



**Education Review Office**  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

**Van Asch Deaf Education Centre  
Sumner, Christchurch**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Van Asch Deaf Education Centre

This review is designed to support schools that were experiencing difficulties at the time of the last review. ERO provides ongoing evaluation over the course of one-to-two years as the school works to improve its overall performance and build its self-review capability.

This report answers key questions about the school's background and the context for the review. The report also provides an evaluation of how effectively the school is addressing areas identified for review and development and the quality of its practices and systems for sustaining performance and ongoing improvement.

## Findings

### 1 Background and Context

#### What is the background and context for this school's review?

The van Asch Deaf Education Centre (van Asch DEC) is a special school providing education and support services to children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The centre caters for students from preschool to 21 years of age across the South Island and the southern half of the North Island.

The van Asch DEC and Kelston Deaf Education Centre (KDEC) are part of a national educational provision for deaf students and operate under a combined board of trustees. In 2017, the Ministry of Education (MoE) appointed a limited statutory manager (LSM) to support the governance of KDEC in employment matters. In 2018, the powers of the LSM were extended to governance and the MoE appointed a further LSM with responsibility for finance and property across both centres.

#### Core School

The core school has three learning provisions that operate at local host schools. The core school also includes a transition unit for older students (16 to 21 years) operating from the van Asch site. There are 32 students on the core school roll. Residential homes onsite provide accommodation for up to 20 boys and girls aged 12 to 21 years of age.

#### Regional Services

Van Asch DEC provides education and specialist services for deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in local schools across the wider region. This includes 403 students on the regional Resource Teacher of the Deaf (RTD) roll and 475 on the support services (ASSIST) roll. In some cases, these students are the only deaf student in their school.

Resource Teachers of the Deaf (RTDs) provide support for students in class and for their mainstream teachers. ASSIST services provide advice regarding Individual Education Plans (IEPs), transition and the management of assistive listening devices.

## 2 Review and Development

**How effectively is the school addressing its priorities for review and development?**

### **Priorities identified for review and development**

The 2016 ERO report identified specific areas of concern related to student achievement outcomes, the curriculum design and governance capability.

#### **Student achievement and the curriculum design**

As identified in the 2016 report, van Asch DEC had not yet established effective systems, processes and practices to gather, analyse, report and use student achievement and progress information to monitor and evaluate curriculum effectiveness, or to inform planning and decision making to accelerate students' learning.

Areas for development in that report included the need to:

- strengthen the use of the student management systems
- build data capability to:
  - improve analysis and use of achievement information
  - accelerate student learning
  - develop guidelines and expectations to guide teacher use of student achievement data
- improve the quality of individual education plans (IEPs)
- improve reporting of student progress to parents
- strengthen partnerships with host schools.

Key curriculum development areas included the need to:

- build students' engagement in their learning
- update core school and regional curriculum
- improve the leadership of teaching and learning
- develop and implement plans and goals to:
  - promote Māori achievement
  - affirm and promote Māori students' language, culture and identity.

#### **Governance**

From 2012 to 2015, the two Deaf Education Centres transitioned to be administered by a combined board. As such, by 2016 ERO external evaluation was the first review of the centres with the combined board. The report for van Asch DEC identified the need to develop:

- high quality stewardship to meet the identified needs of the centre's unique and complex environment
- effective systems and practices to regularly assure the board about the wellbeing of all students and staff
- regular reporting to the board, so trustees are better informed about student progress, achievement and acceleration
- greater evaluative capability, including consideration of the effectiveness of governance and leadership across the centre

- succession planning for school-wide leadership
- improved communication systems with whānau, particularly in the South Island.

## **Progress**

Over the past two years, van Asch DEC has made good progress in many of these areas. Additional areas of concern, particularly about property and financial management, have arisen. In conjunction with concerns about KDEC, these are now being supported by an LSM who is working closely with the DEC Executive Officer based at van Asch.

## **Student achievement**

Leaders have made some progress towards implementing and effectively using the centre's student management system (SMS). Their collaborative work with MoE and KDEC staff and through the Student Achievement Function (SAF) practitioners has been essential. The centre has begun mid-year student achievement reporting to the board and has established a better cycle of reporting to the board.

Centre leaders have ensured that professional development has been appropriately focused on assessing student wellbeing and learning needs across the centre's diverse operations, and developing plans that are customised to the distinct needs of van Asch, regional and ASSIST students. A range of related and useful professional development for staff has been provided. The pace of change required to effect and sustain positive impacts for students' learning and progress is not yet evident and now requires greater urgency.

Staff capability building in relation to the SMS implementation, data analysis and use are at an early stage of development. Using student achievement data to more effectively track and monitor students' learning, sufficiency of progress and achievement remains a significant priority for ongoing development. Centre leaders should now build on the good practice evident in transition programmes and the hostel provision to:

- provide greater clarity about student learning progress and outcomes
- respond in more targeted ways to accelerate students' learning
- continue to build student engagement, knowledge and decision making as learners to promote their self-efficacy and agency as learners
- ensure teachers consistently implement assessment expectations and guidelines, and use assessment information to track and accelerate student learning and progress over time
- fully implement the student management system to collate data so leaders and teachers can analyse, track and monitor progress of individuals and groups of learners.

Leaders and teachers have significantly improved students' IEPs. The holistic and collaborative focus on students is helping to build a community of support around each child and young person. Particular strengths of IEPs include the greater sense of students as learners, and the increased opportunities learners and their families now have to meaningfully contribute to planning and decision making about their learning and wellbeing goals.

Partnerships between the centre and schools that host the provisions continue to develop. Leaders should continue to explore and improve the ways in which progress for students in the provisions is reported to parents and whānau.

## Curriculum

Positive curriculum developments made over the past two years include the:

- increased focus on building students' engagement in their learning
- increased student provision and access to learning New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)
- collaborative use of teacher inquiry as a key tool for improving teaching and learning to promote improved outcomes for students and the responsiveness of the curriculum
- targeted focus on coaching and mentoring to strengthen professional support for effective teaching and learning practices
- increased range of communication with parents and whānau about centre developments related to students' learning and wellbeing.

The awareness and promotion of Māori achievement, culture, language and identity is being significantly improved under the guidance of the specialist resource teacher Māori. Leaders need to ensure plans are in place to sustain and continue to build on the progress evident to ERO at the time of this review. Since 2015 there has been a significant increase in the number of Māori students on the van Asch DEC regional service roll. Their learning, progress and achievement needs are an urgent priority.

The leadership of teaching and learning is being considerably strengthened and extended through the development of a new teaching and learning leadership structure. This is contributing to a more purposeful and strategic approach to curriculum leadership and development. Robust internal reflection and evaluation is needed to identify the benefits and impact of this new structure. It should also identify ways in which it can continue to be adapted and improved to help ensure that:

- workloads are manageable
- the pace of development is in line with students' learning and wellbeing needs
- curriculum processes, practices and valued outcomes are strongly targeted at improving the learning and achievement of all learners.

Reviewing and updating of the core and regional curricula is still at an early stage and requires more urgency. Leaders and teachers are aware that progress with the overall curriculum development has been slow, and that guidelines are needed to inform practice and drive improvement. In order to improve centre performance, leaders can build on the good work already evident in progress with IEPs, transitions, the hostel and cultural responsiveness to ensure a sense of urgency in:

- updating the curriculum
- extending internal evaluation capability in order to know about the effectiveness of programmes, initiatives, interventions and practices on outcomes for learners
- evaluating the effectiveness of centre leadership in meeting identified strategic curriculum goals and priorities.

ERO acknowledges that the improvements to the centre's transition programme, since the last review, have the potential to make an ongoing and positive impact on students' sense of belonging and wellbeing. At transition points into and out of the centre, students are now receiving stronger support that is well targeted to their individual wellbeing, learning and career needs. ERO recommends that centre leaders ensure the sustainability of this programme so that all students continue to benefit from it.

ERO's review of the centre's hostel verified the good practice and improvements identified by senior leaders. A range of systems and practices have been strengthened to improve guidance and support for students. Hostel students who spoke to ERO were positive about the impact these changes were having on their wellbeing and were optimistic about their current and future directions.

## **Governance**

The board is well led. Considerable progress has been made towards improving stewardship capacity and capability with the ongoing support of the MoE appointed LSMs and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).

DEC Trustees are developing a new Deaf Education Service Delivery model for the provision of deaf education and other key services for deaf and hard of hearing learners. The significant collaboration between the board, the LSMs, national and regional MoE representatives has informed the proposed model. Key stakeholders are being extensively consulted through to 2019.

The relationship and partnership building strategy between KDEC and van Asch DEC has been well led. This is a key organisational and operational culture shift in the last two years. A higher level of collaboration is promoting the sharing of expertise and practices between the two centres. This includes policy and project work, consultation, strategic leadership, service provision and financial management systems and processes.

Although progress has been made, the board is not yet able to manage all of the highly complex personnel issues and other needs. Further support is required to support leaders to manage and lead change that is in the best interests of students' wellbeing and learning.

The key areas of progress include:

- developing a governance framework with an associated policy review and board work plan
- ongoing training for trustees to build understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including accessing and making effective use of appropriate and relevant external support
- the appointment of an executive officer across the centres to align financial management
- considering what future property requirements are required to meet the new organisational and delivery model under development.

Board functioning would be strengthened if the board received even more regular reports that help trustees to:

- determine how well learners are progressing and achieving across the core school and regional service to then inform decision making
- set appropriate annual achievement targets for groups of learners, and receive evaluative reports about the progress of these groups
- evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the impact of targeted interventions on student learning and progress over time
- know about student safety and wellbeing, including patterns and trends in attendance and other presence and engagement measures
- ensure the sufficiency and provision of educational interpreters in the core school and the provision of NZSL for regional students.

### 3 Sustainable performance and self review

#### How well placed is the school to sustain and continue to improve and review its performance?

The centre requires ongoing external intervention to continue to help address areas of concern that impact on both centres. The board and centre value the positive working relationships they have with the MoE at both a national and regional level. Van Asch leaders are working collaboratively with their KDEC colleagues, providing external support. The centre is becoming more strategic and outward looking.

Van Asch has good professional leadership capability and capacity. Senior leaders have used a distributed leadership approach to develop internal capacity. They demonstrate a leadership culture that is clearly focused on ongoing improvement. Internal evaluation processes have been strengthened.

Leaders are focused on improving student outcomes and evaluating the impact of their targeted actions. Further decision making is now required to maximise the outcomes for students from targeted actions. This will necessitate some further delegations and changes to roles and responsibilities.

The centre, including regional staff, participated in an internal evaluation workshop hosted across a number of regional sites. This aligned with the increased strategic focus on professional inquiry and appraisal. The coming together for professional development and sharing of insights as a larger service is a key strength of the leadership approach in the centre. This helps connect staff who are diverse and value face-to-face communication.

With the ongoing support of the LSMs and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA), the board has made considerable progress towards improving its stewardship capacity and capability. The board is well led and is collaborative with external partners. While the board has the powers for curriculum, further robust evaluation is required to fully assess the capacity and capability of the board to resume the powers currently held by the two LSMs.

This is a pivotal time in the New Zealand deaf educational landscape. The complexity of demands on board leadership and trustees have, at times, exceeded their ability to meet the extent of competing needs and priorities. There is an urgency to make considerable strategic change to the design and operation of the National Deaf Education Service. This offers both real opportunities and significant challenges for the board.

This is a time of considerable strategic change. Additional external support must continue to be provided. This should include specific expertise to help the board and leaders effectively progress and implement the new national model for deaf education, while improving the day-to-day services and education for deaf and hard of hearing students.

#### Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of the school completed the *ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists*. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare

- personnel management
- financial management
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance
- school policies in relation to meeting the requirements of the *Vulnerable Children Act 2014*.

#### **4 Recommendations**

**Recommendations, including any to other agencies for ongoing or additional support.**

ERO recommends that the current level of intervention continues, and is expanded, if necessary, to meet particular or unexpected demands, as they arise.

ERO also recommends that further additional support be provided, as required, to ensure the Deaf Education Centres and board effectively manage the intended changes to the Service Delivery design.

#### **Conclusion**

Van Asch Deaf Education Centre (van Asch DEC) is a special school for children and young people in the South Island and lower North Island who are deaf or hard of hearing. The centre has made good progress and statutory and other support must be continued to improve student outcomes.

ERO intends to carry out another review over the course of one-to-two years.



Violet Tu'uga Stevenson  
Director Review and Improvement Services  
Te Tai Raki - Northern Region

23 January 2019

## About the School

Location	Sumner, Christchurch	
Ministry of Education profile number	519	
School type	Special School	
School roll	Core school roll	32
	Residential roll	11
	Regional roll	403
	ASSIST roll	475
Number of international students	0	
Gender composition	Girls	50%
	Boys	50%
Ethnic composition	Māori	17
	Pākehā	15
Special Features	<p>Host school partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sumner (van Asch College)</li> <li>• Wharenuī Primary School</li> <li>• Hagley Community College</li> <li>• Hillmorton High School</li> </ul> <p>Residential Hostel at van Asch DEC Base School</p> <p>Regional Service and Resource Development Hubs in Wellington and Napier/Hastings</p> <p>Resource Teachers of the Deaf Service (RTD)</p> <p>ASSIST Teams</p>	
Review team on site	July 2018	
Date of this report	23 January 2019	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	November 2016
	Education Review	April 2013
	Education Review	February 2008