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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION OF WESTBRIDGE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

28 - 30 October 2025

Report to the Ministry of Education

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Executive summary

Westbridge Residential School has experienced a year of constant change and new challenges.

ERO recommendations, following a visit in Term 4 2024, saw the Ministry of Education put in place an Action Plan intervention on 19 December 2024. The Combined School Board was replaced with a Commissioner in Term 2 2025, the current Principal appointed in Term 2 and the Deputy Principal School in Term 3 2025.

The progress report on the Action Plan detailed extensive training, new initiatives, policies and procedures. This resulted in the Action Plan intervention ending on 14 October 2025. A follow up ERO visit also took place in Term 3 2025 and the school awaits a confirmed report. SAMS Developmental Evaluation visit commenced on 28 October 2025.

Historically, Westbridge Residential School's cohort has been aged 8-12 years. This year's cohort includes^{9(2)(a)} [REDACTED]. This has presented new curriculum challenges as the school must now provide NCEA pathways. Older ākonga also bring new health and wellbeing challenges and the need for age-appropriate leisure activities.

The Evaluation Team recommends that the staff balance reflection on external critiques with achievements and take time to acknowledge strengths. As Westbridge plans for the future, we encourage them to maintain a focus on provision that aligns with the values that guide them as set out in their Philosophy of Care and to seek input from ākonga and whānau.

Strengths

- Feedback from whānau highlights strong, trusting relationships and positive views of the intervention provided by the school. Positive feedback on their children is highly valued.
- Whānau also spoke positively of a partnership approach and high frequency of communication from the school.
- Feedback from ākonga was positive.
- Westbridge has connections to the wider community through participation in mainstream activities and events.
- The transition in and out of Westbridge is person-centred and well managed despite wider system delays.
- Professional development for staff is thorough and targeted at improving educational provision for ākonga.
- Staff value access to increased knowledge and skills to address the mental health and wellbeing needs of ākonga.
- Westbridge collaborates with the Public Health Nurse Service to provide regular and robust health oversight and access to services.

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- The Westbridge Philosophy of Care is holistic, person-centred and founded in Te Whare Tapa Wha.
- The Residential and School Teams have established communication processes to ensure continuity of care for ākonga.
- Regular reviews of progress, interventions and plans include ākonga voice.
- There is a commitment to continuous improvement as evidenced by Action Plan implementation.
- Teaching of self-regulation, underpinned by zones of regulation, is embedded across Residential and School Teams.
- The Personal Key Worker (PKW) role provides individual support and connection for ākonga.
- The introduction of a Transition class supports the orientation of new ākonga and a baseline assessment.
- The School Team rapidly developed NCEA Level 1 curriculum provision in response to a changed age range of the cohort.

Areas for development

- Review the current multiple plan approach and create an overarching document capturing the goals of referrer, whānau and ākonga. Baseline data can then be used to identify appropriate progress milestones. This will evidence outcomes for ākonga and Westbridge.
- Continue the exploration of collaboration with local schools to provide access to an NCEA curriculum that can be highly tailored for ākonga strengths, learning styles and future plans (e.g. Supported Learning Standards and vocational programmes).
- Further incorporate planning for home and community support in the transition out of Westbridge. Connect whānau to available funded and community support in their local area and share successful behaviour support strategies.
- Add consent to the use of CCTV monitoring to whānau agreement and consent forms.
- Review policies with the new Board anticipated to be established in Term 1 2026. Ensure policies are easy to use, specific to Westbridge and provide for ākonga, whānau and staff to contribute to policy review.

Background

Standards and Monitoring Services (SAMS) have been commissioned to undertake a Developmental Evaluation of the three Residential Specialist Schools in Aotearoa by the Ministry of Education. The Developmental Evaluation process aims to provide a catalyst for ongoing learning in complex environments. It identifies positive and innovative approaches that already occur within the residential school and provides suggestions for continuous improvement.

Westbridge Residential School is a full primary school located in a rural area of west Auckland. As well as a school classroom complex, gym and swimming pool, the site houses four residential cottages. School grounds also contain a BMX track, trampolines, tennis and netball courts, and a sand pit.

Entry to Westbridge is managed through two pathways overseen by the Ministry of Education: Te Kahu Tōi Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS) and the Residential Specialist School only (RSS-only). Access through either pathway is for ākonga described as having “social, behaviour and/or learning needs that are highly complex and challenging”. In practice this means that young people attending Westbridge often have multiple diagnoses, negative engagements with schools and experiences of trauma.

This year, Westbridge has provided support for a low roll of ^{9(2)(a)} across the school year. Some ākonga have been placed with a single term of approved and funded enrolment requiring requests for extension and resulting in uncertainty for ākonga, whānau and the school.

Reference documents:

Key documents in the development of this Developmental Evaluation framework have been:

- Education and Training Act 2020
- Education Hostels Regulations 2005
- Enabling Good Lives (EGL) vision and principles
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Developmental Evaluation methodology

This Developmental Evaluation aims to provide information about practices and the quality of life of those using services. It identifies positive and innovative approaches occurring within the residential school and provides a catalyst for ongoing learning and continuous improvement.

The evaluation of Residential Specialist Schools was requested by the Ministry of Education and is informed by a number of developmental tools used by SAMS. These tools take into account multiple perspectives from a range of stakeholders: school / service, student, family, staff and community.

The people involved in this evaluation included:

9(2)(a)



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Findings

Governance

March 2025 saw a significant change in the governance of Westbridge with the appointment of a Commissioner, replacing the previous combined Board operating across Westbridge and Halswell Schools. This appointment and an agreed Action Plan were in response to concerns raised by ERO following a visit in Term 3 2024.

The Evaluation Team has reviewed the following documents to gain insight into the school's governance and progress:

- Westbridge Residential School Action Plan
- Westbridge Residential School Action Plan Progress report
- Te Mahau Ministry of Education letter acknowledging Action Plan progress and ending Action Plan statutory intervention.

The Principal and Commissioner both spoke of a well-established and effective working relationship. We note that the decision by the Director of Education, Tāmaki Herenga Tāngata, to close the Action Plan while acknowledging the progress achieved reflects the efficacy of the governance in place.

Ākonga voice in the direction of school and governance decision-making is sought through student wellbeing surveys. These have been conducted termly, tracking trends and informing planning. The Student Committee has not been re-established as current enrolment levels are low and some ākonga are present for short placements. Plans are in place to monitor enrolments and re-establish the Student Committee as numbers grow. Staff wellbeing surveys are also in place to capture their input.

As Westbridge looks to the future and the re-establishment of a Board in Term 1 2026, we encourage the school community to ensure that a new Board includes people with lived experience of disability and Tangata Whaikaha Māori, using their connections with local iwi. This will ensure that Māori and disabled communities have a voice in decision-making. We note that when re-established the Student Committee will provide a vehicle for ākonga voice to affect governance. Westbridge should also consider how whānau voice can be heard at this level.

Staffing

The Evaluation Team met with all Teachers and Teacher Aides and spent time in general and Te Reo Māori classes. We also met with the Residential Cottage Managers and Assistant Managers and Youth Workers on duty. We note that staff are diverse and there is a strong representation of Māori and Pasifika staff in the Residential Team. This is reflected in the culture, routines, values and strategies we saw in the cottages.

Staff were reserved in expressing their thoughts to us, and we learned towards the end of our visit that many felt let down by the way their past comments had been interpreted by previous visiting professionals.

The Westbridge Residential School Action Plan included this outcome / goal:

Training for staff to effectively support students with an increasing number of complex needs to maintain a safe environment. Staff will be able to recognise the underlying causes of behaviours such as trauma, disabilities or mental health issues, enabling more effective practice.

The Action Plan Progress report to Te Mahau Ministry of Education listed actions in progress to achieve this outcome and formed part of the evidence reviewed as part of the decision to end the Action Plan intervention on 14 October 2025.

Training records and plans were reviewed. Staff have undertaken training on trauma-informed practice, functional behavioural analysis and Team Teach de-escalation strategies. Collaborative work with Tūturu has taken place to strengthen staff support around mental health and addiction awareness. A refresh of PB4L values, frameworks and strategies is underway. Staff feedback highlighted the value of Team Teach, PB4L and syndrome-specific training.

We observed Teachers and Teacher Aides working collaboratively, reflecting the documented practice expectation that staff will swap out to change the interactions with ākonga who become dysregulated. Teachers and Teacher Aides provide person-centred, individually tailored learning opportunities and we heard examples of joint learning planning.

The Evaluation Team reviewed the daily routines at the cottages and observed some of these in action. Aligning with the EGL principle of Ordinary Life outcomes, ākonga are expected to contribute to the day-to-day running of their cottage, as well as regularly maintain their own personal care routines. Residential staff plan and support group and individual planned activities focused on interests, self-regulation and growth opportunities. Aligning with the EGL principle Mainstream First, good use is made of community facilities, events and activity organisations. The PKW role was described, clearly reflecting

a good understanding of the role and the move to include ākonga in the Personalised Programme Plan (PPP) review meetings was valued, reflecting person-centred approaches.

Staff share information across the school and Residential Teams formally using the ETAP note system. Incidents are recorded using a functional behavioural analysis framework noting antecedents, behaviour and consequences. Alongside this, staff share information conversationally as part of the physical hand-over of care and oversight at the beginning and end of the school day. We heard that some Teacher Aides visit the residential cottages and share breakfast to support their understanding of ākonga wellbeing. We observed some Youth Workers chatting with young people engaging in practical learning tasks at the end of the school day. These informal connections support a seamless transition between environments for ākonga and promote the perception of a united team. We encourage Westbridge to promote and embed these practices.

Some staff have experience of working at Westbridge in roles of Youth Workers and Teacher Aides. The Residential Deputy Head and Lead Manager have spent time this year seconded to the Academic Team while recruitment was undertaken. We note that the movement of staff across the two service components provides an opportunity to foster a joint understanding of the systems. We observed some joint practices (e.g. preparation for activity hui where ākonga are informed of upcoming activities and share back goals, safe staff and safe places that support self-regulation). We encourage Westbridge to embed this experience across settings into the development of all staff to deepen understanding of the experiences of ākonga across their whole time at the school.

Policies and procedures

The Westbridge Residential School Action Plan required that:

The Board will ensure that school policies and procedures are coherent and fit for purpose.

The review and approval of policies previously rested with the combined Board of Halswell and Westbridge Schools and is currently vested in the Commissioner. The Action Plan Progress report to Te Mahau Ministry of Education listed a range of actions completed and in progress to address this outcome and this formed part of the evidence reviewed as part of the decision to end the Action Plan intervention on 14 October 2025.

Plans are in place to ensure that policies are tailored uniquely to the requirements of Westbridge now that the combined approach with Halswell has ended. As work to tailor policies to the requirements of Westbridge progresses, we encourage the Principal and Commissioner to include an opportunity for ākonga, whānau and staff to contribute to the policy review.

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Policies are available to view on the Westbridge Residential School website and the Parent Information Pack includes information advising of this. Each policy is dated and includes a date for the next scheduled review. Staff induction includes a review of policies and procedures. The Student Induction Booklet outlines key routines and procedures and makes clear that ākonga can raise concerns or complaints with any staff member with whom they feel safe.

A reflection procedure following serious incidents includes consideration of procedures and policies to ensure these are fit for purpose.

CCTV cameras are in place in Residential cottages communal areas and monitored from a staff office. The Evaluation Team discussed with Principal the value of adding information about CCTV to Parent Information Packs and gaining explicit consent from whānau to their use.

The Evaluation Team discussed the Complaints policy with the Principal and this is referenced in the Student rights and complaints section (p14).

Family / whānau / caregiver and community connections

The Evaluation Team spoke with four whānau members. Their feedback was positive and close, trusting relationships with the Pathways Coordinator and cottage staff were highlighted. Whānau drew attention to the detrimental impact of delays in commencing placement following on from school visits. The root cause of this delay appears to be outside of the school's control as they must await paperwork confirming placement and funding. Staff endeavour to mitigate the impact of the delay by maintaining communication and providing what information they can.

Connections between family and child are maintained through regular phone calls with family members and visits home. Fragile relationships are bolstered by regular contact from the Westbridge team sharing good news and successes. We encourage consideration of how success can be recorded in written formats to ensure the lasting impact of positive reflections of young people.

A successful reintegration into a mainstream school is often the outcome specified by referrers seeking a placement at the school. Consequently, the Student Pathway Coordinator's work with whānau flows immediately from supporting entry to planning a successful transition out.

Time is taken to get to know each whānau's unique circumstances, culture, beliefs and preferences. Whānau and ākonga set goals as part of entry procedures. Referrers set goals as part of placement applications. The Westbridge team operates Confidential to the Ministry of Education, subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

with several plans setting out goals including IWS Plans, IEPs and PPPs. This confuses measurement and reporting of outcomes and complicates ākonga knowledge and ownership of their goals and achievements. We discussed with the Senior Leadership Team the advantages of creating a single overarching document capturing the goals of referrer, whānau and ākonga to guide intervention. Baseline data can then be used to identify appropriate progress milestones, strategies documented and achievement recorded. Currently, academic baseline data is captured in the Transition Class programme. We encourage Westbridge to extend data captured at this time to include baseline data related to goals (e.g. where “focus on myself in class” is a goal capturing data on task engagement with / without support etc.).

Prior to enrolment at Westbridge, young people and their whānau we spoke with had not been well supported by Ministry of Social Development funded Disability Support Services (DSS) at home and in the community. Not all ākonga currently enrolled at Westbridge meet the eligibility criteria for this support. Of those young people who do, some whānau did not know that this support was available to them and others had been offered support that did not meet their needs. We discussed with the Student Pathway Coordinator incorporating accessing appropriate DSS support and further embedding planning home and community support into Transition Plans. We also encourage sharing successful behaviour management and self-regulation support strategies with whānau as part of their return home.

As the age range of the cohort enrolled at Westbridge has changed, new challenges for reintegration have emerged. Previously, Westbridge has received enrolments of mainly 8–12-year-olds. Increasingly, new enrolments are for teenagers and 9(2)(a) will be beyond statutory enrolment age when they leave. We encourage Westbridge to explore ways to incorporate vocational pathways into curriculum and transition planning with older ākonga.

Cultural needs

Westbridge collects information about the culture, beliefs and values of ākonga and whānau as part of the entry process, which includes details to construct pepeha. The Westbridge Philosophy of Care is structured after Te Whare Tapa Wha model and recognises the importance of spiritual and cultural practices. The school curriculum and residential programme incorporate cultural learning (e.g. Te Reo class, events for Samoan and Tongan language weeks, taonga pūoro, visits to Wharenui Harikoa exhibition). Westbridge connects with Te Kawerau ā Maki through the Mana Kura initiative in which the iwi and schools seek to connect ākonga to local Māori culture, history, and language.

Māori and Pasifika staff are in the majority across Westbridge. Their influence is embedded in practice, culture, routines, values and strategies particularly in the residential cottages. Karakia is routine. Residential decor features traditional motifs as does the Westbridge school logo. We encourage Westbridge to include Māori concepts into zone of regulation teaching and to deepen connections with local iwi.

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Risk and behaviour management

Westbridge Residential School Action Plan required that:

The Board will ensure that a physical and emotionally safe environment is provided for all students.

The Action Plan Progress report to Te Mahau Ministry of Education listed a range of actions completed and in progress to address this outcome and formed part of evidence reviewed as part of the decision to end the Action Plan intervention on 14 October 2025.

Westbridge staff have received Team Teach Behaviour Support training. Two staff members are accredited Team Teach Trainers. Team Teach training frames behaviour as a form of communication and places the focus on understanding behaviour triggers and de-escalation strategies. Physical intervention strategies are taught within the context of viewing this as a last resort. Westbridge staff have also received training in PB4L, trauma-informed care and zones of regulation. A PB4L refresh is underway with support from a Ministry of Education Advisor. Features of all approaches are present in individual and school-wide Behaviour Management Plans.

Individual Behaviour Management Plans are regularly reviewed and amended, informed by staff and ākonga insights following incidents and successful interventions. Staff Teams are notified of changes and reminded of key strategies via email. ETAP generates automatic emails to staff when a report is logged so that all are aware of events preceding their interactions with ākonga. Staff across residential and school settings operate a practice of exchanging staff supporting ākonga when they are dysregulated. This change of staff helps with the de-escalation of ākonga and staff, supporting the mindful implementation of behaviour management strategies.

Zones of regulation information is displayed around the school and residential settings, and ākonga are supported to identify their current state and explore strategies to self-regulate. Overt teaching of self-awareness of their emotional state and self-regulation is apparent and woven throughout the day.

Westbridge operates a coloured band achievement system based on a self-reflection achievement measurement. Ākonga reflect on a site-wide engagement goal and personal goals. Times to reflect and achieve are structured throughout the day, providing ākonga with multiple opportunities to be successful. Staff award points throughout the day for engagement and behaviours aligning with goals etc.

In the residential setting, progressing to a higher band level unlocks greater privileges (e.g. access to more Wharehokohoko shelves when spending points, a later bedtime). The residential Wharehokohoko is an Aladdin's cave of desirable tangible rewards. The opportunity to delay gratification and save points for a particular item, and the encouragement to spend points on gifts for siblings' birthdays etc. increases the impact of the system. The school setting has created a Wharehokohoko and implemented a similar approach to provide consistency.

The Westbridge Behaviour Support policy includes a Restraint Policy and any use of a restraint is recorded in ETAP and extracted to a separate record.

Abuse, harassment and bullying policies

Westbridge has developed a Philosophy of Care incorporating a trauma-informed approach and reflecting Te Whare Tapa Wha model. This aims to embed the support of physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural safety in all aspects of life at Westbridge.

Practice examples reflecting this include:

- The Student Induction Booklet makes it clear that ākonga can raise concerns or complaints with any staff member they feel is a safe person to communicate with.
- Residential cottages display a poster incorporating visual prompts informing ākonga that they can speak up if they are hurt or not happy with the way they are treated.
- Activity preparation in residential and school settings include ākonga naming safe staff and safe places they will make use of if needed.
- The PKW model provides one-to-one communication and connection.
- Public Health Nurse weekly scheduled meetings and drop-in sessions.
- Checking-in conversations from school staff during class activities.
- Overt teaching of zones of regulation, and identification of own and other's status and strategies in response.

All incidents are recorded in ETAP notes, providing oversight of persistent low-level issues as well as larger events. Larger events are recorded using a functional behavioural analysis format. This forms the foundation of further information gathering and responses recorded in the Incidents Register. Any use of physical restraint is reported to Ministry of Education. Analysis of incidents informs changes to Behaviour Management Plans and whānau spoke of their input into

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this process. Examples of whānau insights into the antecedents of events being included in Behaviour intervention Plans were shared.

Student and staff surveys include questions about safety. Staff identification of what constitutes an incident of harm towards themselves is inconsistent and the Westbridge team are working towards a shared understanding to ensure consistent expectations of ākonga.

Student rights and complaints

The Evaluation Team discussed the current Complaints Policy with the Principal and drew attention to the potential for misuse and/or the perception of misuse of clauses 2 and 9 set out respectively below:

The Principal, on the receipt of a verbal complaint may at her/his discretion decide if the complaint is frivolous or vexatious.

The Principal, on receipt of an unsigned/anonymous written complaint, will determine whether or not the complaint appears to be a serious one and the probability of it being factually correct, prior to determining what, if any, investigation of the matter will follow.

It was agreed that this policy would be reviewed. Records of complaints were reviewed, and the Executive Officer / Property Manager described the robust system of response and documentation in place. Family members interviewed felt able to express any concerns or complaints and named individual staff they felt comfortable contacting.

The Student Induction Booklet includes key routines and procedures and makes it clear that ākonga can raise concerns or complaints with any staff member they feel is a safe person to communicate with. Residential cottages display a poster incorporating visual prompts informing ākonga that they can speak up if they are hurt or not happy with the way they are treated. It outlines a simple complaints process. Beneath this is a written explanation of the complaint's procedure and response timeframes to promote shared understanding between ākonga and staff. Westbridge seeks to create an environment in which young people can feel safe to voice concerns by teaching concepts of safe staff, allowing ākonga to choose who they view this way and providing regular time with PKWs. We also note a focus on establishing reliable, predictable and consistent staff responses in Residential Team.

Regular ākonga surveys include the questions “Do you feel safe at school?” and “Do you feel safe in residential?” These surveys provide Westbridge with feedback trends to alert them when further investigation should be undertaken. We sighted analysis of survey results.

The PKW meetings also provide opportunities for students to voice their worries, thoughts and opinions. The Evaluation Team reviewed meeting notes which capture the exact questions the PKW asks and quoted student responses. These provide insight into ākonga wellbeing, self-knowledge and growth over time. PKWs use insights to monitor and tailor support. PKWs conversations begin generally and then follow the responses of the young person and some questions and answers are therefore quite identifying. More general examples include:

- PKWs ask “What are some positives that happened this week?” some recorded responses are “Getting my silver band”, “Going to polyfest and the driving range” and “Staying up late and seeing the fireworks”.
- PKWs ask “How’s things been for you / How was your week? How do you feel being back at Westbridge?” some recorded responses are “Everything’s been chill”, “My week was ok but when I go home I’m not coming back next term”, “I was ok coming back but I’m still not happy to be back. I just miss X”, and “School’s been alright. I’ve earnt a couple of credits I think”.
- PKWs ask “How’s residential going for you? / Do you enjoy residential?” some recorded responses are “It’s been the same. Alright.”, “I like the staff but I don’t want to sleep here” and “I’ve got all my routines on lock”.

Good relationships and friendly interactions between staff and ākonga were observed during the Evaluation visit. Ākonga gave generally positive feedback, one engaged enthusiastically with us and described in detail self-regulation skills learned and favourite staff.

Health and wellbeing

Westbridge has in place good systems to gather health information in meetings with whānau and ākonga as part of their entry procedure. The Evaluation Team reviewed the Induction Checklist and Parent Information Pack supporting this process.

Westbridge have developed good links with the Public Health Nurse service and young people are supported by weekly visits from them. This has been a particularly valuable support in managing new health and wellbeing challenges presented by an older cohort (e.g. drug and alcohol use). Westbridge has also made use of Tūturu resources to add to staff knowledge and resources to address health and wellbeing issues resulting in the self-regulation techniques ākonga demonstrated.

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The Residential Team have appropriate medication storage, management and recording of administration in place. The activity programme provides a wide range of physical activity, to contribute to both physical and mental wellbeing as well as developing pro-social behaviours. A partnership with Sport Waitākere and Youth Workers' knowledge of local opportunities supports this provision.

The School Team have implemented a wider, practically-focused curriculum in the afternoon sessions incorporating art, music, drama, cultural performance and technology. This is aimed at expanding ākonga range of interests as well as providing a balanced learning experience. The Westbridge Catering Team provides a well-received and healthy diet, managing allergies while ensuring nutritional needs are met.

Comparison to previous evaluations in terms of improvements

SAMS undertook a Developmental Evaluation of Westbridge Residential School in July 2020. This report focused on the residential provision.

The Evaluation Team noted that progress has been made against recommendations in the previous report:

- The residential PKW role has further developed as recommended. PKWs have close connections with ākonga and we heard them name PKW as “safe staff” as part of routine pre-activity hui. PKWs keep records, plan progress and put in place strategies.
- Hand-over notes and meetings take place between school and residential staff and between residential staff shifts.
- We noted holistic, person-centred planning as discussed in the previous report. Ākonga and whānau contribute goals and take part in Personalised Programme Plan (PPP) celebrations to acknowledge progress.
- Residential staff plan and support group and individual planned activities focused on interests, self-regulation and growth opportunities.
- IWS Plans, IEPs and PPPs remain separate documents. We discussed how these might be unified and this is a recommendation in this report.
- Staff have undertaken trauma-informed practice training and Team Teach behaviour de-escalation training to extend staff understanding as recommended. Regular refresher sessions take place to embed practice.
- Syndrome specific training has been undertaken as recommended.
- The PB4L refresh is underway.
- The Complaints Policy was updated in December 2022 and the Child Protection Policy in November 2023.

Recommendations

- Review the current multiple plan approach and create an overarching document capturing the goals of referrer, whānau and ākonga. Baseline data can then be used to identify appropriate progress milestones. This will evidence outcomes for ākonga and Westbridge.
- Continue the exploration of collaboration with local schools to provide access to an NCEA curriculum that can be highly tailored for ākonga strengths, learning styles and future plans (e.g. Supported Learning Standards and vocational programmes).
- Further incorporate planning for home and community support in transition out of Westbridge. Connect whānau to available funded and community supports in their local area and share successful behaviour support strategies.
- Add consent to the use of CCTV monitoring to whānau agreement and consent forms.
- Review policies with the new Board anticipated to be established in Term 1 2026. Ensure policies are easy to use and specific to Westbridge.

Documents reviewed

- SAMS Developmental Evaluation report July 2020
- ERO reports
- Westbridge Residential School Strategic Plan 2024-2025
- Westbridge Residential School Action Plan
- Westbridge Action Plan Progress report
- Te Mahau Ministry of Education letter acknowledging Action Plan progress and ending Statutory Intervention
- Westbridge Residential School Induction Checklist
- Westbridge Student Induction Booklet
- Westbridge Staff Handbook 2025
- Westbridge Parent Information Pack
- Westbridge Philosophy of Care
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Personalised Programme Plans (PPPs)
- Ākonga academic tracking records
- Transition class programme
- Residential cottage daily logs
- Primary Key Worker (PKW) reports
- Age and Gender Mixing Policy
- Behaviour Support Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Employment and Personnel Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Fees and Expenses Policy
- Finance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Integrity of Information Policy
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Response to Historic Allegations Policy

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Development Evaluation for the Ministry of Education Westbridge Residential School

Standards and Monitoring Services

- Staff Appointments Policy
- Sensitive Expenditure Policy.

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Responses to the draft evaluation report

Response from Westbridge Residential School

Response to key recommendations

We accept the recommendations outlined and will integrate them into our strategic planning and operational practice. Our intended actions are summarised below:

1. Development of an overarching planning document

We have begun work to unify IWS Plans, IEPs and PPPs into a single, coherent plan that captures the goals of referrers, whānau and ākonga. This will ensure a clear line of sight from baseline data through to progress milestones, supporting transparent reporting, strong student ownership of goals and more consistent measurement of outcomes across both school and residential settings.

2. Strengthening NCEA access through collaboration

Westbridge has begun to explore partnerships with local secondary schools (Massey High School), training providers (MITO), and Supported Learning programmes (SPEC, Supported Learning Resources) to create flexible NCEA and vocational pathways. These partnerships will be designed to reflect student strengths, preferred learning styles and long-term aspirations, and will align with the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum's focus on meaningful pathways and learner agency.

3. Enhanced transition planning for home and community support

We will expand transition processes to include more deliberate connections of whānau to external support, community services and funded options appropriate to ākonga needs. Sharing successful behaviour and self-regulation strategies with whānau will remain a priority to ensure continuity and safety when ākonga return home or transition to mainstream schools or training pathways.

4. Consent for CCTV use

We have revised our whānau agreement and consent documentation to include an explicit section regarding CCTV use in the school and residences, ensuring transparency and safeguarding practices that align with legislative expectations and whānau rights.

5. Policy review in preparation for a new Board

Ahead of a separate Board being re-established in 2026, we will review all policies and procedures to ensure they are tailored to the unique context of Westbridge, accessible, and shaped by the perspectives of ākonga, whānau, staff and our communities—including

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those with lived experience of disability and Tangata Whaikaha Māori. This reflects our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and inclusive governance.

Commitment moving forward:

This report highlights the need to further strengthen a unified culture across our Residential and School Teams so that ākonga experience consistent expectations and a shared approach to practice. In response to the SAMs recommendation, we have proposed the establishment of the role of Across-site Assistant Principal to lead and sustain this alignment across both settings.

The emphasis on celebrating achievements is well-received, and we will continue to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of staff who work daily in a complex environment to support young people with highly complex needs.

As we move into 2026, we remain committed to:

- embedding culturally responsive practice across all settings
- strengthening transitions in and out of Westbridge
- ensuring that ākonga voice guides decision-making
- continuing to refine our curriculum and wellbeing frameworks
- strengthening partnerships with whānau, iwi, local schools and community agencies
- sustaining a safe environment for ākonga and staff, consistent with New Zealand legislation and Ministry expectations.

We appreciate the constructive and future-focused nature of the evaluation and will use it as a catalyst for continued growth, innovation, and improvement. Our focus remains firmly on providing high-quality, responsive, and meaningful learning and life experiences for ākonga and their whānau.