

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School**

**July 2018**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Christchurch Rudolf Steiner 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 2018* (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
- *NCEA School Handbook, Policy, Procedures and School Forms, Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School, 2018*
- *Curriculum Guidelines, Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School, 2018*
- *NCEA Assessment Requirements and Guidelines, Teacher Handbook, Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School, 2018*
- *NCEA Assessment Requirements and Guidelines, Parent and Student Handbook, Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School, 2018*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, Heads of Department for Drama, English, Music, Science and Visual Arts and Teacher of Photography and Media.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Lower School Co-ordinator 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

Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School offers literacy and numeracy standards at Level 1 NCEA and a full NCEA programme at Levels 2 and 3.

Senior classes are offered the Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School Certificate in Year 11, 12 and 13.

# SUMMARY

## Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School

26 July 2018

### 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

Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School's ethos of 'Head, Hand and Heart' centres on holistically nurturing students' unique capabilities. Personalised NCEA programmes underpin the school's shared commitment to improving student achievement and fostering well-being and lifelong learning. Discussion opportunities and group decision making in small class settings characterise the student-centred learning approach.

Student learning dispositions, educational needs and future goals are very well known to their teachers and are drawn upon to develop responsive assessment programmes that maximise opportunities for success. Developing strong relationships between students and teachers is an important component contributing to engagement in learning and assessment.

The school has improved its capacity to respond effectively to reviewing, improving and embedding NCEA assessment practices. This has enabled school-wide consistency and ownership of credible assessment practice. A well-developed collaborative approach among the College Principal Group and staff to assessment practice and meeting student needs is evident.

Students are well supported by staff to attain their achievement goals. Regular meetings to identify students at risk of not achieving these goals and to plan their support programmes reinforces these processes.

Teachers described a range of approaches used to differentiate assessment opportunities and gather evidence of achievement that allow students to present their best evidence. A range of academic and vocational pathways are offered to cater for individual need.

A consistent school-wide approach to the management of assessment was found across all departments that participated in the review and was evident in student responses to interview questions.

Procedures to complete internal moderation are thorough, well understood by teachers and consistently applied. External moderation outcomes are addressed by teachers making changes to resolve issues. The College Principal Group evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions, and external moderation outcomes reflect improvement following the actions taken.

The management of assessment data is highly effective, ensuring results reported to NZQA are complete, timely and accurate.

Data analysis and use is a particular strength. The Principal's Nominee comprehensively tracks student results and provides staff with quality information to monitor individuals' progress towards meeting personal goals and qualification attainment. Timely and appropriate support and interventions are provided, as required. Data is also used to report achievement outcomes to the College Principal Group and to inform future course design and strategic direction.

The experienced Principal's Nominee provides clear direction of assessment best practice, sets high expectations and effectively manages changes and issues to support student achievement and improve current practice. The school can be confident that any concerns related to assessment practice will be identified and addressed. Staff acknowledged their professional respect for the Principal's Nominee and her approachability and support.

School documentation of NCEA practices and national qualifications is current and instructive. Regular sharing of NCEA information informs professional learning, further promoting school-wide consistency.

### **Areas for improvement**

Resubmission requires clarification to ensure consistent practice, that meets NZQA expectations.

Some departments may be verifying more samples of student work than is necessary to meet the requirements of NZQA. This could be a workload issue for these teachers and external verifiers and the school should consider clarifying a more strategic approach to the selection of student work for verification purposes.

Internal moderation ensures the reporting of credible results. The monitoring process by the College Principal Group should be strengthened by reconciling documentation with actual practice.

**Agreed action**

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

- clarify resubmission process with teachers
- strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by reconciling documentation with actual practice.

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30 August 2018

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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 14 May 2015 Managing National Assessment Report** The review identified four agreed actions, and these have been fully resolved.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** Teachers are required to address issues identified in external moderation reports, using a common response form. The Principal's Nominee monitors the completion of documented actions and evaluates changes for improvement. She also monitors moderation feedback longitudinally to identify trends and potential concerns in subject areas. Support is provided as required. External moderation feedback and the effectiveness of the actions are reported to the College Principal's Group and the Board of Trustees for self-review. Improving agreement rates for standards externally moderated reflect the school's effective response to external moderation feedback and internal moderation processes.

### 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 providing students with the best opportunity to achieve through a holistic, student-centred approach that embraces the special character of the school. Within this context the school uses data and student voice effectively to continually review student assessment outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of assessment programmes, to ensure assessment practice is robust and current.

The Principal's Nominee is committed to increasing the school-wide consistency, understanding and ownership of NCEA processes. A series of regular meetings reinforce self-review and also encourage the sharing of best practice to provide ongoing support for student achievement. An example of collaborative learning is the sharing of strategies to ensure non-written evidence is valid, authentic and verifiable.

Staff interviewed commented that their understanding of NZQA procedures and requirements and consequently their assessment practice, has developed significantly in recent years.

Self-review has resulted in a number of developments at the school, including:

- committing to assessment programmes that focus on quality assessment experiences and attainment of qualifications, in recognition of the dual learning pathways offered
- providing clear expectations of internal moderation requirements and regularly checking that procedures are being followed according to school and NZQA requirements

- Heads of Department completing a self-review and planning tool to evaluate assessment practice and progress towards departmental goals
- teachers engaging in an inquiry process to reflect on enhancing their teaching and assessment practice
- emphasising the importance of Derived Grade examinations to gather valid, verifiable and standard-specific for derived and emergency grades
- improving access for digital assessment opportunities and trialling digital submission of student work, to prepare students and staff for future assessment practice
- revising Memorandum of Understanding to align with NZQA guidelines to ensure they are fit for purpose and pose no risk to the credibility of reported results
- investigating linking Vocational Pathways to the special character of the school, to acknowledge the validity of different pathways.

These initiatives indicate the school's expanded capacity to strategically plan to ensure assessment programmes will continue to meet students' needs in the future. Strong leadership, regular discussion of assessment best practice and close monitoring of individual student progress reflects an assessment culture that increasingly utilises the flexibility of the NCEA model while maintaining robust quality assurance and the credibility of the qualification. The success of this approach is evident in the high levels of student engagement and leaver's attainment being comparable to that of equivalent school peers.

#### **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 2018 5.5)*

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- extending assessment opportunities by offering multi-level classes, and engaging with external providers to offer a range of academic and vocational courses through Te Kura, Gateway and STAR programmes
- assessing students when they are ready through flexible timeframes, as appropriate
- 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 including portfolios, naturally occurring, oral, presentation formats and digital, to reflect student strengths
- extending the practice of using evidence to assess more than one standard
- collecting school-based evidence to support applications for students identified as eligible for special assessment conditions and providing appropriate support.

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- consistent decision-making for managing missed and late assessments, appeals and further assessment opportunities
- using a range of strategies to assist students to present authentic work
- reporting Not Achieved where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but have submitted no work
- effectively managing NZQA external examinations and reviewing practice to identify improvements
- celebrating student achievement through acknowledgement of success
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Personalised approach supports student achievement outcomes** Learning and assessment opportunities are personalised through co-construction of tasks, contexts and presentation formats. This enables students to have ownership of their courses and assessment plans. Appropriate support is provided for students requiring extension opportunities, including the study of university papers, and for those students with additional learning needs.

**Mentoring an integral part of daily interaction** The Academic Dean provides ongoing support for students through conversations tailored to their needs. She comprehensively interviews each student on their achievement goals, progress and the support available. These findings are shared with the Upper School teachers, to ensure individual needs are known and addressed. Support is further enhanced through the Sponsor Teachers who are assigned to a class of students throughout

their time in the Upper School. Subject teachers, the Careers Counsellor, SENCO and Dean are also very active in their support of students.

Weekly Student in Focus meetings use current achievement data to identify the support needed for students, which is shared with the wider Upper School staff. Parents are kept fully informed of student progress.

**Clarification of resubmission required** Some teachers described offering resubmission only to those students who were on the grade boundary between Not Achieved and Achieved. To meet NZQA requirements, a resubmission should be offered at the teacher's discretion to individual students who are on any grade boundary to independently identify and correct the error or omission. The school agreed to clarify processes with staff to ensure consistent resubmission practice.

### **Agreed action**

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

- clarify resubmission process with teachers.

## 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 2018 6.4b)*

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring assessments reflect the standard, by having amended or new tasks critiqued prior to use
- using clarification documents, benchmark exemplars, verification notes and professional learning opportunities to clarify and inform assessment judgements
- using subject specialists within and outside the school to verify grade judgements
- requiring internal moderation processes for each standard to be documented on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* before results are reported.

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- ensuring samples of student work are available by being centrally stored, using a folder system
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- reflecting on moderator's feedback to assist with the understanding of the standard and to inform changes to assessments and assessor's decisions.

**Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency** Departments assure the quality of grades awarded by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However, most staff interviewed verify all samples of student work. The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sufficient verification through the strategic selection of student work.

Strategic selection has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality of the assurance process. There is no fixed, or predetermined, number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size will be determined by factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed.

**Strengthening the monitoring of internal moderation** The monitoring of internal moderation by senior management can be strengthened by reconciling documentation with actual practice. Currently a thorough audit checks that all internal moderation documentation and student work is centrally stored. Reconciling the completed cover sheet documentation with student work for a random sample of standards for each subject will provide a transparent account of moderation effectiveness and issues, where identified. This will support school-wide consistent practice and confirm to senior leadership that internal results reported are quality assured.

**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:

- strengthen monitoring of the internal moderation process by reconciling documentation with actual practice.

## 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)*

### Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
  - analysing results comparatively by level, and class performance, including student voice within departments, to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and assessment programmes and to inform future course design and goals
  - reviewing the school's annual achievement goals and plan, and developing ongoing strategic direction, through collaboration of Upper School teachers
  - reporting an analysis of NCEA achievement at departmental and school-wide level to the Board of Trustees
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
  - actively supporting students and parents to use the student management system portal and NZQA Learner login to monitor NCEA progress and check reported results
  - using the Key Indicators and data file submission reports to identify data issues, which are then resolved
  - requiring students and teachers to thoroughly check entries and reported results and verify accuracy through a sign-off process
  - ensuring entries submitted to NZQA have a reported result or are withdrawn as appropriate
  - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers which are reconciled with centrally held current Memoranda of Understanding.

**Effective data analysis to support robust monitoring** The Principal's Nominee efficiently produces a range of data reports to support the monitoring of students towards attainment of qualifications and their achievement goals. Current, comprehensive information for individuals and groups of students is shared with the Academic Dean, Sponsor and class teachers, allowing appropriate support and interventions to be made when needed.

Credit summaries for individual students are examined by teachers to predict qualification attainment and identify strengths in particular modes of assessment, and address barriers to achievement and to predict success, including in external examinations. This profile is maintained for the duration of the student's schooling.

Class 10 students at risk of not gaining Level 1 literacy and numeracy are identified using prior knowledge of needs, monthly credit summaries and predictive analysis, and supported to achieve these requirements. Similarly, data use underpins targeted strategies, including programme modification, to assist students to gain University Entrance literacy.

The analysis of the success rate of courses, measured in students gaining 14 credits or more, highlight the collective responsibility for student achievement of all Upper School teachers. Teachers actively monitor and support students to attain a minimum of 17-19 credits within each subject, to ensure sufficient credits are assessed for qualification attainment. The tracking of Māori and Pasifika students in a senior science course is focussing on supporting achievement to provide equitable opportunities in STEM pathways.

**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))*

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake and a Senior Studies Guide to assist with course selection
- informing staff of updates to NCEA information throughout the year via *PN – Please Read* emails
- regularly communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and parents using a range of modes and methods
- widely distributing information on financial assistance to cover all students who may be eligible.

### **Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- 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
- supporting professional learning opportunities, including attendance at NZQA workshops and collaborating with external subject specialists.

**Clear communication of assessment practice** Strong leadership and effective communication of NCEA assessment procedures and processes has facilitated shared ownership of assessment systems across the Upper School teachers. Focussed discussions on assessment procedures, such as the practice of assess when ready and authenticity strategies support the development of assessment best practice.

The students interviewed clearly articulated the school assessment practices and what is needed to gain a qualification. They acknowledged the support of staff in providing opportunities to demonstrate their best evidence of achievement, including having a reduced NCEA programme in Class 10.

Assessment handbooks have been updated and digitalised to ensure documentation is coherent, current and fit for purpose. A short version of the staff handbook outlines key NCEA information in brief with more comprehensive explanations in the extended staff version and school policy and procedures document. Clear language and explanatory guidance, such as approaches to gather evidence and outlining each step involved in internal moderation also facilitates school-wide understanding and consistent application of assessment policies and NZQA requirements.

Course outlines are currently being enhanced, using a common visual format, and including all requirements recommended as best practice. This will enable students and parents to readily access course-related information in a succinct and consistent layout.

**No action required**

No issues with the way in which the school maintained the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicated them to staff, students and families were identified during this review.