

EVALUATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL BEHAVIOUR SCHOOLS

A report provided by the Education Review Office
for the
Ministry of Education

September 2008

Contents	
Executive summary	2
Issues	3
Introduction	5
Background	5
Strategic links	5
International best practice	7
The schools in this evaluation	10
Methodology	12
Findings	13
The quality of provision in the three schools	13
Where do these students fit in the wider network?	20
Conclusions	23
What should be done to meet the needs of these students?	23
Issues	27
Appendix 1: Bibliography	29
Appendix 2: Distribution of referrals by catchment area	31
McKenzie Residential Behaviour School	31
Westbridge Residential Behaviour School	32
Waimokoia Residential Behaviour School	33

Executive summary

ERO undertook this evaluation of the residential behaviour schools following a request from the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) for information for its future policy decisions. The evaluation involved mapping current practices and outcomes; assessing the most effective and efficient way to support this group of students; and discussing what should be done to meet their needs.

The three residential behaviour schools: Waimokoia; Westbridge; and McKenzie, exist to provide up to 40 weeks' specialist education and residential care for children identified by their schools and Group Special Education (GSE) as having severe and challenging behaviour. The children referred to these schools are in Years 3 to 8 of schooling in state and state integrated schools. The residential behaviour schools are intended to cater for 105 of these students each year but for various reasons only 84 are currently enrolled.

The current governance arrangements could be strengthened so these are more effective and consistent. Management practices in Westbridge and Waimokoia have been of variable quality, with long-term statutory interventions in both schools. Waimokoia has had three commissioners appointed. The current commissioner for both Waimokoia and Westbridge provides vital stability for both institutions but there is a limited likelihood of the statutory intervention in either school being withdrawn in the near future.

Although each school has some elements of good practice, the three residential behaviour schools have no consistent ways of working and, to a considerable extent, are isolated from each other and from other schools. They are currently stand-alone institutions with no demonstrable alignment. Provision is not consistent with best practice and they have historically operated in a climate of competition rather than cooperation.

The quality of principal leadership at Waimokoia has resulted in serious concerns about student safety, which at the time of this evaluation were in the process of being resolved. The capacity of senior and teaching staff to work with students at both Waimokoia and Westbridge is variable and reflects a lack of training and work force development for this sector of special educators. The vulnerability surrounding personnel places these two schools at ongoing risk. McKenzie is well led, settled and is the most effective of the three schools. It remains difficult for the three schools to demonstrate sustained benefit for their students.

There is a significant issue relating to equity of access. Māori boys are over-represented in proportion to the total school population. There are very few Pacific students (three percent) and girls constitute four percent of the current residential schools population. This is inconsistent with the proportions of students receiving GSE services. Access also depends on referral pathways, and a significant number of children who have challenging and severe behaviour are not referred to these services.

There has been significant work done both in New Zealand and internationally on how best to meet the needs of children with severe and challenging behaviour. Apart from the harm these children do to themselves, their families and other children at school, the *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour*¹ makes it clear that ‘conduct problems are the single most important predictor of later chronic antisocial behaviour problems including academic underachievement, early school leaving, teenage parenthood, delinquency, unemployment and substance abuse. The pathway for many affected young people typically leads on to youth offending, family violence and ultimately, through to serious adult crime.’

Available literature stresses the value of early intervention, and the need for intervention to be consistent, sustained and to meet the needs of the child in context. Interventions that divorce the child from their family, community and school are perceived in the literature to be of limited value. Current work on reviewing special education provision as well as the development on an interagency protocol between the ministries of education, health and social development is a positive step towards meeting the special needs of this group of children and there is a clear need for each signatory to work to implement the recommendations of the strategic plan.

The cost of residential behaviour schools is high and, beyond respite opportunities, evidence suggests may be of little proven benefit. One of the challenges of dealing with students with severe and challenging behaviour problems is the lack of clear role definitions between and among the agencies involved with the facilities, and a lack of consistent terminology. Some children seem to be referred to these schools for what is essentially respite. The extent to which Vote Education should be responsible for providing residential care of this nature without sustained educational outcomes should be examined carefully.

Issues

It is ERO’s view that, in the longer term, retaining all three residential schools in their present form is not the best use of the resources available within the wider network of provision for children and young people with severe behaviour difficulties. Other interventions may be more effective and more likely to have a sustainable impact on the life of the children, their families, their schools and their communities. More localised services and personnel may well be better placed to provide for children closer to their homes, families and regular schools. Interventions that help schools to work with particularly difficult children and their families, in collaboration with specialist services offer better options for using the wider resource.

In the short term however, there are issues that need to be urgently addressed to improve the current functioning of the residential behaviour schools if these are to provide more effectively for this group of students.

In ERO’s view the Ministry of Education should consider:

- establishing one overarching board for the three schools’ operating with a national referral committee to recommend the most appropriate placement for each child;

¹ Ministry of Social Development, *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007- 2012* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), p3.

- developing a frame of reference/operational guidelines that would apply to all three schools;
- creating the role of national practice leader either as part of an overarching board or as part of the wider network serving students with severe behaviour needs;
- reviewing the current duration of residential care and education in line with international best practice;
- increasing the level of interagency work in determining the most appropriate intervention at the earliest point;
- providing more specialised and coherent training for principals, teachers and residential staff of the three schools; and
- developing common terminology to be used among those who work with children with severe behaviour/conduct disorder.

It is also ERO's view that, although outside its current operational role, GSE could take a more active future role in:

- identifying and disseminating evidence-based special education practice; and
- monitoring the long-term outcomes of interventions for children with severe and challenging behaviour.

Introduction

ERO undertook this evaluation of the role of residential behaviour schools following a request from the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) for information for its future policy decisions.

The Ministry funds three residential behaviour schools, one of these is in Christchurch (McKenzie) and the other two are in Auckland (Waimokoia and Westbridge). These schools specialise in working with students who have severe behaviour difficulties. The schools sit within a wider spectrum of special schools, services and programmes whose operations are of particular interest to the Ministry's Special Education Group (GSE).

Various factors have prompted the Ministry to review the place of these schools on the continuum of provision for students presenting with severe and moderate behaviour issues.

ERO evaluated three areas: mapping current practices and outcomes; assessing the need for alternative approaches; and proposing changes, if indicated. The evaluation asks four overall questions.

- What is the quality of provision in the three schools?
- How effective are the current governance arrangements for these schools?
- What is the most effective and efficient way to support this group of students?
- What should be done to meet the needs of these students?

Background

Strategic links

The aim of the Government's *Special Education Policy* is to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people with special education needs at their local school, early childhood centre, or wherever they are educated. The policy affirms the right of every student to learn in accordance with the principles and values of the Education Act 1989, the National Education Guidelines,² as well as the Special Education Policy Guidelines.³

² *National Education Guidelines* as defined under Section 60 of the *Education Act 1989*.

³ Ministry of Education, *Special Education Policy Guidelines*, (Wellington, Ministry of Education, 2003).

The *Special Education Policy Guidelines* guide the work of all those involved with young children and school students with special education needs. They fit within the context of relevant government legislation, education regulations and policies. The guidelines are based on seven principles,⁴ all of which are relevant to students in residential behaviour schools.

In its *Statement of Intent 2008–2013*, the Ministry of Education notes the importance of including in teaching the principles of personalised learning. This is about making learning relevant and meaningful no matter what the level or ability of the learner. It is central to achievement, and to being flexible and responsive in addressing students' learning needs particularly those of students who are educated in residential behaviour schools.

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012 and the *Pasifika Education Plan 2008–2012* both indicate a strategic focus on earlier identification of and intervention for children with specific barriers to learning. In addition, the organisational success priorities emphasised in *Ka Hikitia* imply the building of better connections among government agencies so that the focus is on raising system performance for and with Māori.

The students at the three residential behaviour schools are among a wider group whose severe and challenging behaviour is a barrier to learning and whose connection to education has been significantly damaged. These are students whose behaviour is severe, persistent across contexts and over time, and which involve repeated violations of societal and age-appropriate norms.⁵ The long-term outcomes for these students are not good. Up to 5 percent of primary school-age children are believed to fall into the category of conduct disorder/severe antisocial behaviour.

The Government funds programmes to help meet the needs of these children and their families in line with the Government priority of *Families-Young and Old*. There is recognition of the need for early intervention to give children the best start in life. The *Interagency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour* was developed in 2007 between the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development to articulate a vision of working together to better meet the needs of these children.

⁴ Special Education Principles: 1. Learners with special education needs have the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities as people of the same age who do not have special education needs.
2. The primary focus of special education is to meet the individual learning and developmental needs of the learner.
3. All learners with identified special education needs have access to a fair share of the available special education resources.
4. Partnership between parents and education providers is essential in overcoming barriers to learning.
5. All special education resources are used in the most effective and efficient way possible, taking into account parent choice and the needs of the learner.
6. A learner's language and culture comprise a vital context for learning and development and must be taken into consideration in planning programmes.
7. Learners with special education needs will have access to a seamless education from the time that their needs are identified through to post-school options.

⁵ Ministry of Social Development, *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007- 2012* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), p2.

The key proposals are:⁶

- leadership, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, including establishing an Experts' Group;
- building on the specialist behaviour services already provided by the Ministry of Education to ensure that by 2012, children requiring a comprehensive behavioural intervention (up to 5 percent of children) receive this level of intervention before they are eight years old;
- progressively transitioning current service provision to evidence-based, best practice interventions; and
- developing a shared infrastructure across agencies for the delivery of specialist behavioural services.

The *Interagency Plan* builds on the inter-sectorial *Strategy for Children and Young People with High and Complex Needs and the Severe Behaviour Initiative* in schools. The plan also has links to the early intervention focus of the *Youth Offending Strategy*.

The Ministry of Education is now in the process of completing an analysis of evidence-based interventions for children in the 8 to 12 year age range on the antisocial development pathway.

This review forms part of the work the Ministry of Education is doing to consider the worth of current interventions. There are similar undertakings from Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health to review the provision of behavioural services to the clients of Child, Youth and Family and provision of service from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)⁷ and youth alcohol and drug services. Of particular interest is the intention to review whether Child, Youth and Family caregivers and foster carers are using behavioural support services for children and young people who are in school. The Ministry will consider the level of training required for foster carers in the management of behavioural difficulties in children and young people.⁸

International best practice

What should be done to meet the needs of these students?

The difficulty of saying what works best for these students is evident in the lack of definitive evidence that anything works. The few programmes that meet the standard of evidence-based practice are not in operation in the residential behaviour schools.⁹ Because long-term life outcomes for these children are likely to be poor, intervention

⁶ Ministry of Social Development, *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007- 2012* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), p3.

⁷ Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services were established by the Ministry of Health to provide specialist, accessible and culturally sensitive services to children, young people and their families, who are experiencing significant mental health difficulties. CAMHS are secondary mental health services, accepting referrals from other health professionals, educational and community organisations.

⁸ Ministry of Social Development, *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007- 2012* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), pp46.

⁹ Eyberg, S.M., Nelson, M.M., & Boggs, S.R. *Evidence-based psycho-social treatments for children and adolescents with disruptive behaviour* *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 37(1) pp215 –237 (Eyberg 2007, Church 2003, Moore 2006).

of some kind and ongoing support for families and teachers are a high priority. Any model of intervention needs to be well supported by evidence that it works and that the benefits claimed for the intervention persist.

The inclusive thrust of education in New Zealand and overseas in the last 15 years has been assisted by a greater understanding of learning processes and more informed attitudes towards and tolerance of difference.¹⁰ However, there is great deal of inconsistency about which children and families get assistance, even more inconsistency in the degree of service that they receive, and a lack of coordination and consistency in planning and procedures for addressing problems as soon as possible.¹¹

In 2003 the Ministry of Education commissioned a best evidence synthesis of the research into the development and treatment of severe behaviour difficulties in children who have the potential for normal development by John Church.¹² Church's work revealed that a significant amount is known about how antisocial development occurs. Church emphasizes some key points in designing interventions. These include:

- the value of early intervention;
- lack of evidence of the efficacy of interventions;
- the older the child the more expensive the intervention and the more people that need to be involved;
- the importance of common terminology across the sectors; and
- that there is no evidence of the efficacy of residential schools as an intervention.

Church¹³ comments on teacher ambivalence about whether they should be responsible for teaching children with severe antisocial behaviour problems and difficulties in implementing the kinds of curriculum changes, behaviour management schemes and monitoring procedures that are required for effective work with antisocial children at this level. This highlights the need for effective teacher training in the necessary special skills and the need for prompt specialist help for schools.

The *Interagency Plan*¹⁴ in its review of what interventions work for children says that there is evidence that school-based interventions work for younger children when offered in combination with child and parent components, but there is no evidence of effectiveness of school-based programmes for children aged from about 9 or 10 years upwards. For younger children, there is evidence of some effectiveness for contingency-based management for behaviour in classrooms, but improvements are not shown to extend to other settings. The younger the child the more effective the intervention, and there was evidence of effectiveness in programmes to train parents in dealing with younger children. For older children, group-based approaches risk worsening the problem behaviours.

¹⁰ Macfarlane, A. *Discipline, democracy and diversity: working with students with behaviour difficulties* (Wellington: NZCER Press, 2007), p24.

¹¹ Bretherton, M. *Meeting the needs of children with severe behavioural difficulties: what can New Zealand learn?* A report from a Winston Churchill Fellowship Award. (1998) p3.

¹² Church, J. *The definition, diagnosis and treatment of children and youth with severe behaviour difficulties: a review of research.* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 2003).

¹³ *Ibid* p5.

¹⁴ Ministry of Social Development, *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007- 2012* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), p14.

Aggregation of students may not be the best solution.¹⁵ When such students are regularly placed among others with similar labels and histories, they are exposed to role modelling or contexts that serve only to reinforce or exacerbate issues of concern, ultimately marginalising these students even further. The success of a withdrawal option depends on the programme being targeted, adroitly operated and well led by committed and qualified staff.

Church identified four special teaching needs for these students. They are the need for students to practice responding in pro-social ways to the behaviour of other people; the need to learn that other people can be trusted; the need to learn and to practice age-appropriate social skills, and the need to catch up as quickly as possible with missing academic skills especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Moore et al¹⁶ would add the importance of students knowing that they can achieve.

The lack of evidence of sustained benefit from this form of intervention is a concern. The Ministry of Education has sponsored significant reviews of research findings¹⁷ that are unable to demonstrate sustained benefit for students from their placement at the residential behaviour schools. They argue for early intervention in mainstream schools. Moore recognises that there may at times be a need for withdrawal for the safety of the student or for the benefit of other students. ‘Everybody concerned needs to be very clear about the purpose of withdrawal.’ The principles for the successful provision of withdrawal facilities are:

- early intervention;
- a focus on positive behaviour support;
- multi-systemic/interdisciplinary teams;
- service that is incorporated into a preventative whole school approach;
- active parental involvement; and
- provision of adequate training and support for personnel.

Few of these principles were observed in the three residential behavioural schools.

Withdrawal from mainstream is an intervention that needs to be carefully managed. More attention needs to focus on the transition back to mainstream school and to the maintenance of gains made. After 14 weeks the difficulty of reintegration may outweigh any benefit.¹⁸ Recognising that these students will probably need support throughout their school careers is an uncomfortable but necessary step.¹⁹

For any intervention to be successful it needs to work across the settings of the child’s life and the principles need to be consistently applied. There are implications here for work with schools and families. The older the child gets the harder it is to work

¹⁵ Macfarlane, A. *Discipline, democracy and diversity: working with students with behaviour difficulties* (Wellington: NZCER Press, 2007), p23.

Church, J. (2003) p144.

¹⁶ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma, U. *Reducing Challenging Behaviour Initiative* (2006).

¹⁷ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma (2006), Church, J (2003).

¹⁸ Meyer, L. & Evans, I. (2006). *Literature review on intervention with challenging behaviour in children and youth with development disabilities*.

¹⁹ Hornby, G. & Witte, C. (2008). *Looking back on school* p7.

effectively with the families. The over-representation of young Māori males raises issues about who can best work with them and their families and the levels of skill and training required.²⁰

In an overview of provision in New Zealand in comparison with provision in Perth, Dublin and Glasgow, Bretherton²¹ comments on the extent of the services available, the recognition of the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and lack of a punitive attitude in the provision of services for families. The model of levels of specialised support integrated with mainstream settings provided in West Australia is noteworthy of consideration in the New Zealand context.

Church²² says that the consensus among researchers is that highly structured and well supervised programmes are likely to be more effective than more informal types of programmes, that programmes which provide intensive individual tuition and practice in missing social skills and academic skills are likely to produce the fastest gains in these areas, and that programmes which used a well designed token economy are likely to motivate the most rapid improvement in behaviour. McKenzie Residential Behaviour School fits this description most closely. However, follow-up studies of its students cannot demonstrate sustained gains.

The schools in this evaluation

The schools in this evaluation are Waimokoia, Westbridge and McKenzie. Each takes a different approach to providing education and residential care for children between Years 3 and 8 who have severe and challenging behaviour. The processes are distinct and reflect historical factors of establishment and more recent aspects of development and management approaches. Appendix 2 describes the distribution of students attending each of the schools at the time of this evaluation

Waimokoia is situated in eastern Auckland, adjacent to Pigeon Mountain Primary School and Bucklands Beach Intermediate School and is in the general vicinity of the Pakuranga Health Camp. The school has a notional roll of 44 and currently has 23 students. Over 60 percent of the students are Māori and there are currently three Pacific students. There is one girl. While the nominal catchment area is the northern part of the North Island (north of a line from New Plymouth to Gisborne), the school may enrol students from outside this area if there is a 'compelling reason'.²³ Often these outside enrolments result from the referral of girls who, because of McKenzie's admission policy, have been unsuccessful in gaining admission to McKenzie. A significant number of students in the school come from Manukau City and the wider south Auckland area.

The school has an acting principal who has appointed 30 new staff, both teaching and residential, since the beginning of the year. A new commissioner was appointed this year to replace the commissioner appointed in 2002. Pedersen²⁴ outlines a history of governance and management challenges over an extended period.

²⁰ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma (2006), p54, Church, J (2003) p114.

²¹ Bretherton, M. (1998), p36.

²² Church, J. (2003) p143.

²³ Waimokoia Resourcing Statement.

²⁴ Pederson, E. (2004).

Westbridge was formerly Glenburn Residential School with social service provision from Presbyterian Support Services. Child, Youth and Family (CYF) funded the residential programme. The Ministry of Education purchased the residential facilities in June 2000 and, until recently, the Anglican Social Services was involved in the provision of a social services programme. With the Anglican Social Services withdrawal, the school is fully responsible for all aspects of provision. Westbridge also receives funding for a Centre of Extra Support (CES) to provide for day students from local schools. There is additional provision for a satellite CES at Stanmore Bay School but it has closed because of lack of demand for its services. Westbridge also has governance responsibility for 20 secondary students in the Future's West²⁵ programme.

According to its resourcing statement, Westbridge has a notional roll of 44 including 24 residential and 20 day students but its actual roll is 24 residential and 8 day students including three girls. Māori students constitute 60 percent of the roll and there are no Pacific students. The school's catchment area includes all the North Island but in practice this is north of a line drawn through New Plymouth, Taupo and Gisborne. Currently students come from the north and west of Auckland, Northland, Hamilton, the Coromandel and Taranaki. The principal is known as the CEO and has been in that position for approximately five years and there is a newly appointed deputy principal who is the programme director. Most of the teaching staff have been at Westbridge for some time. The commissioner has been in place since 2000.

Both Waimokoia and Westbridge are located in areas of Auckland that were previously rural but are now suburban. They are not well served by public transport.

McKenzie Residential School is on the outskirts of Christchurch and has a notional roll of 29 students all of whom are residential and all of whom are boys. Thirty percent of the students are Māori and there are no Pacific students. According to its resourcing statement the school can enrol students 'residing anywhere in New Zealand; in practice it enrolls students south of a line drawn from New Plymouth to Gisborne. A significant number of students come from Levin, Otaki, Palmerston North and Wellington, as well as from the South Island.

McKenzie has a ministerially appointed board of trustees who provide good governance supported by a stable and effective management team.

2008 Funding

	FTTEs	Salary units	Operational funding	Day school funding	Residential services	5-year property budget
McKenzie	7.66	4	\$180,855	\$17,905	\$1.32M	\$737,431
Waimokoia	10.10	7	\$215,999	\$17,905	\$1.89M	\$242,382
Westbridge	8.16	4	\$171,931	See below	\$1.06M	\$450,291

²⁵ Futures West is a programme that provides a pathway for suspended students to make a successful return to school. Set up by the nine secondary schools in the city of Waitakere in west Auckland, Futures West has been running for nearly a year in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Group Special Education.

Westbridge also receives an extra \$176,000 funding for Centres of Extra Support and \$375,000 for Futures West. The funding for Centres of Extra Support is based on 20 day students at Westbridge and 14 at Stanmore Bay. There are only eight day students enrolled at Westbridge and enrolments at the Stanmore Bay CES, now closed, were usually significantly below 14. Westbridge has governance responsibility for Futures West but is not directly involved in the Future's West programme.

Methodology

The ERO team developed an analytical framework and a set of evaluative questions to guide this review of the role of the three residential behaviour schools within the network of provision for children and young people with severe behaviour difficulties. The framework set out a structure for the review that included scoping activities, on-site investigations at the three schools, synthesis and emerging findings, discussion of emerging findings and tentative recommendations with the reference group, and the preparation of a report for the Ministry.

In the scoping phase of the review, the ERO team sourced selected readings from both the New Zealand and international best practice literature as well as key documents from the individual schools. The latter included the school charters, annual reports, Schoolsmart data, internal and external review information, and policy and operational documents. The team members also familiarised themselves with the role of other government agencies and the policy framework that supports the provision for children and young people with severe behaviour difficulties.

During the on-site phase of the review, the ERO team visited the three schools and observed both the school and the residential programmes in action. The on-site visits provided opportunities to meet with the principals, senior managers, teachers and residential staff, to undertake structured observations in classrooms, to talk to students in both school and residential settings, to access additional school-specific data and to meet with the Board of Trustees of McKenzie School and with the Commissioner of Westbridge and Waimokoia schools. ERO also asked to hold discussions with union representatives on each site.

In addition to the school visits, interviews were conducted with Ministry and Group Special Education staff, principals and other individuals who had particular knowledge and expertise relevant to the review. The ERO team conducted scripted telephone interviews with 26 principals in the Auckland/Northland area to determine their knowledge of and use of the behaviour residential schools.

The ERO team did not meet with or speak to families of the students attending the three schools because of difficulty of access and privacy issues.

Findings

The quality of provision in the three schools

To what extent do the practices and outcomes in the three schools reflect best practice?

This is discussed under the following 13 headings.

- Governance
- Leadership
- Staffing
- Quality of teaching
- Student Achievement
- Referral Criteria
- Families
- Links with other agencies
- Behaviour management
- Student voice
- Transition
- Residential care
- Ethnicity.

Governance

A commissioner governs both Westbridge and Waimokoia. This statutory intervention has been in place for eight years at Westbridge. Waimokoia has also had problematic governance. Although a specialist board of ministerial appointees was briefly in place, that board was unable to sustain its role and Waimokoia now has its third commissioner. The model of a school board of trustees elected in the main by parents is not feasible at these schools and, where a board operates it is usually a ministerially appointed board. Commissioners in these two schools have wrestled with inadequate reporting, ineffective leadership and poor quality practice, and have been unable to deal with larger issues because of the overwhelming nature of ongoing management issues.

A board of trustees governs McKenzie. The board is well informed and supportive. It consists of trustees who bring differing expertise but a shared commitment to the school. Trustees have a good understanding of the role of the school, its strengths and weaknesses, and their own role in shaping and monitoring the direction of the school. What is lacking is a sense of how McKenzie should fit into the range of national provision and an appreciation of its obligation to provide for children with the most difficult behaviours. Even though McKenzie operates an effective governance and management model, it is unable to demonstrate sustained improvement for the limited number of children who are able to access this resource.

McKenzie benefits from having a committed board and a cohesive management team that enable all staff in the school to feel that they are able to make a worthwhile contribution. As a result there is high staff morale and commitment. This is not the case in the other two schools where low staff morale and a culture of personal

grievances and disciplinary actions have been the norm. The commissioners of these schools have had to deal with a succession of staffing and financial matters and have not had the benefit of robust reporting from their executive directors. The consequent lack of accountability constitutes a serious risk to the Crown. This has been particularly evident at Waimokoia, but is also an issue at Westbridge.

The charter and strategic plan at McKenzie are supported by a useful annual plan that operates consistently across the school and residential provision. It incorporates a cycle of systematic and well-planned self review that is largely missing at the other two schools. At Westbridge and Waimokoia there has been little attempt to use the charter effectively and there is little evidence of systematic self review. The quality of variance reporting on student achievement or on the attainment of any other specified goals is poor. However, management systems at Waimokoia have been well documented, and there has been an attempt to develop systems to collate and analyse data on student behaviour.

Leadership

One of the key roles for school leaders is to provide direction for the work and development of the school and to promote high standards. Such leadership is evident at McKenzie, where a well-established management team demonstrates a unity of purpose, consistency of expectation and effective communication. The principal, deputy principal and assistant principal have adopted a collaborative style of leadership and are well respected by the staff. As a result, staff morale is high. This is not the case at the other two schools.

There is some lack of clarity around the role of the principals at Waimokoia and Westbridge. As executive directors, the principals at these two schools delegate key components of their role to the managers of the residential services and to the deputy principals who are responsible for the school programme. Clear lines of reporting and accountability are not always evident. Reports to commissioners have been of varying quality and have not provided adequate information about some key matters. The position at Westbridge has been complicated by the role of other agencies in providing residential care and social support services.

The intention of Waimokoia and Westbridge to provide leadership in the education sector by serving as ‘centres of practice excellence and sources of learning about behaviour management’ has not been achieved and, in current circumstances, is unlikely.

Staffing

The quality of staff is an issue at the two Auckland schools. Teachers at Westbridge have been unwilling to take part in school-based professional development on formative assessment. They are increasingly professionally isolated and out of touch with the professional learning being undertaken in regular schools.

Where teachers do take part in good quality professional development, such as the new work on information literacy underway at Waimokoia or the work at McKenzie on numeracy and the new curriculum, the benefits are clear for both staff and students.

Most of the teachers and residential staff now at Waimokoia are new to the school. There are four new teachers, including one beginning teacher. Four of the teachers are provisionally registered. The acting principal has appointed 30 new staff this year without needing to recruit from overseas as had been done previously.

Waimokoia uses a team teaching approach with two teachers per room plus a teacher aide. McKenzie operates with one teacher per room in a physical layout that facilitates interaction between and among teachers and the deputy principal. There is only one part-time teacher aide. At Westbridge there is a teacher and a teacher aide in every room for what staff deem as 'safety'. The teacher-aide role is primarily to police behaviour and to mark student work.

McKenzie's teaching staff all receive the residential schools' allowance of \$900 per annum and work two morning shifts each week in the residence in return for this. They believe that this enhances their relationship with the students and with the other staff. Staff at the other two schools do not work in the residence in this way.

Staff appraisal systems are inconsistent. McKenzie teachers are confident that they demonstrate each year how they meet the professional standards. The principal at Westbridge has been reluctant to address staff performance issues in the school and these have become a significant challenge for the new deputy principal. No appraisal was carried out at Waimokoia in 2007. Systems for appraisals for residential staff vary from school to school and there is little evidence of strong links to targeted professional development.

Quality of teaching

ERO developed a classroom observation format that was given to the principal to be shared with the teaching staff. The observation sheets incorporated ERO's quality of teaching indicators and Moore's adaptations for students with severe and challenging behaviour. There is a high level of consistency between the two sets of indicators. The indicators focused on the quality of teaching, student engagement with learning and evidence of the use of student achievement data.

ERO was interested to see the extent to which students were challenged and expected to achieve, the extent to which relationships between teachers and students were positive and reciprocally courteous, the extent to which relationships between adults in the classroom provided models of courteous cooperation and the extent to which students were confident that their achievement was valued and that they were able to acquire new skills.

McKenzie provided the best teaching and came closest to the model described above. Focused and interactive learning programmes were in place and there was evidence of supportive and affirming relationships. Learning programmes and expectations of achievement reflected the importance that teachers placed on keeping up-to-date with best practice so that students would not be disadvantaged on their return to their own school. Their work on the new curriculum incorporated values appropriate to these students.

Teaching at Westbridge was poor. The focus was on behaviour management and control. Classrooms were reasonably well resourced but teachers' own tools were very dated and reflected their degree of professional isolation and resistance to change. Work on the new curriculum focused narrowly on the principal's "values wheel" and a thinking skills model provided by the new deputy principal.

The teaching at Waimokoia was in the hands of mostly new teachers. Programmes appeared relatively unstructured and the purpose of many activities was unclear. Activities were not well matched to students' abilities or interests, which made it difficult to engage students fully or to keep them on task. Teachers were supportive of students' efforts, and positive relationships between teachers and students were evident.

The number of adults in each classroom at Waimokoia and Westbridge was high. This does not represent the most efficient or effective use of the available staffing resource. At McKenzie there is usually one teacher in each classroom with the deputy principal, a specialist teacher, and a teacher aide in close proximity. The physical layout of the classrooms enables the deputy principal to work closely with teachers, helps to build a collegial, cooperative model of interaction and allows deployment of staff to provide specialist one to one remedial tuition.

Student achievement

Although students are referred on the basis of their behaviour problems, they may also have learning deficits where their behaviour or withdrawal from school has impacted negatively on learning. Equally, achievement data from previous schools may be misleading because of student's or teacher's attitudes to test completion. Consequently it is difficult to determine student entry level, and retesting and assessment are necessary to determine appropriate provision. However, there is an expectation of significant progress when students are placed in a programme intended and resourced to accelerate their learning.

Teachers use a variety of assessment tools. The work of the new deputy principal at Westbridge in introducing asTTLe testing and displaying each child's individual learning profile is part of a determined effort to improve the reliability and validity of data. It also provides opportunities for each child to know how well they are doing and to be able to participate in setting worthwhile and specific learning goals. The analysis of variance report for 2007 indicates that achievement targets in reading were met with 52 percent of students maintaining their progress, but that targets in numeracy were not met. It is of particular concern that 24 percent of students were reported not to have made expected and average progress in reading and that 19 percent were reported to have regressed in numeracy.

At Waimokoia students have individual assessment folders with comprehensive baseline achievement data. There is some tracking of progress in language, mathematics and integrated learning outcomes, and asTTLe results are recorded. There is insufficient data to determine overall patterns of achievement. Waimokoia did not prepare an analysis of variance report for 2007.

McKenzie has comprehensive systems for assessing, recording and reporting individual student achievement. This information is used effectively to set individual student learning and behaviour goals. The analysis of variance report for 2007 indicates that students make average gains in reading age of 1 year 3 months over a 40-week period and that more than half (18 of 30) progress to at least one stage beyond their entry level in mathematics while the others, with one exception, progress within their current stage.

There is no systematic tracking of students once they leave the residential schools. None of the schools could demonstrate that gains made, whether academic, behavioural or social, were sustained when students returned to mainstream schools. In many cases the schools learned through follow-up contact with the receiving schools that students had been subject to disciplinary processes including suspension and exclusion. The Westbridge evaluation of the social services programme²⁶ noted that initial improvements in behaviour were reported but lasted between three days to three weeks and that behaviour tended to deteriorate for all students.

Referral criteria

The criteria for determining the enrolment of students are set out in each school's resourcing notice and are the same across the three schools. For the most part, Waimokoia and Westbridge were found to be operating within the criteria.

McKenzie sets certain conditions for accepting students. These have to do with parent participation, care and protection issues, the continuance of CAMHS support for children receiving it and a GSE plan for transition back to school. Although McKenzie is described in its charter as a co-educational school, it has not enrolled girls for some time. The principal stated that he would not accept a girl on her own into an otherwise all boys group, but would accept girls in groups of at least four. As that situation is unlikely to present itself, the effect is that girls do not attend McKenzie and are excluded from the service unless they are prepared to go a considerable distance to one of the two Auckland schools. An analysis of McKenzie admissions records indicates that it accepts three of seven referrals.

Families

Partnership with parents is not well developed. There are geographical barriers to this in the current mode of provision. Staff report that McKenzie's weekly reports to parents on students' behaviour and attitude are well received by parents. This appears to be a worthwhile attempt to bridge the distance, as is McKenzie's provision of accommodation for each family at some time during their boy's stay. Westbridge now offers a weekly parent skills session that five parents attend; these sessions are designed to replace the work previously done by the Anglican Social Services social workers. There is no evidence of specific work being done with siblings to modify the nature of family interactions.

There remains a perception by many staff in these schools and in the referring schools that the families are the problem. If this is the case, it strengthens the argument for localised provision where specialist staff can work with the child, the family and the school together.

²⁶ Auckland Uniservices Limited. (2007).

The Westbridge evaluation²⁷ notes that the majority of parents or caregivers believed that the difficulties the child was having were largely school-based rather than home-based. This view would support the argument that resources should go into strengthening the capacity of regular schools to manage behaviour.

Links with other organisations

The Education Act 1989 gives the board complete discretion to manage the school. This means that relationships with GSE or other agencies are essentially invitational. The extent to which these schools have maintained effective relationships with GSE varies. The three schools would benefit from GSE leadership in the promulgation of best practice.

Apart from relationship established with CYF through the 11 children currently in care in the three schools, there is little evidence that the schools themselves initiate and maintain constructive reciprocal relationships with other community agencies. Across the three schools a total of 27 students are on medication so there is some link to CAMHS but that is based chiefly on the need for the review of students' medication.

At Westbridge the Anglican Social Services was involved in the provision of a social services programme but it appears that this relationship was not a success.

McKenzie has an ongoing professional and research association with the University of Canterbury.

Behaviour management and the use of timeout

The three schools do not have a consistent approach to behaviour management. McKenzie has a consistent behaviour management approach across the school and residential provision but that kind of internal consistency is not evident in Westbridge or Waimokoia.

All three schools use time out but each uses it differently. GSE has guidelines for the use of time out but it appears that these are for internal GSE use and, although Westbridge had a copy, the guidelines had not been shared with the schools officially. None of the schools follows practices that are consistent with the GSE guidelines on the use of time out and the management of challenging behaviour.

Each of the three schools operates some form of residential token economy as part of their behaviour management strategy.

GSE has a leadership role in terms of behaviour management, use of restraint and time out procedures. This is a role that should be strengthened.

²⁷ Auckland Uniservices Limited. (2007).

Student voice

None of the schools has a mechanism to give students opportunities to voice opinions or to contribute to decision making. McKenzie has a very good practice of adult mentors who make unannounced visits to talk to students. The mentors report on their visits and may serve as advocates should that be necessary.

Transition

All schools have good induction material for children and their families and strategies for keeping in touch with families while their child is at the school. McKenzie's weekly reports to parents are the most comprehensive and best of these.

The transition back to school and home is more problematic. Each school has its own system for managing the transition including which type of staff is involved and the timing and frequency of reintegration periods in the receiving school. Written reports are provided on the student's achievement while at the residential school. Practices for liaising with the teacher who is receiving the student also vary. Although some good practices were evident in the transitioning process, they were not consistent across schools and sometimes not even within schools. It should be noted that not all schools receiving students back into mainstream fully undertake their reciprocal responsibilities for successful transition.

The most difficult transitions usually occur when the student is leaving the residential school at the end of Year 6 and going to a new intermediate school for Year 7 or leaving at the end of Year 8 and going into secondary school. When the receiving school is the one that originally made the commitment to work with the student and has been in communication with the residential school during the student's time there, there is more chance of a successful transition. When the student is unknown to the receiving school, there is less chance of success.

GSE has responsibility for students when they return to a mainstream school but the level of GSE involvement at this stage is variable.

Residential care

Westbridge has the advantage of small co-educational cottages that lend themselves to the creation of a comfortable, family atmosphere. Good practice observed there included non-intrusive behaviour management strategies and a sense of respect for the privacy of the individual students.

The residential dormitory environment at Waimokoia is the most institutionalised of the three, although there have been efforts to enhance the grounds with planting and to upgrade the residential kitchen facilities. Although routines are well established, the residential programme does not reflect thoughtful planning or scope for individual choice and there have been issues of student safety in the recent past.

McKenzie benefits from an exceptional natural setting. Although the students are housed in dormitories, their individual spaces are highly personal. The residential programme is well planned and reflects the school's focus on learning, but in a different context. Students choose from a variety of leisure activities ranging from group activities to more independent pursuits. Students generally meet high

expectations for the care of property and equipment. Although high levels of trust were evident, there was also evidence of a significantly controlled environment.

Ethnicity

Māori students make up approximately 60 percent of the roll at both Waimokoia and Westbridge. There is very little evidence, in either the school or the residential environment, of Māori culture other than some Māori words in classrooms and reference to karakia. There does not appear to be any systematic work to promote Māori culture and pride or to build long-term resilience.

Where do these students fit in the wider network?

During the course of this review ERO contacted 26 school principals in the Auckland and Northland areas to find out what they knew and what experience they had had of residential behaviour schools. Fifteen of the principals had had some experience of either referring students to the schools or receiving students from the schools.

Overwhelmingly principals reported that they preferred to use school processes to manage their students and only considered a referral to a residential behaviour school as a last resort. Many had developed policies and had allocated resources to deal effectively with these students and they knew how to access resources in the wider community. Those who had used residential behaviour schools reported mixed results, which often depended on the effectiveness of the communication between the residential school and the receiving school.

Some of the barriers to principals' use of residential behaviour schools were perceptions that the referral process was lengthy and difficult, that there was poor access to GSE staff when needed or discontinuity of GSE staff, and that there was a lack of communication among agencies. Schools in rural areas were less likely to know about residential schools as an option whereas schools in more affluent urban areas were able to refer parents to private counselling and psychological services.

School principals' desire to meet the needs of their own students in their local schools is consistent with the principles of Special Education 2000 to provide inclusive education.

What alternatives exist to meet the needs of these students?

A range of provision is available to schools and families to deal with children with severe and challenging behaviour. This includes the residential behaviour schools, which provide up to 40 weeks of residential education for children in state and state or integrated schools in Years 3 to 8 of their schooling. There are no other facilities similar in age grouping, duration and intervention to the residential behaviour schools currently operating under the aegis of education.

Since the residential behaviour schools were first developed there have been other significant developments. The Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) have the potential to provide in-class support in teaching strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour. There is still some variation in the quality of the service relating to processes for recruitment, management and governance. Nevertheless, well-respected RTLBs provide worthwhile services to schools and families and

should continue to build their capacity to work with students with behavioural issues particularly in assessing needs and liaising with other services.

The introduction of the Behaviour Specialist Support services in 1998 was designed to provide immediate intervention to help schools manage crisis situations relating to individual students, to provide interventions when schools had exhausted their own strategies, to coordinate across agencies, and to help schools develop proactive strategies and systems. The interventions included Centres for Extra Support to provide day provision in withdrawal settings. Westbridge receives significant funding (\$176,000) for two centres of extra support, one of which has now closed because of lack of referrals from GSE. Other types of intervention may be more successful, but evaluation of this service provision lies outside the scope of this report.

As part of its budget bid 2006-07 *Tackling Disruptive Behaviour in Schools*, the Ministry of Education introduced the Interim Response fund to help schools cope when children with challenging behaviour reached a crisis point. The fund is available so that principals are able to get a quick and flexible response to a behaviour crisis. It is intended to be used to stabilise a situation and meet a student's immediate needs, while a comprehensive intervention plan is designed. There are built-in student engagement and accountability strategies for use of the fund.

The increase in the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) around the country has improved access to mental health and psychological support for students where that is deemed appropriate. Half the students currently at McKenzie are on medication that relates to aspects of serious and challenging behaviour. The relative percentage at Waimokoia and Westbridge is about 30 percent. CAMHS also deal with a large number of students who remain with their family and in their local school.

The other residential special schools in the country are reviewing or have reviewed the kind of service they offer. Halswell and Salisbury are reducing the length of residential provision and trialling a model of satellite units to allow better integration into the community. This is of particular interest because these schools also serve students with challenging behaviour, although the primary admission criteria is limited intellectual capacity. Halswell maintains links with families and referring schools through the employment of resource teachers in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin who have a role in ongoing support after the boy has finished his placement at the school.

Health Camps provide short-term residential care and education for a similar age group as residential behaviour schools. Children are increasingly referred to a health camp for moderate to severe behavioural problems and/or some dysfunction in their home life. Placement tends to be at the lower end of the dysfunction continuum. There is an overall lack of clarity about the purpose and objectives of health camps and health camp schools. There are also tensions about the purpose of the teaching and learning programmes offered at the schools. As students attend a health camp for a relatively short period of about five to six weeks there is limited opportunity for the teachers to make a difference to educational achievement or behaviour. Health camps and their schools provide a suitable local respite option that enables students to

remain reasonably close to their homes and families. There is, however, an important question about how long this intervention should be and what form it should take.

Felix Donnelly College provides education for children who are in the care of CYF in various different residential provisions. This includes some, but not all, of the children in the Youth Horizons Trust that was established in 2000 to deal with children with severe conduct disorder. It also now includes children in the care of the Dingwall Trust who are much the same age as children at the residential behaviour schools. The school has had problems with the quality of staffing, poor educational provision and poor governance and leadership. The commissioner and new principal face a challenging task. It would be appropriate to consider the needs of these students in any review of provision for students with severe and challenging behaviour.

Some students with severe and challenging behaviour receive education through the auspices of The Correspondence School, and this is the model that is used for some of the students who are in the care of CYF. This education provision is designed primarily to address literacy and numeracy needs, rather than to change or modify behaviour.

The hospital schools also cater for children with mental health needs, often by supervision of and support with Correspondence School programmes, working with children and families in their homes. The operation of these schools presents a possible model of cooperative programme delivery, in a framework of autonomy and coherence of practice.

The number of children who are believed not to be in education at all presents another significant question. This includes children who have already been excluded from school by age 10 or 11. Access to accurate information about this group of students is difficult but it is reasonable to assume that an important element in their failure to thrive in a school setting is severe and challenging behaviour.

Other provision

High and complex needs funding constitutes a model of interagency funding focused on meeting the needs of the individual child. Funding is provided from health, education or social development (CYF). Features of this model include case coordination, and the integration of existing services or developing new joint services. While this funding model is currently reserved for the most needy children, the principle of such an inter-sectoral alliance around the needs of the individual has much to recommend it.

Provision is also made for older children through various programmes funded by the Ministry of Social Development. The *Interagency Plan* comments that a lot of the demand for CYF services arises from concerns about young people's behaviour, and the programmes focus on conduct disorder and young people who are at risk of re-offending.

Conclusions

What should be done to meet the needs of these students?

Some programmes are not well aligned with the evidence base around the effective treatment of conduct disorder/severe behaviour disorder eg: interventions are not usually coordinated across all the key settings in which a child or young person operates, interventions do not necessarily address other needs in a child or young person's life, and interventions are often lacking in sufficient intensity or duration. Interagency Plan

Any residential programme divorces the child from the family. The ideal is therapeutic foster care for the most needy²⁸ and early intervention is most likely to result in successful outcomes. ERO acknowledges that there is a need for some kind of residential care and treatment for children. The real issue may actually be how best to make educational provision for children who are in residential care and who have severe and challenging behaviour. Consideration of wrap-around provision that starts from where the child's needs are greatest would be consistent with the recommendations arising from interagency work and with intended special education policy outcomes. However, any such solution would require enhanced capacity at the family support level.

If the decision is made to retain the residential behaviour schools in the short term it is ERO's view that this should be done on a different basis and there are some urgent steps to be taken. The three schools should not function independently with little or no reference to research literature and evidence-based practice. Any model of intervention needs to be supported by evidence that it works and that the benefits claimed for the intervention persist.

What is needed is a cohesive, coherent and interdependent operating culture underpinned by a clear rationale for the three schools. If this is to be achieved, the governance arrangements would need to be different. The most efficient way to achieve this would be to establish one overarching board operating with a national referral committee able to recommend the best placement for each child considering their family and school.

The residential provision should be linked to the wider framework of interventions for these students. The place of the health camps as a more localised provider within this network should also be considered. The health camp resource may be best placed to offer short-term respite where appropriate, and provide ongoing specialist support for families and schools around the needs of individual children.

In any consideration of how to best meet the needs of these students there are nine matters to take into account.

²⁸ Church, J. (2003).

Capability

The limited provision of professional training for teachers in special education is central to performance issues. The capability of staff to work with these children is also a factor. The chief tool to build workforce capacity is the recruitment of the 'right' people who are seen as team players and able to cope with the complex needs of the students. Ongoing training and support for teachers, residential staff and principals is critical. In addition, there is a need for explicit principles of programme provision and good practice.

Moore²⁹ identifies the problem of lack of research on the role of cultural factors in the process and the accountability of those deciding what special provision children will experience. Appointments to management positions have not required staff to demonstrate previous experience or training in special education or the management of residential facilities.

There are big demands on school leaders. They have to be capable of liaising with related agencies, understanding different structures and terminology, working with teachers, residential staff and children, working with families, running efficient systems humanely, keeping up-to-date with research and best evidence, and promoting evidence-based practice. They also have the regular principal role of reporting to the board about how accountabilities are met.

Unlike other special schools there is very little specialist provision for these children. Therefore it is of vital importance that leaders of these schools have the ability to recognise need and access specialist support.

Consistency

The lack of consistency among the three schools arises in part from the historic nature of their development. The culture has been standalone and competitive and there has been little or no counter incentive for alignment. Each has developed its own philosophy, its own way of implementing referral criteria, delivering learning programmes and managing behaviour.

Provision has to be consistent with the needs of the child, consistent with best practice and consistent with the needs of the families and school. With such a small service providing for the same body of students, it should be possible for nationally consistent provision.

Communication

Until now it has been difficult to monitor the whereabouts of students and to track them long term. With the adoption of ENROL there is an opportunity to improve communication about students and what happens for them over time. One of the difficulties in determining cost-benefit has been the lack of student tracking once students leave residential behaviour schools. The opportunity now presented by ENROL to capture longitudinal data about individual students' education history may also help to provide some of the missing data about the effectiveness of interventions.

²⁹ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma (2006), p2.

Interagency communication about children and their families and what interventions are in place would be strengthened by the adoption of a model of wrap-around provision focused on meeting the needs of the child.

Co-operation and collaboration

Thinking about developing supportive, multidisciplinary therapeutic programmes, which look at the child in context rather than in isolation, seem to me the most important areas for development in New Zealand.

Bretherton (1998:16)

The development of the interagency plan has been an important step forward in addressing what can feel to families and schools like fragmented provision. The case coordination model recommended in the plan would be helpful in focusing provision on the needs of the child in the context of their school, family and community.

Strengthened leadership from GSE and more explicit practice guidelines would be useful. All schools would find it helpful to have an overview of the range of provision and where each kind of intervention sits within that. An important step is the commitment spelled out by the Ministry of Education in the recent Auckland Special Education Network Strategy to strengthen working relationships between existing providers, specialist providers and mainstream schools in order to build capability at mainstream schools. The Ministry's commitment to identify and disseminate evidence-based special education practice will provide important leadership in special education.

Constituency

Current provision is inequitable in terms of gender and ethnicity. The percentage of students in the residential behaviour schools does not reflect the percentage of students receiving behavioural services over a six-year period to 2004.³⁰ Girls constitute four percent of the roll at the residential behaviour schools but 28 percent of students receiving interventions under the Severe Behaviour Initiative. Māori are 35 percent of students receiving interventions nationally, but constitute 60 percent of the rolls at Waimokoia and Westbridge. Pacific students seem under-represented at 4.6 percent but are less than three percent of the schools' rolls. If the needs of girls and Pacific students are being met elsewhere, further analysis of how this happens may provide a useful model for better overall provision.

The frequency of occurrence of severe and challenging behaviour in low decile schools needs further investigation. The proportion of antisocial students in low decile schools is somewhere between three and six times greater than those in high decile schools.³¹ Many of the lowest decile schools are in the wider Auckland area and have increasing numbers of Pacific students. Little is known of the prevalence of conduct disorder among Pacific students but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is of concern and is increasing among the generations who are New Zealand born.³²

The same resource allocation could be used more usefully to support students, their families and the schools who are providing for them. The current allocation is

³⁰ Interagency Plan 2007, p 46.

³¹ Church, J. (2003), p2.

³² Conduct Problems Best Practice Report 2008,(in draft).

inequitable and, in part, it is the luck of the draw whether a child comes to the notice of the right people and is assigned appropriate services. Smaller, more local provision should be considered so that it is more feasible to work with families and with schools, either by working with children who are referred for special programmes or by supporting students and teachers in school. The use of health camps, perhaps in a different form, could have a role in this kind of provision.

Culture

Solutions to the problem of disruptive behaviour in class do not reside solely in the identification and treatment of individual children. Researchers agree that an important first step in making better provision for dealing with the most difficult children in schools is to build a consistent culture of non-violence in the school. Schools of comparable socioeconomic status and cultural composition have been shown to differ in their capacity to both prevent and manage behaviour problems. The attitudes of teachers and principals are key factors.³³

Māori parents at a hui to develop a behaviour management programme wanted an approach that would bring parents, teachers, and students together to address the barriers to learning presented by the challenging behaviour of the students. But they also wanted schools to address their concerns that school policies and behaviour management practices were contributing to their students' challenging behaviours.³⁴

This is a challenge that schools are starting to pick up and many of the schools in ERO's telephone survey believed that they could and should address problem students themselves. Providing schools with more immediate access to specialist services and support for teachers is worthwhile, as is continued work to build effective school-wide behaviour management plans.

The Hei Awhina Mātua programme for Māori students who experience behavioural and learning difficulties aims to develop a partnership between parents and other whānau members with the teachers who share responsibility for their children. The success of the work of Russell Bishop in secondary schools provides a further model of how schools can change their culture to benefit all.

Governance arrangements

The challenging nature of governance in special schools is reflected in the fact that, of the 87 statutory interventions in place in June 2008, three were in residential schools and a fourth is in another school, Felix Donnelly College, that provides education for students with severe and challenging behaviour but whose residential provision is made by agencies other than education. Wilson (2001) reports a similar finding in the United Kingdom where ineffective governance for special needs education is identified as one of the factors impeding policy implementation.

A commissioner can provide greater efficiency and clarity of decision-making. As the Auditor General's recent report on Ministry of Education support for boards of trustees points out, the capacity of the commissioner is a vital component in the success of any intervention. However, even the most capable commissioner cannot be expected to deal with chronic dysfunction. It is to the credit of the current

³³ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma (2006), p2.

³⁴ Glynn, T., Berryman, M., Atvars, K., & Harawira, W. (1997). Chapter 5).

commissioner for both Waimokoia and Westbridge that the vulnerabilities around student safety issues have been managed to assuage significant issues in the case of the former and to deal with ongoing personnel matters in the case of the latter.

Options for governance

The option of one board for these three schools in whatever format they continue has the advantage of consistency and would make it more likely that the schools would serve their intended purpose. It may offer an appropriate structure for providing a national continuum of provision for these students by integrating existing resources from the residential behavioural schools and the health camps.

Once the governance structure is agreed the Ministry would need to develop a frame of reference/operational guidelines that would apply to the three schools. The development of these guidelines would give an opportunity to incorporate international best practice into the operation of the schools and may significantly change their structure and organisation.

Optimum school size

The question of optimum school size is vexed and presupposes the continuation of the schools in their current form. The literature³⁵ is clear about the disadvantages of aggregating these students and equally clear that removing them from local settings is disadvantageous.

These schools are anachronisms. The thrust is always to inclusive practice. They provide expensive respite care but who benefits? What real work is done to prepare for the child's return? If the student's problems emanate from home environment, respite is a false situation. We want highly specialised local units for the extreme end of the range, staffed and managed by people with expertise. The pressure for removal from school typically comes from the school and social worker, not from the parents. Students need to be integrated into the community, able to generalise their learning in authentic contexts. School principal.

Issues

It is ERO's view that, in the longer term, retaining all three residential schools in their present form and mode of operation is not the best use of the resources available within the wider network of provision for children and young people with severe and challenging behaviour difficulties.

There is merit in reviewing the current provision to determine whether local services and personnel would be better placed to provide for children closer to their homes, families and regular schools. The role and purpose of health camps should also be considered as there is currently little clarity about these.

In the short term, however, there are issues that need to be urgently addressed to improve the current functioning of the residential schools if these are to provide more effectively for this group of students.

³⁵ Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma (2006), Church, J (2003).

In ERO's view the Ministry of Education should consider:

- establishing one overarching board for the three schools operating with a national referral committee to recommend the most appropriate placement for each child;
- developing a frame of reference/operational guidelines that would apply to all three schools;
- creating the role of national practice leader either as part of an overarching board or as part of the wider network serving students with severe and challenging behaviour needs;
- reviewing the current duration of residential care and education to align with best practice;
- increasing the level of interagency work in determining the most appropriate intervention at the earliest point;
- providing more specialised and coherent training for principals, teachers and residential staff of the three schools; and
- developing common terminology to be used for children with severe and challenging behaviour/conduct disorder.

It is also ERO's view that, although outside its current operational role, GSE could take a more active future role in:

- identifying and disseminating evidence-based special education practice; and
- monitoring the long-term outcomes of interventions for children with severe and challenging behaviour.

Appendix 1: Bibliography

- Ministry of Education. (2008). *Auckland Special Education Network Strategy*. Auckland: Author.
- Bretherton, M. (1998). *Meeting the needs of children with severe behavioural difficulties: What can New Zealand learn?* An unpublished report from a Winston Churchill Fellowship Award.
- Church, J. (2003). *The definition, diagnosis and treatment of children and youth with severe behaviour difficulties: a review of research*. Retrieved 8 August, 2008 from: http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/special_education/15171
- Education Review Office. (2003). *Evaluation indicators for education reviews in schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Auckland Uniservices Limited. (2007). *Evaluation of the Westbridge social services programme: final report*. Auckland: Centre for Child and Family Policy Research, Auckland Uniservices Limited, The University of Auckland.
- Eyberg, S.M., Nelson, M.M., & Boggs, S.R. (2008). Evidence-based psycho-social treatments for children and adolescents with disruptive behaviour. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 37(1) 215 –237.
- Glynn, T., Berryman, M., Atvars, K., & Harawira, W. (1997). *Hei Awhina matua, a home and school behavioural programme: Final report to the research and international section of the New Zealand Ministry of Education*. Specialist Education Services and The Poutama Pounamu Education and Research & Development Centre.
- Hornby, G. & Witte, C. (2008). Looking back on school – the views of adult graduates of a residential special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. *British Journal of Special Education* 35 (2).
- Ministry of Social Development, (2007). *Inter-agency plan for conduct disorder/ severe antisocial behaviour. 2007- 2012*
Wellington: Author
- Macfarlane, A. (2007). *Discipline, democracy and diversity: working with students with behaviour difficulties*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Meyer, L. & Evans, I. (2006). *Literature review on intervention with challenging behaviour in children and youth with development disabilities*. A report for the Reducing Challenging Behaviour Initiative. Wellington: Ministry of Education,
- Controller and Auditor General. (2008). *Ministry of Education: Monitoring and supporting school boards of trustees*. Wellington: Controller and Auditor General Tumuaki o te Mana Arotake.

Moore, D., Anderson, A., & Sharma, U. (2006). *The effectiveness of segregated settings/ withdrawal centres/ centres of extra support as an intervention for children and young people with severe challenging behaviour*. Melbourne: Monash University.

Pederson, E. (2004). *Residential Special Schools: Waimokoia and Westbridge*. An unpublished report for the Ministry of Education. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *Regional Health Schools: Initiative for Students with High Health Needs: Draft guidelines*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

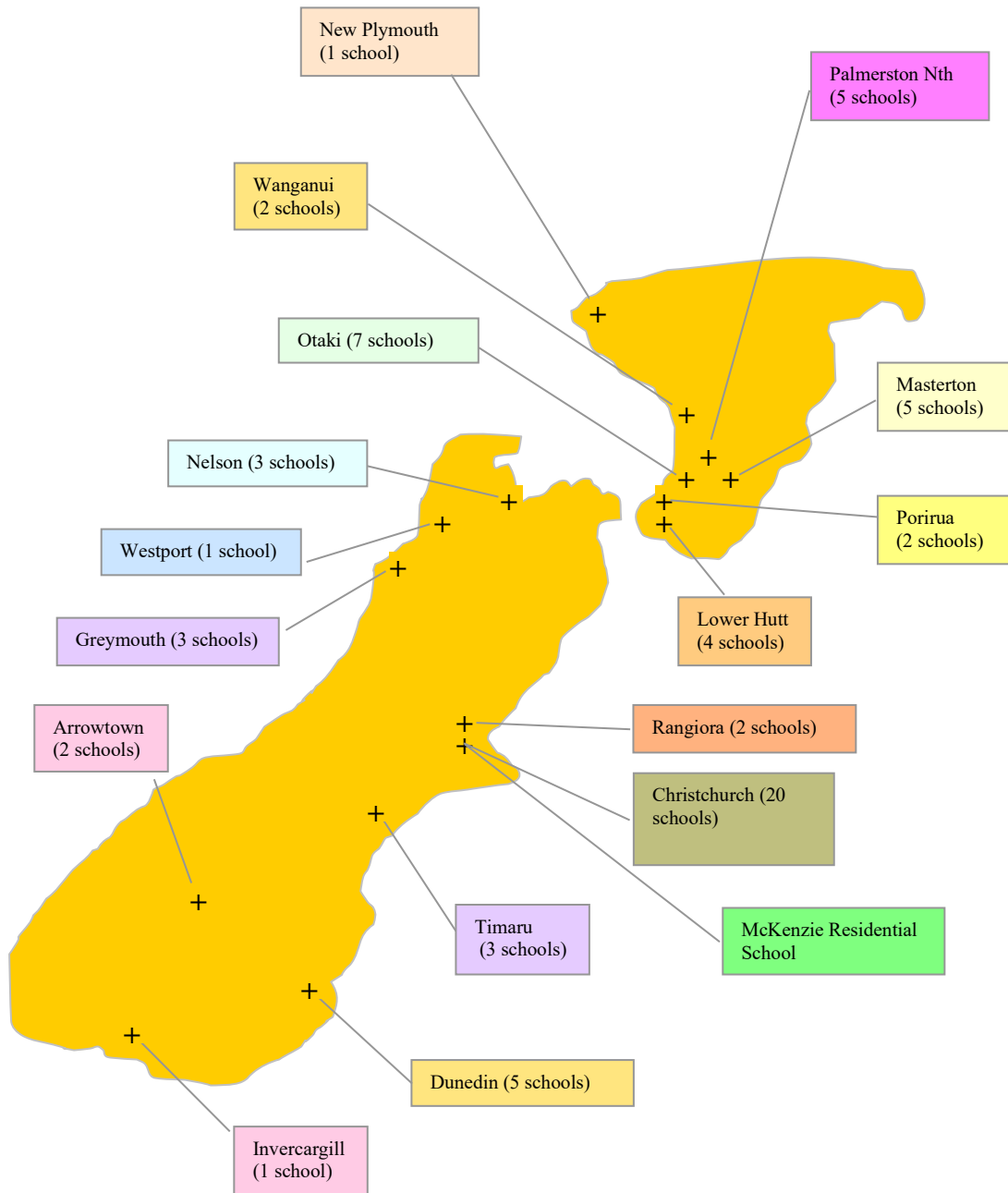
Reynolds, A., & Wolfe, B. (1999). Special education and school achievement: an exploratory analysis with a central-city sample. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 21, (3).

Wilson, M. (2001). Comprehensive school governance and special educational needs provision: policy, practice and future priorities. *Educational Management & Administration* 29 (1).

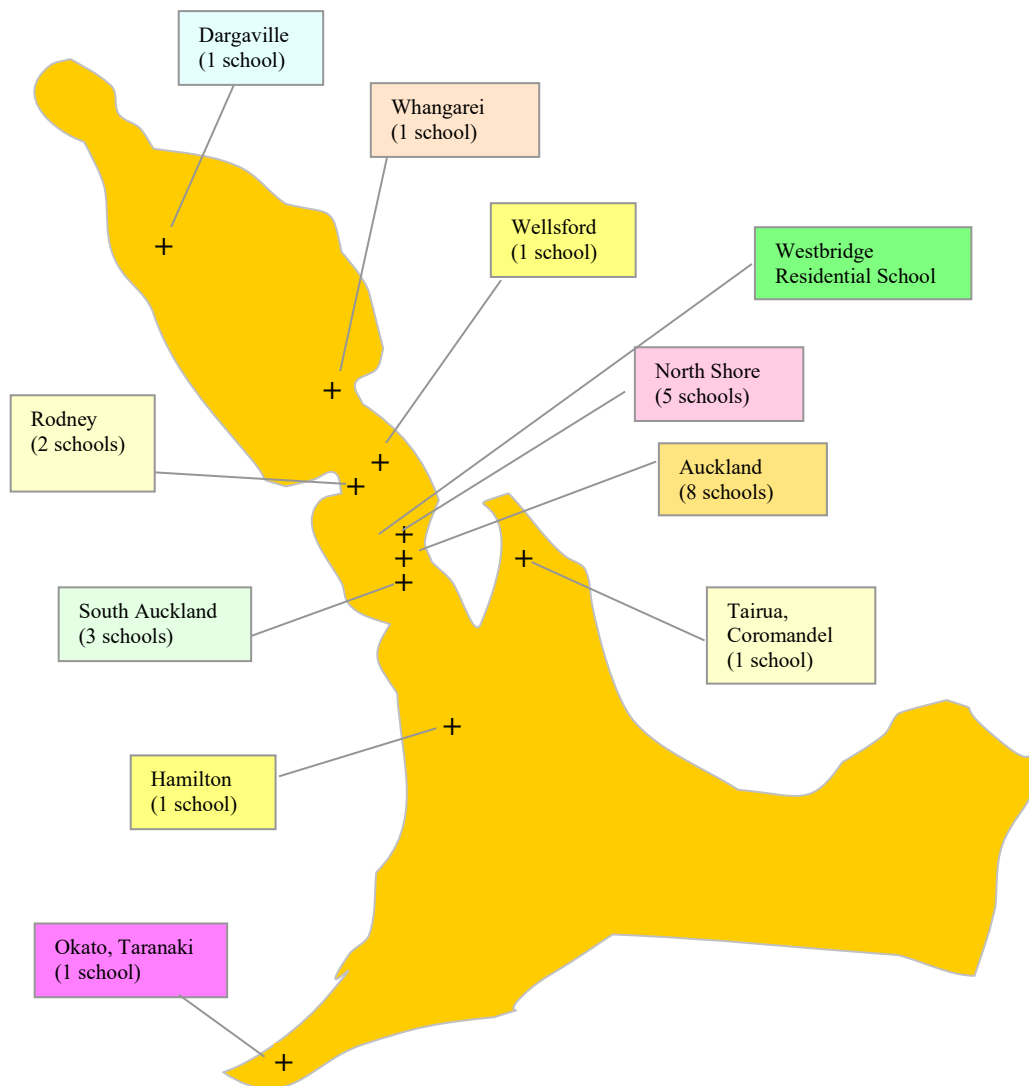
Ministry of Education. (2008). *Pasifika Education Plan 2008-2012* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Appendix 2: Distribution of referrals by catchment area

McKenzie Residential Behaviour School



Westbridge Residential Behaviour School



Waimokoia Residential Behaviour School

