

**Appraisal 2015
Ash Maindonald**



Appraisal Report

2015

Appraisal Commentary:

This is the second year I have worked with Ash and this has enabled me to have an even more in depth appreciation of his abilities as a principal and the manner in which he has strived to make Western Heights School one where learning is paramount and the nurturing and support of all students is the driver behind all that is done.

It is not difficult each year to find new superlatives to describe the ongoing change that makes this a dynamic school and one where the needs of every student is clearly articulated and obviously followed through in classroom and pastoral provision.

As any visit to the school affirms the depth of knowledge in regard to the needs of students and the lengths to which Ash and his teachers go in order to meet these needs is really a feature as is their ability to articulate what is being provided for students and the various successes over the course of the year. In short Ash, in my view, provides a very good model of a principal who has high expectations and places positive outcomes for students as the basis for the daily operation of the school. That he is dynamically forward thinking has had a profound effect on the school over his time as principal and this is manifested in many ways, as this report will hopefully indicate.

When visiting classrooms it is notable that the provision of colourful and educationally vibrant displays of work has been achieved across the school. The quality of student work and the value placed on student artwork is reflected in all rooms, and in the playground and this emphasises the extent to which students are able to develop their skills and how much the school values such quality work.

As well as artwork classrooms reflect the extent to which students have been undertaking a variety of Writing tasks and these are again of such quality that they provide good indications of the expectations made on students to complete work to the best of their ability.

In all the rooms I visited students were happily engaged in the completion of the tasks they were set and in all cases the managing of learning was most certainly the focus, rather than than the managing of behaviour. This to me was an indication that the programmes provided were meeting student needs and the development of students taking control of, and managing, their learning was taking place.

Clearly as students became older this was more evident so that in the Year 5/6 classes the use of goal setting and self-assessment was readily observable and the co-construction of programmes even more readily apparent.

The remodelling and modified layout of teaching spaces in the senior class area has clearly impacted on this and has allowed students to work in differing settings with fluid groupings and

with more control of their learning. From my observations all of those I watched and spoke to were relishing this greater independence.

Ash of course has played a significant part in this process being involved in the planning of the teaching spaces, in providing the necessary resources to enable students to be more independent and in the provision of professional development to enable teachers to better appreciate the pedagogy behind the curriculum provision.

Ash continues to guide the provision of programmes of work that are firmly based around the expectations of the New Zealand Curriculum and the need to develop engaged and life long learners. The providing of the Essential Skills and the Key Competencies are in evidence in classrooms, and in the daily life of the school, it is also clear that the values and principles behind the Ka Hikitia document play a major part in the ethos of the school.

The climate of the school is one that is clearly based on nurturing and a set of values that allow students to contribute to the well being of others, be supportive of their peers and understand the need to develop into well rounded, contributing members of an inclusive society.

On one of my visits I was shown around the school by two of the students from the senior part of the school who impressed me with their ability to articulate the school's goals and to demonstrate the fact that the school's values programme was in fact something that was now embedded into the daily life of the school and embraced by the student group.

To ensure the school continues to perform at the leading edge of education Ash has over the course of the year enabled teachers to be engaged in professional development that extends skills and provides new ways of providing for students. This professional development provision is a major component of the school's operation and in my view accounts for the high quality of the teaching provided across the school. Ash shared with me the weekly programme that encourages professional reading and the sharing of ideas and challenges that enable teachers to remain up to date with currently accepted good practice.

Ash shared with me his view that because of this focussed work with teachers and the use of such programmes as those in the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing, the learning is growing and growing. He feels at this time that teachers see themselves as learners first and this has major impact on students. Indeed he shared with me the comments he had received from teachers thanking him for providing the professional development that he does and doing so in such an inclusive manner.

These high level expectations of teachers are enhanced by the comprehensive and robust system of appraisal that Ash has implemented with the documentation for their on going registration being readily accessible and also confidential to only those with rights to its viewing. Ash has obviously spent a great amount of time developing these teacher portfolios, which are now a requirement of registration, and make expectations of teachers to reflect on their practice and to continue to grow.

From my perspective Ash has quite clearly lead this quality growth and through the delegations he has in place, is well supported by his senior management team and his lead teachers to enable this to be the case. As already noted teachers themselves are part of the growth expected and are encouraged to be, and are, growing in their learning.

Another innovative practice that Ash brings to the school is the classroom safari whereby all teachers visit all classrooms in the school to gain ideas from each other and to share best practice. This practice means teachers are constantly under the scrutiny of their peers and keen to

ensure that they have ideas to share and quality student work on display. This quality is certainly obvious when walking around because classrooms clearly are colourful and interesting.

The implementation of digital devices into classrooms has continued as teachers have requested this and in the senior classrooms such implementation has become embedded into the programme provision that occurs in those rooms. At all points this implementation has been evaluated by Ash so that the teaching practice leads the devices rather than the reverse.

It would be true to say that in this area Ash is quite clearly not only an advocate, he is also a principal with the necessary curriculum expertise to appreciate that the use of such devices relies on a basis of understanding that devices are tools to assist the learning process rather than being the learning. This was exemplified by the video he shared which showed students working with LEGO Mindstorms Robots and the degree to which learning was taking place not just in the building but also in the oral discussion and the thinking necessary to accomplish the outcomes desired. This again serves to explain why students are so well engaged in their learning and why Ash was able to share with me so many examples of such learning.

Ash continues to manage staff in an inclusive and caring manner. He has high expectations of his staff with these being made with due cognisance of personal factors and the need for on going professional development. While changes have occurred over the course of the year it is apparent that Ash has managed these so that their impact on the running of the school and the provision of quality programmes have not been compromised.

Regular checking of planning, classroom visiting, a robust appraisal process and the expectations around the provision of student assessment data all mean that Ash keeps a very good oversight of student progress and is always aware of where interventions are needed to make a difference in positive outcomes for students. The systems Ash has in place to enable these things to happen means the day-to-day operation of the school continues to have children as the heart of the matter.

Ash is a very visible presence around the school and is so appreciated by the students who greet him affectionately. He in turn impresses with his knowledge of them and his willingness to be involved with them at lunchtimes, on sporting and cultural trips, and his open door policy means students are constantly visiting to say hello to him. These interactions quite clearly demonstrate the school climate in action and provide the proof of the effectiveness of the values that underpin the school's operation. Over the course of his time at this school I believe Ash has been responsible for this growth in the nurturing of students and in the growth of a community that is focussed on learning.

It has been an interesting year in terms of property, however I believe Ash has managed his way around the provision of quality facilities that serve the best interest of students in an environment that enables a variety of teaching spaces and the expectations of improving learning.

While walking around the school I also noted the variety of subtle changes that have occurred over time, including outdoor artwork, the development of a garden space and the native tree area while the on going maintenance of the school continues to be well managed.

Ash also shared the variety of equipment purchases that have facilitated presentations in the hall, allowed for the security of digital devices and contributed to the desire to allow students to constantly share and celebrate their achievements. Ash has very good systems in place for the management of property and finance and in my view the board of trustees can be well assured by the competent managing of these that Ash displays on a daily basis.

He clearly has a good rapport with those agencies and officials that impact on the school and such is his persistence that in many cases good outcomes result because of his knowledge and ability to negotiate the most positive outcomes for students and the school in general. Ash shared with me the gains made as a consequence of the building work being undertaken.

Over the course of this year I have noted the many, many opportunities that are provided for students whether these be in school or in the community. Ash spoke with pride about the new emphasis placed on sport and the great variety of sporting opportunities presented both in school and out, and how well the students have done this year when representing the school. The list of achievements at local level and then at Auckland wide level are quite outstanding and with two teams competing at Jump Jam at national level it is clear that students can well feel proud of their school and their part in representing it. (I now note that one Jump Jam team finished First in New Zealand at those National Champs).

I noted that Ash accompanies students on these occasions and the successes are shared on social media sites in both graphic and written form. Ash uses Facebook daily to share the school's successes with parents and it is clear from their comments that they appreciate this contact and the inclusiveness it provides in terms of building community.

Along with these sporting achievements there are a range of cultural opportunities that are provided for students. The school's kapa haka group continues to be a source of pride, and performs at a variety of events where their skills are acknowledged and appreciated. The school's kaiako works with every class to enable te reo Maori to be embedded into the culture of the school.

Music lessons in every class also contribute to the development of student talent. The celebration of the successes of students at assemblies, the ability for them to display their talents through such occasions as performances by the Kapa Haka group, Indian Dance Troup, Marimba Band, Rock Band, and Jump Jam groups, and the enabling of students to develop a range of skills can certainly be seen as developing a love for learning and the ability to be life long learners. The balance of academic and sporting/cultural activities makes this a great place for students and Ash is to be commended for enabling this to be the case.

One of the more positive insights I gain from my visits to Ash is his ability to speak with authority about students in the school. It is clear that Ash is not an office bound principal and is rather one who seeks to gain a good picture of each of his students and his staff and then to put in place strategies so that each is performing and succeeding to the best of their abilities. Ash can share authoritatively the interventions put in place and the methods by which those with special needs are assisted and he can also demonstrate through comprehensive data how well the whole school is performing in relation to National Standards.

In this respect Ash always completes those mandated tasks required of a principal in a timely manner and in a quality fashion.

He has a comprehensive record of how well the school has met its target expectations and the data provided the Ministry I believe accurately reflects student outcomes because of a robust moderation process that ensures teachers have a sound basis for their assessments.

As I understand Ash has worked at length with teachers to enable the moderation process to be an accurate and valid one that truly reflects student outcomes against expected levels. The school's emphasis on students setting goals for their learning and undertaking their own

monitoring of success in attaining these goals has this year led Ash to trial an e/portfolio system which will provide students with the ability to share their learning in variety of digital ways. As part of this trial teachers and parents have been involved in using the e/portfolios to share their views on how effective the reporting process is, and how well it complements the reporting against National Standards that is a requirement for all schools. The fact that these e/portfolios are based around formative assessment practices and provide students with the ability to develop skills in the use of video and written presentation, mean that the goals of the school that see students as part of a community of learners is certainly being realised. I am confident that the trial will lead to school wide acceptance and that Ash will enthusiastically oversee its implementation.

A major area of strength in Ash's "tool kit" of principalship is, in my view, his building of strong links between the school and its community. There are many instances that Ash shared with me where students have been involved in activities / events / fund raising etc. where the community have been involved and have done so enthusiastically and very supportively.

From school camps, to fund raising, to sporting and cultural events, there is no lack of parental support and no lack of involvement. I believe Ash has fostered this through his use of social media such as Facebook and the WHS Smartphone app where parents are able to respond immediately to the daily posts that Ash makes available, and that highlight the school's day to day events and successes.

The newsletters he has produced this year are amazingly informative, and because they are digitally based, enable Ash to send numerous pages of information so that parents can feel very much involved in the education of their children. The positive comments he receives because of this large amount of information shows that parents enjoy being kept well informed and able to share the enthusiasm these posts engender.

Ash also keeps his board of trustees very well informed. The digital sharing of information again means that board members are able to access a variety of information and because of this able to make sound decisions based on this information. Ash reports fully on the day to day operation of the school and ensures board members are fully cognisant of the leadership he provides in enabling high level outcomes for all students, with this being demonstrated by the provision of a slide at most board meetings from each teacher detailing the learning that is happening in their room at that time. In this way Ash is assured that his board is being kept fully informed, and this practice in my view could well serve as a model for other schools.

Ash continues to play a role in the wider educational community through his involvement with his colleagues in the local area through the Principals' Association and also in the wider West Auckland area as a member of that group. He has also taken on the management of a sub-committee developing a Community of Schools in the area, and as such is working with colleagues to secure the best possible outcomes.

Ash has worked on Post Graduate studies this year, which commits him to 5 hours per week on campus, and of course the various assignments that go with such study. Ash is happy with the results achieved in his assignments with these being at a very high Grade Point Average. Ash continues to read widely and is in my view particularly well informed around current trends and expectations in education. In this regard I commend the manner in which Ash considers any change before it is implemented. He does not commit to the latest "fad" unless he has fully researched it and confirmed that it might indeed be of benefit. Even at this point he evaluates all such change and determines whether or not it does in fact warrant implementation on a school wide basis.

As an instance of this, it is heartening that he always discusses the impact teaching practices make on learning and how one to one devices can enhance these. Ash has an amazing understanding and ability with information technology and a great sense of where to find new ideas and applications that can enhance the systems or the provision of learning experiences for teachers and students. A number of the applications he shared with me, and which have been implemented in the school, are noticeably impacting on learning and quite clearly highlight why in Ash's words the "the learning is growing and growing."

Finally, and as I stated last year, it has been a pleasure to visit Western Heights School this year and to appreciate the care and support provided by Ash and his staff team to enable students to feel secure, nurtured and capable of reaching their potential. It has also been most informative to follow the school through Facebook and to find what is happening each week through the school's phone app. Ash has also made all the school's comprehensive google sites available to me to ensure I am fully in the picture. Through this information stream I feel I have been a part of the school and while I have visited on two occasions this year, I feel that I have been much more involved that that.

As an outside observer I appreciate the value Ash places on such communication and believe this contributes significantly to the friendly "feel" the school has when I have visited. The desire to always make things "better than before" has, I believe, been realised and is manifest in many ways as any visitor to the school such as myself can appreciate. I commend Ash for making this the case and for his enthusiasm, knowledge, leadership ability and nurturing of students. All of these attributes contribute towards making this a rather special school.

As a consequence of my visits, and from my knowledge of Ash and the school, 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.

The next section of this report details the outcomes of the expected day to day tasks that underpin the running of a school and which define the management and Chief Executive Officer roles that a principal undertakes.

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.

The planned timetable of curriculum review has been followed and milestone reports based on this review completed as planned and as required.

The planned self-review programme has been followed with selected ELAs reviewed and again milestone reports prepared to reflect outcomes of the review.

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

2014 targets were reported to the community as planned and new targets set.

All planned 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 BOT 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. The management team have undertaken observations and provided support to enable the expected quality to be met.

Ash has in my view again successfully reached out to the community this year. It would be true to state that each year the school, and its students, seem to achieve even more of a public profile so that Western Heights School becomes more and more well known because of its reputation and the opportunities provided for students to excel. I believe this can be confirmed by a visit to the school on any assembly day where I know students display a range of skills in a confident and effervescent manner.

Newsletters are regularly sent to parents as noted earlier in this report and like all publications for the school are quality documents that continue to inform and celebrate the school's successes. The addition of a school app. this year has further enhanced the school's reach to the community. 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. As noted above assemblies showcase this while reports in the wider context also provide testament to the quality outcomes provided by the school.

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

Information evenings have been held as necessary to keep parents informed.

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 completion of the classroom upgrade in the senior school has resulted in quality facilities that allow for more flexible teaching / learning spaces and the ability for teachers to more flexibly manage the student group to provide individual and group instruction as well as student managed work spaces that suit their own learning styles.

All resources and facilities have met the goal of enhancing teaching and learning.

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. I commend Ash for the manner in which he has continued to maintain the focus on learning this year and has not allowed anything to shift this focus. His knowledge of students is amazing and his empathy and nurturing of them is a feature of the school.

Personal Development Objectives

Appraisal Comment:

Ash has continued to attend meetings of the local principals' group.

He has also attended meetings hosted by the WAPA.

Ash has led a sub-committee of schools looking towards the formation of a Community of Schools. Ash leads weekly staff meetings and has provided leadership in a variety of professional development undertakings this year.

He has continued to undertake a wide variety of professional reading and use this as the basis for reaching decisions in regard to the day-to-day management of the school and the building of school community all focussed on learning.

As required by good appraisal practice Ash has maintained a Learning Journal where reflective comment and professional development undertaken has been recorded.

Post Graduate studies have been undertaken and Ash notes that his success in passing assignments is at a high level.

Ash is a well-regarded principal in the wider educational community. His depth of knowledge and his curriculum understanding is at the highest-level while his management of his school and his passion for learning provides a model to others.

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 recognised in the wider educational community. His staff team also demonstrate the skills that continue to enhance the reputation of the school and its desire to provide sound educational programmes that recognise best practice and quality outcomes for its students.

Points Noted For Future Consideration

Continue to work on the development of e/portfolios and ensure their implementation is well understood and well managed.

Consult with the community on the achievement and aspirations of Maori students and also undertake community consultation on the Health and PE programme.

Undertake a survey of the school community using a reflective tool that will allow for determining where the school is currently at and where it should go next.

Continue to seek opportunities to participate in conferences, seminars workshops etc. where these are seen as being of value.

Monitor the implementation of the new phone and speaker system being installed currently.

Continue to lead the embedding of sound pedagogy around innovative learning environments and that of the 6+ Traits of Writing.

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 a very competent manner.

Mac Stevenson H DipT FNZEI

Appraiser

October 2015