Managing National Assessment Report

Rai Valley Area School

April 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Rai Valley Area 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 2019* (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
- *Information on the National Qualifications Framework, Rai Valley Area School, 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- *National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), Rai Valley Area School, 2019* (Student Handbook)
- *Curriculum Management, Rai Valley Area School, 2019*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Teacher in Charge of English and Media Studies
- Teacher(s) of:
    - Health, Physical Education, Technology and Vocational Pathways
    - Science
    - Year 11 English
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Principal's Nominee 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

Rai Valley Area School

10 April 2019

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.

What the school is doing well

Rai Valley Area School is effectively meeting the assessment needs of its students. School self-review has effectively identified areas that required improvement. Changes resulting from this self-review have improved assessment outcomes for students.

Assessment programmes are student-centred. Students and teachers co-construct the assessments to be undertaken. The school has developed pathways and structures that allow all students to follow their passions and interests.

The school has improved the process to identify students who may be eligible for special assessment conditions. The school now has good processes to collect school evidence to support applications when required.

Internal moderation is an embedded practice and staff interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of the process and could readily provide documented evidence of internal moderation happening within their departments.

The school effectively responds to external moderation and has maintained a high agreement rate between teacher and moderator judgements. The Principal's Nominee and teachers address external moderation outcomes and develop action plans as required. These are monitored for completion to ensure teacher judgements remain consistent with assessment standards.

Data analysis is being used to track student progress and inform course design. Teachers use data to reflect on student achievement, evaluate the effectiveness of their courses and report their findings to the Principal and Board of Trustees. The Principal's Nominee has effective data management processes to ensure accurate entries and results are reported to NZQA.

The school's community is well informed about school assessment policy and procedures and how to gain NCEA qualifications. The NCEA focused parent information evening has led to improved understanding. Staff and students interviewed demonstrated a thorough understanding about the school's expectations.

Areas for improvement

Internal moderation requires monitoring so that Senior Leadership is assured that it is happening in all learning areas and that credible results are reported to NZQA. A single method for randomly selecting evidence for external moderation is required, so that the process is transparent and consistent.

School documentation requires updating to maintain currency with actual practice.

Agreed action

The school agreed that a number of actions will improve the quality of their assessment systems. These are to:

- formally monitor internal moderation by senior management to ensure all results reported are credible

- develop a single method to randomly select student work for external moderation

- update school assessment documentation to reflect current practice.

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14 June 2019

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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 17 May 2016 Managing National Assessment Report   The school has mostly addressed the two agreed action items from the 2016 report. The third action, to update the staff handbook, still requires some attention and this is detailed in the communication section of this report.

Response to external moderation outcomes   The school has a robust process to respond to external moderation outcomes. The school has maintained a high overall agreement rate between assessor and moderator judgements.

The school has improved its process to respond to external moderation since the last review. Action plans to address moderation issues are now recorded in a shared online document. This has streamlined the response process for staff and allows the Principal's Nominee to monitor the completion of the plans. These changes result from the Principal's Nominee's review of the process to ensure that it was still appropriate and that all teachers had a clear understanding of it.

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)

Rai Valley Area School's has effective processes for self-review that are identifying areas for improvement. Self-review is evident across all levels of the school. Ownership of the self-review process is shared with teachers through senior syndicate and senior teacher meetings.

Senior Leadership is providing teachers with clear direction for student NCEA achievement. A current strategic focus is increasing the number of students gaining a certificate endorsement for NCEA Level 1. Teachers interviewed articulated how they were working towards this in their assessment programmes.

A new process for analysing and evaluating assessment outcomes was introduced in 2018. The Principal's Nominee's review identified that the former method was more of a compliance activity that did not produce valuable analysis of assessment programmes for teachers. A new template, developed in consultation with staff, streamlines the process and identifies trends and patterns. Staff interviewed commented that the template is effective for them in producing meaningful analysis.

A review of the school's processes for special assessment conditions has resulted in the improved identification of students requiring these entitlements. To improve the identification of eligible students the school has actively engaged in professional development with NZQA, the Nelson RTLB cluster and support from an experienced SENCO from within the Top of the South Island Kāhui Ako. Screening of students now begins in the junior school to identify barriers to learning, so that applications are

well supported with school-evidence when appropriate. The school had made no applications for special assessment conditions prior to 2018.

A tracking sheet has been introduced to ensure that the school or external providers that the school uses have consent to assess prior to an assessment taking place.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews and 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 2019 5.5)

Rai Valley Area School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- using school-based testing to identify students requiring Special Assessment Conditions and making applications appropriately

- contextualising assessment tasks so that they are more relevant and better engage student interest

- developing Individual Assessment Plans to meet student needs, where appropriate

- providing differentiated assessment within courses to match student abilities

- making portfolio and research-based assessments more manageable using milestones checks and templates

- extending assessment opportunities by using external providers to deliver:
  - courses the school is unable to offer
  - assessment against individual standards related to career pathways.

Rai Valley Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessment

- managing resubmission and further assessment opportunities

- using a range of strategies to ensure that student work is authentic

- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but have not submitted work

- investigating student appeals of assessment decisions and breaches of assessment rules

- ensuring derived grades are based on valid, authentic and standard specific evidence

- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Student-centred assessment programmes   Student assessment needs are being met through student-centred programmes. In most courses, students and teachers co-construct the assessments to be undertaken through discussions about assessment contexts, themes and the standards to be assessed. Students interviewed commented that this shared ownership approach has resulted in better engagement in their assessments. Flexible timeframes for assessments ensure that they are assessed when ready.

Māori and Pacific student engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects   The school is taking steps to ensure Māori students have equitable access to and outcomes for STEM subjects. Science is now being offered across the whole school. It has been introduced into the Primary school curriculum, so that all students are engaged in the subject. The

school has invested in professional development for the science teacher to their build capacity and capability to meet the needs of the students. NetNZ provides access for students to NCEA Level 1 Electronics and Level 3 Computer Science. Courses are also offered through Te Kura, so that the school can continue to provide STEM opportunities for students.

No action required

No issues with the school's management of assessment for national qualifications were identified during this review.

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 2019 6.4b)

Rai Valley Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use to ensure they are valid and fit for purpose

- staff reviewing standard clarifications, and using NZQA and school exemplars to improve assessor judgements

- using subject specialists, within and outside the school, to verify the grades awarded on a purposefully selected sample of student work

- documenting the internal moderation process by using an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*

- keeping benchmark exemplars and verification notes to inform future assessment decisions.

Rai Valley Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored

- actively encouraging teachers to submit student work digitally

- encouraging teachers to suggest appropriate standards to be considered for inclusion in the moderation plan.

Formalise monitoring of internal moderation   Although the school is confident that internal moderation is happening in all learning areas, its current process does not fully assure this. Monitoring of internal moderation provides assurance to Senior Leadership that all grades reported to NZQA have been subject to the school's internal moderation process. The school should formalise its process to strengthen its monitoring of internal moderation.

The recently introduced process to store all evidence of internal moderation digitally has ensured that all moderated standards are visible to Senior Leadership, which are monitored with irregular checks. To formalise monitoring the school could develop a routine for reconciling documentation against the stored evidence and document actions taken.

A process for the random selection of student evidence required   The school is required to have a process to randomly select student evidence for external moderation. Although it is uncommon for the school to have more than eight students' work available to select from, due to its small roll, a documented process to conduct a selection is still required. To meet NZQA guidelines, the school should use a single method for selecting student evidence common to all learning areas.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's internal and external moderation to assure assessment quality. Senior management undertakes to:

- formally monitor internal moderation by senior management to ensure all results reported are credible
- develop and document a single method to randomly select student work for external moderation.

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)

Rai Valley Area School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- informing assessment programme design so that the standards offered match student strengths and interests

- monitoring student progress towards qualifications to identify and support learners at risk of not achieving their goals

- using NZQA statistical reports and analysing results comparatively and longitudinally to inform decisions about future course content and design

- annually reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement, to inform strategic goals and actions.

Rai Valley Area School reports accurate achievement data by:

- reconciling results from external providers with which they hold a current Memorandum of Understanding, to ensure results are reported with the correct provider codes

- reporting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis

- ensuring all students attest that their entries and results have been entered correctly

- using the Key Indicators and data file submission reports to identify and resolve data errors

- ensuring that internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn, as appropriate

- ensuring a low number of late entries for external examinations.

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))

Rai Valley Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- informing staff of updates to NCEA information throughout the year via emails and staff meetings
- widely distributing information on financial assistance to cover all students who are eligible.

Rai Valley Area School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- holding student assemblies to inform them of school assessment policies and procedures
- improving parental understanding of NCEA and assessment procedures through a targeted evening meeting in Term One
- Senior Syndicate teachers meeting regularly throughout the year to discuss assessment related issues.

School documentation requires updating   The 2016 report requirement to update the staff handbook with methods for generating justifiable derived grades requires completion. The following aspects of assessment practice require updating in the school's documentation to reflect current school practice:

- a procedure for appeals of assessment decisions that includes all aspects of the assessment process
- a process for managing missed and late assessments
- reporting a Not Achieved grade for a proven breach of the rules of internal assessment
- replacing the terms reassessment and compassionate consideration with further assessment opportunity and derived grade.

Develop a common template for course outlines   The school should consider having a common template for all course outlines. Using a common template would help to ensure the consistency and quality of the information provided to students. Assessment and course information that could be included, but currently is not in some outlines, is:

- the mode and timing of assessments
- the availability of further assessment opportunities
- eligibility for course endorsement
- standards that count towards:
    - Level 1 literacy and numeracy

- o University Entrance literacy – Reading and Writing
- o University Entrance approved subjects.

Incorporating a review of school documentation into a regular review cycle would help to ensure currency is maintained.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. Senior management undertakes to:

- update school assessment documentation to reflect current 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:

- developing a common template for all course outlines.