



**Education Review Office**  
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

**Kelston Deaf Education Centre**  
**Kelston, Auckland**

**Confirmed**

**Education Review Report**

# Education Review Report

## Kelston 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?

Kelston Deaf Education Centre (KDEC) provides education, pastoral and technical support services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students aged from birth to 18 years (21 at school). KDEC's service range includes the top half of the North Island, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Northland and Waikato. A pre-school also operates from the base school site in Kelston, Auckland.

A combined board of trustees governs KDEC and van Asch Deaf Education Centre (VADEC). KDEC has a base in Auckland and supports students in Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Northland and Waikato. 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.

KDEC provides a core school option for students in Years 1 to 15 to learn alongside other DHH students. 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 KDEC's students learn in mainstream classes at local schools. They are supported by specialist regional service 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 from Years 7 to 13. An additional Tu Kokiri transition programme supports young adults from 18 to 21 years of age who are developing their independence, with support for pathways to further study, employment and life skills.

Rūaumoko Marae was established on the KDEC site in 1992. After a lengthy period of refurbishment, the marae was blessed and reopened in August 2019. Many students who are enrolled with KDEC, or receiving its services, identify as Māori. A Māori cultural advisor (teacher role) was created in 2019.

Since the 2019 ERO review, several new leaders have been appointed to key positions in the centre. New teachers and other staff have also joined the service. The centre continues to be led by an acting principal.

Over the past four years, ERO has monitored and evaluated improvements in KDEC'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. KDEC 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. KDEC will continue to operate until July 2020, when the 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 related to student learning and achievement outcomes, curriculum design, governance, hostel management and the overall effectiveness of KDEC leadership.

The 2019 ERO report noted that KDEC had made progress, in some of these areas, but still required a high level of ongoing external intervention. Ministry statutory intervention was supporting improvement in governance, personnel management, property and financial management. The new acting principal was in place.

Good progress was evident in the conditions and provision for students in the hostel residence. Improvements in student achievement outcomes and curriculum design were at an early stage. Further action was needed to implement effective leadership, particularly of the Core School, to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for students.

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

## Overall progress

New leaders working collaboratively with the LSMs and acting principal, have increased the pace of change and improvement. They have facilitated changes in a highly consultative way, and made significant progress in most development areas. Leaders have used Ministry support to establish and embed better operational systems and practices. KDEC had a significant amount of work to do to establish effective operational systems. Professional support networks have been developed and embedded with VADEC. 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 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) including data use 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, has 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 been re-established to plan and lead considered and 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 been introduced 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 Leadership of the core school

- Restructured leadership roles now include a teaching component for leaders. Clear lines of responsibility and better oversight by leaders of the host school provisions are enabling more rapid response times by core school leaders to matters raised.

- Targeted appointments have been made to key roles, including increased opportunities for deaf staff.
- Quality assurance and inquiry into the effectiveness of practices, systems and processes are becoming robust.
- Wellbeing surveys of students and staff are informing leadership solutions and action.
- NZSL training opportunities are increasingly offered to students and adults, including parents and whānau.
- Strengthened staff appraisal processes, with clearer guidelines, are growing a culture of accountability, collaboration and support.
- The acting principal and new leaders have made a significant difference to the quality of centre leadership.

## **2.4 Hostel Residence**

- Students have greater input into residential operations. Timetabling and supervision rosters now prioritise student safety and wellbeing. Student input is used to make improvements. More consultative relationships with students are positively impacting on the atmosphere of the residence, and students' sense of wellbeing and connection.
- Students are better supported with their learning and schoolwork, self-management and life skills. They have more opportunities to be involved in activities in and outside the residence, including with the Auckland deaf community.
- Shared expertise with the VADEC residential leader is helping to enhance the rigour of systems, policies and procedures, including health and safety. Guiding documents have been reviewed and improved to give clear information about accountability and to support staff in their work.
- The new hostel leader is building a collaborative team to better support students who are away from home.
- New staff have been appointed according to the needs of DHH students and this includes deaf and hearing adults. More frequent team meetings and better lines of communication are helping to address important matters in a timely and proactive way.
- Rūaumoko Marae is starting to be used to build cultural connectedness for Māori students and their whānau.

## **2.5 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 promote 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 the two Ministry appointed LSMs, NZSTA, and external advisors and facilitators. The LSMs have made a pivotal and valuable contribution to both KDEC and VADEC. Collaborative professional connections with VADEC have been mutually beneficial and have resulted in positive change within KDEC, and nationally. There is a sense of collective responsibility to support increased positive outcomes for DHH students.

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 new initiatives and early outcomes. These changes are supporting KDEC to foster sustainable improvement and be better placed to continue to review and improve its performance as the merger approaches.

The acting principal has worked strategically to address the areas for improvement identified in previous ERO reports. An overarching plan was created, linked to the KDEC vision and values, to address matters in the Core School, Regional Services, hostel and non-teaching support services. New regional leadership supports the development of cohesive practices and with a greater focus on students. Leaders are proactively gathering DHH student data and enhancing connections to families and mainstream schools.

The centre has a more distributed leadership approach and targeted professional development to support senior leaders as they mentor middle leaders and teams. Job descriptions are up-to-date and appraisal processes and practices have been redesigned to actively support professional growth. Meetings are now regular and discussions more focused on enhancing student outcomes and growing staff capability.

While leaders and teachers have maintained an unrelenting focus on improving outcomes for students, learning and achievement outcomes still require further improvement and acceleration, particularly in reading and writing. Additional external professional development is required to target effective teaching practices. The new board and leaders will continue to require a high level of external support and guidance to 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 achievement information for more responsive programme planning and reporting.

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

The appointment of a leader 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 achievement to the community. The curriculum plan should be the foundation for shared understandings of effective approaches that improve outcomes for all DHH learners, including for Māori.

While KDEC is currently well supported by LSMs, there is further change and uncertainty 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 one area of continued concern. Staff have managed a significant workload in improving current practices as well as developing initiatives related to the new school.

### **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 KDEC 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**

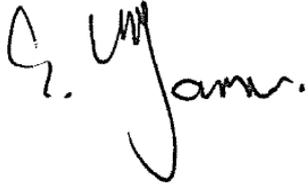
On the basis of the findings of this review, ERO 's overall evaluation judgement of Kelston Deaf Education Centre's performance in achieving valued outcomes for its students is:

#### **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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Tanner'.

Steve Tanner  
Director Review and Improvement Services (Northern)  
Northern Region - Te Tai Raki

9 March 2020

## About the School

|                                      |  |      |
|--------------------------------------|--|------|
| Location                             | Kelston, Auckland  |      |
| Ministry of Education profile number | 503  |      |
| School type                          | Special School   |      |
| School roll                          | Core School (provisions)   | 90   |
|                                      | Residential  | 14   |
|                                      | Regional Services (mainstream)   | 449  |
|                                      | ASSIST   | 1110 |
| Gender composition                   | Core School: Boys  | 53   |
|                                      | Girls  | 37   |
|                                      | Residential: Boys  | 10   |
|                                      | Girls  | 4    |
| Ethnic composition                   | Core School:   |      |
|                                      | Māori  | 32   |
|                                      | NZ European/ Pākehā  | 12   |
|                                      | Samoan   | 9    |
|                                      | Cook Islands Māori   | 8    |
|                                      | African  | 7    |
|                                      | Tongan   | 5    |
|                                      | South East Asian   | 5    |
|                                      | Chinese  | 4    |
|                                      | other ethnic groups  | 8    |
| Special Features                     | <p>Provisions located in other schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kelston Primary School</li> <li>Kelston Intermediate School</li> <li>Kelston Boys' High School</li> <li>Kelston Girls' College</li> <li>Ormiston Primary School</li> <li>Ormiston Junior College</li> <li>Ormiston Senior College</li> <li>Oteha Valley Primary School</li> </ul> <p>Regional Sensory Resource Centres and Regional Hubs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auckland</li> <li>Hamilton</li> <li>Tauranga</li> </ul> <p>Hostel residence and Tu Kokiri Programme located at Kelston</p> <p>Resource Teachers of the Deaf (RTDs) supporting students in their mainstream classes</p> <p>ASSIST Teams (technical service)</p> |      |

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|---------------------------|--|---|
| Review team on site       | November 2019  |   |
| Date of this report       | 9 March 2020   |   |
| Most recent ERO report(s) | Education Review<br>Education Review<br>Education Review | January 2019<br>November 2016<br>October 2012 |