



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?

Established in 1880, van Asch Deaf Education Centre (VADEC) provides education, pastoral and technical support services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students from birth to 18 years (21 at school). VADEC's service range includes the South Island and the lower North Island. An Early Intervention centre for children from diagnosis to five years also operates from Christchurch.

A combined board of trustees governs VADEC and Kelston Deaf Education Centre (KDEC). VADEC has a base in Christchurch and supports students in the South Island and lower North Island. The board's vision is that all DHH students in New Zealand will have the skills and knowledge necessary to enjoy fulfilling and satisfying lives.

VADEC provides a core school option for students in Years 1 to 15 to learn alongside other deaf students in bilingual provisions. Students learn through New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and English, in a bilingual programme, designed to promote the development of language, academic progress and deaf identity.

The majority of DHH students in VADEC's area are enrolled in mainstream classes at local schools. They are supported by specialist resource teachers, including an ASSIST team who provide scaffolded teaching, advice and guidance, and technical support.

A hostel residence is available for senior students to study at the core school. This includes a transition unit for young adults aged 18 to 21 years who are developing their independence, with support for pathways to further study, employment and life skills.

Over the past four years, ERO has monitored and evaluated improvements in VADEC's governance, leadership, curriculum design, student achievement and health and safety, including the residential hostel. Prompted by the findings of ERO's 2016 review, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has provided Student Achievement Function (SAF) practitioners to support leaders to improve assessment and the use of student achievement information. VADEC has also used internal and other external expertise to grow internal capability.

Two Ministry appointed Limited Statutory Managers (LSMs) have worked to guide significant improvement in governance, employment, finance and property matters. Their work has been instrumental in promoting improvement. The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) has also provided ongoing training and advice to the combined board. Most board members were newly elected mid-2019, including the chairperson.

ERO's January 2019 report recommended that Ministry intervention be continued and expanded to facilitate stability and progress. A merger of the two Deaf Education Centres is underway. VADEC will continue to operate until July 2020, when a new national school, Deaf Education Aotearoa New Zealand (DEANZ), is established. An experienced executive principal, recruited with the Principal Recruitment Allowance (PRA), has been appointed to lead DEANZ. ERO will continue to work alongside the board, leaders and staff, pre and post-merger.

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 concerns regarding student learning and achievement outcomes, curriculum design and governance. VADEC leaders needed to establish effective systems and practices to:

- gather, analyse, report and use student achievement information
- monitor and evaluate curriculum effectiveness
- inform planning and decision making
- accelerate student progress in learning.

ERO also identified the need to improve governance. This included more regular reporting on student outcomes to inform decision making and use of evaluation to determine the centre's effectiveness.

Overall progress

Leaders have increased the pace of change and improvement. They have facilitated positive changes in a highly consultative way, and continued to make progress in most development areas. Leaders have used Ministry support to establish and embed better operational systems and practices. Professional support networks have been developed and embedded with KDEC. A culture of inquiry and collaboration focused on improvement is scaffolding greater consistency and shared capability-building between the two centres.

Areas of significant progress

2.1 Student achievement and other valued outcomes

- Purposeful growth of staff capability has increased the analysis and use of achievement information, including the identification of priority learner groups. The student management system (SMS) is being better used to record and monitor student progress and achievement.
- Higher expectations have been set for teachers to improve and personalise planning, teaching and learning. Regular review and improvements to individual education plans (IEPs) are now in place.

- Students have more opportunities to share their perspectives and make choices about their learning and wellbeing. They are encouraged to be involved in a range of activities and interests beyond the school.
- Communication and information sharing within the centre, and across the two centres, have improved, including greater clarity in reporting student progress and achievement to parents. Professional and productive relationships are being developed with host schools.
- Student wellbeing is appropriately prioritised and better supported.

2.2 Curriculum design

- A cohesive joint national senior leadership team has made considered effective changes. Leaders' planning has been based on the consultative, inclusive and evaluative review of the school's local curriculum design. A purposeful process is in place to build middle leadership capability to improve teaching and learning.
- A collaborative approach to enhance teaching and learning is growing a culture of collective responsibility for curriculum development. Professional learning groups and team-based inquiries are promoting a greater shared understanding of effective teaching practices. A well-planned professional development programme, linked to key initiatives, is now being implemented.
- To affirm and promote Māori language, culture and identity, staff are trialling and developing more responsive initiatives. Professional learning is building staff bicultural awareness, promote Māori achievement and build partnerships with whānau.
- Innovations using digital technology have further developed to enhance students' communication, understanding and engagement in learning. In particular, students' access to the curriculum is increasing through a deaf bilingual NZSL and English programme.

2.3 Governance

- The board has a stronger focus on staff and student wellbeing and has improved ways of knowing about and addressing challenges that arise. Strategic plans and approaches have been developed that are more likely to improve outcomes for all learners, including for Māori.
- The board receives more regular reporting about student engagement and achievement, with opportunities to scrutinise data. Trustees have greater clarity about the school's learning approaches, initiatives, interventions and quality practices that are resourced to provide valued outcomes for DHH students.
- Defined responsibilities, including sub-committees, with actions and timelines, and an enhanced meeting structure are supporting more efficient governance practice. Opportunities for training, support and guidance are supporting the board's stewardship.
- Board effectiveness is beginning to be evaluated. Updated policies and procedures provide better guidance for operating the service.

3 Sustainable performance and self review

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

The board and senior leaders continue to be well supported by two Ministry appointed LSMs, NZSTA, and external advisors and facilitators. The LSMs have made a pivotal and valuable contribution to both VADEC and KDEC. Collaborative professional connections with KDEC have been mutually beneficial and have resulted in change within VADEC, and nationally. There is a sense of collective responsibility to support positive outcomes for DHH students.

VADEC leaders are reflective and strongly promote innovation for improvement. Senior and middle leaders are building capability in evaluation and inquiry. Systems and structural changes promote clear communication, evidence-based decision making and a faster pace for change. The board is well informed about initiatives and outcomes. These changes are supporting VADEC to foster sustainable improvement and be better placed to continue to review and improve its performance as the merger approaches.

While leaders and teachers have maintained an unrelenting focus on improving outcomes for students, student learning and achievement outcomes still require further improvement and acceleration, particularly in reading and writing. Effective external professional development is required to target teaching practices. The new board and leaders will continue to require a high level of external support and guidance to sustain the positive impacts for students, staff and families, and address the learning requirements of DHH students.

Longstanding challenges with the student management system (SMS) require improvement to develop a comprehensive picture of student achievement across the core school and regional services. This work is vital to inform evidence-based decision making and evaluation at all levels. Leaders are continuing to develop teachers' capability to use the SMS to collate, track, analyse and share useful information for more responsive programme planning and reporting.

Following a period of consultative curriculum review, VADEC leaders are designing, implementing and refining a more localised and responsive curriculum. They are also developing a cohesive, evidence-based and outcomes-referenced plan to ensure that bicultural perspectives are better reflected through the curriculum, teaching and learning, and in organisational approaches.

The Māori Specialist Resource Teacher role to promote culturally responsive practices is indicative of the board's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Initiatives are being trialled to develop greater whānau partnership for Māori success and reporting progress and achievement to the community. The curriculum plan should be the foundation for shared understandings about effective approaches that improve outcomes for all DHH learners, including for Māori.

While VADEC is currently well supported by LSMs, there is further change ahead with the 2020 merger. A new human resources manager has been appointed to support staff through this complex period. However, specialist workforce supply is an area of continued concern.

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 *Children's Act 2014*.

4 Recommendations

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

ERO recommends that the current level of Ministry intervention remains to support VADEC as both deaf education centres prepare to merge in July 2020. The LSMs and NZSTA should continue to ensure that operations related to personnel, finances, property, strategic planning and curriculum development continue to progress and impact on more positive student outcomes.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO 's overall evaluation judgement of van Asch Deaf Education Centre's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

Developing

ERO will maintain an ongoing monitoring and evaluation relationship with the service through the Readiness Review process for the merger of the two centres.

ERO's Framework: [Overall Findings and Judgement Tool derived from School Evaluation](#)

[Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success](#) is available on ERO's website.



Lesley Patterson
Director Review and Improvement Services (Southern)
Southern Region

9 March 2020

About the School

Location	Sumner, Christchurch	
Ministry of Education profile number	519	
School type	Special School	
School roll	Core School (provisions)	31
	Residential	12
	Regional Services (mainstream)	1062
	ASSIST	642
Gender composition	Core School: Girls	18
	Boys	13
	Residential: Boys	7
	Girls	5
Ethnic composition	Core School:	
	Māori	12
	NZ European/Pākehā	12
	other ethnic groups	7
Special Features	<p>Provisions located in other schools: Hagley Community College, Christchurch Hillmorton High School, Christchurch Wharenui Primary School, Christchurch</p> <p>Regional Hubs and Resource Development Hubs: Napier/Hastings Wellington</p> <p>Hostel residence and transition located at Sumner</p> <p>Resource Teachers of the DEAF (RTDs) supporting students in their mainstream classes</p> <p>ASSIST Teams (technical services)</p>	
Review team on site	November 2019	
Date of this report	9 March 2020	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Education Review	January 2019
	Education Review	November 2016
	Education Review	April 2013