

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Taihape Area School

June 2021

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Taihape 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
- *Taihape Area School Assessment Procedures Handbook for Staff*
- *Taihape Area School Student Information Booklet NCEA Assessment Procedures 2021*
- 2021 course outlines for Year 11 and 12 students
- Taihape Area School Unit Planning Template.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Learning Area Mentors for
  - Mathematics
  - English
  - 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

## Taihape Area School

09 June 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

The Taihape Area School community have embraced a completely new vision: "Nurturing the Growth of our Potential." Under the leadership of a new Principal the school has re-organised, focusing on student potential through the key values of nurturing and growth. For teaching and assessment this has led to changes such as favouring local contexts in curriculum development and unit plans and embracing a mentoring approach by kaiako in Te Whare Hāpai classes. Related goals are to improve retention and assessment outcomes, particularly for senior students.

Learning Area Mentors (the "Growth" leaders in the school) work effectively with external subject experts to verify samples of student work for internal moderation. This network of expertise is well managed and important to good practice, given that teachers often work alone in their learning area due to the small size of the senior cohort.

Entry and assessment data are well managed by the Principal's Nominee. This reduces late entries and student absence from or non-attempt of external examinations. Teachers use assessment data effectively to plan and review their units.

The new Principal's Nominee has identified and addressed inconsistencies in assessment practices. Procedures for managing assessment are put into practice by classroom teachers. Spot checks by the Principal's Nominee provides them with good support: checking on and strengthening their understanding of assessment practices (such as managing deadlines, resubmissions, and authenticity) and ensuring consistent application across the school.

The school has systems improvements which once embedded will provide evidence that their assessment systems are credible.

### Areas for improvement

Systems designed to improve external moderation processes have been put in place, including ensuring that assessment materials are provided for all standards selected by having better management of storage. The 2021 moderation cycle is an opportunity for the school to embed the reviewed procedures, including ensuring

external moderator feedback is adequately responded to by teachers and that action plans are evaluated for effectiveness by senior staff.

The school should strengthen its procedures for identification of students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions. Staff have sound knowledge of student capabilities and are well placed to use school-based evidence to identify candidates and support applications.

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

### **Agreed action**

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

- external moderation feedback is responded to by teachers
- external moderation action plans are followed up and evaluated for effectiveness by senior leaders to complete the review cycle
- samples are provided for all standards in the moderation plan by having secure storage of all student assessment materials, both physical and digital.
- systems for identifying students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions are strengthened and communicated to all staff.

Kay Wilson  
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14 September 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 04 May 2017 Managing National Assessment Report** The school has made some progress in addressing the agreed actions in the 2017 review.

Processes managed by the Principal's Nominee ensure that:

- all results reported to NZQA are quality assured
- random samples are selected for external moderation.

The school has modified its student mentoring structure significantly in 2021. This could support students to better self-manage their external examination entries.

Staff and student handbooks have been updated. Several amendments will ensure they provide clarity of assessment practice, as noted in the communications section of this report.

**Response to external moderation outcomes needs strengthening** The school's response to external moderation will be improved by having all teachers respond to external moderator feedback, and the action plans developed then evaluated by senior leaders for effectiveness. This provides assurance that assessor judgements are consistent and that the internal assessment and moderation process is robust.

In the most recent complete external moderation cycle (2019) the school did not meet NZQA expectations. The low agreement rate between assessors and NZQA external moderators was compounded by the school not submitting materials for all the standards in its assessment plan.

The new Principal's Nominee has a process in place to ensure that storage systems are adequate, and submissions made for all the standards in the current plan. He also has a system for ensuring effective follow up on issues raised by external moderators. The current cycle is an opportunity to test the effectiveness of these procedures.

### 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)*

In 2020 under the guidance of a new senior leadership team, thorough strategic review of pastoral and assessment systems identified the need for change to improve achievement outcomes for students. This led to the development of a new school vision statement "Nurturing the Growth of our Potential".

Nurture leaders (such as the Te Whare Hāpai kaiako) support student well-being, including mentoring to identify pathways and support assessment success. Growth

leaders (the “learning area mentors”) facilitate teaching and assessment where localised contexts are prioritised across the school’s curriculum. Implementation of these systems is in its early stages in 2021. It is important, and necessary, that teachers and senior leaders evaluate the success of changes they implement, using the inquiry cycle.

Review of assessment systems by the new Principal’s Nominee has identified areas for improving the consistency of practice in learning areas. He has clarified in meetings and through documentation the school’s procedures for handling late assessment, requests for extensions, resubmissions, and managing internal moderation.

### **Agreed action**

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

- ensure that external moderation feedback is responded to by teachers
- ensure external moderation action plans are followed up and evaluated for effectiveness by senior leaders to complete the review cycle.

## 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)*

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

- expanding the classroom curriculum by providing learning and assessment programmes through Gateway and NetNZ
- designing courses based on student interests and ability
- developing individual learning plans focussing on appropriate learning and assessment
- providing appropriate further assessment and resubmission opportunities
- assessing when ready.

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

- managing missed and late assessment
- investigating and resolving student appeals of assessment decisions
- ensuring that appropriate evidence required for emergency and derived grades is collected
- checking student submissions for authenticity
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020*.

**Processes required to identify students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions** The school should improve its systems for identifying students who could be eligible for Special Assessment Conditions (SAC). Establishing robust identification procedures using school-based evidence gathering will support applications for and provision of entitlements.

A formal process is required to ensure that candidates entitled to this support are not overlooked. The school is well placed to implement this, as it tracks many of its students from Year 1. They have introduced stronger processes for tracking Year 9 and 10 students this year which should help them better identify SAC candidates and support applications.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator should work with teachers to better understand the range of barriers some students face in accessing equitable assessment conditions and help teachers to understand the mitigations available using Special Assessment Conditions.

### **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 that systems for identifying students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions are strengthened and communicated to all staff.



## 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)*

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

- ensuring appropriate assessment materials are sourced and then critiqued prior to use
- networking with subject specialists external to the school to verify samples of marked student work
- documenting and reporting the moderation process prior to submitting results to NZQA.

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

- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements.

**System for ensuring secure storage of all student assessment materials needed to meet external moderation requirements** Issues with the storage and retrieval of some assessment work have contributed to materials not being submitted for external moderation in the past. Secure and accessible storage will ensure assessment materials are available for external moderation. To address this the Principal's Nominee will conduct checks of the physical and digital storage of student work in learning areas, reconciling it with the information provided on moderation documentation (an internal moderation cover sheet for each standard). This will help ensure that it is suitably managed and available for external moderation.

**Contributing to the annual moderation plan provides assessment support** Having staff involvement in the development of the annual moderation plan will support school assessment quality. The school could encourage Learning Mentors to request standards they need feedback for in their annual moderation plan. Reasons for requesting feedback could include improving assessor judgements at targeted levels or learning areas, or to review the effectiveness of responses made to previous moderation advice.

**Base the size of the sample of student work for verification on assessor need** The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sample size to maximise the benefit they gain from the grade verification component of internal moderation. Using strategic selection, the sample size should be sufficient to assure confidence in the assessor's judgements and be based on the professional learning needs of teacher-assessors. Factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed can be considered to determine the appropriate sample size.

All learning mentors assure the quality of grades awarded by verifying assessor judgements across a range of grades, including at the grade boundary. Purposeful selection would focus the samples selected to those at the grade boundary, to optimise the quality of the feedback and the professional learning, and potentially reduce workload.

**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:

- ensure that samples are provided for all standards in the moderation plan by having secure storage of all student assessment materials, both physical and digital.

**For consideration**

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

- providing subject leaders with an opportunity to suggest standards for inclusion in the annual external moderation plan
- providing all staff with further guidance on how to maximise their professional learning through strategic and purposeful selection of student samples in the grade verification process for 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)*

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

- providing appropriate pathways for students that include courses with external providers, use of online learning and individual student-centred mix of internal and external assessment
- analysing assessment outcomes when reviewing courses and reporting on student achievement to the Board of Trustees.

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

- submitting regular datafiles and checking the Key Indicators to identify and correct data issues
- ensuring results are supplied for all entries or withdrawing student entries as appropriate
- having the Principal's Nominee monitor school assessment data, from input through to submission.

**Strengthened analysis of achievement data leading to better outcomes for students** Improved analysis of assessment data by classroom teachers, learning mentors and senior leaders has led to better outcomes for students, particularly at NCEA Level 1 and 2. Senior leaders reviewed lower than expected attainment results in 2018 and 2019. This review led to changes in course design, including strengthened consideration of individual student pathway and assessment requirements, and deeper connections with local contexts for learning and assessment purposes. The next step is for the school to embed these changes at all levels and to continue to improve assessment outcomes for all students.

### **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))*

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

- providing students with comprehensive outlines for all courses they undertake
- supporting teachers new to the school.

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

- using a spot-checking system to provide assurance that teachers are following processes
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- providing an annual event to introduce parents and students to NCEA.

### **Keep staff and student handbooks up to date to guide assessment practice**

Staff and student NCEA handbooks require amending to better support the Principal's Nominee's spot checks and messages. Annual review of communications ensures that they are fit for purpose, up to date, and consistent with verbal messaging. Making the changes will reduce the risk to assessment that could result from following incorrect guidance. The specific changes needed were discussed during the review visit.

### **Consider ways to better support student self-management of entries and results**

The school could consider allowing students access to the school management system to facilitate self-tracking. Students interviewed for the review found it difficult to track their academic progress. They receive some support with this by using MyMahi and from their Te Whare Hāpai teacher. Strengthening the messaging around accessing their entries and results via the NZQA Student Login will assist with this.

The academic mentoring process is new in 2021 and should be given time to embed.

### **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:

- ensuring that the staff and student handbooks remain current through an annual review process each year
- supporting student and parent tracking of entries and results, by opening online student and caregiver access to the School Management System, for example.