**LEARNING, MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING**

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."[[1]](#footnote-1)

# OVERALL POLICY

This policy shows the Kinma approach to student learning.

# LEARNING VALUES

"The future wellbeing of human society and its environment depends upon the quality of peoples’ interactions with each other”[[2]](#footnote-2)

At Kinma, building genuine relationships with people having similar and dissimilar values is a vital part of our students’ learning. At Kinma we incorporate social justice, inter-cultural understanding and democratic principles into our daily learning practice. We immerse our students in the practices of a community based in democracy. The Kinma learning environment immerses students in the political and social systems of our wider community. Students at Kinma are in a sense apprentices – their learning derives from simultaneous immersion and formal study.

As members of the Kinma community, the students are encouraged to

* ask challenging questions
* foster curiosity
* engage with actual life issues
* develop project-based learning skills through meaningful experience
* action their decisions.

Students play an active role as decision-makers and leaders in Kinma’s learning practice. Student ideas and interests generate units of work in all Key Learning Areas. The role of teachers then becomes blending the knowledge, skills and values set out in the relevant syllabi and tailoring learning to individual needs. At class and school meetings, students raise issues, suggest events and propose resolutions to problems. Student input also plays a key role in planning excursions, responding to behaviour issues, and classroom management. Students and teachers together debate the issues and make decisions. Kinma students who are thus empowered assume greater responsibility for activities and projects than in the majority of schools.

Kinma welcomes both the new English and Maths syllabi (2013) as the values and attitudes espoused therein sit so comfortably with what is stated above.

# MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT AT KINMA

“Assessment activities should:

* enable students to demonstrate their learning in a range of different contexts
* be reliable, free from bias and provides evidence that accurately represents a student’s knowledge, understanding and skills
* be inclusive of and accessible to all students
* be part of an ongoing process where progress is monitored over time. “ [[3]](#footnote-3)

Kinma meets all the assessment requirements of the Board of Studies.

## Observation and reflection

At Kinma, assessment is made up of observation of each student, shared reflection on these observations and monitoring of progress against each student’s learning needs. The mantra for Kinma teachers in assessment is “we look, we listen, we learn about each student, from each student, with each student, along with the family”.

Every student enters Kinma as a whole person. Each student has already formed a personal outlook and sense of him/herself from an array of experiences: joyful moments, sad times, successful new activities, frustrating incidents and insightful episodes. Students bring their world into Kinma.

As soon as a student enrols at Kinma, teachers start active observation both within the classroom and outside in the playground. Observations focus on interactions with other students, adults and the physical environment. Teachers observe

* how each student learns
* who each student chooses to mix with and how social interactions unfold
* where each student feels comfortable and where they do not
* the situations that facilitate a student’s learning and those that pose challenges.

Observation is perhaps a teacher's most profound tool, often constituted as a kind of mental checklist, which derives from knowledge of content and processes relevant to school, knowledge of childhood and knowledge of the individual student. Observations are undertaken by a number of staff at different times. Teacher observations are the subject of individual and shared reflection by staff that helps identify options for interpreting the observed activities or behaviours. A team approach allows for as much diversity and support as possible.

The results of reflections (known as “reflection based inferences”) are collated and discussed with staff, students and families at appropriate times. The rich dialogue itself makes the assessment effective. It is deep and probing and gives insight to all concerned (students, staff and families) regarding the ideas, the challenges and the potential routes for learning.

Observation and reflection provide the basis of ongoing monitoring of each student’s learning requirements and learning progress, and the monitoring allows students, parents and teachers are aware of changes over time in

* strengths and weaknesses or concerns
* interactions with others
* approaches to learning
* development needs.

On the basis of teacher observations, teachers join students’ learning by providing appropriate stimuli and opportunities. Teachers overlay their ongoing observation and reflection with active assessment of student development across informal and formal learning areas (like literacy and numeracy). In this way, ongoing observations provide teachers with a rich monitoring and assessment tool that feeds the growing curriculum.

## Developmental Stage Statements as Safeguards

The teacher's knowledge of a student grows, largely through observation. As teachers glean more information, they are better able to tailor a supportive, appropriately challenging learning environment. This process never stops. The teachers are aware of each student's changing needs as the student passes through different developmental stages. Such stages are not hard and unbending. They are general guidelines to aid teachers in planning appropriate learning experiences. The teachers use various developmental stage statements (NSW Board of Studies documents, Department of Community Services guidelines and other relevant developmental continuums) to guide their programming and assessment for each individual.

These actions and guidelines help teachers make decisions about the best ways to facilitate further learning for each student. The individual observation and planning ensures that students are progressing commensurate with their ability. If teachers note a discrepancy between a student's potential and the developmental stage statements, they:

* clarify understanding of the areas of need, through focused tasks and observation
* consult with parents (this is ongoing)
* provide opportunities for skill development
* continue to monitor skill development
* record observations in anecdotal notes.
* consult specialists if needed.

It is this core mix of observation, communication, respect, facilitation and stimulation that roots the learning process at Kinma in the present. It is this process that allows each learner to continue the unique learning journey with which s/he has entered the school.

## Assessment

Teachers make ongoing assessments over the course of the school year. Each new assessment is compared with the individual student’s previous assessments. In this way, Kinma teachers document individual progress over the year. This approach to assessment is known as “developmental assessment”.

Records of Kinma student development are kept in each student’s portfolio of work. Portfolios consist largely of samples of work. Samples include but are not limited to photographs of the student engaged in experiences that reflect changes in their physical, social, emotional and/or intellectual learning. The photographs are particularly beneficial with PE, Creative and Practical Arts and some Science and Technology and Maths creations that could not otherwise be recorded. Portfolios contain significant pieces of work and provide a longitudinal view of students’ development and progression.

## Assessment Tools

The practical tools that Kinma teachers use in their monitoring and assessment of students include:

* writing and collation of anecdotal notes
* collection of samples for portfolios
* sending work home at the conclusion of a unit of study
* student, teacher and peer assessment of various pieces of work
* teacher-student conferences
* self-assessment by students
* learning outcome continuums
* skills checklists (maths, English)
* group discussions and feedback.
* pre and post tests on topic areas, where appropriate (mainly stage two and three studies)

A detailed list of assessment tools is set out in Appendix 1 to this policy.

Teacher-student conferences provide opportunities for discussion on works in progress throughout the process, not just when completed. Conferences allow teachers to identify and address needs in context.

Student self-reflection covers the whole of their learning process: what experiences are enjoyed, in what do they excel, what experiences do they dislike, what poses a challenge? Self-assessment can take various forms: labelled diagrams, written responses, diary entries and verbal responses.

Pre and post testing provides information for the teachers on the state of the student’s current knowledge, and is usually done at the start of a unit of study. The post testing, undertaken at the end of a unit of study, shows the new level of student knowledge and provides input for the teacher’s assessment of ongoing learning requirements. It is also used as a reflection base on teacher practice.

*“* Teachers should consider the effect that assessment and feedback have on student motivation and self-esteem, and the importance of the active involvement in their learning.*”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

At Kinma, an individual student’s progress is not assessed comparative to other student’s progress. In reading and SENA (Schedule for Early Number Assessment) in maths, teachers use a range of measures to gauge the student’s approximate stage level. Teachers make and retain records of individual learning and development. These records can be consulted at any time by the three-way partners in student learning; student, parent and staff. Families are involved in discussions and planning if a student’s needs require particular attention.

Staff are keenly aware of the danger posed to learning by making quick, simple or conclusive judgments. They appreciate that they can only observe within the extent of their own (inner and sensory) vision. To compensate for this natural limitation, much of staff’s time at Kinma is taken with dialogue. One distinct advantage of our small school is that because staff learn with and play with all our students, they build relationship with all students. This provides a student’s classroom teacher with several other well-informed perspectives on each student’s learning.

# TRANSITION TO THE NEXT GROUP

Kinma students work in three groups working in three classrooms. Transition between groups can occur at the start of the school year or during the school year.

Teachers take many factors into account when considering a student's transition between groups. The most significant factor is the benefit to the student. Teachers consider the student's emotional, social, academic and physical development. In addition, teachers take into account family issues (e.g. separation, death in family) and the school's structure.

Teachers always consult the student, parents and other teachers to ensure that the student is in the most supportive learning environment. When a student moves to a new group, the previous teacher will discuss and pass on any relevant information to the student's new teacher. The student's portfolio, anecdotal notes and letters are also exchanged and read.

# REPORTING AND FEEDBACK

The aim of reporting is for teachers to give feedback and communicate their understanding of the student to his/her family. Reporting is a dialogue involving teacher, parents and student. Each has an active role to play.

Kinma supports a wide range of feedback and reporting opportunities. They include:

* teacher reports on class activities in the weekly newsletter
* letters to parents
* classroom displays
* class or school meetings
* informal discussions between teacher and parents
* parent information evenings (held each term)
* student / school performances
* student self-reports
* Kinma learning forums
* formal parent-teacher interviews
* written half yearly reports for each student.

In terms one and three, teachers set up formal interviews with each family to discuss the individual student, to build a common understanding of the student’s development and learning needs. The outcome of these discussions is a jointly planned future learning path for each student, highlighting both strengths and challenges for that student. In terms two and four, teachers issue “formal” written reports to parents. The format these reports take is responsive to the changing needs of students and staff and the experiences of the semester that they reflect. Kinma’s reports are detailed and individual, rather than formulaic.

**PLANNING CONTROL**

* Distribute to all staff
* Publish in parent information kit
* Use in staff induction

Next Scheduled Review: 2018

**VERSION CONTROL**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date Approved** | **Approved By** | **Brief Description of changes, rationale** |
| 1.1 | 5/08/2014 | Education Coordinator, Juli Gasner | Re-organisation of document and establishment of schedules for information on standardised testing. |
| 1.2 | 10/09/2014 | Chair, Pam Webster |  |
| x.x | dd/mm/yyyy | Title (name) |  |
| x.x | dd/mm/yyyy | Title (name) |  |

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**APPENDICES**

1. **TEACHER ASSESSMENT TOOLS**
2. **STANDARDISED TESTING**

**APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT TOOLS AT KINMA**

| **Key Learning Area** | **Self Assessment Opportunities** | **Teacher Assessment Opportunities** | **Peer/Other Assessment Opportunities** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| English - reading | Questionnaire  Reflection as part of teaching and learning cycle  Socio-gram / brainstorm / mind-map for bi-annual report | Running record (PM benchmark kit and text the child is reading)  Sight words (Understanding Words)  Dialogue forum | Buddy reading | |
| English - writing | Self-editing pro-forma  Reflections – written, illustrated, diagrammatic, charted  Questionnaires | Dolch spelling lists  Multi lit spell check  Teacher/student conference  Work samples (see, scope and sequence)  Checklist for genre writing (from What, Where, How to teach English)  Handwriting checklist | Peer conference  Dialogue forums  Writing plays for class or other groups | |
| English - Talking and Listening | Questionnaire  Reflections - written, illustrated, diagrammatic, charted  Daily life | Observation and anecdotal notes of daily life at school  Presentations  Poetry festival / Plays  Class forums  Class and whole school meetings | Class and whole school meetings  Natural feedback | |
| Maths | Questionnaire  Reflections - written, illustrated, diagrammatic, charted  Daily life (shopping, cooking) | Work samples and photos  Anecdotal notes  SENA  Presentations and Observation  Predictions  Teacher designed pre-tests  Pre and post testing in topic areas | Share reflections  Working in groups | |
| Science and Technology | Reflections - written, illustrated, diagrammatic, charted  Questionnaire – brainstorm mind map | Work samples – particularly experiment records and data  Photos  Models / designs  Observations  Pre and post test topic areas – as appropriate in stage 2 and 3 | Share reflections  Peer coaching |
| Creative and Performing Arts | Reflections - written, illustrated, diagrammatic, charted -  Questionnaire | Art / craft samples  Observation  Anecdotal notes  Photos  Models / designs  Plays / Poetry festival / End year celebration | Share  Reflections  Peer coaching |
| Human Society in its Environment | Reflections  Questionnaire | Work samples  Group dialogue |  |
| Language other than English | Reflections  Conversation | Observation and anecdotal notes  Work samples Presentations | Conversations / dialogue / role play |

**APPENDIX 2 – STANDARDISED TESTING**

Kinma’s educational philosophy is founded on the principle of non-competition. Our constitution bans competitive testing. There are several reasons for this rejection of competitive testing.

1. Not all learning competency is amenable to simple statistical analysis

Kinma promotes a form of education that values all types of student intelligence and learning styles, many of which cannot be measured statistically or competitively. Standardised testing creates a narrower version of excellence that does not reveal real learning competency.

1. Standardised, normed tests results are harmful to students

When students are judged to be sub-standard or to exceed standards, their self- concept can be artificially moulded and their confidence easily damaged. Such judging creates division in school communities. Kinma is a strong and cohesive school community and is deeply concerned about such harmful effects of testing on students and the community as a whole.

1. Standardised testing limits educational opportunity

When schools are judged on student performance in standardised testing, students and teachers start to focus their work on improving test results. This means responding to the needs of the tests at the cost of individual learning needs or the integrity of school philosophy. This was recognised by Australian Literacy and English University Teaching Boards over 2010-2013 with public statements in the media and educational literature. Both organisations recommend the cessation of standardised testing. Their voice is spreading to assorted groups in Australian society. Kinma offers a student driven program consistent with a learner driven pedagogy – a major contribution to educational development in Australia.

1. Testing undermines teacher expertise

Because of its size and philosophy, Kinma provides an ideal educational environment where staff members are highly attuned to each student’s progress and make decisions about programming that are sensitive to all aspects of a student’s performance. Close observation and individual assessment are a better use of each teacher’s creative and professional expertise. A richer indication of learning progress than standardised measures are found in modes such as:

* peer teacher observation
* ongoing staff reflection and dialogue,
* parent/teacher monitoring and conversation and
* student/teacher communication

1. Any benefits for other schools don’t apply at Kinma

While schools with large class sizes or high teacher turnover might identify some information they can use from standardised testing, this is not the case for Kinma. Kinma group sizes are small and teacher numbers are low. Teachers are in close contact with all the students and are well aware of student progress and development without needing to consult standardised test results.

1. Testing absorbs scarce resources

Teachers need to prepare students for state and national standardised testing, and to then run the tests and prepare paperwork to comply with reporting requirements. These activities take teacher time away from more beneficial teaching and assessment activities. With such small staff numbers and an administration staff of two, tests impose a serious administrative burden.

5. Whitlam Institute 2013, *Submission to the Senate Standing Committee Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, Interim Report*:15

Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA) 2013, *Submission to the Senate Standing Committee Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy,* June 2013: 2

6. Wyn, J, Turnbull, M and Grimshaw, L. 2014, *The impacts of high stakes testing on schools, students and their families: Parental Attitudes and Perceptions Concerning NAPLAN*

Howell, A. 2012, *The Silent Voice in the NAPLAN Debate: Exploring children’s lived experiences of the tests*

*7. Professional Voice- A NAPLAN DEBATE.A national symposium held by AEU ( Australian Education Union) in Sydney in July, 2010. "Advice for Ministers and ACARA on NAPLAN, the use of student date, MySchool and league tables". Contributors include Alan Reid, Margaret Wu, Allan Luke and Brian Caldwell.*

*Please note that Kinma school has copies of all these articles ( and more) should you be interested in reading them.*

1. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, 1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Page 7, Human Society and Its Environment Syllabus, 1998, NSW Board of Studies [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. NSW Board of Studies, Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum, Advice on Assessment (2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NSW Board of Studies, Syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum, Kindergarten – Year 6 Assessment Strategies (2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)