

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Amuri Area School

April 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Amuri 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
- *Student Achievement Information Policy*
- *NCEA Teacher Information Handbook 2019, Amuri Area School*
- *NCEA Student Information Handbook 2019, Amuri Area School*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the:

- Principal's Nominee
- Head of Essential Learning Area for:
  - Arts
  - Digital Technology
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Physical Education
  - Science
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the 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

## Amuri Area School

4 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.

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2018.

### What the school is doing well

Amuri Area School's mission to 'raise achievement, realise potential and encourage excellence' exemplifies the school's student-centred approach and commitment to student achievement. Thorough knowledge by teachers of each student's needs is an important component contributing to high levels of engagement in learning and assessment. Teachers are active in their support of students and through the development of positive relationships create a learning environment in which students feel empowered to achieve.

The school regularly reviews assessment processes and practices based on the implementation of strategic goals that include access to dual pathways through offering multiple subject options, academic mentoring and enhanced communication.

Assessment practice is understood and well-managed by all teachers. Consistent processes and shared ownership of NCEA assessment practice ensure that results reported to NZQA for national qualifications are credible. The students interviewed were well-informed about the NCEA qualification.

Effective use of data analysis and student voice underpins the planning and delivery of quality assessment experiences for students, utilising the flexibility of the NCEA assessment model. To provide relevant and engaging opportunities for students the school has extended academic and vocational pathways through distance learning and utilising external providers. Authentic learning experiences are provided, including life and work ready skills, to support students beyond school. Effective monitoring and tracking of student achievement progress by staff has fostered student engagement and led to a greater focus on personalised learning.

Internal moderation practice is effectively managed school-wide. All teachers critiqued tasks, verified a strategic selection of student work and documented the process. The Principal's Nominee audits learning areas to ensure documented moderation processes reflect actual practice. External moderation outcomes are discussed with senior leaders and teachers make changes to resolve identified issues. Senior management evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions.

Data is used to reflect on student achievement outcomes, inform course design, measure strategic goals and the effectiveness of changes made. Effective monitoring of student progress occurs through academic mentoring, and early interventions. Literacy and numeracy are actively targeted to assist in the attainment of qualifications. The reporting of entries and results to NZQA is complete, timely and accurate.

Strong leadership and sound communication of assessment procedures and processes by the Principal's Nominee has led to shared expectations of effective practice. This has facilitated professional learning and the development of assessment best practice. The Principal's Nominee has a thorough knowledge of school practice and manages changes and issues to improve current practice. Staff acknowledged her professionalism, approachability and support. The Principal's Nominee is supported in her work by the Principal, who alongside the staff, support students to achieve.

### **Areas for improvement**

There are no agreed action items. Some next steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

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8 May 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 3 September 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

Items from the 2015 report have been actioned. Responses to agreed action items include:

- broadening the use of non-written evidence of student achievement
- assuring valid, verifiable and standard-specific evidence for derived grades by modifying publicly sourced tasks, and keeping commercial tasks secure
- collecting school-based evidence to support applications for students identified as eligible for special assessment conditions
- strengthening the monitoring of internal moderation through checks to confirm all steps of the internal moderation process are complete, and reconciling completed documentation with stored student work
- randomly selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- updating the documentation related to these action items to reflect current practice.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has a sound levels of agreement between teachers and NZQA moderators.

Heads of Essential Learning Areas respond to concerns in external moderation reports, outlining interventions to address issues. Action plans are discussed with senior management as part of departmental review. Appropriate support to improve practice is provided, where required. Senior leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the changes made.

### 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)*

Self-review focusses on continuous improvement to best meet the needs of students. A culture of transparency, accountability for assessment practice and professional learning are integral to this approach. The school is committed to effective assurance processes to confirm the credibility and quality of assessment, and adherence to NZQA requirements.

Senior leaders meet regularly with Heads of Essential Learning Areas to discuss achievement and to evaluate assessment practices and programmes. These meetings provide a robust framework for ongoing self-review and improvement. The Principal's Nominee effectively resolves issues to ensure consistency for teachers

and students, and improvement in practice. The school can be confident that any concerns related to assessment practice will be identified and addressed.

Self-review has resulted in a number of new initiatives, including:

- enabling student-driven subject choice, including through dual pathways and multiple options using distance learning and external providers
- developing a mentoring programme for all NCEA students with mentors accessing current achievement data to inform support
- identifying students at risk of not completing qualifications and providing targeted support through the development of personalised learning plans
- managing student workloads with a focus on the quality of achievement including the attainment of certificate and course endorsements by
  - limiting the number of credits offered in each course, and
  - monitoring the calendared programme of assessments
- the introduction of a school-wide learning management system that allows the development of personalised learning, engaging students in the assessment process
- teachers reflect on the analysis of achievement data as part of teacher as inquiry projects which includes NCEA achievement
- improving the effectiveness of communication by form teachers who now contact parents early in the academic year to support students NCEA achievement progress
- preparing students for future assessment direction through intended involvement in digital examinations.

Reflective practice and the Principal's Nominee's effective leadership of assessment processes provide school-wide consistency and ownership of NCEA processes. To ensure sustainable assessment best practice it is recommended the school continues to develop the capacity to lead school assessment systems. This approach supports robust quality assurance and the credibility of the qualification.

### **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 2019 5.5)*

### **Amuri Area School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- providing differentiated learning and assessment opportunities within the same class and across classes in the same subjects, including offering optional standards
- using milestone checks, feedback, and feedforward to assist students to present their best evidence of achievement
- using a range of methods to gather evidence of achievement to reflect student strengths
- assessing students when they are ready through flexible timeframes, as appropriate
- ensuring teachers are aware of individual students with special assessment conditions entitlements and providing appropriate support
- supporting students to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, with resultant Level 3 success equivalent to other students.

### **Amuri Area School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring consistent school-wide assessment practice on missed and late work, extensions, appeals, resubmissions and further assessment opportunities
- using a range of strategies to assist students to present authentic work, including the use of a universal student sign-off statement
- reporting a Not Achieved grade for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but have submitted no work
- motivating students by celebrating academic achievement through endorsement badges and personal acknowledgement of success
- effectively managing NZQA external examinations
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993* in the issuing of student results and using student work as exemplars.

**Student-centred approach supports achievement outcomes** The school focusses on providing open, flexible opportunities and meaningful pathways leading to relevant qualifications, to support student achievement success.

The number of academic and vocational options available to students has been increased by extensively using external providers and distance learning opportunities. Nearly a quarter of internal assessment results are reported using outside providers.



The timetable design is student-driven and extended learning blocks support dual pathways and opportunities for experiential learning. This blocking allows the impact on school-based study to be minimised for those students who undertake off-site learning. Multi-level classes also ensure greater subject choice to meet student needs. Life and ready to work skills programmes support students beyond school. Learning and assessment opportunities within courses are personalised based on a thorough knowledge of each student's abilities, qualification goals and career aspirations. This enables students to have agency and ownership of their learning, and assessment plans.

Student voice is valued for informing changes to assessment practice and programmes. Staff gather student perspective through formal surveys and informally throughout the year. Teachers meet student needs by evaluating course design and delivery, leading to adjusting standards, assessment tasks and providing authentic contexts to reflect student interests and learning styles.

**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)*

### **Amuri Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring assessment tasks reflect the standard by having amended or new tasks critiqued prior to use
- using clarification documents, bench mark exemplars, and documented discussions on grade verification to inform assessment decisions
- regularly checking teachers' digital and physical subject folders by Principal's Nominee to ensure that procedures are being followed according to school and NZQA requirements
- documenting internal moderation processes for each standard before results are reported.

### **Amuri Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being stored
- assisting subject leaders to complete their own online submissions through the Moderation Application tool, including supporting digital submission of student work.

**Moderation processes valued for professional learning** The school focusses on moving beyond compliance of moderation requirements to self-reviewing their practice to make improvements as appropriate. A strong culture of accountability and transparency underpins teachers' moderation processes. Teachers understand the explicit relationship between the outcomes of external moderation and the robustness of internal moderation processes previously undertaken.

Teachers value feedback from external moderators and relationships with verifiers as professional learning opportunities. Teachers select two-thirds of the standards included for external moderation, to gain assurance of their assessment decisions. Staff extensively network with other subject specialists, frequently from outside the school to verify the grades awarded. Professional learning includes assistance with understanding the standard, informing changes to assessments and making assessor judgements consistent with the standard. The school supports and resources networking time for assessment and moderation purposes.

### **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)*

### **Amuri Area School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- senior management meeting each term with Heads of Essential Learning Areas to review progress and the effectiveness of learning and assessment, to determine next steps
- annually reporting an analysis of NCEA achievement at learning area and school-wide level to the Board of Trustees to outline actions and to inform strategic direction.

### **Amuri Area School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- actively encouraging students and parents to use the student management system portal and NZQA Learner login to monitor NCEA progress and check reported results for accuracy
- timely reporting of results to NZQA that have been checked for accuracy across all levels of the school
- using the Key Indicators and data file submission reports to identify and resolve data issues
- ensuring entries submitted to NZQA have a reported result or are withdrawn as appropriate, and low levels of late external entries
- reporting results against the correct codes of external providers with which the school holds a current Memorandum of Understanding.

**Strengthened monitoring and academic mentoring to support student achievement** The school has developed effective monitoring processes to support all NCEA students. These processes are informed by current NCEA data and student voice. To assist with monitoring, teachers share academic and pastoral information online and meet termly to discuss students in each year level.

Teacher mentors have been assigned to year level groups. They provide ongoing support through regular conversations tailored to the student's needs, and pro-actively address issues. The mentors discuss progress towards personal goals, preparedness for upcoming assessment and how to manage assessment workloads. Literacy and numeracy requirements of NCEA and University Entrance are actively targeted, as applicable. Students interviewed indicated they valued the positive relationships with their mentor.

Senior staff develop individual learning plans for identified students, including those at risk of not completing qualifications. These students receive targeted academic counselling and if necessary, assessment programmes are modified to reflect their learning needs and aspirations. Parents are involved in decisions about changes to programmes.

An example of the effectiveness of active tracking and support is increase to very high attainment at Level 2 of the qualification. This reflects the school's expectation,

with the support of parents, that Level 2 NCEA is completed prior to students leaving school to join the workforce.

**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))*

### **Amuri Area School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- regularly communicating assessment policy and procedure to staff, students and parents using a variety of methods including digital, face-to-face, and written communication opportunities
- annually reviewing staff and student handbooks to ensure that they are accessible and current
- widely distributing information on financial assistance to cover all students who may be eligible.

### **Amuri Area School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- the Principal's Nominee presenting NCEA information in tailored year level student meetings
- providing Parent-Student-Teacher conferences to assist parents to discuss their student's goals, assessment programmes and achievement progress
- using senior syndicate meetings to clarify changes of NCEA procedures or expectations, highlight assessment best practice and provide opportunities for discussion
- supporting professional learning opportunities to improve current practice, including collaborating with external subject specialists, cluster groups and attendance at NZQA Best Practice Workshops, when available
- supporting teachers new to the school through an induction programme on the school's assessment and moderation processes
- encouraging teachers to use their Education Sector Logon.

**Improved communication with families through personal approach** The school's review of parental involvement in 'meet the teacher' evenings held in Term 1 indicated participation levels were below expectations. This was a barrier to timely, quality information to support student learning needs, and planning for qualification goals and future pathways.

To overcome this barrier, the school realised they needed to change their approach to improve communication with parents. Personal contact with parents by phone from the form teacher has resulted in high levels of parental discussion. As a consequence, student needs, learning pathways and qualification goals are known and responded to from the outset of the school year.

**Students well supported and informed** The students interviewed had a clear understanding of what was needed to gain a qualification, NCEA procedures and the school assessment practices. They considered staff knew their individual learning needs, including support for their future pathways.

**Updating course outlines to provide consistent assessment information** Some subject course outlines need updating to include:

- Level 1 literacy and numeracy
- University Entrance literacy requirements
- further assessment opportunity information, as applicable
- identifying University Entrance approved subjects and endorseable courses.

Succinct and consistent information for all courses should be readily accessible to students and their caregivers, to assist their understanding.

**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:

- providing consistent assessment information in all course outlines.