health, safety, and wellbeing, have the potential to promote improvements. As these are in the initial stages, it is too soon for ERO or the school to know if they are having the desired impact.

Students spoken to by ERO shared that they identify strongly with the Methodist faith and some of the school traditions. They reported that at the beginning of 2023 they felt more positive about the school, its culture, and their safety.

Some staff who met with ERO were less positive about culture and safety at the school and raised several concerns relating to harassment and discrimination of students. ERO was made aware of a "code of silence" that is prevalent amongst students who are reluctant to disclose information to adults.

The majority of stand downs, suspensions, and expulsions recorded by the school board in 2022 were related to serious instances of bullying and violence between students. This indicates that the behaviours the school leaders are seeking to eliminate, continue to require action.

The school's strategic and annual planning requires strengthening. It does not sufficiently prioritise student safety and wellbeing. Although aspects focus on building a positive school culture, plans need to be more specific about the actions required to address the negative behaviours that the board and leadership acknowledge they need to eliminate.

The school leadership commissioned two external independent reviews in recent years. These focused on areas of provision for students that leaders identified need significant improvement. These were the *Students Wellbeing Review* (2020) and the *Review of Senior Leadership Team structures* (2021). Both reports include valuable findings and suitable recommendations that could inform strategic decision making for change. Leadership has yet to fully respond to all the recommendations and take sufficient action to result in the necessary improvements.

ERO is not satisfied the school is maintaining full and proper records for the investigation and reporting of complaints and potentially, abuse. Policies are in place, but ERO was not able to verify that complaints over recent years have been responded to, managed, and resolved appropriately in line with the school's own procedures. The recently introduced process for registering complaints needs strengthening to ensure it tracks complaints through to resolution.

Overall learning outcomes for all students have declined overtime. National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) results in 2022 show that school pass rates are generally lower when compared to 2018, particularly at Level 3 and University Entrance qualification.

A recently introduced process that supports coaching for teachers has the potential to promote improved practice. Strengthening this process to have a clearer focus on promoting rich, innovative, and culturally responsive teaching, should help increase the levels of achievement across the school. Making learning relevant, responsive, challenging, and meaningful, in addition to a focus on ensuring student health and safety, is a priority.

Internal review is not sufficiently evident, and staff are yet to develop a shared understanding of evaluation for improvement. The new initiatives and programmes to improve outcomes and safety for students need stronger support to effectively implement and embed across the school. Leaders and the school board need to closely monitor and review the impacts and effectiveness in a systematic way.

The school leadership has recognised the need to be more inclusive and respond more deliberately to the culture and identity of diverse groups. Strategies and programmes are now in place to strengthen how the school supports Māori students in their learning. These are yet to be embedded.

Extending this to other groups is an important next step. More emphasis is now needed on better reflecting and integrating the culture of Pacific students into school environments and through curriculum delivery.

ERO found that a degree of marginalisation of girls as a minority group is having an impact on their feelings of safety, wellbeing and opportunities for equity and excellence. Knowing more about why this is occurring and planning strategies to respond and resolve these concerns is a key area of development.

Despite being part of policy, staff at the college have not been provided with sufficient professional learning and development that emphasises health and safety. In line with stated intentions all staff should undertake professional development that includes awareness of bullying, abuse recognition and reporting.

School health and safety policies have been reviewed within the last three years, but not all have been updated to reflect current changes to legislation and educational priorities. The rigour of review needs strengthening. Currently the board does not have monitoring mechanisms in place to know whether its policies have been effective or fully implemented.

A thorough overhaul of the policy frameworks and policy and procedure detail needs to be undertaken by the school board to bring policies up to date and to ensure they are relevant in the school context. This requires particular attention to developing child protection policies that align with current legislation.

ERO is not confident that the range of issues identified in this report are being sufficiently addressed by the leadership of the school and is concerned that the pace of change to date has been too slow.

Next steps

Following the special review of Wesley College, the following next steps have been identified.

- Strengthen strategic and annual planning to prioritise student health, safety, and wellbeing, along with the elimination of entrenched harmful practices. Establishing success criteria will assist the school board to know how well they are progressing towards achieving their targets and goals.
- Develop health and safety systems and processes that effectively manage and prevent harmful practices and behaviours. The systems need to be consistent and cohesive between the hostel and the school and have a focus on continuous improvement.
- The school needs to establish foundations to support learner's healthy sense of belonging and connection to the school, as well as confidence in their identities, languages, and cultures.
- The culture of Māori and Pacific students' needs to be better reflected and integrated into school environments, curriculum, teaching, and learning.
- Leaders need to respond fully to findings and recommendations of the two independent reports and reviews commissioned by the school.
- Ways to gather a range of voice to inform future decision-making need to be developed by leaders and teachers. Regular surveys of students, families, and staff in culturally appropriate ways, about bullying, violence, wellbeing and inclusion should be initiated. Information gained from these surveys needs to be analysed, communicated to the community, and responded to.
- A deliberate programme of professional learning for school related to the areas of priority for the health safety and wellbeing of all students (including abuse awareness, behaviour management, anti-bullying, restorative practices) needs to be established and sustained.
- Governance practices of the school board require strengthening. The board needs stronger systems to ensure they are meeting their statutory and regulatory responsibilities in terms of providing a safe physical and emotional environment for all students at the school. The board needs to be more proactive in scrutinising its own performance to measure its effectiveness and improve decisionmaking.
- The board needs to review and overhaul all policies and procedures, particularly those related to health and safety. These should be strengthened and aligned with current legislation and good practice. The policies should ensure learner safety and child protection are prioritised, fully covered and that safety systems are effectively minimising risk.
- Once strengthened the policies and procedures need to be well understood by all the school community and fully implemented. A mechanism to monitor closely and report that the policies, procedures, and guidance are being fully implemented and followed effectively needs to be created.
- Establishing a more thorough and regular policy review process that includes consultation with staff, students and the community will support the board to ensure the policies are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of all.
- Significantly strengthen the management and resolution of complaints process in the school to include regular oversight by the principal and presiding board member. Reports need to be developed that show the register, progress, and outcome of complaints. This information

can then be used to improve the school operation and performance. How complaints are dealt with needs to be consistent and practice aligned across both entities.

- Leaders and teachers need to build their capacity and capability in how to use evaluation for ongoing improvement of conditions and outcomes for students. A rigorous approach should provide useful and relevant information to measure the impact, value, and effectiveness of new initiatives.
- Closer monitoring and reporting of progress towards achieving goals and success criteria is needed. Boards and leaders can then use this information to inform decision making going forward.
- Leaders need to plan an indepth review of strategies to address major health and safety concerns in the school.

Following the review

Since the onsite phase of the special review ERO notes the Wesley College School Board have taken steps to strengthen governance practice through:

- undertaking governance training
- increased frequency of board meetings
- developing an understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- stronger processes for management reporting
- reviewing and making changes to policy framework, in particular the child protection policy.

School leaders have initiated:

- a student survey that will inform a review of the provision for student wellbeing
- plans to regularly survey teachers and staff
- staff professional development to address areas of improvement outlined in this report.

A Student Achievement Function (SAF) practitioner has been engaged by the MOE to assist the school to raise achievement and improve their capability.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education continue its intervention under section 180 of the Education and Training Act.

ERO recommends that the Wesley College School Board seek external expertise and support from the New Zealand School Trustees Association to strengthen governance practices and effectiveness.

Future Action

ERO's role will be to work with the school in its evaluation for improvement cycle to improve outcomes for all learners. ERO will support the school in reporting their progress to the community. The next public report on ERO's website will be a Te Ara Huarau | School Evaluation Report and is due within three years.

Jane Lee

Deputy Chief Executive – Review and Improvement Services

9 June 2023

About the School

The Education Counts website provides further information about the school's student population, student engagement and student achievement. educationcounts.govt.nz/home