

# Maple Kindergarten Education Review

- 1 The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation
- 2 Review Priorities
- 3 National Evaluation Topic
- 4 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements
- 5 Recommendations
- 6 Future Action
- About the Centre
- Community Page

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# 1 The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

## Confirmed Education Review Report: Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten

This report has been prepared in accordance with standard procedures approved by the Chief Review Officer.

Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten is one of two kindergartens situated on the Michael Park School campus. The kindergartens, each of which operates under a separate licence, cater for children from 4 to 6 years of age. In the year that children reach their seventh birthday, most move, as a group, into Class One at the Michael Park School. Good processes are in place to support children to make this transition successfully.

An inclusive, whānau-based approach to learning is very evident. Many valuable practices are used to inform parents and whānau about, and include them in, the programme and important decisions about the kindergarten. Māori whānau have input into centre initiatives and development to help to ensure that bicultural practices and principles are consistently implemented.

Over the last 12 months, trustees, in consultation with the community and staff, have undertaken major property developments, which include new or refurbished kindergarten rooms, and a thoughtfully designed communal outdoor space. These facilities, together with spacious, functional rooms, provide children with an attractive and natural environment for learning through play. The provision of further play equipment, landscaped areas and gardens is in the planning stage and is likely to increase children's opportunities for play and exploration of the natural world.

The Rudolf Steiner philosophy is reflected well in the kindergarten programmes and teaching practices. Since ERO's 2007 review, kindergarten staff have developed a curriculum based on Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, The New Zealand Curriculum for schools, and the Rudolf Steiner curriculum. They have also refined their planning and assessment processes. As a result, centre documentation shows more perceptive observations about children's learning, and clearer planning for individuals and the group. These improvements are largely an outcome of teachers' involvement in external professional development and the ongoing professional support they receive from the section leader.

Staff have warm relationships with children, and are respectful and responsive to children's preferences. They model patience and respect. Some staff are skilled at extending and deepening children's learning through non-intrusive participation in their play and timely questions that stimulate children to think. A positive feature of the programme is the provision of opportunities for children to immerse themselves in extended self-directed play. This play

fosters children's imagination, deep engagement, and the development of their social skills. Managers agree that a useful next development step would be for staff to further explore their role in extending children's thinking skills. Enhancing curriculum planning, and furthering the use of the learning environment and te reo Māori would support children's progress and development.

### Future Action

ERO is likely to review the service again within three years.

## 2 Review Priorities

### The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten was invited to consider its priorities for review using guidelines and resources provided by ERO. ERO also used documentation provided by the centre to contribute to the scope of the review.

The detailed priorities for review were then determined following a discussion between the ERO review team and the management and staff. This discussion focused on existing information held by the centre (including self-review information) and the extent to which potential issues for review contributed to positive outcomes for children at Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten.

All ERO education reviews in early childhood focus on the quality of education. For ERO this includes the quality of:

- the programme provided for children;
- the learning environment; and
- the interactions between children and adults.

ERO's findings in these areas are set out below.

### The Quality of Education

#### Background

Maple Rudolf Steiner kindergarten has two rooms, each staffed by qualified teachers and experienced, and/or qualified teacher assistants. Staff are referred to as kindergarteners. There are mixed age groups in each room and this creates a whānau/community-based atmosphere in which children support, learn from, and nurture each other. Recent building redevelopment, and the move to a whānau approach, has prompted teachers to work together more closely and to provide opportunities for children to work alongside their peers in other kindergarten rooms from time to time.

The day is carefully structured so that periods of play are interspersed with community times in which children eat, sing, listen to stories and dance. Children's involvement in practical tasks, such as baking, cleaning up and gardening, is encouraged as part of the development of their life skills.

Kindergarteners implement a learning programme based on Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, The New Zealand Curriculum for schools, and the Rudolf Steiner curriculum.

Significant work has been carried out by the kindergarten section in developing and reviewing the centre's curriculum and assessment practices to provide a seamless and relevant education for children who move to Michael Park School.

### Areas of strength

Balanced and appropriate programmes. Children benefit from programmes that provide a balance of challenge, creativity, social skill development, routine, and age-appropriate learning. The programme is characterised by:

- extended opportunities for children to take part in self-directed play that develops their imagination, self expression, problem-solving skills, social skills, and knowledge of the world;
- opportunities for children to acquire valuable literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills as they participate in the programme;
- skilful integration of New Zealand contexts; and
- regular sessions of song, dance and story-telling that help to develop children's sense of belonging and of wellbeing.

Positive outcomes for children. The structure of the programme, and the warm and inclusive culture fostered in the kindergarten, supports positive outcomes for children, including:

- high levels of involvement in activities;
- independence and persistence with tasks;
- confident and capable participation in the programme;
- ability to use skilled negotiation and problem-solving skills in social situations;
- high levels of mutual support for each other; and
- harmonious and inclusive play.

Improved planning, assessment and evaluation practices. Since the last ERO review, teachers have made good progress in refining their planning and assessment processes. As a result, staff now:

- are more perceptive in their observations of children's learning and development,
- produce more comprehensive programme planning; and
- undertake useful evaluations of the quality of the programme in action.

These improvements are largely the outcome of staff involvement in external professional

development and the ongoing responsive professional support provided by the section leader.

Relationships with parents and whānau. Many kindergarten practices foster positive reciprocal relationships between kindergarteners, parents and whānau. Effective practices include:

- consistently integrating bicultural practices and principles;
- consulting with parents/whānau about the policies and programmes of the kindergarten;
- drawing on the expertise of parents and whānau in achieving kindergarten projects;
- including parents and whānau in aspects of the kindergarten programme; and
- staff contributing, through regular social activities, to parents' understanding of early childhood education principles and practices.

Leadership and management. The kindergarten section leader, supported by the principal and trustees of Michael Park School, has undertaken considerable work in developing strategic planning, policies and programmes that effect alignment between the kindergarten and the school and give children the benefit of a coherent and seamless programme as they move through these educational levels. Significant good quality self review has been undertaken. This is clearly documented and used to inform the future direction of the kindergarten. The section leader has identified further areas of curriculum development to cater for the children who are four and five years of age.

#### Areas for development and review

Kindergarten programmes and practice. Kindergarten managers agree that it is timely for teachers to engage in further discussion about their roles in implementing the kindergarten programme. This review could include exploring:

- the opportunities that the programme provides for children to access all areas of learning and play in the kindergarten;
- the extent to which teaching teams are aligned in their expectations about children's learning and behaviour; and
- the approaches teachers could take to extending and deepening children's learning.

Te reo in the programme. Kindergarten managers agree that it would be useful to support teachers to develop their skills in te reo Māori so that they are confident about implementing a regular te reo Māori programme.

## 3 National Evaluation Topic

### Overview

ERO provides information about the education system as a whole through its national reports. This information will be used as the basis for long-term and systemic educational improvement.

### Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Competence

As children learn to make sense of their world they develop an understanding of themselves in social contexts, including the early childhood service. As part of this review ERO looked at how each service's curriculum supports children's developing social and emotional competence.

The findings are reported in the Quality of Education section of this report and used as part of a national evaluation report on this topic.

## 4 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff of Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten completed an ERO Centre Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist. In these documents they have attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

- administration;
- health, safety and welfare;
- personnel management; and
- financial and property management.

During the review, ERO looked at the service's documentation, including policies, procedures and records of recent use of procedures. ERO also checked elements of the following areas that have a potentially high impact on outcomes for children:

- emotional safety (including behaviour management, prevention of bullying and abuse);
- physical safety (including behaviour management, sleeping and supervision practices; accidents and medication; hygiene and routines; travel and excursion policies and procedures);
- staff qualifications and organisation; and
- evacuation procedures and practices for fire and earthquake.

## 5 Recommendations

Centre managers and ERO agreed that:

5.1 centre managers should continue the work they have begun in developing a curriculum for children; and

5.2 teachers should explore ways in which they can further enhance the programme to maximise children's opportunities for choice and extension.

ERO recommends that the Rudolf Steiner Schools' Trust Board:

5.3 continue the development of the outdoor area to provide children with increased opportunities for play and exploration.

## 6 Future Action

ERO is likely to review the service again within three years.

Richard Thornton  
National Manager Review Services  
Northern Region

15 October 2010

## About the Centre

Location	Ellerslie, Auckland
Ministry of Education profile number	10081
Type	Education and Care Service
Number licensed for	50 children over two years
Roll number	35
Gender composition	not provided
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā 20 Māori 3 Japanese 3 Samoan 3 other 6
Review team on site	September, 2010
Date of this report	15 October 2010
Previous three ERO reports	Education Review, June 2007 Education Review, April 2004 Accountability Review, July 2000

## Community Page

15 October 2010

To the Parents and Community of Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on Maple Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten.

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deepening children's learning through non-intrusive participation in their play and timely questions that stimulate children to think. A positive feature of the programme is the provision of opportunities for children to immerse themselves in extended self-directed play. This play fosters children's imagination, deep engagement, and the development of their social skills. Managers agree that a useful next development step would be for staff to further explore their role in extending children's thinking skills. Enhancing curriculum planning, and furthering the use of the learning environment and te reo Māori would support children's progress and development.

## Future Action

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When ERO has reviewed an early childhood centre we encourage management to inform their community of any follow up action they plan to take. You should talk to the management or contact person if you have any questions about this evaluation, the full ERO report or their future intentions.

If you would like a copy of the full report, please contact the centre or see the ERO website, <http://www.ero.govt.nz>.

Richard Thornton  
National Manager Review Services  
Northern Region

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT REVIEWS

### About ERO

ERO is an independent, external evaluation agency that undertakes reviews of schools and early childhood services throughout New Zealand.

### About ERO Reviews

ERO follows a set of standard procedures to conduct reviews. The purpose of each review is to:

- improve quality of education for children in early childhood centres; and
- provide information to parents, communities and the Government.

Reviews are intended to focus on outcomes for children and build on each centre's self review.

### Review Focus

ERO's framework for reviewing and reporting is based on four review strands.

- Quality of Education – including the quality of the programme provided for children, the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the interactions between staff and children and how these impact on outcomes for children.
- Additional Review Priorities – other aspects of the operation of a centre, may be included in the review. ERO will not include this strand in all reviews.
- National Evaluation Topics – This strand contributes to the development of education policies and their effective implementation. The information from this strand is aggregated by ERO for its national evaluation reports. Topics for investigation are changed regularly to provide up-to-date information.
- Compliance with Legal Requirements – assurance that this centre has taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements.

### Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of centre performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to positive outcomes for children and useful to this centre.

### Review Recommendations

Most ERO reports include recommendations for improvement. A recommendation on a particular issue does not necessarily mean that a centre is performing poorly in relation to that issue. There is no direct link between the number of recommendations in this report and the overall performance of this centre.