

EDUCATION REVIEW REPORT:
CITY CHILDREN'S CENTRE
SEPTEMBER 2007

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

1. 1. About the Centre

Location	Napier
Ministry of Education profile number	55087
Type	Education and Care Service
Number licensed for	Over 2s 30, Under 2s 15
Roll number	63

Gender composition	Male 34, Female 29	
Ethnic composition	New Zealand European/Pākehā 48, Māori 9, Other ethnic groups 6	
Review team on site	August 2007	
Date of this report	14 September 2007	
Previous ERO reports	Education Review 2004	October
	Accountability Review December 2000	
	Assurance Audit	June 1994
	Assurance Audit	March 1993

2. 2. The Education Review Office (ERO) Evaluation

City Children’s Centre is a purpose-built facility located in the Napier City business area. It is one of two community-based centres administered by the Napier Community Childcare Trust Incorporated. The trust is responsible for administration while the supervisor oversees the day-to-day operations. The high level of understanding and expertise in assessing children’s learning is a feature of teaching practice at the centre.

This education review evaluates the quality of education and care children receive, the interactions within the centre, and the quality of the learning environment. It also provides an evaluation of the safe physical and emotional environment for children, and the impact of assessment practices on children’s learning and development.

Children enjoy exciting programmes that challenge and extend them. Throughout the day they have many and varied choices. They experience play activities that enhance their understanding of literacy, numeracy and science concepts. Children are growing in their ability to problem solve and reason. Teachers skilfully engage children in sustained conversations and pose open questions that encourage them to think more deeply and investigate more fully. Toddlers and infants benefit from activities that are responsive to their individuality and special characteristics. Children’s strengths and interests effectively guide the programme. Their learning is valued.

Children’s emotional wellbeing is sensitively nurtured within a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Relationships between children and adults are positive and affectionate. They benefit from the quality of relationships that surround them.

The rich variety of high quality resources is accessible to children, encouraging child-initiated choices and promoting learning experiences. Children take pleasure in exploring well-organised environments that cater for their learning and developmental requirements. Since the October 2004 ERO review major renovations have occurred to the outside area for over-twos, greatly enhancing teaching and learning.

Teachers are committed to fostering and developing strong bonds with families. This is a feature of this early childhood centre. Teachers successfully promote links between home and the centre. They respect, encourage and value parent opinion and input. Children's individual records reflect the child's life within and outside the early childhood centre environment. Family contributions are valued as significant.

Families demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to this centre. Many parents contribute to their child's portfolios by writing interesting anecdotes about learning and events that occur at home. Teachers keep families well informed about their child's progress. Infants, toddlers and young children benefit from this partnership.

Teachers successfully implement systems and procedures to guide and shape their teaching practice. They review progress and identify areas for further development. Children and families benefit from this cohesive approach to self review.

Management and staff take all reasonable steps to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of children. Sound health and safety practices, supported by appropriate policies and procedures, promote a safe environment for children and adults.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO will review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

3. 3. Review Priorities

The Focus of the Review

Before the review, the management of City Children's Centre 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 City Children's Centre.

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

This review evaluates the quality of education and care children receive, with particular emphasis on the programme, interactions and environment. Teachers have participated in professional development in 2006 relating to the early childhood exemplars. This involvement in professional development has supported their implementation of assessment, planning and programmes for children. ERO considers this commitment to professional enrichment as part of this evaluation of the quality of education.

Areas of good performance

- Programme

Teachers effectively build on children's strengths and interests. They provide an appropriate range of resources to support development and learning. Children spend uninterrupted time at activities of their choice, using equipment and resources for multiple purposes. They negotiate and communicate as they play together imaginatively. Children are developing confidence and competence in activities that interest them. Curiosity is recognized as an attribute for life-long learning.

Opportunities for children to engage with literacy and numeracy concepts are successfully integrated into the daily programme. Teachers skilfully provide interesting and varied opportunities for children to explore print and demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts within everyday play experiences. Children are gaining an understanding of the importance of reading, writing and number in relevant and meaningful ways.

Children confidently access a wide variety of materials and resources for use in creative and expressive activities. They are encouraged to learn through a range of contexts, including musical and dramatic experiences. Children learn to make sense of the world around them through song, dance and role-play in formal and informal situations. They are developing confidence in their abilities and skills.

Routines are skillfully managed to provide choices. Appropriate group times enable children to engage in social discussion with peers and adults. Children learn how to relate to one another, communicate and negotiate.

The programme for infants and toddlers successfully provides for their individual needs for play, sleep and nourishment. Teachers are warm and responsive to infants' and toddlers' verbal and non-verbal communication. Adults promptly and appropriately respond to young children's approaches by talking and playing with them. Toddlers and infants benefit from programmes that are responsive to their individuality and special characteristics. Teachers continue to reflect on how best to respond to the requirements of infants and toddlers. Professional development, reading and discussion enable staff to provide programmes that are aligned to current theory and best practice.

Since the previous ERO review teachers have worked hard to integrate a bicultural perspective into all aspects of teaching and learning. Resources and displays encourage children to develop a positive understanding of their dual cultural heritage. Teachers are skilled in effectively incorporating te reo me ngā tikanga Māori into the programme. They frequently use te reo Māori in their interactions with children and incorporate waiata into daily experiences. Children confidently participate in karakia before meals, and confidently respond to instructions, phrases and questions in te reo Māori. Children have opportunities to hear and use Māori language and learn about aspects of tikanga in authentic ways.

- Interactions

Children's emotional wellbeing is sensitively nurtured within a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Relationships between children and adults are positive and affirming. Children benefit from the quality of relationships that surround them.

Teachers successfully engage in sustained conversations with children. Staff notice and respond quickly to the moment of play when teaching and learning can occur. They use open-ended questions to encourage children to think more deeply, problem solve and investigate. Adults provide affirmation to children related to their learning, at times leading to sustained interest and involvement. Children are viewed as competent and capable learners.

Children have appropriate opportunities throughout the day to play independently or in small groups. They initiate contact with peers and adults. Children encourage and assist one another. They are learning to make decisions and give support.

Teachers use positive teaching strategies to effectively manage the learning environment, encouraging children through respectful and purposeful interactions and interventions. Children demonstrate confidence and cooperation when playing and learning in groups. They use language skilfully to manage relationships with their peers and teachers. Children's emotional and physical wellbeing is promoted.

Teachers make genuine efforts to establish strong and purposeful partnerships with families. They engage parents in ongoing consultation about possible directions and aspirations for their children's learning. Families are kept informed about their child's progress through daily conversations, regular newsletters and wall displays that include written narratives and photographs. Children benefit from strong links between home and centre.

- Learning environment

The centre setting is stimulating, welcoming and successfully organised to make the best use of available spaces. In the kindergarten room, teachers have carefully arranged a variety of wall displays at child height. Photographs of children involved in centre activities are displayed to show children's participation in learning through play, and these are frequently looked at and discussed by peers. Children are able to reflect on items of interest and aspects of their learning and progress. Wall displays include alphabet and number charts. Some of these highlight words and phrases in te

reo Māori. Centre displays also include useful information about the programme, including regulatory and parent information. Children's work is attractively displayed, placing high value on their accomplishments and creativity.

Children are provided with a range of exciting opportunities to interact with the environment. The open indoor layout, particularly in the 'Kindergarten Room', supports easy transitions between activities and flows into the well-designed playground. The separate outdoor area for infants is also easily accessed from inside. A range of high quality resources, equipment and materials are provided. These are easily accessible and stored within reach of the appropriate age groups. Children are confident in making satisfying educational choices.

Teachers are highly responsive to the differing developmental stages of infants and toddlers. Staff carefully monitor children and respond swiftly, and with reassurance, when children need their assistance. Staff continually replenish resources and change activities to stimulate ongoing interest. Children's play is valued as meaningful learning.

- **Operations and review**

Centre management sets clear direction for the centre. Documentation that guides centre operations is of high quality and accessible to staff and parents. A commitment to good and fair employment practice is highly evident. Effective financial management enables implementation of the centre's policies and philosophy. Children and their families benefit from a consistent and clear direction that is focused on best outcomes for children.

4. 4. Areas of National Interest

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.

The Quality of Assessment in Early Childhood Services

Background

ERO is currently evaluating the quality of assessment practice in early childhood services.

Educators and parents use assessment information to support children in their learning. They notice, recognise and respond to children's strengths and interests.

The Ministry of Education is currently funding professional development over a five-year period starting from 2005. Early childhood services are at varying stages in their understanding and implementation of effective assessment practice. In this centre all staff have participated in a whole centre training programme.

Areas of good performance

- Links to self review

Self review has successfully led to improved assessment and planning processes, positive interactions, and the creation of an inclusive and welcoming learning setting. Teacher reflection has led to investigations to encourage parents to further contribute to programmes, planning and assessment practices. Review also influences ongoing improvement to environments and resource provision. Educators consistently review all facets of assessment practice to inform programme development.

- Children' learning in context

Assessment practice consistently reflects the social context in which children live and learn. Educators use their observations and analysis of learning to plan for programmes and activities that allow children to follow their current and emerging interests from a child-initiated perspective. The child is frequently portrayed in the framework of family and community. Links are made to experiences that have authentic meaning for children.

- Children's profiles

Teachers have established an effective process for individual child assessment through well-presented profiles. These contain narrative observations, photographs and work samples. They are easily accessible to children, who use them as an assessment tool to revisit past experiences and stimulate new pathways for learning. Children and parents are beginning to contribute their perspective. Children enjoy sharing their profiles with adults, demonstrating pride in their achievements. These shared records provide a treasured memoir of children's participation and learning during their time at the centre. Assessment acknowledges and affirms children's work.

- Professional dialogue

Teachers work collaboratively to effectively manage assessment practices. They have all undertaken extensive professional development related to *Kei tua o te pai*, the Ministry of Education's childhood assessment exemplars. Centre philosophy and the principles of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* support teachers to document their reflection on assessment practice at staff meetings. These discussions provide opportunities to talk about children's strengths and interests, identified through a range of observational data. Teachers then develop narrative assessments of children's learning, incorporating learning aptitudes and attitudes, which lead to tentative next steps for learning. Resource provision is strongly identified to support children's interests. This team approach to assessment practice assists teachers to know each child well and make decisions of how best to provide for their learning. The high level of understanding and expertise in assessing children's learning is a feature of the teaching practice at the centre.

- Children's participation in assessment

Children enthusiastically participate in the assessment of their learning. They make decisions about the content of their profiles and work alongside teachers to select and create their own photographic documentation. Assessment always portrays the child

in a positive light and highlights their uniqueness. The child is central to assessment and evaluation processes.

- **Visibility of children's learning**

Children's learning is made visible through a range of media, including profiles, wall displays, and special books about group activities and events. Teachers display children's work in ways that celebrate and value their contributions. Individual profiles are attractively presented records of their time at the centre. Immediate responses to develop children's interests and knowledge through a daily log make learning meaningful and increase the complexity of experiences. Children's development is celebrated.

Areas for improvement

- **Environment displays**

Wall displays in the infant area celebrate learning through narratives, photographs and examples of work. However, these are not displayed at child level, so are not visibly accessible unless the baby is held up by an adult. Teachers have begun to investigate ways to make this documentation more easily viewed by infants. ERO concurs with this thinking to increase babies' sense of ownership and delight in their accomplishments and image.

5. 5. Management Assurance on Compliance Areas

Overview

Before the review, the licensee and staff of City Children's Centre completed an ERO *Centre Management Assurance Statement* and *Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they have attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

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

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they 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.

ERO's investigations did not identify any areas of concern

6. 6. Recommendations

ERO and the Centre Management agreed that:

- 6.1 teachers review placement of displays to make them easier to view by babies to increase their sense of ownership and delight in their accomplishments and image.

7. 7. Future Action

ERO is confident that the service is being managed in the interests of the children. Therefore ERO will review the service again as part of the regular review cycle.

Graham Randell
Area Manager
for Chief Review Officer

14 September 2007

14 September 2007

To the Parents and Community of City Children's Centre

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **City Children's Centre**.

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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 licensee 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>.

Graham Randell
Area Manager
for Chief Review Officer

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.
- • **Areas of National Interest** – information about how Government policies are working in early childhood centres.
- • **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.