

Managing National Assessment Report

Mt Hobson Middle School

August 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Mt Hobson Middle 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
- *2021 NCEA Assessment Handbook for Students, Whanau and Staff at Mt Hobson VNA* (Staff Handbook)
- *Mt Hobson Villa NCEA Academy National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) Student Handbook* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

Two School Relationship Managers met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Principal
- Teachers of:
 - English
 - Mathematics
- 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

Mt Hobson Middle School

6 August 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.

What the school is doing well

Mt Hobson Middle School meets the learning and assessment needs of their students by providing programmes tailored to each one individually. Each student follows their own achievement pathway, with their progress closely monitored by the Principal and e-Dean. The school's small size means that staff know each student very well and they use this knowledge effectively to provide assessment opportunities that match student needs and aspirations. A Gateway programme has been developed that secures a wide range of vocational and tertiary options to complement the curriculum-based courses provided within the school and through a virtual learning community.

The school continues to review its structures and processes to make sure they are fit for purpose and future focused. A five-year plan is in place to build staff capacity and transition school leadership when assessing for qualifications, as the school roll grows in number. As part of this plan the role of the Principal's Nominee was reviewed in 2019 with a new Principal's Nominee appointed for 2020. Her remit was to focus on embedding quality assurance processes so that the school has evidence they are delivering credible, quality assessment. She monitors that every standard assessed has undergone internal moderation and ensures all teachers have beneficial grade verification relationships with subject professionals outside the school. These actions fully resolve the significant issues found in the 2019 review.

As part of capacity building, data systems have been strengthened with the introduction of a student management system. This allows data recording and reporting to be shared, with the Principal's Nominee having oversight. Student agency is promoted with staff helping students to access their entries and results through the school and NZQA portals. The school is now well placed to develop the evaluative use of their entry, result, and qualifications data to inform curriculum and assessment review.

Areas for improvement

Developing a systems-based approach to some key processes will help to future proof the school as student and staff numbers increase. Tracking student progress is one process that would benefit from a system approach, so that everyone concerned with monitoring and supporting students on their individual assessment pathways has access to a consistent view.

Rewriting the staff handbook will allow the school to accurately detail the policies and processes specific to managing assessment and NCEA qualifications at Mt Hobson Middle School.

Some other steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

Agreed action

The school agreed these actions will improve the quality of their assessment systems. These are:

- develop a systems-based approach to student tracking and monitoring
- revise the staff handbook so that it accurately documents school policies and processes.

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5 October 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 19 September 2019 Managing National Assessment Report

This review found a lack of evidence that internal moderation consistently took place, and no formalised system to monitor that assessment was internally moderated before results are submitted to NZQA. Both are significant issues as these are required for the school to maintain its consent to assess. NZQA returned within six months to find that a system was in place that addressed the issues. This system is now embedded practice which allows the school and NZQA to be confident in the quality of results reported for qualifications.

Most agreed actions have been responded to. The school now ensures that grade verification feedback is recorded as part of their quality assurance process. Systems for supporting teacher induction and for those exiting the school have also been developed. While a process for external moderation follow-up is documented, no external moderation has taken place since 2019 that provides evidence of use. The school is yet to develop a process for teachers to report on their efficacy of assessment programmes annually, as discussed in the internal review section of this report.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has documented a system for follow-up of external moderation to ensure that where a need is identified, there is a record of teacher response and the successful resolution of issues. However, the moratorium on schools having to participate in external moderation due to COVID-19 for 2020 means the system has not yet been tested. From 2017 on, moderators have confirmed that teacher judgements are consistent with the standard for all but two standards externally moderated.

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)

As part of their five-year plan, Mt Hobson Middle School has made some key changes aimed at developing their capacity to provide suitable qualifications pathways for students and robust, consistent quality assurance processes for assessment. These changes provide evidence of the school's capacity to effectively review and implement change that leads to improved assessment quality and achievement outcomes. A next step is to consider how to develop processes that lead to shared and sustainable review, building on the following examples.

Quality assurance and programme management strengthened A priority for the Principal has been to develop a model that capitalises on their small school context to effectively meet the school's accountabilities as a provider of the NCEA qualification within their staffing limitations. The appointment in 2020 of a new Principal's Nominee, and development of an e-Dean role and Data Management

roles, means that the leadership and management of assessment for qualifications is now shared and understood by more than one person. Quality assurance has been strengthened as has the development and monitoring of student pathways.

Assessment programmes are individualised Development of assessment programmes is underpinned by the school's ethos of being flexible and accepting of the diverse needs of its students. Following review, the process now starts with the e-Dean who formulates a learning plan with every student at the start of each year. The Principal ensures each plan is appropriately resourced. Then at the end of every term, the Principal's Nominee meets with the students to validate their progress, with adjustments then made to plans and programmes as needed. This iterative model means the school is responsive to their diverse range of student needs and aspirations. Their next step is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the key personnel involved. That way this process will remain effective as the school roll grows with further devolution of systems and changes to their operating model and personnel.

Review of students' achievement strengthens online delivery Review of the achievement of students using online courses within their assessment programmes has resulted in some key changes. These have improved student engagement and achievement. Appointment of an e-Dean means that the school now has a role with time dedicated to supporting students when they are working independently, and for checking in with online learning providers on student assessment progress. The school has also moved to working with an online learning community meaning teachers at Mt Hobson now deliver courses across the country, which expands their exposure to a broader the range of student abilities and needs.

Strong community links developed to support assessment In response to the limitations that the school's small size places on their capacity to meet assessment programme and quality assurance needs, the Principal and Principal's Nominee have developed a model of active partnership with organisations outside the school. Examples of current partnerships include the school using:

- laboratories at a nearby school for students to complete practical work in Science
- existing professional contacts around New Zealand to develop teacher relationships with subject matter experts for assessment delivery support and quality assurance
- the Online Learning Community Partnership, Auckland University, and other tertiary organisations to expand course options for students.

For consideration

To extend good practice in external review and self-review of assessment, the school is encouraged to consider:

- developing sustainable shared review of assessment processes and student achievement
- continuing to develop models that maintain the school's capacity to manage assessment for qualifications.

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)

Mt Hobson Middle School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- ensuring they are learning ready
- promoting daily routines
- applying for special assessment conditions
- assessing when ready
- developing a Gateway programme to provide access to a wide range of vocational and tertiary options
- ensuring they all complete courses in Mathematics and Science in Year 11 to keep future pathways open.

Mt Hobson Middle School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessment
- ensuring evidence for derived grades
- supporting students to provide authentic work as evidence for assessment
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020*.

Systemise student tracking and monitoring The school agrees that a next step is for them to develop a systems-based approach to student tracking and monitoring. This will provide all relevant parties with visibility of student programmes and progress, as the size of the student roll and staff numbers increase. The recent introduction of a student management system could provide a useful tool for this. Leadership and management of assessment for qualifications is currently shared between the Principal, Principal's Nominee, e-Dean, and Data Manager. This partnership uses regular meetings and email to ensure that an assessment pathway for each student is developed, and progress tracked and monitored, but is not centralised.

Agreed action

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

- develop a systems-based approach to student tracking and monitoring.

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)

Mt Hobson Middle School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- using a broader number of subject specialists to critique assessment and verify student work with a focus on borderline samples
- documenting that internal moderation has taken place for all standards assessed
- physically filing all evidence of the process centrally
- the Principal's Nominee checking evidence for all standards assessed being internally moderated.

Mt Hobson Middle 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.

Move to digital monitoring of internal moderation Developing a digitised system for recording and monitoring of internal moderation is a recommended process refinement, given all internal moderation takes place at a distance using subject experts located outside the Auckland region. A digital system would reduce the unnecessary effort of transferring emailed information and other evidence to the written record of verification, without compromising the robustness of the process. It would also give everyone visibility of the process and provide ease of access for checks made by the Principal's Nominee.

For consideration

To extend school practice in assurance of assessment quality, the school is encouraged to consider:

- developing a digital system for recording and monitoring internal 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)*

Mt Hobson Middle School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- using a student management system to report achievement data regularly.

Mt Hobson Middle School reports accurate achievement data by:

- submitting datafiles regularly
- employing dedicated support for data management
- the Principal's Nominee checking exam entries and internal results reported
- the Principal's Nominee checking that a Memorandum of Understanding is in place for all assessment delivered by a provider outside the school.

Use students and teachers in the review of achievement Providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on and be accountable for the efficacy of their teaching and assessment opportunities, helps support them to be flexible and responsive to changes in student needs. The school should consider expanding their review of achievement to a process where all teachers analyse and evaluate student attainment in their courses. This will help the school to comprehensively identify areas of strength and opportunities to improve student achievement as student numbers grow. Including student feedback in the analysis gives them further voice in informing the courses and programmes offered. Current review of achievement rests with the Principal who identifies pathways for students and reports to the Board of Trustees annually on student qualifications achievement.

For consideration

To extend good practice in managing and making use of assessment-related data, the school is encouraged to consider:

- developing a process for teachers to report on their efficacy of assessment programmes annually.

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))

Mt Hobson Middle School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all school courses they undertake
- orientating teachers using a planned introduction for the first day and a half each year
- supporting teachers new to the school, including finding subject matter experts at other schools that they can work with.

Mt Hobson Middle School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- providing professional development focused on assessment and moderation at the start of each school year
- students meeting with the Principal in the second week of the year, including a focus on assessment and moderation
- regular contact with parents by email and phone on assessment and achievement progress
- helping students understand what they need to achieve to gain a qualification.

Review of staff handbook agreed The school should rewrite their staff handbook so that it accurately details the policies and processes for managing assessment and NCEA qualifications at Mt Hobson Middle School. The recent review of the information provided to students could form a useful model for the rewrite. The present staff handbook describes systems and policies that relate to structures and practices not found at the school, including NZQA expectations that are no longer current.

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:

- revise the staff handbook so that it accurately documents school policies and processes.