

Managing National Assessment Report

South Westland Area School

September 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively South Westland 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 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
- *South Westland Area School – Staff Assessment Procedures 2021* (Staff Handbook)
- *South Westland Area School – Student Assessment Procedures 2021* (Student Handbook)
- *South Westland Area School – Interim Annual Plan 2021*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Acting Principal
- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Department for:
 - English
 - Hard Technology
 - Mathematics
 - Physical Education
 - Social Sciences
- Teacher of:
 - Mathematics and Science
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Acting 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.

Background

At the time of this review, the Principal had been on leave since mid-April 2021 with day to day management carried out by the Deputy Principal and members of the senior leadership team.

SUMMARY

South Westland Area School

30 September 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 NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

What the school is doing well

South Westland Area School typically has approximately 20 - 30 Year 11 to 13 students from as far as away as Ross in the north, to Fox Glacier in the south. The school works hard to keep its remote school community connected and involved in the life of the school.

The school's assessment practice supports students to achieve their academic and vocational goals within an inclusive environment that caters for their individual learning needs. Providing a meaningful pathway for each student, including a significant number who leave school to employment or training before they complete Year 12, is a key focus for the school. Assessment prioritises localised, authentic contexts to engage students' interests and maximise prior learning. There is a high degree of differentiation and personalisation to meet students' needs and assessment dates are fluid with students assessed when ready. Good use is made of external providers to extend learning opportunities that the school cannot provide due to its size and low number of specialist staff.

The newly appointed Principal's Nominee has digitised most of the internal and external moderation processes, to improve transparency and give senior leadership visibility of the whole moderation cycle. The school effectively uses subject specialists from outside the school to verify samples of student work. This ensures that most assessment judgements are consistent with the standard.

The school effectively informs staff and students about NCEA through a range of methods. Those interviewed for this review demonstrated a very good understanding of school policy and procedures and the requirements to gain a qualification.

Areas for improvement

The school has not made any Special Assessment Conditions applications over the past three years. The appointment of a new Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is a welcome addition to the staff to support those entitled to Special Assessment Conditions. The teachers interviewed were aware that there are some students requiring this support and the SENCO can support them by making applications and supporting eligible students with their provisions for internal and external assessment.

Likewise there is a need for the school to send Unexpected Event Grades for all standards to be externally assessed prior to the start of the external examinations. The emergence of COVID-19 and its impact on school examinations in 2020 and 2021 underscores the importance of sending this data to NZQA. This will ensure students who cannot sit examinations due to an unexpected event are not unduly disadvantaged.

As indicated in the body of this report, the school is required to analyse NCEA achievement data on a variety of levels to inform course design and the school's strategic goals. Leadership and schoolwide ownership of the use of data needs strengthening to support ongoing improvement to achievement outcomes for students.

Agreed action

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

- use its self-review and evaluation processes to identify areas for on-going improvement and then action
- ensure eligible students receive their Special Assessment Conditions entitlements
- submit Unexpected Event Grades for all standards to be externally assessed prior to the start of the external examinations
- record and track student achievement systematically
- use assessment information to inform learning and review of programmes and/or courses across the whole senior school
- ensure all teachers know how to check the school has the necessary Consent to Assess a standard prior to assessment taking place
- ensure students are provided with consistent Assessment Statements using a common template
- provide staff and student handbooks with up to date and accurate key information.

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23 November 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 4 July 2017 Managing National Assessment Report There were two agreed items in the 2017 report to improve the quality of the school's assessment processes. The first has been resolved by ensuring there is a documented process for responding to external moderation and monitoring any action plans that arise. The second has been partially resolved by the newly appointed Principal's Nominee co-constructing updates for both the staff and student handbooks.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school's quality assurance processes are generally good overall. Only three subject areas have had variable outcomes since the last review. Where external moderation reports identify issues associated with a particular standard, the Principal's Nominee's next step should be to evaluate whether the department's action plan satisfactorily resolves the issue in any future assessment of the same standard. This completes the cycle of external moderation informing and improving the process of internal moderation.

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)

Although the school's interim Annual Plan for 2021 identified a number of strategic goals specific to the school, as well as others linked to those of the Top of the South Island Area Schools Kāhui Ako, with the Principal on leave, there has been no clear leadership or ownership of the changes required to meet the school's goals.

Since 2018, there has been no requirement for teachers to analyse achievement data or produce annual reports for the Principal or the Board of Trustees. Where there has been a process of departmental self-review, it has been ad hoc and reliant on the initiative of individual teachers or Heads of Department modelling Best Practice. There is a need for data analysis within each subject or learning area to become better embedded across the whole Senior Syndicate to identify areas for on-going improvement.

The newly appointed Principal's Nominee has digitised most of the internal and external moderation processes, to improve transparency and give senior leadership visibility of the whole moderation cycle. The shift to digital storage of student work ensures materials can always be sent to NZQA for external moderation. The school effectively uses subject specialists from outside the school to verify grades awarded on samples of student work. This ensures that most assessment judgements are consistent with the standard. Following feedback from the 2017 Managing National Assessment review, improved systems for following up on external moderation outcomes ensure that action plans can and do resolve issues identified by NZQA moderators.

The school does have capacity to make improvements to how it utilises data to inform teaching and learning. Good practice is being modelled by some teachers, but leadership and ownership are required to ensure the school can strengthen and embed this good practice. The staff as a whole would benefit from having a shared understanding of the school's strategic direction and being able to identify and measure the effectiveness of strategies for improving assessment outcomes for students in each of the subject or learning areas.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's response to external review and/or its self-review of assessment systems and practice. Senior management undertakes to:

- use its self-review and evaluation processes to identify areas for on-going improvement and then action them.

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)

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

- having students set SMART qualifications and assessment goals with Form Teachers in Term 1 and reviewing their progress with parents/caregivers at the student led conference in Term 2
- negotiating with students the standards to be undertaken in their assessment programme, producing highly personalised programmes that reflect individual student's needs, interests and future pathways
- having the Senior Syndicate meets every week for updates on each student's progress and identifying those requiring extension or targeted support
- developing a localised curriculum to utilise the local environment by providing contextualised learning opportunities designed to improve student participation, engagement and agency in learning
- extending assessment opportunities for courses the school is unable to offer by using Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu and the Virtual Learning Network
- engaging with external providers to extend the range of vocational assessment opportunities the school can offer, through Gateway, STAR and Trades Academy and providing transport for students to attend the West Coast Trades Academy at Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth
- adapting programmes to suit the abilities and assessment needs of particular cohorts, for example, an alternate Unit Standard numeracy course for Year 11 students in 2021
- engaging with the Review of Achievement Standards for Science and the Literacy/Numeracy Mini-Pilots to prepare staff and students for the impending changes to NCEA and to encourage greater participation and success in STEM subjects.

South Westland Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring credible assessment through consistent school-wide practice on missed and late assessment, extensions, resubmissions, and further assessment opportunities
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is valid, authentic and verifiable
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020*.

Special Assessment Conditions applications needed to support student achievement The school has recognised the importance of identifying and supporting students to access special assessment conditions to give eligible students a fair opportunity to achieve. The school leaders interviewed expressed concern that there had not been any applications for special assessment conditions over the past three years. A newly appointed SENCO will oversee and action testing for senior students, gather school-based evidence and submit applications. This will ensure

teachers are aware of student entitlements and that appropriate assistance is available for all assessment events.

Core Skills classes meet students' needs The school loses a significant number of students to employment or further training before they complete Year 12. The school runs a Core Skills class for three periods per week offering additional standards for this target group to enable them to gain a qualification prior to leaving school.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management of assessment for national qualifications. Senior management undertakes to:

- ensure eligible students receive their Special Assessment Conditions entitlements.

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)

South Westland 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 fit for purpose
- documenting the internal moderation process on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- using subject specialists to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work
- having the Principal's Nominee ensure that all standards have been subject to the internal moderation process before reporting results.

South Westland Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored.

Requirements for purposeful selection and sufficiency currently met Due to most classes being relatively small, most student work is submitted for verification. As the roll grows, or the numbers attempting a particular standard increase, then teachers need to select work for verification on grade boundaries. This will inform assessor awareness and understanding of where the boundaries for each grade sit and help manage the workload of verifiers.

External verification helps to ensure consistent assessor judgements The school's high use of external verifiers contributes to a robust internal moderation process. Due to the size of the school and a lack of suitable subject specialists within it, most internally moderated work must be verified externally. Teachers have established good networks with schools on the West Coast and the *Top of the South Island Kāhui Ako* to ensure that assessments can be quality assured. External grade verification provides senior leadership with assurance that the results reported to NZQA are credible and the school's historically high agreement rate confirms this.

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)

South Westland Area School reports accurate achievement data by:

- reporting results to NZQA on a regular and timely basis
- ensuring all students attest that their entries and results have been entered correctly
- checking entries in externally assessed standards to limit late entries
- using the *Key Indicator Checklist* and *Data File Submission* reports to identify and resolve data issues
- using the correct code of outside providers with whom the school holds a current Memorandum of Understanding.

Reporting Unexpected Event Grades to NZQA There have not been any Unexpected Event Grades sent to NZQA over the past three years. Section 5.5 c of the *Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021*, requires schools to submit quality assured grades for all standards to be externally assessed prior to the start of the external examinations. Submitting the grades prior to the start of the external examinations means that they are immediately available if NZQA is required to activate the unexpected event grade process, where an unforeseen event disrupts NZQA external examinations. This ensures that students will receive a result if an unexpected event were to occur. The school leadership is committed to redressing this issue in 2021.

Improve monitoring and tracking of student progress There is a need for a more robust system of tracking and monitoring student progress to be implemented, so that students avoid narrowly missing out on achieving a qualification. Regular Senior Syndicate meetings discuss students' progress. However, there is a need for a more systematic and ideally, digitised process for recording information shared in that forum. This will ensure it is visible and accessible to all teachers and builds a cumulative profile of the student. Live reporting of student progress could provide Form Teachers with data to support ongoing academic conversations with students, identify students at risk of not gaining literacy and/or numeracy requirements for a qualification and provide a coherent set of data for three-way conferences and reporting throughout the year.

Provide evidence of data management and use to support student achievement outcomes Reporting an analysis of NCEA achievement to the Principal and Board of Trustees is required to inform the strategic goals the school, departments and individual practitioners action to improve student achievement. A next step for the school would be to evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies to improve student achievement.

Ensure Consent to Assess in place prior to assessment It is vital that teachers check that the school has the necessary Consent to Assess prior to assessment taking place. Otherwise this puts the students at risk of not having their results reported. Where a teacher has Limited Authority to Teach, or has transferred from another school, it is important that their induction includes instruction on how to check the necessary Consent to Assess is in place for any standard they might add to their programmes during the year.

Agreed actions

NZQA and senior management agree on the following actions to improve the management and use of assessment-related data. Senior management undertakes to:

- submit Unexpected Event Grades for all standards to be externally assessed prior to the start of the external examinations
- record and track student achievement systematically
- use assessment information to inform learning and review of programmes and/or courses across the whole senior school
- ensure all teachers know how to check the school has the necessary Consent to Assess a standard prior to assessment taking place.

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))

South Westland Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- encouraging high attendance at mid-year student-led parent/teacher conferences
- reporting fortnightly on Year 7-13 students' progress and providing two written reports annually
- communicating promptly with parents/caregivers to follow up missed or late assessment
- celebrating student success with Mana Awards and reporting on the same at the Monday staff briefing
- allowing families to attend assemblies virtually through Zoom.

South Westland Area School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families in print, digitally and in person
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes through regular Senior Syndicate meetings
- having all teachers provide academic mentoring to help students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification.

Create a common Assessment Statement template to assist students' and their families' understanding of assessment matters

A common Assessment Statement template would provide greater clarity and coherence for students and their parents/caregivers by ensuring all Assessment Statements contain the same key information. The current course outlines follow a variety of formats and some include superfluous material duplicated in the new student handbook. A common Assessment Statement template will enable students and parents/caregivers to:

- understand which standards are optional, and tailor courses as appropriate
- map out and manage the student's assessment calendar
- see how the work will be assessed
- be aware of the number of credits in each course
- check the mode/s of assessment, and
- check the availability, or otherwise, of Further Assessment Opportunities.

Updating of documentation required Suggestions were made at the review for improvements in assessment documentation to ensure that it reflects school practice and NZQA requirements.

Agreed actions

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

- ensure students are provided with consistent Assessment Statements using a common template
- provide staff and student handbooks with up to date and accurate key information.