



Birkdale Intermediate School

Newsletter of the Board of Trustees

Summer 2011

BULLETIN

**WORLD CLASS
COMPUTER
FACILITIES**

**TOP SPORTING
OPPORTUNITIES**

**POSITIVE
ERO REVIEW
COMMENTS**

Education Review Office Comments on a Supportive Learning Environment

We are proud of the supportive, friendly and safe learning environment we provide our students. It has been wonderful to have this confirmed by the Education Review Office for over eight years now.

2010

'Students are highly engaged in learning programmes and show particular interest and enthusiasm for the school's integrated curriculum units. Students work within a positive, supportive climate that helps them to engage in learning. Respectful, affirming relationships with peers and with teachers are evident.'

2006

'Students communicate well and benefit from the nurturing environment teachers provide. They show high levels of interest and sustained on-task behaviour in classrooms.'

2003

'Students were highly motivated. Teachers' skilful questioning and focused oral feedback effectively supported learning. Programmes catered well for the needs of students in a pleasant educational environment.'

Thinking-Based Learning

'In-depth thinking is evident as students talk confidently and knowledgeably about their learning tasks. They experience learning within an integrated

curriculum framework that helps them to acquire knowledge and skills across the wider curriculum areas within scenario-based programmes that require students to find solutions to issues. This approach is also used in specialist teaching programmes, where students learn skills within the context of real life scenarios.'

Sequential Teaching and Learning

'Teachers follow structured, sequential progressions of learning in literacy and mathematics. Comprehensive rubrics of achievement indicators for all units of learning provide useful frameworks for assessment processes. These rubrics enable students to identify what they can achieve and identify next steps to improve their achievement.'

Transferable Skills

'Students learn skills for thinking and information literacy that can be used throughout the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of questioning to encourage students to share their opinions and knowledge, and to help them to clarify their thoughts and justify their reasoning. Students talk confidently about issues, develop lines of argument and respect alternative views. Opportunities for cooperative learning result in students being motivated to participate and contribute to discussion. Students apply these developing skills to seek solutions to issues posed in curriculum based studies and their wider social interactions.'



International Day

The school's student executive organized an International Day. A large number of students and staff came dressed in costumes from all around the World. It was the most colourful assembly of the year. This fun event was to celebrate all the cultures that make up New Zealand. It follows on from our social studies inquiry titled 'Filemoni's Dilemma' where our students look at the benefits and difficulties of moving to another country.

Lead Teacher Initiative

A 'lead teacher' initiative was introduced in 2009 to support teacher development. Lead teachers observe the teaching practice of colleagues and discuss these observations together. This has been an effective initiative that supports teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to make changes to their teaching, if necessary.

World Class Computer Facilities

In 2004 our Principal, Mr Coote, travelled to New Orleans to attend a conference of 12,000 educators from around the world. At this conference he was presented with an International award 'recognizing creative teachers for their pioneering use of telecommunication networks to provide innovative learning opportunities for school-age students.' At that conference it became clear that our school's computer facilities were equal to the top facilities available to schools around the world.

Since then we have gone on to provide our students and teachers with even better facilities. The school presently has a fibre optic cable bringing the Internet into the school's server at a speed faster than normal Broadband. Our Internet plan provides unlimited data at 10mbps. Seven computer labs of 15 computers each are available for classroom use. These computers can access the school's network on a 2GB wireless network or through our wired network.

Students use these facilities regularly. So regularly that they become a natural part of learning. You just reach for the right tool to take your learning that next step.

We are truly a school connected to the world of learning opportunities.

High Speed Internet Filtering

To make sure our students take full advantage of the new learning opportunities the Internet offers without unsuitable material spoiling this wonderful resource we have for many years now had Watchdog filtering in place. This year Watchdog have asked us to trial filtering in a high speed environment. The information gained will assist other schools as they move to high speed Internet connections.



iPads Come into Classroom Use

This year we are trialling the use of Apple's new iPads. The iPads portability, touch screen features and large display screen look to have many advantages in a classroom situation.

We have provided 15 so we can see how this tool can be used by a class during their research in science and social studies.

The iPad is a tactile and engaging handheld device which we believe could transform the way young people learn. We are excited about being able to explore its potential to improve learning.

Students Reading Vocabulary Takes a Leap Forward

One of our recent focuses has been on a group of students with low reading vocabulary. We have been using a number of strategies to improve reading vocabulary with these students. On average, students nationally progress 5-6 scale points over a year on the Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT). Our Year 7 students on this programme shifted 5.2 points in only 6 months. In 6 months, the Year 7 group had made as much progress as students would normally make in a year. The Year 8 cohort made similar shifts by progressing their learning at a rate more than the New Zealand average. They shifted 6.2 points, also making more progress in 6 months than students would normally make in a year. This is evidence of accelerated learning beyond the expected average rate of learning. Well done to all the students and teachers involved in this programme.



A Special Dolphin Encounter

This experience was not something you could say you do every day. It was a special



moment to treasure. It was a beautiful day. When we first jumped in, my heart pounded continuously. When I dived under, the dolphins spoke and the piercing sounds ran right through me. Spinning and diving, jumping and swimming wears you out but the dolphins made you forget about it. When they brush past you its like them saying, 'Come and play.' The feel of the dolphins being around you is warm, joyful, unforgettable. This day I will never forget.

Paige Nebbeling Year 8, Room 9

English as a Second Language Goes from Strength to Strength

We have received great feedback on our English as a Second Language Programme (ESOL).

Some very positive comments came from Diana Grieg, Primary Facilitator, Team Solutions. Diana's position with Team Solutions is linked to the University of Auckland and the Ministry of Education and she

works to develop high quality programmes in Auckland schools.

She wrote to us saying that while interviewing a group of our ESOL students, she had been impressed with their responses.

'I have done this before at other schools and the strategy is to begin with the familiar – the students family and everyday school life, then move onto more challenging, topic related questions. Most will talk confidently about the familiar and get stuck

on the topic-related questions because they don't have the vocabulary required. The exact opposite happened at Birkdale Intermediate. When asked to talk about Filemoni's Dilemma (our recent social studies topic), they had a lot to say. I commented that this showed the teachers must be doing a good job of teaching the topic-specific vocabulary and giving their students plenty of opportunities to talk about the topic. They were well practised and most were able to compare their own families' decisions to come to New Zealand with Filemoni's Dilemma.'

Working at Birkdale Intermediate School has been a very positive experience.'

It was wonderful to get such positive feedback on our ESOL programme and the work of our teachers from an experienced educator like Diana Grieg.

Top Sporting Opportunities

The school has a long standing reputation for success on the sporting field.



We have the usual sports teams such as football, rugby, rugby league, netball, cricket, touch, basketball, hockey, waterpolo, athletics, swimming, volleyball, crosscountry, gymnastics, orienteering, as well as a number of more unusual ones such as top team, dancesport, fun run and a yearly and well supported snow camp.



Snow Camp on Ruapehu



The water slide during Top Team



Dance sport