



# ERO Early Childhood Governing Organisation Initiating Evaluation Report

**Governing Organisation:** BestStart Educare Limited

**Head Office Location:** Auckland

## 1 ERO’s Judgements

A **Governing Organisation Evaluation** evaluates the extent to which organisational conditions support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners in the organisation’s services. *Te Ara Poutama- indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most* is the basis for making judgements about its effectiveness. *The Governing Organisation Quality Evaluation Judgement Rubric* derived from the indicators, is used to inform the ERO’s judgements about this organisation’s performance.

ERO’s judgement for BestStart Educare Limited is as follows:

### ERO’s judgement Organisational Conditions

Assurance Review	Whakatō Emerging	Whāngai Establishing	Whakaū Embedding	Whakawhanake Sustaining
Overall judgement			<b>Effective</b>	

The organisation conditions encompass Ngā Akatoro | Domains of:

- Ngā Aronga Whai Hua | Evaluation for improvement
- Kaihautū | Leadership fosters collaboration and improvement
- Te Whakaruruhau | Stewardship through effective governance and management.

## 2 Context of the Governing Organisation

BestStart Educare Limited is a large national early childhood organisation comprised of 258 centre-based services. A governing board with delegated management responsibility to a Chief Executive Officer, and a senior leadership team oversee the operations of its service. A national education leader works with a team of regional professional practice leaders, and a quality assurance manager to provide curriculum leadership to services and auditing. At the time of this evaluation 253 services hold a full licence with five on a probationary licence.

Findings from ERO’s evaluation at the governance and organisational level included evaluating the extent to which BestStart Educare Limited’s strategic intentions, quality improvement systems, processes and practices support the provision of a quality curriculum at individual service level.

### 3 Summary of findings

Conditions supporting the organisation to embed an effective culture include:

- shared values which provide clear expectations and guidance to facilitate collaborative working relationships
- a clearly defined strategy with goals that coherently align to strategic objectives and initiatives to progress improved outcomes across the organisation
- an experienced senior leadership team who provides specific and targeted support to build leadership capability fostering a culture of collective responsibility
- strategies that build relational trust that enables a highly collaborative approach to improvement
- a well-utilised and accessible online Whare Ako platform for professional learning and development to support and enhance teacher capability.

Improvement strategies that the organisation is effectively implementing include:

- a broad range of strategic initiatives led by project teams who collaboratively design and implement these with a group of services. For example, current initiatives include a focus on children's identity, language and culture, and the localised curriculum to provide children with the opportunity to learn about the cultural stories and history of their place
- a responsive and dedicated learning support team who provide targeted and timely guidance and resourcing for services and work effectively with external agencies to assist children with identified learning needs and their families
- multiple leadership pathways and initiatives to support sustained improvement, continuity, and succession planning in services.

Quality systems, processes and practices for accountability and improvement include:

- effective and highly responsive recruitment, selection, appointment, and induction processes to support ongoing sustainability in staffing
- a comprehensive approach to tracking, monitoring, and evaluating services' performance in relation to the organisations' strategy and quality improvement.

Regular planned assurance and quality audits provide leaders with a broad range of data to report at senior leadership and board level. Where non-compliances are identified better monitoring of the actions taken to show how it has been satisfactorily addressed and changes sustained over time is required.

Review and evaluation for improvement is well used and embedded at governance level. Continuing to build evaluation capability at regional support level will enable leaders to guide and mentor services more effectively. Throughout evaluation processes an increased focus on knowing what is working and what is not working for whom, including for Māori and Pacific would better inform decision making.

Leaders have self-identified that further areas for development are:

- building teacher capability in working with children of Pacific heritage, their families, and communities. A Talanoa team was established 12-18 months ago to guide culturally appropriate practices across the organisation
- a revitalisation of the strategy for working with children up to the age of three years with a deliberate approach to supporting infants and toddlers learning through play.

## 4 Summary of findings from visits to services

ERO visited a sample of fifteen services to verify what BestStart Educare Limited knows about the quality of each of the services' learning conditions and to what extent the organisational conditions support service improvement. ERO selected the service sample in consultation with the governing organisation.

Services are well supported by a team of area managers and professional practice leaders who provide targeted operational and curriculum support and guidance. Positive relationships between leaders and services contribute to ongoing improvement. The sample services visited were in Canterbury and Auckland.

Effective strategies that are supporting learners include:

- clear guidelines and high expectations of teachers to implement organisational values, practice, and service curriculum to promote a shared understanding of quality
- the deliberate placement of culturally diverse teachers who reflect their communities enabling communication in the home languages of children to build a strong sense of belonging
- prioritising leadership opportunities for centre managers to connect and share practices across the organisation and to inspire and grow their teams
- learning environments that are responsive to children's strengths, interests and needs
- effective partnerships between children, whānau and external agencies to support children who have identified learning needs
- a newly developed approach to supporting international teachers and provisionally certificated teachers with a focus on staff retention through building a sense of belonging and well-being
- a strategic focus on the identity, language, and culture of children, affirming their individuality and sense of self
- building teacher capability in understanding cultural diversity and working towards a culturally responsive environment.

Assessment, planning, processes, and practices are clearly aligned to the goals and strands of *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. Documentation in some sampled services shows increasing use of the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* and identifies children's learning and progress over time.

Leaders and teachers are taking steps towards increasing opportunities for all children to see, hear and speak te reo Māori. A small group of services have been involved in focussed work with external providers to build teachers capability in the use of te reo Māori and providing a bicultural curriculum. Extending the learning and best practices from this work across all of their services would be beneficial for all learners.

## 5 Improvement actions

Prior to the next ERO evaluation BestStart Educare Limited will progress the following actions through its Quality Improvement Planning. This includes to:

- increase the monitoring of actions taken to rectify areas of non-compliance
- strengthen capability across the regional leadership team to enable them to better guide and mentor services to do and use internal evaluation more effectively
- continue to implement a national and strategic approach to distributing the learning and best practices from current initiatives such as the localised curriculum focus to build cultural confidence for younger children, these key initiatives would benefit all groups of learners including Māori and Pacific.

## Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

As part of this review, a representative of BestStart Educare Limited completed an *ERO Governing Organisation Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they stated that the organisation has the systems, processes, and practices to be assured that service providers for licensed services within the organisation are meeting legal requirements related to:

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

The licensed service provider/s of the sampled services listed at the end of this report also completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist* for their service. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements, including those detailed in Ministry of Education Circulars and other documents, related to these areas.

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

## 7 About the Governing Organisation

Service types	Education and care services	
Total number of licensed services	258	
Total number of children licensed for across all services	18,168 children, including up to 4,339 aged under 2	
Total number of children enrolled across all services	19,440 children	
Ethnic composition (%)	Māori 21%; NZ European/Pakeha 29%; Samoan 3%, Other Pacific groups 6%, Indian 16%, Cook Island 1%,	
Number of full-time equivalent teachers	Qualified	2008
	Unqualified	801
Review team on site	October 2023	
Date of this report	21 February 2024	
Most recent ERO report(s) These are available at <a href="http://www.ero.govt.nz">www.ero.govt.nz</a>	No previous ERO governing organisation report.	

## 8 List of sampled services

All sampled services are on a full licence.

Services sampled in this evaluation:

Profile Number	Name of service	Service Type
10117	BestStart Albany 1	Education and care service
20159	BestStart Ascot Avenue	Education and care service
45132	BestStart Buchanans Road	Education and care service
10225	BestStart Epsom	Education and care service
46844	BestStart Faringdon	Education and care service
10284	BestStart Grey Lyn	Education and care service
25194	BestStart Howick	Education and care service
10299	BestStart Lambie Drive	Education and care service
10123	BestStart Lambie Drive 1	Education and care service
45826	BestStart Marshland Road	Education and care service
25049	BestStart Maich Road	Education and care service
46662	BestStart Papakura	Education and care service
45134	BestStart Redwood	Education and care service
65098	BestStart Riccarton	Education and care service
70011	BestStart Styx Mill	Education and care service



Patricia Davey  
Director of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

21 February 2024