EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

ERO Early Childhood Service Akarangi | Quality Evaluation Report

Early Childhood Service Name: Otaki Early Learning Centre

Profile Number: 55390

Location: Ōtaki

1 ERO's judgement of Otaki Early Learning Centre is as follows:

Domains: Ngā Akatoro	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
The learner and their learning He Whāriki Motuhake	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	**Excelling**
Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability Whakangungu Ngaio	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	**Excelling**
Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement Kaihautū	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	**Excelling**
Stewardship through effective governance and management Te Whakaruruhau	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	**Excelling**

For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation.

Children's health and safety	Improvement required	**Taking reasonable steps**

2 ERO's Judgements

Akarangi | Quality Evaluations evaluate the extent to which early childhood services have the learning and organisational conditions to support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. *Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most* and *Early Childhood Education (ECE) Improvement Framework (teacher led services)* are the basis for making judgements about the quality of the service in achieving equity and excellence for all learners. Evaluations for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above domains.

3 About the Service

Otaki Early Learning Centre is one of eleven early childhood services within a wider organisation. Most of the teaching team has changed since the previous ERO review in 2021. The service provider contact has delegated responsibility from the owner to oversee operations of the eleven services. The centre manager works across two local services, and they are supported by a head teacher who oversees day to day running of the centre, a curriculum lead and the teaching team. Two separate learning environments cater for younger and older tamariki up to five years of age. Almost half the tamariki at this service whakapapa Māori.

The curriculum is underpinned by *Te Whāriki,* the early childhood curriculum, and the centre values of whanaungatanga (relationships), ako (to learn), pūkengatanga (expertise, skilled ability), manaakitanga and aroha (kindness, showing respect), which align to the values of Raukawa ki te Tonga.

4 Progress since the previous ERO report

ERO's Akarangi|Quality Evaluation in 2021 identified three improvement actions which were to continue to embed:

- learning partnerships with whānau drawing on their aspirations to determine what educational success means to them and their children and to better celebrate and make visible children's culture, language and identity in the curriculum
- iwi knowledge and expertise to extend the service's localised curriculum so that places and stories of significant value to Ngāti Raukawa are celebrated
- internal evaluation practice through deeper analysis of the information gathered against the identified indicators of good practice. This is likely to more reliably support decision making and identify next steps for sustained improvement to the curriculum.

The service has made significant progress in building learning partnerships with whānau. Teachers draw on whānau aspirations to define what educational success means for their tamaiti and use iwi knowledge to enrich the curriculum by including places and stories of significance to Ngāti Raukawa.

The service has made good progress in celebrating and making ngā tamariki culture, language and identity visible in the curriculum. Internal evaluation is strengthening through deeper analysis of information against identified indicators, supporting decision-making, and identifying next steps for sustained curriculum improvement.

5 Learning Conditions

The learner and their learning | He Whāriki Motuhake

The curriculum demonstrates strong alignment with *Te Whāriki* principles, fostering holistic development through highly intentional, collaborative partnerships and consistently responsive teaching practices.

- Kaiako prioritise oral language development and promote both oral literacy and New Zealand Sign Language. This supports ngā tamariki in expressing thoughts, ideas, and feelings effectively and enhancing communication skills.
- Leaders and kaiako intentionally scaffold social and emotional development using strategies such as describing, narrating, encouraging, and fading support. These approaches reflect deliberate planning to nurture the confidence and independence of ngā tamariki.
- Whānau aspirations are actively gathered and integrated into planning, ensuring learning aligns with *Te Whāriki* outcomes and dispositions, including Māori values. This strengthens partnership-based learning and aspects of cultural responsiveness.
- Early interventions are responsive to the identified needs of ngā tamariki and support equitable access and participation. Individual assessments for ngā tamariki Māori strongly reflect their language, culture and identity, teachers mostly acknowledge other ethnicities through group celebrations rather than individually.

Collaborative professional learning and development builds knowledge and capability | Whakangungu Ngaio

Leaders and kaiako demonstrate effective collaborative professional learning, ensuring shared responsibility and intentional practice that enhances outcomes for ngā tamariki.

- Leaders and kaiako systematically engage in shared professional learning, promoting consistency of knowledge and implementation across the team. This has strengthened curriculum responsiveness and promoted culturally inclusive practices and equitable learning opportunities.
- Participation in New Zealand sign language and oral language and literacy initiatives (OLLi) by leaders and teachers has led to observable improvements in ngā tamariki oral language and communication skills, demonstrating effective application of learning.
- While teachers inquire into their practice and foster collaborative reflection and shared responsibility for improving outcomes, they do not yet consistently evaluate intentional strategies or track learner progress over time.

6 Organisational conditions

Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement | Kaihautū

Leadership have implemented sound practices to ensure relational trust and collaborative improvement.

- Leaders and kaiako actively build relationships with local iwi and incorporate Raukawa ki te Tonga values, pūrākau, and places of significance into the curriculum, ensuring cultural responsiveness to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and alignment with community aspirations.
- Distributed leadership practices effectively enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Leaders encourage kaiako to take on roles such as leading reviews, mentoring colleagues, and managing responsibilities, fostering professional growth and shared accountability.
- The centre engages whānau and local iwi in reviewing philosophy and service priorities, supported by strategic and annual planning processes that gather whānau aspirations annually to inform ongoing improvements.

Stewardship through effective governance and management | Te Whakaruruhau

Management fosters a strong commitment to continuous improvement through strategic planning, resulting in systems that promote positive outcomes for ngā tamariki and whānau.

- The current strategic plan aligns with ERO's 2021 quality improvement actions, internal evaluation, and kaiako professional growth cycles. Progress towards strategic goals is monitored regularly through the centre manager's reporting.
- Management develops fit-for-purpose policies and procedures that guide practice and actively engages with Māori at tangata whenua, ensuring culturally responsive approaches.
- Professional learning for evaluation and a supporting framework enables leaders and kaiako to undertake internal evaluations and spontaneous reviews, promoting improvement and positive outcomes for ngā tamariki.

7 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff and management of Otaki Early Learning Centre completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management and administration.

During the review, ERO looked at the service's system for managing the following areas that have a potentially high impact on children's health and safety:

- emotional safety (including positive guidance and child protection)
- physical safety (including supervision; sleep procedures; accidents; medication; excursion policies and procedures)
- suitable staffing (safety checking of staff, ratios)
- relevant evacuation procedures and practices.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

Where to next for improvement?

Otaki Early Learning Centre will include the following actions in its quality improvement planning:

- Build leaders' and teachers' knowledge of culturally responsive practices that support Pacific children and those from diverse cultures, and consistently reflect the languages, cultures and identities of all children in their individual planning and assessment.
- Strengthen kaiako and leaders' ability to evaluate intentional teaching strategies and track tamariki learning over time, so they can clearly identify what works, what doesn't, and for which tamariki or groups.

Activities undertaken by the evaluation team

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/manager.
- Reading documentation and records of children's learning and development.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

Further information about how ERO evaluates early childhood services is available here.



Vivien Ruth
Director of Early Childhood Education

9 February 2026

8 Information About the Service

Service Type	Education and care service
Number licenced for	38 children, including up to 15 aged under 2
Percentage of qualified teachers	80-99%
Ethnic composition *Using rounded percentages*	Māori 41%, NZ European/Pākehā 47%, other ethnic groups 12%
Service roll	49
Review team on site	November 2025
Date of this report	9 February 2026
Most recent ERO reports These are available at www.ero.govt.nz	Akarangi | Quality Evaluation, August 2021; Education Review, March 2018

Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	Above the threshold for quality
Excelling	The service is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The service has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement to the quality of education and care for children.

	Below the threshold for quality
Working towards	The service is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the quality of education and care for children.
Improvement required	The service has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support quality education and care for children.