

# WESTON SCHOOL

**Location** North Otago

**Full primary** (Years 1-8)

**Decile** 7

**Roll** 233

**Ethnicity:** Pakeha 99%; Maori 1%

**Principal** Nicky Ryan

## **History**

Weston School plays a leading role in the promotion of the Cornerstone Values programme, which was established at the school under former principal, Rod Galloway. The programme is well integrated now and functions as an essential part of everyday life and community culture at Weston.

The current principal took up her position in July of this year, having taught overseas for some time. Of particular importance to her was to return to a school with a values programme in place. While she sees her task as mainly one of conservation, her present aim is to review and up-grade the programme in its functioning in order to provide a more modern approach. She has, for example, invented the *Weston's Winning Way (www)* slogan and booklet. Also there are discussions underway about whether the school wants to acknowledge other values than those eight in the Cornerstone programme.

## **Systems**

- The Cornerstone Values programme has been in place at Weston long enough that it has become well-understood, widely accepted and fully integrated into school life. Now it has a lower profile than was necessary during its establishment period. The values are accepted as part of the school's culture.
- One value per term is the focus. Every class acknowledges this with at least one introductory lesson, other integrated activities and displays. (The school is now in its third two-year cycle.)
- Every child has the "Weston's Winning Way!" booklet on the desk. The booklet was created this year in order to simplify and clarify for students what had been a Code of Conduct.
- Junior and senior assemblies include student-centred, values oriented activities as well as material presented by the principal.
- Full school assemblies each fortnight provide opportunities for values certificates to be presented as well as vouchers that serve as rewards. These

- offer treats such as products from McDonalds, Free Time tokens and living gifts (plants).
- Parents take an active interest and remain strongly supportive. They are kept informed through school newsletters and other school events. The “You Have Been Spotted” initiative allows parents to e-mail or phone in the name of a child who they wish to nominate for practising the values currently highlighted in the school newsletter.
  - Active modelling of values-oriented behaviour at school is developed and encouraged. Staff are expected to model appropriate behaviour in their relationships with students and one another at school. Student leaders (playground and sports monitors, for example) are provided with opportunities where they, too, can model the school’s values.
  - While the very young appear to pick up the ideas and terminology of the values programme very easily, intermediate students are at an age where they explore and question the boundaries and require a different approach, according to the principal. Weston School has a “senior school” of Year 7 and 8 students who are provided with a variety of activities, structures and approaches to learning that is more appropriate for their age group and is designed to prepare them for secondary school. The values programme remains intact at this level, within a framework of opportunities that include leadership, a breadth of co-curricular activity, career education, camps and field trips which are designed to build self-esteem and confidence. A plan for 2006 is to involve senior students more in decision-making. A Student Council is to be formed applicable to all levels but led by students in Years 7 and 8, guided by the Principal. Students are also encouraged to take on responsibilities such as coaching and monitoring teams of younger students.

## **Results**

- Rod Galloway researched the outcomes after introducing the Cornerstone Values programme. The positive results of his research were a factor in the decision to continue with it. His research is available on the school’s website ([www.weston.school.nz](http://www.weston.school.nz))
- The current principal says that change is hard to measure, that children model home behaviour and that it is, therefore, very difficult to be certain about the effects of a values programme. Discipline issues are dealt with by reference back to the values and this has generally delivered very good results.
- An ERO report of 2003 says that “Student learning is strongly supported by the explicit and purposeful teaching of values, both as a separate curriculum area and integrated into other learning areas. The Principal and teachers consistently model a culture of mutual respect and the identified values are reinforced through the behavioural expectations of teachers. These values are evident in the positive relationships between students and between staff and students.”

## **Key Features**

- Weston School was one of the earliest schools to take on the Cornerstone Values character education programme, and it is now well-established there. The school has been a leader in the Dunedin area for the establishment of this style of values education in a number of other schools.
- The Cornerstone programme is in a process of evolution at Weston. It seems clear at this stage that the original programme has sufficient flexibility that schools can modify their approach to suit their particular needs.
- Weston School has identified the need to develop different approaches and activities for older students so that young people who are testing the boundaries still find the school's values relevant and meaningful.