

Managing National Assessment Report

Westlake Girls High School

May 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Westlake Girls High School:

- has addressed issues identified through NZQA's Managing National Assessment review and through the school's own internal review
- manages assessment practice for national qualifications
- manages internal and external moderation
- makes use of and manages assessment-related data
- maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

The summary section evaluates the school's overall effectiveness and provides a broad overview of the review's key findings for all readers. The remaining sections provide detail of these findings for school managers.

Why we review how schools are managing national assessment

The purpose of a Managing National Assessment review is:

- to confirm, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report, that schools are meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011* (CAAS) and its *Guidelines* (CAAS Guidelines) in order to maintain their consent to assess; and
- to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment according to the requirements of the *Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021* (Assessment Rules).

What are possible outcomes

Outcomes may include NZQA:

- requiring action from the school where an issue is identified that significantly impacts on the school meeting the requirements of their *Consent to Assess*
- agreeing action with the school where an issue has been identified that could become significant if not addressed
- making suggestions for the school to consider, to enhance good assessment practice.

What this review includes

The review has three components:

- The annual external moderation of the school's internal assessment.
- A check on specific aspects of assessment systems on an annual basis.
- A check on the school's assessment systems at least once every four years.

How we conducted this review

The review includes examination of documentation from a range of sources and interviewing key stakeholders.

Prior to the visit the school provided the following documents:

- information on their actions and self-review since the last Managing National Assessment report
- *Westlake Girls High School Assessment Policies and Documentation 2021* (Staff Handbook)
- *Student Handbook, Westlake Girls High School* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Acting Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment
- Head of Faculty for Language Acquisition and Literature
- Heads of Department for:
 - Business Studies
 - Mathematics
 - Social Sciences
 - Technology
- Assistant Head of Department for Language Acquisition and Literature
- Acting Head of Department for Visual Arts
- teacher of Visual Arts
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal and Principal's Nominee, two Deputy Principals and the Acting Deputy Principal at the end of the review visit to highlight good practice and areas for improvement, with suggested strategies, next steps and to agree on any action required.

SUMMARY

Westlake Girls High School

20 May 2021

Consent to assess confirmed

This review found that the school is meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011*. No significant issues with the school's management of national assessment were found. The school's own review mechanisms allow them to identify and respond to most issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.

At the request of the NZQA and with the school's agreement this review was first deferred from 2019 until 2020, and then rescheduled from 2020 until 2021 due to COVID 19.

What the school is doing well Westlake Girls High School has a vision and purpose defined in its Strategic Plan to inspire and engage students to achieve their academic potential, while enhancing personal growth and hauora. A focus on student agency fosters independence and ownership of student assessment outcomes and students interviewed confirmed that assessment opportunities are meeting their needs. This is evidenced through the school's highly consistent NCEA and Scholarship results. Students are mentored to achieve their academic and vocational goals.

Use of digital pedagogy and assessment are integral to this vision. Digital tools and strategies are used effectively to provide students with assessment pathways through technologies with which they are already familiar and can best support their assessment outcomes.

The school's review process ensures a culture of continuous improvement to identify any issues and develop a range of strategies to ensure any ongoing assessment issues are addressed.

Academic and vocational assessment pathways deliver authentic student work across a wide range of internal and external assessments through the school's Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Arts framework.

Robust internal and external moderation systems are supported at all levels of the school from Senior Leaders, through Line Managers to Heads of Department and teachers. Internal moderation is valued because it provides the opportunity for professional discussions to support change. These discussions are documented. External moderation is used to confirm internal processes such as provision of fit-for-purpose assessment materials and verification of accurate grade boundary decisions. This is effective moderation practice.

Achievement data is used to track student progress and meet student needs through the student's academic journey profile. Students at risk of not achieving the qualification are identified and offered appropriate support to ensure literacy, numeracy and NCEA goals are met and that they can confidently enter for qualifications and awards.

The school has developed its ongoing evaluation processes to confirm that student needs are being met. This includes analysis of student voice and data, and provision of a dedicated role to support schoolwide data sharing. Data summaries are provided to Heads of Department and teachers to help them make evidence-based decisions to justify changes to courses, confirm the best sequencing of standards and the provision of relevant local and digital contexts.

The Principal's Nominee is part of the Senior Leadership Team and works closely with the Acting Deputy Principal for Curriculum/Assessment, Deans and Heads of Department to ensure updated communication is shared face-to-face, in written and digital formats. Policies and procedures are effectively communicated to students and their whānau.

Kay Wilson
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13 July 2021

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

External review

Evidence for external review actions having been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3iv-3v)

Action Items from 20 May 2016 Managing National Assessment Report The school has fully addressed four of five action items from the 2016 Managing National Assessment report. A fifth agreed action relating to comparison of internal and external moderation results has been partially addressed.

The Principal's Nominee and Senior Leaders are continuing to strengthen checking processes to reconfirm and adjust action strategies where a trend of ongoing inconsistency in both internal or external moderation outcomes is identified. They are confident that this will provide effective professional learning, especially when combined with examples of effective practice that exist in departments within the school.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has an effective process to respond to external moderation that identifies any actions to be followed up in departments. Responses to external moderation have been used to strengthen teacher understanding of critiquing tasks and verifying accurate grade boundary decisions.

Internal review

Evidence for the school using its self-review and evaluation processes to identify areas for on-going improvement in assessment practice and procedures, which are then actioned. (CAAS Guidelines 3iv)

Strategic Review In 2019, and with the arrival of a new Principal at the end of 2017, the school reviewed its Strategic Plan, aligning academic achievement, personal growth and hauora with a stated vision of "inspiring, engaging and challenging all our students to achieve their academic potential".

The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Departments meet regularly and consider next steps with a focus on improving course design and ensuring effective and engaging pathways for students. Consistently outstanding student achievement outcomes in both internal and external assessment and Scholarship provide evidence that the school is meeting the needs of its students through realising this vision.

Review of school processes Aside from their strategic review, the school has conducted several more practical and process-based reviews. Efficient review of these processes means the school effectively pursues ownership of digital assessment, development of student and teacher agency, data analysis and provides current communication over assessment to help students best engage with their chosen learning pathways as follows.

For example:

- **Reviewing use of digital examinations** Senior Leaders reviewed the successful trial of digital examinations in 2020. As a result, the school is increasing the number of digital assessments on offer in 2021. Students interviewed confirmed that this type of assessment is meeting their needs as they already work digitally. The Senior Leadership Team, and Examination Centre Manager, have identified the need for more technician time to support next steps to scale up involvement.
- **Student agency in Special Assessment Conditions** The school's own review of Special Assessment Conditions supported the development of student agency over managing approved special assessment conditions. The school has introduced an app to enable students to book approved entitlements for assessment. Students and teachers explained that this is highly effective in encouraging students to plan and own their own assessment requirements.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews and/or its self-review of assessment systems and practice were identified during this review.

How effectively does the school's assessment practice meet the needs of its students?

Evidence for assessment practice meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6i & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021 5.1 – 5.7)

Westlake Girls High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- making portfolio and research-based assessments more manageable, using milestones checks and templates to monitor progress
- providing more teaching and learning time by reducing the number of standards assessed in courses
- providing individualised learning programmes to meet student needs through differentiated assessment, multi-level courses and optional standards
- effectively meeting the literacy and numeracy needs of all students through a compulsory core of Mathematics, Science and English at Year 11, and English at Year 12
- using school-based evidence to support applications for special assessment conditions and ensuring those with entitlements are provided with approved resources
- offering a wide range of Scholarship classes to support student goals and aspirations.

Westlake Girls High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- helping students to present authentic work by using a range of appropriate strategies during the assessment and marking process, including online authenticity checks
- managing missed and late assessments, resubmissions, further assessment opportunities and any appeals of assessment decisions
- investigating and resolving any possible breaches of the rules ensuring the collection of appropriate, pre-existing, standard-specific evidence to support derived grade applications.

Improving workflow through school wide assessment calendar The Principal's Nominee confirmed that the school's annual assessment review identified staff and student workflow and timing of assessments as a barrier to student achievement. Introduction of a schoolwide assessment calendar, so that staff and students can see all assessments allows students to better plan for these.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) support for Māori and Pasifika students to improve outcomes The school has considered and is aware of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics support needed for Māori and Pasifika students. The story behind its small Māori and Pasifika cohort has led to provision of several support strategies. Individualised Careers and Pathways guidance encourages students to set aspirational academic and vocational goals. The school still bands courses. This means that deans must identify any barriers to access for Māori and Pasifika students and work to remove these by providing access to courses where possible. The Pasifika lead teacher runs a weekly homework centre for students and the Head of Mathematics attends this each week

to provide teacher input. Achievement STEM data analysis is included in annual departmental reports to the Principal and through the Principal's report to the Board of Trustees. Careers guidance and parent evenings provide further support. Each step contributes to the school's broader vision for student achievement for all students. Despite this wide range of strategies, Year 13 Māori and Pasifika STEM achievement data shows that there remains an achievement gap for some students.

The Privacy Act 2020 While the school has a policy on privacy, and all teachers interviewed explained applying the requirements of the Privacy Act 2020 students noted that this was not always their experience when signing off their grades. The school has agreed to remind all staff to apply this as a practical requirement to ensure student privacy is protected.

For consideration

To extend good practice in meeting student needs and supporting assessment practice, the school is encouraged to consider:

- reminding teachers that student privacy is to be protected when grades are returned.

How effectively does the school's internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?

Evidence for internal and external moderation ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021 6.4b)

Westlake Girls High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- engaging with suitably qualified subject specialists to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work from within and outside the school
- documenting internal moderation processes and storing these summaries in departmental folders with exemplars as guides to future best practice
- holding benchmarking and marking panel meetings to establish a common understanding of the standard
- senior leaders and line managers documenting annual monitoring visits to departments and sharing reporting findings to the Principal's Nominee for follow-up; and to ensure all staff are following appropriate internal moderation processes.

Westlake Girls High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- encouraging staff to select standards on the school's assessment plan
- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored digitally or as hard copy
- ensuring that moderation follow-up occurs for all standards regardless of the standard-setting body.

Improving student assessment outcomes Teachers interviewed showed examples of highly developed internal moderation conversations resulting in improved student assessment outcomes. They explained that their documented reflective conversations allow them to confirm student readiness to be assessed. For example, the English department identified that better common messaging and use of scaffolded digital resources around unfamiliar texts have improved student engagement with the requirements of the standard. This is effective assessment practice.

Responses to external moderation strengthen teacher understanding Where an issue is identified by the external moderator, teachers must hold conversations within their department and with their nominated Senior Leader following school process. Together they co-construct a documented *Response to External Moderation*. Participants in this conversation note any support required and later check completion of the actions for sign off. A final version of this document is shared with the Principal's Nominee as a quality assurance check. Appropriate professional support is provided and the Principal's Nominee's sign-off confirms actions are complete.

Reflection on effectiveness of grade verifiers for internal moderation The school is sharing examples of best practice in departments and has evaluated the internal moderation process as very effective. Teachers critique of assessment materials, maintain current exemplars and make accurate verification of grade boundary decisions confirming good internal moderation practice in most departments. In addition, the Principal's Nominee noted that this process has helped the school to identify the need to expand its use of verifiers in single teacher and smaller departments to rectify any remaining or ongoing inconsistencies.

No action required

No issues with the school's internal and external moderation were identified during this review.

How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?

Evidence for data management and use supporting student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)

Westlake Girls High School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- monitoring progress to identify those at risk of not achieving their literacy, numeracy or NCEA qualification, with deans, form teachers and subject teachers then providing assessment support
- gathering student voice as each standard is completed to inform changes to courses, sequencing of standards, contexts and delivery
- analysing comparative and longitudinal achievement trends to inform changes to courses and programmes
- following up internal/external outlier data so that departments can identify the reasons for these disparities and take action where appropriate.

Westlake Girls High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- requiring grade sign off before reporting results for internally assessed standards
- checking external entries to ensure minimal late entries
- supporting students to use their Learner login, providing instruction both digitally and in person so that students take ownership of their own entries, results, and tracking progress
- reporting results against correct provider codes
- checking that all Memoranda of Understanding held with external providers are current and reconcile with results reported.

Shift in focus of annual data analysis The Principal's Nominee explained that the nature of schoolwide longitudinal and comparative data reporting and conversations has changed to better connect to understanding student assessment outcomes. Heads of Department interviewed showed how these data conversations with management ensure they consider access to credits in their evaluation of course design, the provision of pathways for students and their ability to gain endorsements. This helps ensure that these are being best delivered for each student.

Review of data roles within the school Recently the school separated out the roles of data processing and data analysis through the School Relationship Administrator to ensure improved access and understanding of achievement data. This has proven helpful in providing all Deans, Heads of Department/Faculty and teachers with baseline data for ongoing analysis of student progress, effectively connecting understanding of academic progress and hauora.

No action required

No issues with the school's management and use of assessment-related data were identified during this review.

How effectively does the school's communication inform staff, and students and their families about assessment?

Evidence for school communication promoting understanding of assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7ii(b))

Westlake Girls High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all course they undertake and signing that they have received these
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to staff and students online, and as hard copy in departments at the beginning of the year
- providing subject counselling to support students following university and vocational pathways.

Westlake Girls High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- making information available to students and whānau through the parent portal, newsletters and the school's website
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes, for example resubmission and course endorsement
- assisting students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification, through encouraging online and face-to-face discussions with tutors, subject teachers, deans and the careers advisor
- the Principal's Nominee running year level NCEA assemblies, and information evenings for Year 11 students and those new to NCEA
- ensuring processes for succession planning so that assessment information is accessible for new staff.

Review of online assessment processes During 2020 and as a result of COVID lockdowns, the Senior Leadership Team reviewed a range of assessment practices which are now online. Processes for misconduct, extensions and rescheduling of assessment forms are all completed online and held in departments. The result is a more consistent understanding of assessment practice that better meets student needs.

Communications review A review of communication by Senior Leaders has resulted in more focused and contextualised information sharing with each year level as a target audience through their assigned senior leader. The Principal's Nominee commented that this has resulted improved communication on endorsement and resubmission changes. For example, vocational pathways endorsements are particularly relevant to Year 12 and 13. This effectively directs information and action requirements to specific cohorts.

Edit staff and student handbooks When the staff and student handbooks are next reviewed, some amendments will be needed for the purposes of clarification and to align with the school's current good practice.

For consideration

To extend good practice in ensuring that information about assessment to students, staff and families is current and accessible, the school is encouraged to consider:

- review material in the staff and student handbook to ensure they reflect the school's current effective practice.