

6. EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE REPORT ON PIONEER EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

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Corporate Plan Output: Childcare	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of a recent Education Review Office report on the Pioneer Early Learning Centre.

BACKGROUND

The Education Review Office (ERO) is responsible for undertaking accountability reviews of all licensed early childhood education services on a regular basis. The purpose of these reviews is to evaluate the quality of education and care received by children, and the performance of centre management in providing these services.

Two ERO reviewers conducted an on-site investigation at the centre on 13 and 15 June. This included discussions with staff, parents and children, and management, as well as the assessment of a large amount of centre documentation.

The confirmed review report was received in September.

This review was the first undertaken by ERO since the centre moved to new premises and expanded its service in October 1998.

ERO REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

The following summary is taken directly from the review report:

“The Pioneer Early Learning Centre is one of three early childhood centres owned by the Christchurch City Council. A community adviser for the Council is also the licensee of the centres. Management is the responsibility of the centre supervisor in consultation with the licensee.

Since the last review, the centre has been relocated in a new building within the recreation complex. The hours of operation have been increased along with the numbers of children and staff. Before the change the centre was used predominantly by children and parents on a casual basis but has gradually established a more regular clientele. This has meant that the licensee, supervisor and other staff members have had to rethink and change many procedures and practices in order to meet the new requirements. This process is continuing. The supervisor has identified the need to make additional changes, particularly with programme planning.

Children receive good quality care in a safe and secure environment. The staff use the environment to provide many opportunities for children to learn. The indoor and outdoor areas encourage physical development, exploration and the development of manipulative skills. The development of early literacy skills is encouraged through the special programmes provided particularly for the older children.

The staff members with responsibility for babies and toddlers are aware of their needs and respond to them warmly.

Improved curriculum planning is needed. This should be based on existing information about the individual children's abilities, interests and areas for development. Planning should follow a regular recorded cycle of needs identification, the development of programmes that include specific learning objectives, and an assessment of how well the identified areas for development have been met. This information should also help staff decide how effectively the curriculum has promoted learning.

The supervisor has developed appropriate policies and procedural statements that reflect current practices in the centre. She needs to develop internal review procedures further in order to provide a cohesive approach to curriculum development and centre management including budgeting.

Many aspects of personnel management are implemented in a positive manner. There are, however, some temporary constraints that the Council imposes. These include the reliance on fixed term contracts and the decision to leave vacant the position of team leader for the over two year old children. Such decisions are hampering the development of the centre, particularly curriculum management."

A full copy of the report is attached. This report is a public document and is available at the centre for parents' information.

There are four required actions from the report, as follows:

- “1. Extend procedures for identifying learning objectives for children and use the information as a basis for planning, evaluation and improving curriculum programmes;
2. Further develop procedures for implementing policies, objectives and practices which are regularly evaluated and modified by an on-going, recorded process of internal review;
3. Complete the requirements of occupational health and safety legislation; and
4. Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in decision-making concerning their child and discuss formally their child's progress, interests, abilities and areas for development on a regular basis, sharing specific observation based evidence.”

COMMENT AND CONCLUSION

This is a very good report, especially given that the centre and its staff are still relatively new and the centre's operation has changed and expanded greatly.

All the required actions have been acted on or are in the process of being developed. The report identified that some of these matters were already being developed by staff at the time of the review.

The report's comment about temporary constraints on personnel management refers to the impact of the recent review of childcare services. These constraints should be removed once the final outcome of this review is determined in October.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the Committee congratulate staff involved with the Pioneer Early Learning Centre on a favourable report from the Education Review Office.