

**Ash Maindonald
Appraisal Report
2014**



Introduction:

This year has been the first in which I have had the pleasure of undertaking Ash's appraisal and I must say that I have enjoyed the interactions with him, and other management staff members, and come to appreciate what a good place this school is to visit. On each of my visits this year I have left with that feeling of having been involved in a learning environment where the support and care of all students is the main priority and everything that happens within the school revolves around this premise.

Without question the ethos under which this school operates is directly attributable to the skill, knowledge and experience Ash brings to the leadership role and because of this all of those around him work hard to enable this ethos to be realised and to provide the means whereby sound teaching and learning situations and outcomes are realised. There is no question in my mind that Ash since arriving at this school has built a climate that is values based and encourages all, whether student or staff, to live the expectations that are encompassed in the school's documentation and promulgated by Ash through his leadership and his passion for the beliefs he brings in terms of providing the best possible outcomes for students. In this respect I have been most impressed with the manner in which Ash has developed this climate in such a short time.

As will be seen through the summary section of this report I have provided the evidence for my preceding comments and will in brief notes state my reasons for making these comments. Having visited the school on three occasions during Terms 3 and 4 this year and having walked around classrooms and taken account of the displays of work in those rooms as well as noting a range of student activities on the school's Facebook page I believe I have developed a good sense of the expectations that pertain to student outcomes and the provision of a range of activities and events that allow for their various talents and skills to be celebrated. Further to this I have spoken to each of the Senior Leaders of the school and enjoyed their positive responses to my questions about the operation of the school. Added to my discussions with Ash and the contents of this year's ERO review I feel I have developed a good sense of the school, Ash's role in its success and the pleasant and engaging atmosphere that has been the norm on each of my visits. On so many levels it is clear that Ash demonstrates his ability as a professional leader and as a manager of the day-to-day tasks that are required to ensure the school continues to operate so effectively. Without question Ash's leadership is focussed on making learning outcomes better for students and enabling them to become life long learners and able to take their place confidently in their future world. Thus Key Competencies, Values and principles are important to Ash and underpin all that occurs in the school. I have no doubt that under Ash's leadership, with the support of capable senior management staff, with quality classroom practitioners, a very supportive board of trustees and a community that cares Western Heights School will flourish.

I have based this appraisal report around the school's Annual Plan Statements and their outcomes as well as the Business As Usual Tasks that comprise the principal's role. In this regard and as a consequence of my visits I would like at this point to note that in my opinion:

Ash has this year met all of the requirements of Part 4 of the Principals' Collective Contract in regard to those professional and remunerative expectations of an Experienced Principal and a Leading Principal as listed on Pages 10 and 11 of the contract booklet.

In the summary and more detailed sections that follow are the reasons why I believe this to be the case.

Over the course of my discussions with senior management staff I noted that in regard to those things that have been successful in the smooth running of the school Ash has certainly shown that he is a professional leader who demonstrates a very clear understanding of the NZ Curriculum and those components of this other than just the Essential Learning Areas. While acknowledging the importance of these Ash has provided leadership around the implementation of the values and principles noted in the NZ Curriculum and has also lead the school in the provision of Key Competencies which underpin what happens on a daily basis. Ash's senior leaders were most complimentary of his ability to share his understanding and expectations around the change of climate that was expected from his leadership and the manner in which this professional leadership had manifested over the course of the year. Comments such as "professionalism is the key thing", "he is a dynamo", "there is lots of in school learning" affirm the fact that Ash is quite clearly a professional leader who values the need to make change in a managed and inclusive fashion and that this change being based on a sound professional understanding of what makes a difference for students has been embraced readily by teachers and student alike. The various programmes in place to enable this to happen are clearly a testament to the thoughtfulness and thoroughness that underpins everything that happens in this school. It is clear to me that the detail of programme provision and the resulting monitoring of these programmes is what set the overall tone for the school. Under Ash's professional leadership the development of the whole child has been fostered and the understanding of the need to build the Key Competencies have been realised.

Another point that has been readily apparent on my visits to the school this year has been around the process of change that Ash has initiated. While change is usually anathema to many existing staff members it would be true to say that Ash has in fact implemented a great deal of change this year and this has been welcomed by his staff and also the community. In walking around the school and viewing various presentations from students it is very obvious that students have also welcomed the changes that Ash has driven this year. Again in quoting his senior leaders I noted such comments as: "he is inspirational and his enthusiasm is infectious", "all changes have been about good reasons", "he has been a breath of fresh air", "doesn't mark time always new ideas", "expectation of a standard" quite clearly point to an acceptance and a welcoming of the change leadership Ash has provided. It is clear that as a result of the changes that have been made this school and its students enjoy many educational opportunities based around a variety of expectations in regard to recognising the talents and skills of students and the need to nurture these in as many ways as possible. While driving the change I noted that Ash has also recognised the importance of Literacy and Numeracy and the school's annual targets in these areas are challenging and reflect the significance placed on students making progress in Literacy and Numeracy and the focus on these through a range of strategies that will enable this to be the case.

To undertake the degree of change that Ash has this year it is important that the whole staff buys into such change and sees the benefit of it in school wide terms. For this to occur the principal needs to demonstrate a high degree of leadership around personnel management and this Ash has quite clearly done this year. His personnel leadership can be expressed in terms of those interactions with staff members, with students and with the community and I can confidently state that for each of these groups Ash has shown leadership of the highest quality. His senior leaders describe his valuing of them as people and for their professionalism and that his lifting of communication has been immense. With students he has developed a real nurturing and they note that he is very much involved with the students and providing them lots of values lessons and a restorative justice that allows them to be a part of the solution. Additionally to this in his discussions with me Ash described the changes that have been made to classroom practice and reporting of student progress so that students are now very much a part of the process and more able to describe their learning and have an ownership of it. In terms of the community the initiatives that have been introduced to open the lines of communication between home and school are very much apparent. The positive feedback from this communication and the fact Ash makes himself available for such informal interactions as farewelling students at the end of the day speak a lot about the importance Ash places on his personnel management role. One of his DPs also noted that in terms of the mechanics of this leadership area Ash was very knowledgeable around employment matters and that this made for relationships that were based on sound

information and ways to address issues. From my point of view I believe this a real area of strength for Ash and that his leadership of personnel strategies has been a major reason for the successes enjoyed by the school and its students this year. It is most heartening to walk around a school with the principal and to note how all the students greet him and he in turn acknowledges them by name. This is not the case in all schools and is testament to the value Ash places in his role as the principal and particularly in that of being seen and available.

One of the many changes that Ash has initiated this year, and which was commented on by each of his senior leaders, pertained to the introduction of more useful strategies around the implementation of digital technology and its recognition in the learning process. From a change of platform through to the introduction of digital devices and classroom technology the drive to provide the means for students to engage in this technology has been immense this year. In stating this however I would also point out that Ash has ensured that this implementation has been strategically planned and that staff have been a part of the whole process of change that has occurred. What is also clear is that Ash has determined that the pedagogical underpinnings of the use of ICT in classrooms has been fully understood and teachers have embraced the concept that this implementation is about improving practice and providing the means for students to learn in a fashion that is valuable to them and one that fits what is currently accepted good practice by those who understood what this entails. To enable a more consistent approach and to give teachers the ability to introduce digital technologies more readily Ash has enabled staff to undertake a great deal of professional development this year. Much of this has been in school where the already noted skills of staff members have been shared through classroom safaris and through a range of staff meetings where professional understandings have been shared. Ash has enabled this because he: “ has high trust in us and along with this high expectations”, “he sees the school as being very forward thinking and encourages this”, “ teachers are working hard to improve their practice” As can be seen Ash has certainly managed and encouraged change this year and while doing so has ensured it is about improving practice and outcomes for students which in my view is why it is so readily acceptable to his staff.

Ash has this year undertaken the role of day-to-day manager of the school in a most capable manner. He has a very firm grasp of all of those areas of a school's operation that make for successful outcomes for students and these are supported by clear and detailed documentation that guides the day to day running of the school. He ensures that all classroom teachers are delivering programmes that are interesting, motivating and learning based and also follow school curriculum planning. Further to this he regularly monitors these programmes so that he can be assured that the intended outcomes are in fact being met and this is further monitored through the assessment schedule both formative and standardised that operates across the school. As a result of this monitoring Ash is able to discuss the learning levels across the school and point to those interventions that are undertaken to enable all students to achieve the progress expected of them. So that the documentation that underpins the school's operation is more readily available Ash has undertaken the task of upgrading the school's website so that all of that information that makes for the smooth running of the school is now accessible for those who need to use it. This includes policies and procedures along with newsletters and other communication with the school community and because the school has become so much more digitally based such things as documentation for board of trustees meetings and other information pertaining to the school is readily available. This opening up of lines of communication has clearly meant a great deal for Ash's staff and his school community and is appreciated as those involved in the school now feel a real part of its daily operation. In terms of day-to-day management I have already noted Ash's knowledge of employment issues, his ability to lead curriculum and the provision of professional development that goes along with this. Additionally I note that Ash is also fully involved in the oversight of the current provision of modern learning spaces and the future planning for the development of the school and its environment. Quite clearly Ash is a knowledgeable and competent day-to-day manager and this is exemplified in a variety of ways across the school.

Alongside all those day-to-day management roles Ash has also acted as the Chief Executive to the board of trustees over the course of the year and again has done so most competently in my view. He has regularly reported to the board on a variety of issues not the least of which is student

achievement levels. He has acted for the board in the building programme and in a variety of other situations has been the representative of the board as is fitting for the principal's role. Due to his experience Ash understands and completes a variety of tasks related to the school that ensure it continues to meet parental expectations and legal requirements over a myriad of tasks. From my reading of reports and looking through documentation I am confident Ash has enabled the school to meet all required legislative timelines and to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students and staff. This is affirmed through the report by the financial auditors in relation to the school's financial management and through the feedback from the Ministry of Education in regard to the school's planning and reporting documentation. It is further affirmed through the most positive ERO review received earlier this year.

Ash has continued to recognise the need for the development of his own professional understandings and has in this regard undertaken professional development through attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops etc. where he has seen he may gain professional growth and a better understanding of change and directions in education. Complementary to this Ash also reads widely to further his professional understandings and because of these skills and understanding he is able to work with people from all walks of life. These skills are particularly apparent when Ash is describing his vision for the school and the improving outcomes he sees as being important to the students in his care.

Finally, I would like it noted that in my view this has been a very successful year for Western Heights School. It has clearly provided very sound educational programmes that have enhanced outcomes for students and has done so through quality practices that could be regarded as being of real quality. Teachers work hard to enable students to feel secure, nurtured and capable of reaching their potential and Ash works hard to provide the educational environment for this to be possible.

In the final paragraph of this year's ERO report it stated:

"The school has an inclusive culture for learning through its vision, " Love to learn to lead." Students are enthusiastic learners."

I concur with this and particularly enjoyed the enthusiasm with which Ash and myself were greeted wherever we were across the school.

Key Focus Areas:

To develop self motivated, self managing, self monitoring independent learners of their own learning.

Appraisal Comment:

- Students have become much more involved in the learning process as planned.
- They are taking more responsibility for their own learning.
- The school's reporting practices have been reviewed and students now take more part in the reporting process.
- Professional readings have been facilitated so that teachers have also become involved in being better learners.
- Class environments have provided evidence of the significant changes in the use of digital thinking in classroom practice.
- Teacher planning has been monitored by senior leaders to ensure it is meeting the goal of providing best practice outcomes for students.
- A robust appraisal process along with reflective practice, modelling and discussion has enabled good practice to result.
- The goal of using real world experiences etc. has been realised. There have been many examples this year of students undertaking tasks or commitments that serve to help others. The principle of "bucket filling" and "paying it forward" as introduced by Ash have seen

students demonstrating good citizenship and an understanding of the values implicit in the school's expectations of them.

- Through targeted and thoughtful professional development the effectiveness and the appropriate use of digital tools has become a reality this year. It is pleasing to note that students understand such digital devices are tools for learning and not toys. This concept has quite clearly been the basis for staff development and the need for quality presentations on such occasions as buddy class run assemblies.

I believe the leadership provided by Ash and the improving skills and experiences of staff the school employs has had a major impact in the achieving of this goal.

From my observations and discussions I can state that all indicators in this area have been, and are being, met this year and in a most comprehensive and educationally sound manner. In noting this I would also note the significant role Ash plays in ensuring this has happened as planned.

To provide a balanced, differentiated learning and teaching programme focussed on achievement.

Appraisal Comment:

Assessment practices have been reviewed and refined to enable individual student progress against National Standards to be monitored.

The Senior Leaders have ensured that all planning undertaken by teachers meets school requirements and provides for differentiated teaching programmes and differentiated outcomes in terms of learning.

The modelling of good practice and discussion of such good practice has been undertaken this year.

One Senior Leader noted that a consistency of practice has been achieved to a large degree over the course of the year.

The various standardised and formative assessment practices have made it possible to monitor progress against the school's targets for the year and to enable interventions to be implemented where these are indicated.

Improved programmes in Reading and Numeracy have been sought and worked towards over the course of the year. Appraisal observations have confirmed the success of these expected outcomes as staff decided on the components of a good Reading programme and these were used as the basis for observations and discussions which followed.

Professional readings in this area have also been facilitated.

The on going professional development and the sharing of strategies that make a difference to learning outcomes have contributed to a climate where teachers more readily appreciate the differing needs and motivations that drive learning.

Again all key tasks in this area have been met. The documentation that underpins the school's programmes is comprehensive and readily accessible by staff as the basis for classroom programmes.

To build a team of effective and motivated educators.

Appraisal Comment:

This has been a real area of success in my view with this being confirmed by those Senior Leaders to whom I spoke.

Teachers are in fact working hard to improve their practice.

Ash has encouraged others to take responsibility in a variety of areas.

Staff have been measured against the Professional Standards as planned.

Personal achievement goals were set by staff members and monitored as part of the appraisal process.

Reading programmes were linked to the observations undertaken and as noted previously were based around teacher initiated goals.

The goal of building school leadership has quite clearly been met. Ash shared with me the extent to which this has occurred with his Senior Leaders and the process he undertook for this to become a reality. The positive outcomes of this shared leadership has had major impact across the school where good practice outcomes have resulted and a cohesive and enthusiastic staff team has resulted.

Student voice has become apparent in a variety of ways with various fund raising ventures, student leaders and a much more obvious leadership component on such occasions as assemblies.

The school's kapa haka group provides another instance of the leadership that has been shared with students with this group providing a "voice" for the school in public situations.

In reviewing this focus area of the school's operation I believe the goal has been achieved particularly well. Indeed when visiting the school it is quite apparent that students are encouraged to play a full role as learners and leaders and that the school's vision in this regard provides the basis for this to be the case. Ash has through such means as the introduction of bracelets ensured a real "buy in" to the school's vision and his expectations of positive outcomes because of this.

To build an informed community focussed on student achievement and engagement.

Appraisal Comment:

Regular reports of student achievement have been provided to the board and the community as planned.

The school's reporting programme has been reviewed this year and changes resulting from this review have been implemented over the course of the year.

Written reports to parents informing them of student progress have been revamped so that they are in plain language and reflect "value added" progress.

Goal setting by students has become an embedded component of the learning process. This goal setting is done within classroom programmes and for the purpose of reporting to parents.

The achievement of Maori and Pasifika students is monitored with collated data of this achievement reported to the board of trustees along with school wide data.

The school's Maori community has been consulted as planned and Ash has endeavoured to achieve a growing acceptance of Taha Maori within the school community.

I believe Ash has achieved the goal of having an informed community. It is readily apparent that the many ways in which he has opened up lines of communication with the community have been to the advantage of the students and the school. Through the feedback noted on Facebook, through various classroom blogs, through newsletters and through face to face contact Ash has certainly provided the parent community with a great deal of information about the daily life of the school and each child's part in this daily life. I believe Ash's dynamism, his vitality and his "being out there" all contribute to the great "feel" that this school possesses.

BUSINESS AS USUAL OBJECTIVES

Appraisal Comment:

The annual plan was completed and implemented as planned.

All other planning pertaining to the school's operation was completed as planned and implemented as necessary.

As planned the Strategic Plan was reviewed and targets set as agreed. These have been monitored over the course of the year.

Policies and procedures have been reviewed as planned according to the planned timetable for this action.

2014 targets have been set for the year.

Parents have been reported to on the achievement of students in a timely fashion according to the school's procedures in place to ensure this happens.

School wide professional development has been undertaken.

Teachers have been encouraged to undertake personal professional development opportunities and have done so on a needs basis.

The Board of Trustees has been kept well informed about the effectiveness and the extent of the professional development undertaken.

Consistent high-level teaching has been expected and monitored this year. Senior Leaders have undertaken observations and provided support to enable the expected quality to be met.

Ash has in my view successfully reached out to the community this year and in doing so quite clearly has raised the profile of the school.

Newsletters are regularly sent to parents and the wider community and like all publications for the school are quality documents that continue to inform and celebrate the school's successes.

Parents have been encouraged to support their children's sporting efforts as well as the various other occasions when the skills and talents of students is on show. That they have done so is a credit to the way in which the school has promoted and encouraged this.

The recognition of parents as first educators continues to be a focus.

Ash has monitored the school's budget and expenditure according to the procedures in place for this.

Funds were allocated to support the school's Strategic Plan and Operational Plans and these funds were monitored to ensure planned outcomes were being realised.

Curriculum needs identified were funded accordingly and again monitored to ensure outcomes were being realised.

The school's property has been maintained in line with those plans in place to enable this to happen. The completion of a new classroom block has proceeded this year.

All resources and facilities have met the goal of enhancing teaching and learning with digital devices being introduced over time to achieve this end.

All required documentation in regard to planning and reporting has been completed.

Ash has ensured that all school systems/ procedures / operations are compliant.

The checking for hazards and the general checking to ensure ACC requirements are met have been completed.

The school continues to provide strategies that allow students to enjoy a safe physical and emotional environment.

Issues of concern are well covered and in the first instance involve strategies at the classroom level. All teachers and students are aware of the school's procedures in this regard and as a consequence the provision of a supportive school climate is the one a visitor comes to appreciate.

All Health and Safety legislation requirements are met as planned.

Evacuation drills have been held.

As can be seen Ash has undertaken his role as the day-to-day manager of the school in a very capable manner this year. In addition as the Chief Executive to the board of trustees he has fulfilled the role of reporting to them and providing the necessary leadership to ensure the school continues to provide well for its student body. In all aspects of the principal's role I believe Ash is an extremely capable practitioner and a most professional leader.

Personal Development Objectives

Appraisal Comment:

Ash has attended meetings of the local principals' group as planned.

Ash continues to undertake a variety of professional reading the outcomes of which reflect in his knowledge and understanding of educational initiatives in the wider educational community.

I believe Ash to be a most competent and capable principal and one who has a real commitment to Western Heights School. He demonstrates this in a variety of ways not the least of which is his commitment to the very good outcomes enjoyed by students.

This is highlighted by Ash when as stated to me he operates under the belief that:

- schools should be designed for children
- decisions should be made for children
- children should be a part of the decision making process
- children should have ownership of their learning

and:

- everything the school does should be about quality

As stated earlier in this report I believe Ash has met all the requirements of his Job Description this year and in doing so has provided an environment of learning that is of the highest quality. He has provided an environment where staff members are supported and enabled to provide sound educational programmes that recognise best practice and quality outcomes for students.

Points Noted For Future Consideration

Continue to attend relevant conferences and seminars.

Give consideration to the pedagogical underpinnings that will be necessary in the further implementation of digital devices in the learning process.

Ensure the embedding of consistent good practice across the school.

Investigate the introduction of a Music programme that takes cognisance of the intent of the Music strand of The Arts curriculum document.

As a consequence of this appraisal process I can confidently state that in my view Ash quite clearly meets all the requirements of the Professional Standards for Principals and does so in an exceptionally competent manner.

Mac Stevenson H DipT FNZEI
Appraiser
November 2014