
ROUTINE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION OF HALSWELL RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

REPORT TO THE JOINT BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR HALSWELL
RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE AND WESTBRIDGE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

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Executive summary

SAMS (Standards and Monitoring Services) was asked by the Halswell and Westridge Board of Trustees to complete a developmental evaluation of the services provided to students in the residential whare at Halswell Residential College (HRC). Developmental evaluations focus on where a service is performing well (not just within minimum standard criteria) and consider areas for further development. SAMS has had some experience working with HRC and it was a pleasure to return to the school after a gap of three years to find standards of support continue to be very high. In particular, the school has maintained the same processes and expectations that focus on providing the best possible outcomes for students.

During this visit the Evaluation Team noted student life was highly structured with a particular emphasis on individuals achieving learning objectives relevant to both home and school. This structure did not eliminate having fun and 'being yourself', and there were many examples of students being involved in activities that particularly interested them.

The college is working toward students being the centre and potential lead of their Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs). This has involved students specifying goals they want to achieve during their tenure at the college and through their involvement in IEP meetings. IEP goals continue to be dominated by IWS adaptive behaviour support goals (goals for living) and educational goals, tailored to each student. There are therefore goals relevant to residential life and goals more relevant to curriculum-based learning.

The Principal completed a sabbatical in 2018 that involved research into best practice in Residential Specialist Schools (RSSs) internationally and review of predictors of life outcomes based on the work of IWS and the Dunedin Longitudinal Study. This work resulted in specific innovations that have been introduced into the school and are representative of the professionalism at the college. The new innovations have been ratified at Board level and written into the school's Charter and Strategic Plan 2020-2021.

The school has a very clear student code of conduct that emphasizes many of the school values whānaungatanga: working together to strengthen relationships Manawa-Roa: being resilient and whaiwhakaaro: being reflective¹. Students agree to be respectful of others, their culture and property. Respect of others extends to no swearing, following rules concerning the use of electronic media, understanding that sexual behaviour will not involve other people and not having a boy or girlfriend amongst other HRC students.

The school has comprehensive safety and security policies and processes that include continual monitoring of all students through electronic surveillance (with the exception of bedrooms and bathrooms) and constant staff presence. The system of monitoring is robust enough that the whereabouts of all students should always be known to the school and/or residential personnel.

¹ 2020 Charter

The staff team in the residential area includes the Principal, the Assistant Principal (residential), Whare Managers, IEP Coordinators, Youth Workers, Residential Assistants, and Night Staff (supervisor and attendants). There is low reported turnover among the staff team with several key personnel working at the college for many years. Each whare has its own team of staff and has weekly staff meetings. Once every three weeks a staff team from each whare will have professional supervision. The school provides a week professional development and three separate development days throughout the year.

IWS psychologists report a positive working relationship with the school and the school closely follows IWS developmental goals for each student based on, amongst other measures, the results of an adaptive behaviour scale ABAS. IWS psychologists have access to pastoral notes reported on eTap and can interface with college staff and with families/whānau about trips home and transitioning.

Families/whānau and students report positive interactions with personnel at the college and families/whānau report good communication with residential staff. Families/whānau can track student progress/activities while in school using an online system called SeeSaw and through formal reviews of IEPs (that also include residential goals). Families/whānau are also able to directly contact their student by telephone and/or skype and can visit or have the student home for visits (typically on a weekend). All students go home for holidays. For their part, the school stipulates that each student must want to be at HRC. This provision is explored prior to admission and at various stages throughout the person's tenure at the school. Students have access to counselling and other therapeutic services (depending on their funding packages) and two independent advocates actively visit the students in different whare at least weekly.

HRC had a school roll of 13 out of a possible 32 at the time of this evaluation. A new enrolment pathway was made available to residential specialist schools in New Zealand (RSS only pathway) by the Ministry of Education in the interests of extending the number of placements. While welcomed, this pathway does not necessarily carry the same funding and there are concerns regarding the type of students that may be recommended for entry.

Background

SAMS (Standards and Monitoring Services) has had previous involvement in reviewing the provision of residential services at Halswell College. It began in 2013 when the Ministry of Education was considering the move from a boys-only school to coeducational status and continued through to a second review in 2016. Since that time that school has formally been gazetted as fully co-educational.

The current Developmental Evaluation was designed to review the current residential service at the school, consider where the school is performing well and suggest areas for further development.

It has been noted that since the 2016 review the school has retained many of the same professional staff and minimised turnover in the residential homes. The school has also completed the rebuild started in 2016 of the residential facilities and now hosts four new whare and a meeting house. Three of the whare are in operation with each catering to specific groups of students: girls only, boys only and boys wanting immersion in Māori culture.

The college has the capacity for 32 students but only 13 were enrolled at the time of our review. The numbers in each whare included:

Whare Tauawa: Māori cultural immersion – four boys

Whare Owaka: three girls

Whare Makonui: six boys

The roll at Halswell varies throughout the year as students enter the college and others exit after successful completion of their tenure at the school. This is achieved by obtaining set goals and transitioning to their next placement (school or work) back in their home community.

Developmental evaluation methodology

Developmental evaluation aims to provide information about service practices and the quality of life of people using services. It identifies positive and innovative approaches occurring within the service and provides a catalyst for ongoing learning and continuous improvement. This evaluative approach will include the perspectives of a range of stakeholders and take into account wider influences within the community and the health, education and disability sector.

The current evaluation is informed by a number of developmental tools used by SAMS. These tools take into account multiple perspectives from a range of stakeholders – school/service, individual, families/whānau, staff, and community.

The people involved in this evaluation included the Principal, the Associate Principal – Residential, the Associate Principal – Day School, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the managers of all three whare, six teachers, three IEP Coordinators, three student representatives from the student council, one student advocate, two family representatives or caregivers, two IWS psychologists, the school nurse and the school psychologist. The team also shared lunch with the students from one whare and spoke informally with both students and residential staff.

Findings

- HRC continues to provide a safe and nurturing environment for young people with highly complex support needs.
- The residential service provides a consistent, professional and stable support team.
- HRC relies on their partnerships both within the college (residential and school) and externally (IWS, allied professionals, families/whānau and community) to provide safety and consistency for the young people at the college.
- The school is in the process of developing innovative initiatives based on sound research to enhance the outcomes for students within the college. These initiatives are now built into the school's Charter and Strategic Plan 2020-2021.
- Students come to HRC by choice and the school is continuing to enhance person-centred approaches to IEP development.
- HRC is rightfully wary of institutionalised practices and continually offers external supervision for staff and managers, provides opportunities to review professional direction and allows critical but constructive reflection.
- Families/whānau are kept informed and are readily able to communicate with their young person at the school (and vice-versa).
- Both families/whānau and students appear satisfied with the services provided by the school.
- There have been no formal complaints or critical events that may have eroded confidence in the school over at least the past calendar year.
- HRC offers a 24/7 learning environment that provides consistency in expectations and learning opportunities.

Recommendations

1. The school considers extending the concept of student-centred IEP development to integrate aspirational goals and educational/behavioural goals and create a planning environment and language that is individual focused.
2. In line with earlier SAMS recommendations (2013) the school continue to work exclusively with students with intellectual disability and have right of refusal for students who may not fit well with the existing student body.
3. The school continues to explore with the Ministry of Education a satisfactory base funding model. In particular, we suggest the funding allocations and resources available to students entering the school through the RSS only pathway are adequate to support the needs of those students, and they are not disadvantaged in comparison to the services IWS pathway students are able to access.

Admission criteria and pathways

The three residential colleges in New Zealand have opened enrolments to New Zealand students who are not solely part of the Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS). The Residential Specialist School (RSS) only pathway is guided by criteria listed on the Ministry of Education website and indicates that children may be eligible for enrolment if:

they have social, behaviour and/or learning needs that are highly complex and challenging (and may have associated intellectual disability) and require support at school, home and in the community.

The RSS-only pathway has the advantage of increasing the rolls of the three residential schools which have been running with far fewer students than available places. It also provides a needed avenue for Learning Support providers and whānau to consider residential specialist schools as an option (among others). The disadvantage may be the admission of complex students without the extra funding provided for students who access the schools through the IWS pathway. Furthermore, the criteria only suggest the need for students to also have a diagnosed intellectual disability. Providing placements for students with complex behavioural issues and students with attachment disorders without intellectual disability with students who do have intellectual disabilities may create specific safety concerns that could be insurmountable over time. The first recommendation in the 2013 SAMS report stated:

The college is not put at risk by admission of children with severe behavioural problems without intellectual impairment or children with severe attachment disorders.

The basis for this recommendation was a concern at the time that IWS would not consider intellectual disability as a necessary criterion for placements at the school. This was found not to be the case. However, the new RSS only pathway has raised old concerns. The 2013 report noted:

Staff are keen to maintain the current mix of learning impairment and behavioural problems for which they have developed a high level of expertise. After reviewing incidents, they have identified that students with severe attachment disorders do not do well at the college. They argue that an environment with multiple carers is not a suitable place for students with severe attachment disorders.

The risk of excluding students who do not fit in well with the student body has its own difficulties for those students who are excluded. HRC has and will continue to exclude students who put themselves or others at risk. The most recent exclusion occurred for this reason with a student who was also indicating a desire to leave the school. Creating multiple scenarios where exclusions may increase in frequency will over time erode the capacity of the school to develop a therapeutic and developmentally positive approach to student life.

IEPs, person-centred planning, 24/7 learning and therapeutic approaches

IEPs are initially based on IWS goals and areas identified in the ABAS (adaptive behaviour scale) that require development. Goals are also set through the day school that are common to both the school and residential service. Students entering the school will also indicate their own aspirations for their time at the school. For example, making friends, getting involved in a community-based groups, pursuing a hobby etc. These broadly-based aspirations are then integrated into the IEP goals in various places alongside behavioural, developmental, educational and social goals.

The residential component of the IEPs will include a set of goals based around a reward system, for example, attaining a coloured wrist band (the first is white). As one wrist band is attained a new set of goals are developed and the individual pursues the next colour. The students keep folders that list their unique goals and their progress/achievements are noted by staff signing off certain goals, providing written praise, gaining certificates and taking photographs etc.

The person-centred aspects of IEPs include a focus on areas of identified need for each individual student, inclusion of aspirational goals and the person's participation in IEP meetings. At present inclusion at meetings involves the individual attending a multi-level meeting with a variety of professionals who know them well and their family/whānau if they can attend.

While the complexity of working with the students at HRC requires a large number of goals, the desire to provide more person-centred approaches can be developed further. For example, it was unclear whether students had the opportunity to revisit their original aspirations at various points and consider whether goals derived from those aspirations are progressing or whether they wanted to change the aspirations or add new ones. In many ways the goals derived from aspirations, such as 'wanting to make friends', can take many avenues (for example, having opportunities to meet and spend time with people who share similar interests, inviting a person for a meal or game session, problem solving difficult social situations etc) and these may be best driven by the person at various points in time. At the same time, developmental goals can be pursued that support the skills needed by the person to attain or pursue certain aspirations.

HRC might also wish to consider whether attending a meeting held and run by others is the best method of reviewing and developing person-centred plans (even though students will consider and discuss goals prior to the meeting). For the person to feel more in control of the process, the school may wish to consider other methods of involving students. The method of recording goals may also be considered from the person-centred perspective with goals worded in the first rather than third person. For example, 'X will make her bed each morning' can be worded as 'I will make my bed each morning'. Thus, while some goals need to be imposed by others (educational, social, behavioural etc), some goals can also be owned by the person or written in such a way that some ownership is assumed.

HRC uses a 24/7 educational model that considers every opportunity for learning, whether these are programmed goals or activities, or simply opportunities. The residential environment is viewed equally as a venue for learning as the school environment, and there is a fluid exchange of information between both environments. This approach provides consistency in what all of the staff at HRC expect of each individual and vice-versa. Creating appropriate boundaries and creating a positive learning environment provide avenues for further development.

The school's Principal completed a sabbatical in 2018 where she reviewed several teaching and therapeutic methods aimed at supporting and extending young people with complex needs in Residential Specialist School (RSS) settings. She highlighted the findings of the Dunedin Longitudinal Study that suggested self-control of behaviours and emotions were an important predictor of adult well-being². IWS also utilised this research in developing the 'IWS Life Predictors'. Self and emotional regulation was considered most important for the HRC cohort as this is an area that impacts on all other life areas if left unchecked.

As a result of the work completed during this sabbatical, HRC is trialling two systems of developing self-regulation: (1) Mindfulness and (2) ENGAGE (Enhancing Neurobehavioural Gains with the Aid of Games and Exercise). Mindfulness is practised and supported by classroom teachers and being extended into the residences and ENGAGE is borne out of the Otago research. The Principal also researched the effectiveness of other international RSSs during her sabbatical and favoured those providing a therapeutic milieu that bridges both the school and residential environments. These schools teach at the level of the student (and not necessarily the national curriculum age) and consider all other personal and psychosocial needs. There appeared to be a relationship to the understanding gained from review of the Dunedin research and current IWS practice and the work being done in other successful residential schools. The ability of the school to adapt to current thinking and try new approaches to assist young people to be successful when they leave the school environment indicates a high level of innovation and professionalism.

The new approaches have been ratified by the Board of Trustees (which consists of mainly government appointees with relevant professional qualifications in the sector) and have been integrated into the school's Charter and the 2020-2021 Strategic Plan.

² There were also four other predictors including, (1) social competence and interpersonal skills, (2) attitudes, values and interpersonal skills, (3) relationships with others, (4) access to and achievement in safe and pro-social environments.

Satisfaction and quality of life

Each student at HRC attends the college by choice. It is acknowledged that forced attendance at the school will create an unsustainable situation for the student concerned and those around that person. The students and family members who were available to talk with the Evaluation Team noted they were happy, and at times extremely happy, with the school and the support being offered. Central for families was the high degree of communication provided and the stability of the programmes. The students noted that they felt safe at the school and the staff treated them respectfully. Most importantly for the students was the sense of fun they had at the school. There were many opportunities to engage positively with staff members and many opportunities to participate in favoured activities.

The students also noted that they could earn money for completing tasks around the whare and school and this could increase their available spending money each week. Opportunities to spend money were also provided with trips to shops and the community each week.

The whare are well furnished with comfortable lounge furniture and a large television. Some whare have a second television in an activities room and Xboxes are available for periods of time. The televisions have controlled access to Netflix and there is controlled access to the internet for all students. Most students also have their own mobile phones. Obviously, media time is a favoured activity for young people, but this is carefully managed.

It was pleasing to note one activity room had been set up for a person who enjoyed craft activity and who requested a space be provided prior to entry to the college.

Each student had his or her own bedroom which they could decorate as they wished. There are four bedrooms in each wing of a whare and a bathroom shared between two bedrooms across a corridor. A student can move rooms if they are having difficulty with someone in their wing.

Food for each whare is prepared at a separate location and brought in for lunch and dinner. People with special diets are supported by a dietitian and the menu plan is on a six-week rotation. The students have an opportunity to discuss what they do and do not like, and this is taken into consideration. The main issue identified by students regarding food was the temperature. It is possible some food did cool a little between being prepared and being dished.

The students in each whare have a rotation of chores to complete, including setting or clearing tables, stacking or emptying dishwashers, vacuuming, dusting etc. There are also chores associated with keeping personal spaces tidy and laundry. Completion of tasks such as these could result in financial reward.

There are also toys and play equipment available throughout the school including bikes, drift trikes, basketball hoops, a gym, an onsite pool, sandpit, board games, craft equipment and balls of various types.

The staff noted that having fun times with the students was part of the most enjoyable aspects of their work. Different staff have different interests and strengths, and these could be utilised to offer a variety of activities to students. Mountain biking was one example. Although this interest was beginning to turn toward BMX . The introduction of the ENGAGE programme has also seen many staff members playing board games with students with an emphasis on learning both to win and lose gracefully, taking turns and not cheating. All opportunities such as these were seen as teachable moments.

Staffing and record keeping

The College employs a large number of staff associated with the day school, residential whare, administration, food and grounds support, and professional expertise. The residential whare employ a manager in each and provide six Individual Education Plan (IEP) Co-Ordinators who focus on adaptive learning goals (social, personal, living skills, positive behaviour etc) for each student and provide a point of contact with families/whānau/caregivers, IWS psychologists, professional and teaching staff.

The residential staff also include eight Youth Workers, six of whom are assigned to specific whare and who accompany students when they access community groups and events. There are also six residential assistants who provide for day-to-day support in the whare and five night supervisors/assistants. The school reports low staff turnover among the residential staff with several key staff members having tenure at the school for several years.

Youth Workers and above are expected to have a relevant tertiary qualification or teaching certificates and experience in supporting the learning of students with complex intellectual needs. Residential and night staff are expected to have relevant experience and, as with all other staff, demonstrate an ability to develop rapport with students at the college.

All residential staff (excluding night staff) are on duty one day a week and use this time to run staff meetings, have training or supervision, and catch up on paperwork. Each whare has a separate staff meeting and uses the time to discuss development and issues for each student. This includes review of progress and review of any incidents that may have occurred during the week. Once every three weeks each whare has professional group supervision. Private supervision is also available to staff members by appointment.

Once a year all staff at HRC will meet for a week before the start of the academic year to plan and have formal professional learning and development. There are also two or three professional learning development days during the year. This year all staff have completed short courses variously entitled, 'Soul Psychology: Healing the Inner World of our Tamariki', ORS applications, refresher first aid, ENGAGE programme, understanding feelings, reflective practice and utilising clinical supervision, and play based learning. There has also been in-service training on foetal alcohol syndrome and a literature review conducted in 2019 on 'defining best practice in residential care and education'. This latter work included discussion on developing a therapeutic milieu, considering a trauma informed approach, anchoring consistency across all staff, incidental and 24/7 learning approaches, creating safe and nurturing environments, keeping connected with family, utilising restorative practices, developing person-centred/empowerment approaches and hiring the right staff.

The school reports all staff have completed a Certificate from the College of Applied Human Services – Behaviour Technician Level One, Safe Crisis Management (SCM) and first aid training.

As well as in-service events, HRC has supported individual staff members to pursue training in courses such as the Certificate in Health and Wellbeing (level 4), Autism and Me, Treating Anxiety through Mindfulness, CORE-ED 'Using Seesaw to enhance Home-school Partnerships' (online), and Oppositional Default and Angry Children and Adolescents.

As noted earlier an important method of ensuring consistency and providing safe approaches is to keep all staff informed. This is obtained through professional development days, staff meetings, supervision sessions, shift change meetings, where daily contact notes (day and night books), eTap intranet pastoral notes available to school staff, whānau and IWS psychologists, SeeSaw on-line postings for the student and their family/whānau (from the school), incident reporting, IEP progress notes and meetings, independent counselling for students and access to advocates.

Conversations with staff from a variety of settings (professionals, school, and where) indicate the staff team at HRC appears to work well together and provides consistent and safe approaches.

Policies and procedures

As noted in the 2016 Report, the Policies and Procedures documents include the NAGs and the procedures listed under the special character of the school. Revisions of the Policies and Procedures were completed in 2016 and further review is undertaken systematically.

Policies and Procedures documents (including the NAGs and special character procedures) are available on eTap, the intranet system which is accessible to all staff. Training and discussion in Policies and Procedures occurs as part of the induction of new staff³, through Professional Development (PD) events as well as during staff meetings and group supervision.

The Policies and Procedures include safeguards relating to abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) disclosures⁴) and incorporate the school rule discouraging intimate relationships between students⁵. The school provided evidence of reporting disclosure of external abuse in the past few months to the appropriate authorities.

The complaints register indicated no formal complaints in the last calendar year but did record two issues in March 2019 (one as a result of a telephone conversation). Both were investigated appropriately.

³ Induction Procedure Checklist (NAG 3).

⁴ Current Policies (document) – allegations of sexual abuse (staff), Policies and Procedures – allegations of sexual abuse, protected disclosures (under review), child protection policy and child protection guidelines, NAG 1 – child abuse, suspected or disclosed, NAG 3 – staff safety procedures, Special Character – student rights procedure, relationships between students procedures.

⁵ Special Character Procedures – relationships between students, Student Code of Conduct.

Family/whānau/caregiver and community connections

HRC continues to offer family/whānau accommodation (two flats) for people who wish to assist their child to transition into the school and for families/whānau who visit generally. The students at the school are encouraged to keep in contact with their family/whānau via telephone and electronic media and the school posts student work on SeeSaw. Families/whānau also have ready access to school personnel and are kept informed of important events in their child's life. It was noted that residential staff (managers, IEP Coordinators, Youth Workers and Residential Assistants) will contact families/whānau to discuss any observations or questions or concerns, as well as when more critical events occur (such as incidents or health events).

The school policy of enrolling young people only for a limited time is a deliberate method to reduce the risk of institutionalisation and isolating people for too long from their family/whānau. IWS is tasked with assisting families/whānau to transition students back home either for holiday periods or when their tenure at the school is complete. Students tend to stay at the school for one term to 24 months.

The current cohort of students is less connected with community groups and clubs than the cohort in 2016. This is due to differences in this particular cohort and their current progress. The evaluation also took place at the beginning of the first term of 2020. The school has an active policy of assisting people to join groups such as Special Olympics, RDA, churches and church youth groups, scouts/guides and sports groups. The aim is to mirror groups and clubs that are also available in their places of origin so students can transition to those groups when they exit the school.

Furthermore, the school attempts to find work experience placements for students who are able, but report this is becoming more difficult in mainstream settings. None of the students are currently on work experience (again the cohort and time of year are factors). The school does offer a barista course and runs its own café. Students at the café learn not only how to be polite patrons but also the skills used in running a café. Ideally, on-campus ventures such as this are best mirrored with real community experiences both from a skill development point of view and with regard to being outwardly/community focused (rather than insular).

Community connectedness is encouraged in other ways at the school. For example, swimming is a favoured activity and students were witnessed to attend swimming lessons and simply visit a public pool for recreation during our visit. Youth Workers also involve students in activities such as piano lessons, cycling off campus, visiting the library, shopping, visiting Timezone, going for drives and walks, going to the movies, playing mini golf and bowling, playing T ball with other teams, going to a car rally, and getting takeouts (typically once a fortnight). All of these activities were noted from recent contact notes (residential day books and pastoral notes) and from conversations with the students and others.

Cultural connections

Te Whare a Tauawa continues to focus on kaupapa and Tikanga Māori under the guidance of a kaiwhakahaere (whare manager). A student from this whare assisted in the mihi whakatau when the Evaluation Team visited and also welcomed us to kai with a karakia. Te Reo is a prominent feature in the whare and students practise karakia before meals and at the start and end of each day. It was noted that other whare also practise karakia and some may visit Te Whare a Tauawa for karakia and waiata from time to time.

Celebrations, such as Māori and Pasifika language weeks and Matariki, are marked at the school with hangi and umu, and are open to everyone at HRC.

HRC has a Māori and separate Pasifika staff caucus which consults on cultural issues within the school and issues pertaining to Māori or Pasifika students. The Pasifika staff have incorporated cultural practices into the HRC programme and support students who wish to worship with the local Pasifika community.

The 2019 ERO report also notes:

The school has well-embedded culturally responsive practices woven into the 24/7 curriculum. Te reo and tikanga Māori, including core concepts such as manaakitanga, whānaungatanga, wairua and tuakana-teina, are a natural part of life at the school. School-based assessment information shows that these approaches are highly effective in enhancing students' learning, engagement and sense of belonging.

Safety and risk management

The 2016 SAMS report specifically focused on safety and risk at HRC especially with regard the introduction of girls to the college at that time. The report indicated comprehensive policies and processes regarding safety that reflected acknowledged best practice⁶. In particular, the focus on safety included:

- reduced opportunity for bullying or abuse through constant student supervision
- providing multiple staff members who are able to be in visual contact with one another wherever possible
- providing clear crisis management and an alarm system available to all staff members
- utilising electronic surveillance to protect staff and students
- providing clear boundaries for students (including the Code of Conduct)
- involving students in decisions that affect them including a willingness to be at the school
- utilising reporting systems that inform other staff, relevant professionals and whānau of incidents
- providing risk management and behaviour support plans with clear processes and protocols for each student
- implementing restorative practices with students following incidents
- providing clear reporting systems for disclosures or suspected abuse, with zero tolerance of abuse involving staff members
- providing external supervision opportunities for all staff including reflective practice techniques
- providing regular opportunities for staff to meet, plan and discuss
- providing regular training and personal development opportunities for all personnel
- providing clear and professional leadership and governance
- hiring with very clear guidelines and expectations
- providing external advocacy opportunities for students
- providing very clear and accessible complaints processes
- allowing free access to families/whānau through multiple methods
- involving students in integrated community activities
- providing methods of external review and evaluation.

HRC had put in place all of these measures at the previous review and continues to provide consistent protocols and practices. Furthermore, building the new whare has provided a more comfortable environment for students with state-of-the-art electronic

⁶ Based on a literature review conducted by SAMS for the Ministry of Education: Parker, A and Wilson, C (2016). *Evaluation of the safety of children in coeducational residential special schools*.

surveillance both in the form of camera, motion and door alarms, plus a monitoring station in each whare. The monitoring system includes the internal areas of the whare with cameras in all areas, except bathrooms and bedrooms, and motion monitors that alert staff to students moving about at night in their rooms or elsewhere. Door alarms will sound between particular zones if someone crosses a threshold. There are also outside parameter cameras and motion sensors that will detect nocturnal movements. Cameras operate 24/7 and have an alarm system if they fail.

When discussing safety at the school with students, we were told that the cameras provided a sense of security as they record 'everything'. Thus, rather than being seen as imposing, the students viewed them positively.

The students at HRC come to the school after all other placement options have failed for them. These are often the result of negative and quite challenging behaviour that involves others. Bullying can occur within the school and the staff have called it for what it is when it occurs. Responses to instances of bullying are immediate (prevention) and wherever possible perpetrators are asked to attend a restorative practice meeting where the behaviour is reviewed with the person and restoration sought (through various means, i.e. in person, an apology card, positive actions etc). Incident reports are filed in cases of observed bullying and processes are followed through with senior staff. Families/whānau are informed of incidents.

Behaviour support and risk management plans outline key needs and behaviours (including a functional analysis, triggers, antecedents, consequences and mitigating factors) and an assessment of the estimated risk (impact, likelihood). All staff at HRC who work with each student are briefed regarding safety (behaviour support) plans and key goals related to the plans are written into IEPs. The school follows a reward structure that includes a focus on self-regulation of anger and emotion. HRC is training staff to better understand the effects of trauma and specific syndromes as they impact on student attempts to self-regulate. Relaxation and de-escalation techniques learned through whakapiki haa (breathing exercises) and mindfulness are actively taught in both the whare and school. Students are reminded they can take some time away from others in their own bedrooms if they wish (not as a punishment but as a technique simply for getting away from a source of distress) and there is a sensory room where students can get completely away from others and relax on beanbags (with constant staff supervision). Safe rooms discussed in the 2016 report were decommissioned the same year. The sensory room is not locked and is not used for punitive purposes.

IEPs do offer graduated goals aimed toward self-regulation and these may include games associated with the ENGAGE programme. Students strive to attain coloured wrist bands and other rewards are offered for completion of tasks around the whare and school. It was noted that electronic media and other privileges were used both as a reward for positive behaviour and completion of tasks and also as a consequence for adverse behaviour or non-compliance. There tended to be slight variation in the reward systems operating in different whare.

Wherever possible staff do not engage with students without other staff members being in visual range or nearby. Crisis procedures will involve use of alarms situated in each building that will call in additional staff when required. The first response is to ensure the safety of the individual and others wherever possible. There are cases where behaviours will require physical restraint to ensure

safety. Restraint is viewed as a last resort and incident reports are filed and followed through to the management, Board and Ministry of Education. Only staff trained in Safe Crisis Intervention (SCM) and who have written authorisation are allowed to use physical restraint. Staff involved in the use of physical restraint will be debriefed and provided with professional supervision. All incidents involving restraint are debriefed with the participants involved. .

As well as these methods of reducing or eliminating the potential for bullying and abuse, safety and risk management also considers the following:

- implementing and developing civil and fire emergency plans
- providing civil defence equipment and supplies, fire safety equipment and drills
- cultural and spiritual safety
- providing a pandemic plan
- operating systems for identifying and responding to hazards
- providing clear policies and protocols for infection control, medication management and storage, health and safety.

The new whare have a state-of-the-art fire protection system that includes sprinklers, smoke alarms and automated smoke doors. Students practise fire and earthquake drills at regular intervals both in the school and the whare. Civil emergency supplies are included within each whare and water tanks provided on the property supply emergency water.

Medications are securely stored in a locked cupboard next the staff room and controlled drugs are in a safe within the same cupboard. Medications are blister packed wherever possible. Only staff who have completed medication training have access to the medication safe. Controlled drugs are reviewed after each medication round with double signatures. The staff member who issues medications will initial that each person's medication has been provided at the right time.

All staff have completed first aid training and first aid kits are provided in the same locked cupboard as the medication safe. First aid kits are also provided in vehicles and the school. All trained staff have access to first aid equipment.

Health

HRC as well as the rest of New Zealand was in the process of implementing the initial stages of its pandemic plan when the Evaluation Team visited the school. At that stage the Ministry of Education and the Government had not issued any directives to schools. As a residential college HRC was concerned with how students would be returned to families/whānau if the Government closed schools. Many students at HRC are not local and some live in the North Island. The school is in consultation with the Ministry of Education to plan for events of this nature.

All students have access to medical assistance off site in the form of general practitioners, health specialists and dentists. Appointments are managed by the whare's Youth Workers. HRC has whare staff on duty during school hours to welcome and support students who are unwell during the school day and assist them to attend day-time appointments. Students are also linked to IWS counsellors wherever possible or have the assistance of the psychologist appointed by the school. Not all students have funding for counselling, and this is particularly concerning for students entering through the RSS only pathway.

Documents reviewed

Halswell Residential College Newsletters 2018, 2019

Communication books – night-book, day-book, whare diaries and night movement monitoring sheets

Incident reports

Staff code of conduct

Student code of conduct

Student IEP reports

Policies and procedures: complaints, child protection policy, notifiable events, inappropriate sexual behaviour procedure, inappropriate sexual behaviour action chart, child abuse – suspected or disclosed procedure, emergency management plan, health and safety manual, medication procedure, behaviour support policy and procedure, protected disclosure policy and procedure

Evidence of reporting external child abuse and neglect allegations

Complaints register, written complaints and responses 2018, 2019

HRC staff training and professional development: individual and group training 2019

Certificate from College of Applied Human Services Certificate – Behaviour technician level One (completed by all staff)

Risk Assessment processes for individual students, including safety plan

Treaty of Waitangi: Cultural Policy

Work safe legislation – health and safety manual

Entry and exit criteria and processes: staff

Self-reviews and snapshot reviews

Positive Behaviour for life (PB4L) Term plan

Charter and Strategic Plan 2020-2021

Staff meeting minutes: each whare, Te o Kokiri minutes, IEPC meeting, teacher Hui, SLT meeting, Health and Safety Minutes

Student enrolment documentation

Student IEP and personal progress folders

ERO Report January 2019

HRC Strategic Development – What and Why of HRC (from Principal)

24/7 Education Environment At Halswell Residential College (report from Principal)

Principal's Sabbatical Report – Term 3 2018

Job descriptions: Associate Principal (Residential), Whare Manager, IEP Coordinators, Youth Workers, Residential Assistants, Night Supervisors, Night Assistants

Halswell Residential College Magazine 2019

Prospectus: Halswell Residential College

HRC Website

ABAS pre and post tests

Confidential to the Joint Board to Trustees: Halswell and Westbridge Residential Colleges and subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982. 24

Responses to the draft evaluation report

Response from Halswell Residential College

Board of Trustees Response

Janine Harrington, Principal, provided Board members a copy of the draft report, which was also considered at a Board meeting. Board members were impressed by the in-depth nature of the review undertaken. The Board spent time considering the review generally, and the Findings and Recommendations specifically. The review provided the Board positive assurance around the quality of the provision of services to the students at Halswell Residential College. The intention of the Board is to work with, and to support the Principal and the Senior Leadership Team, towards implementation of the Recommendations contained in the report. The Board thanks Standards and Monitoring Services for an opportunity to make comment on the report.

Halswell Residential College Response

Thank you to Christine Wilson and Gary Williams for undertaking the review at Halswell Residential College (HRC). As part of our reflective culture we welcome external review and feedback. Consequently, we appreciate and value the recommendations you have made as well as your affirmation of the current practice at HRC. In support of HRC providing the best possible service to the vulnerable students in our care, we also hope the Ministry of Education see the merits in your supporting your recommendations too.

We look forward to another review with SAMS in the future.

Response from evaluators

As always SAMS was welcomed into Halswell College and treated with considerable respect while on site. We valued the professional yet relaxed environment within which we conducted this review and the thoughtful and often wise interactions we experienced with both professional staff and students.