

EDUCATION REVIEW REPORT:**RATHKEALE COLLEGE****NOVEMBER 2008**

To the Parents and Community of Rathkeale College

These are the findings of the Education Review Office's latest report on **Rathkeale College**.

Rathkeale College is one of three in Masterton that operate under the proprietorship of the Trinity Schools' Trust Board (TSTB). The TSTB has responsibility for the buildings, grounds and boarding establishments, as well as being the guardians of the school's special character. A Board of Trustees includes proprietor's representatives and is responsible for the governance of the day school.

The college caters for boys in years 9 to 13, over half of whom are weekly or full-time boarders. Students in years 12 and 13 receive programmes of learning through the Rathkeale St Matthew's Senior College based at the Rathkeale College site. It provides teaching that allows for an extended curriculum and the social development of boys in a co-educational environment. Within this arrangement, Rathkeale College makes separate provision for whole-school activities in keeping with its special character.

Expansive grounds, native bush and access to the Ruamahanga River are features of the college. In the last two years, improvements have been made to the chapel, some buildings have been repainted and 15 classrooms are scheduled for refurbishment. The special Anglican ethos of the college is evident in the relationships between staff and students, and between the students themselves. The chaplain plays a part in the pastoral care of students as well as leading weekly religious observances. Religious studies are included in the curriculum.

Students are appreciative of the range of academic, cultural, and sporting activities available. A wide range of leadership opportunities for seniors is provided. Participation levels are high. Whole school activities, such as combined singing and house competitions, contribute to the school's aim to develop 'good Rathkeale men'. Results in the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEAs) indicate that while achievement has been consistently above national percentages for the last three years at NCEA Levels 1 and 2, in the last two years at Level 3 it has been below. In 2007 five New Zealand Scholarships were awarded.

ERO's 2006 report noted areas of progress in the board's strategic planning, curriculum management and administration, self review and in the provision of a safe physical and emotional environment for students. Staff were at the beginning of a planned programme of whole-school and departmental professional development that was focused on effective teaching practices. Half the trustees elected in 2006 are new to the board and a new principal appointed for the start of 2008. There have also been significant staff changes in the last two years. The college is in a transitional phase of development.

In discussion with the board, ERO agreed to evaluate the quality of self review, focusing on its effect on the quality of teaching and learning. This review also evaluates progress in the

achievement of Māori students, readiness for the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in 2010, provision for students in the hostel and for those who are international students. ERO also discussed with the board and senior managers the future of education in the college and considered compliance with requirements relating to health and safety.

The board has recognised the need to begin the process of reviewing its current strategic and annual plans. A strategic planning day has already been undertaken to establish clear medium and long-term future direction for the college. Other aspects of self review are also apparent. For example, the board reviews curriculum programmes on a three year cycle, there is reflective discussion among some staff and departments resulting in changes to course provision and students are surveyed on relationships and anti-bullying.

The principal is leading developments in performance management. The appraisal process is now explicitly developmental and focused on improving the quality of teaching school wide. This, overall, is sound with some examples of high quality practice. The general tone of teacher/student interactions is respectful, affirming and supports the focus on learning in classes.

Since the 2006 ERO review, further upgrading of the two boarding houses, Cranleigh and Repton, has taken place. In particular, effective heating systems now maintain comfortable temperatures within the accommodation areas. The houses have been restructured so that each now caters for a vertical grouping of students from years 9 to 13. A positive, relaxed and supportive tone is evident in interactions amongst students and between students and staff in the boarding houses. International students participate in school activities beyond the classroom and are enjoying their college experience.

The board responded positively to the findings of this review. It has developed a recommendation, to be incorporated in the strategic planning process, to establish a comprehensive framework of self review to develop and sustain a culture of continuous school improvement.

College staff have acted promptly to address compliance requirements brought to their attention during the review.

Future Action

ERO is confident that the board of trustees can manage the school in the interests of the students and the Crown and bring about the improvements outlined in this report.

ERO is likely to review the school again as part of the regular review cycle.

Review Coverage

ERO reviews do not cover every aspect of school performance and each ERO report may cover different issues. The aim is to provide information on aspects that are central to student achievement and useful to this school.

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

SIGNED

Lennane Kent
Area Manager
for Chief Review Officer