



ACT
Government
Education

Yarralumla Primary School

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 6, 7 and 8 August 2019
Principal of Review School: Rohan Evans

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report of Review, 2019 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review are considered alongside system and school level student achievement, perception and demographic data as the evidence base for development of the school's next 5-year School Improvement Plan.

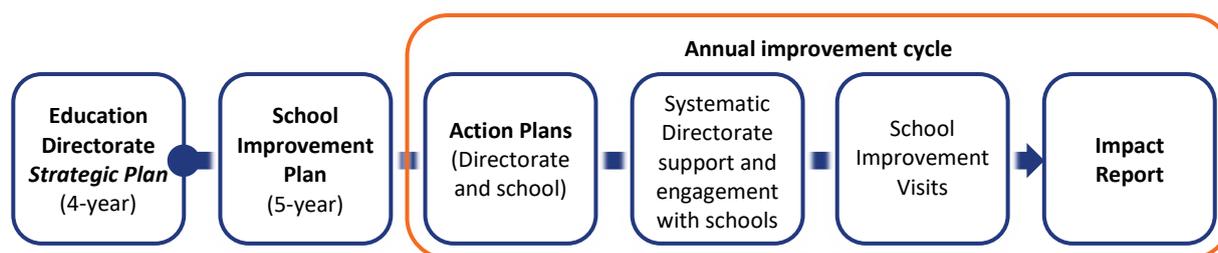
Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, parents and community members.

Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school communities.

The *Report of Review* includes detailed Review Team findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, and Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does School Review sit within the broader school improvement cycle?



ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. School Improvement Visits (SIVs – which include School Review) provide differentiated support and feedback to schools through varying levels of in-school immersion. SIVs progress in relation to a school's needs and improvement cycle, with School Review typically occurring at the end of this cycle.

What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

The commendations highlight positive actions the school has taken over its last improvement cycle. Typically these actions are either complete, or embedded in school practice.

Affirmations

The affirmations verify specific actions being undertaken by the school that are impacting positively on school improvement. These actions are typically either not yet complete and/or not yet embedded.

Recommendations

The recommendations provide the school with evidence-based advice regarding high-value areas for future school improvement efforts. Drawn from the NSIT, recommendations are key to the school developing a sharp and narrow improvement plan.

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor

The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Findings

- The *Yarralumla Primary School Strategic Plan 2017-2021* describes two strategic priorities: Improve learning outcomes for all students, and Build a school culture to improve student engagement. To measure success, the plan describes targets that related to NAPLAN, PM Benchmark, Italian and Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data. The plan also describes targets around student and parent satisfaction surveys.
- In many cases, targets are referenced against national or state means.
- Progress in both the Italian and satisfaction survey targets has been communicated in newsletters this year.
- The *2018 School Impact Report* and annual School Board reports are located on the school's website. The *2018 School Impact Report* provides progress data on all targets over two years with limited analysis to base data.
- The school leadership team has communicated performance data to school staff. Staff were able to describe the key strategies of writing and mathematics. An understanding of school targets and how they might apply to their work was less obvious.
- Staff displayed an obvious commitment to improving practice in writing and mathematics to improve student outcomes.
- Parents recalled the efforts of the school leadership team to communicate some school performance data and key improvement strategies. When asked about the school improvement agenda, responses were focused on facility and resource improvement.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Findings

- The school has a planning and assessment overview that describes when whole-school testing is performed in each year.
- The school staff have contributed to detailed annual student assessment spreadsheets for each year level in reading, spelling, comprehension, mathematics and Italian.
- There was a wide variation of responses by teachers across the school about how they used the collected data. There was a similar variation in teacher understanding of data analysis, including progress over time. Teachers new to teaching were particularly in need of training.
- The school leadership team uses school level data for NAPLAN, PIPS, PM Benchmark and satisfaction surveys to monitor school performance.
- School performance data are discussed in Professional Learning Communities (staff meetings).
- PIPS, NAPLAN and in-school assessments are used to identify students who may require interventions.
- The school's leadership team is currently compiling Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) data on the SENTRAL¹ data system and intends to analyse the data at the whole-school level. These data will complement behaviour and attendance data already available on the system.
- Some parents sought school performance data through My School, particularly at times of enrolment. Parents said that they are given school performance information at P&C meetings and through other avenues; while they could not be specific, they felt the school was performing well.

¹ Cloud-based school and student management platform

NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

Domain descriptor

The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.

Findings

- The *Yarralumla Primary School Cultural Integrity Continuum* demonstrates that the school is actively enquiring and developing the cultural integrity dimensions. There is a strong inclusion and celebration of the Italian culture.
- There is a documented *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) Expectation Behaviour Matrix* and these are linked to the 'All Settings' posters displayed around the school.
- The school has values of Safe, Team player, Active learner and Respectful (STAR). There are STAR tickets and e-STARS given to students to acknowledge these values.
- There is a *2016-19 Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) implementation plan*. Friendly Schools Plus activities are documented and teaching resources for the STAR values are available to all staff.
- There is a documented classroom behaviour flowchart.
- The review team observed calm and orderly classrooms where students appeared engaged in purposeful work. Students felt there are high expectations for their learning. Some students, however, felt that they could be more challenged in some areas.
- Staff, students and parents commented on the positive relationships within the community and a sense of belonging. Parents said, "there is a real sense of inclusion" and "a real sense of community". Students said, "teachers are helpful, supportive and considerate of my way of working," and "teachers make learning fun."
- Parents and community members were seen volunteering in many aspects of schooling, for example Challenging and Mathematical Problem Solving (CHaMPS) is facilitated by a parent who runs an enrichment program for year 5-6 students.
- Parent teacher interviews, student reports and learning journeys provide regular communication regarding student learning and progress.
- Teachers, including relief teachers, described positive working relationships across the school. Staff said that they feel supported by the school's leadership team.

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor

The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

Findings

- The school's *Learning Difficulties Flowchart* describes the process used to identify student needs and tiers of intervention, using available data. The special needs referral form was also cited.
- There is a process in place for the engagement of the Network Student Engagement Team (NSET) to support students and staff.
- There are Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), and Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSPs) in place, with a process for consultation and review with families.
- The learning support assistants' (LSA) timetable is directly linked to student needs and inclusion support funding.
- A learning assistance teacher is resourced to provide early intervention aimed at years 1-2 as a result of ongoing PM Benchmark assessment.
- English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) timetable describes both in-class and small group support for students across the school.
- Early childhood educators are trained for a Montessori program for children aged 3-6 and a traditional preschool program, both aligning with the National Quality Standard.
- Specialist teachers in music, health and physical education, science, and digital technologies complement classroom programs.
- The staff workload reduction plan was cited, with resources put into administration tasks, and consideration given to meetings, professional learning and family friendly weeks (meeting free).
- The school is using locally raised funds (e.g., Walkathon) in addition to school funding to support digital technology resources. Students in years K-6 have access to digital technologies to support their learning. The school has recently upgraded to mobile interactive multi-touch screens.
- The school has invested in a furniture and outdoor play equipment upgrade. The school has also redesigned some learning spaces to support learning.

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor

The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

Findings

- Staff have Teacher Performance and Development Plans and annual professional discussions with the school's leadership team. Beginning teachers have mentors and are given feedback through observations consistent with ACT Education Directorate expectations.
- The school maintains a professional learning record.
- Teacher observations focusing on writing and mathematics were cited. Teachers talked about how leadership team observations helped them to develop a consistency in practice, particularly across the English and Italian classes. The school is formalising mentoring and coaching processes occurring across the year levels.
- The school leadership team models effective practices in writing and mathematics across many classes.
- A roles and responsibilities document also indicated leadership opportunities provided to staff.
- This year the school has transitioned from a meeting construct into a Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model. The PLCs are designed to build collaborative practices around curriculum and pedagogy.
- The leadership team's participation in the Principals as Numeracy Leaders (PANLs) has provided focus for developing consistent classroom practice, teacher observations and feedback.
- The school is working actively to ensure a constant supply of suitably qualified teachers to maintain the bilingual approach to schooling.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.

Findings

- Teachers at Yarralumla Primary plan curriculum delivery using the Australian Curriculum, the Early Years Learning Framework, and the Montessori program.
- Teachers of Italian at Yarralumla refer to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), an international standard for describing language ability on a six-point scale.
- The Yarralumla Montessori provides for students 3-6 years, focusing on five main areas: practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language and culture. Considerable emphasis is also placed on creative arts, music, science, geography and cultural studies.
- The school has supported teachers in unpacking the Achievement Standards to provide focus for teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting. Staff are developing a consistent approach to essential learnings through 'I can' statements.
- There are documented literacy and numeracy plans that describes teaching and assessment expectations.
- The school organises its curriculum around four themes over two years.
- The English teacher and the Italian teacher of the bilingual classes share the teaching of the curriculum, taking responsibility for different learning areas. The English-only class teachers are responsible for delivery of the whole curriculum in their classes.
- Whole-school planning templates acknowledge the presence of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities where appropriate. However, the skills of the general capabilities are not clearly articulated in planning documents.
- The school is working towards developing a whole-school approach to delivery of the Australian Curriculum.
- The preschool and the Montessori programs provide rich learning opportunities through quality learning environments both indoors and outdoors.
- Curriculum adjustments are outlined in individual learning plans constructed in consultation with parents.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

Findings

- The school leadership team has increased the focus on data to support classroom planning. Every teacher is required to do both standardised testing and use classroom assessment to monitor learning.
- Teachers talk about using data in their teams to inform teaching and learning in their classroom. In PLCs teachers are reflecting using a common inquiry approach to plan for individualised, small group, and whole-class learning. Teachers identified that students are grouped according to need, and planned activities include levelled tasks that students work through. Flexible grouping is particularly used for English and mathematics.
- Students described a range of opportunities available to them to supplement or expand upon their learning. These include gardening, robotics, coding, sporting teams, instrumental music and guitar.
- Teachers described how they provide feedback to students about their learning and the steps they can take to improve. Students described how teacher feedback helps them to be better learners.
- Some students expressed a desire for more challenging tasks.
- Reporting to parents and regular communication provide opportunities for parents to know 'where their child is at', and what is next in their learning. This provides insight for parents into how they can best support their child at home. Some staff are exploring the use of online applications to support parent communication.

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

Findings

- The school has a strong focus on writing and mathematics, as identified in its strategic plan.
- The school's numeracy and literacy plans describe a consistency of practice in the teaching of mathematics and writing. PLCs (staff meetings), classrooms observations and feedback are reinforcing these practices.
- Learning intentions are visible in some classrooms and teacher programs. In writing there is some evidence of success criteria at different levels of learning.
- Informal observation practices by the leadership team are in place across the school, providing feedback to teachers to build pedagogical practice.
- Students said that teachers provided them with feedback and described how this helps them to improve. Teachers identified a variety of student feedback strategies including written feedback with next step recommendations, conferencing, self-assessment using success criteria cards and peer feedback.
- Teachers use the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology to support students in learning content in Italian, using a gradual release of responsibility model.
- The Montessori program employs a range of teaching practices not normally used in a general school context. The educators are taking the opportunity to share pedagogy and practice.

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.

Findings

- Yarralumla Primary School has many partnerships, with some more formal than others; however, all partnerships aim to improve student outcomes.
- The school has a developing partnership with the Italian Embassy in Canberra to supply an Italian teacher.
- Yarralumla Primary School students travel to Bergamo in Italy every two years. A partnership with the local community of Scanzorosciate in Bergamo provides an authentic language immersion for students to learn within a homestay and school context. There is anecdotal evidence to support the belief that student language outcomes are accelerated by this partnership. The success of the partnership is also gauged by the increasing number of schools involved in Italy.
- It was obvious to the review team that the school encourages and values its parent and community partnerships. Parents feel welcomed into the schooling process. Examples of this partnership include:
 - > parents coaching sports teams
 - > a parent who supports students through the Challenging and Mathematical Problem Solving (CHaMPS) enrichment program for year 5-6 students
 - > the reading program where individual students receive targeted support in reading and comprehension by the Yarralumla Residents Association
 - > extended members of the community who maintain the community garden
 - > a community volunteer coordinating the school's library.
- The school has a partnership with the University of Bergamo. The university sponsors Italian students to travel to Australia to do their eight-week teaching practicum at Yarralumla Primary School. In turn, the students bring a current cultural perspective to the classes in which they teach.

Commendations

- The positive relationships within the community of staff, students and parents is reinforced by the strong sense of belonging. Parents said, “there is a real sense of inclusion”. Students said, “teachers are helpful, supportive and considerate of my way of working.” Another student said, “teachers make learning fun.”
- There is a strong sense of cultural inclusivity within the school community. The Italian heritage and culture are embedded and celebrated.
- The school is working actively to ensure qualified teachers are recruited to maintain the bilingual approach to schooling.
- All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the outcomes of all students.
- The school has a strong partnership with the local community of Scanzorosciate, Bergamo to provide authentic learning experiences for its students.
- The school also has strong partnerships with parents and the wider community. Parents, students and staff described a strong sense of community in this school.
- The Montessori program provides an engaging student-centred curriculum designed to meet the needs of the whole child. Teachers in the primary school identified student strengths of learner readiness, respectful relationships, and self-regulation in those who have transitioned from the program into their classes.

Affirmations

- The school leadership team is communicating school performance information to all stakeholders.
- Staff continue to contribute to student assessment spreadsheets for each year level and are using these and other data to support student learning.
- The classrooms are calm and orderly; students appear to be engaged in purposeful work.
- All staff, including relief teachers, describe positive working relationships across the school. Staff said that they feel supported by the school’s leadership team.
- The implementation of the PBL framework is strengthening the positive tone within the school community.
- Students in years K-6 have access to a varied range of digital technologies to support their learning.
- The school has invested in a furniture and outdoor play equipment upgrade. The school has also redesigned some learning spaces to support flexibility in learning.
- Teachers talked about how the observations from the leadership team focusing on writing and mathematics helped them develop a consistency in practice, particularly in lesson structures across the English and Italian classes.
- The school leadership team is developing a whole-of-school consistent approach to teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting using the Achievement Standards.

- Teachers are expanding their use of data to inform teaching and learning decisions in their classrooms and use flexible grouping to support students at their point of need.
- The school has developed literacy and numeracy plans that articulate consistent pedagogical practices in the teaching of writing and mathematics.
- Learning intentions are supporting students in understanding what they are learning to do in classrooms and teacher programs.
- Teachers of the Italian stream use the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology to support students in learning content in Italian using a gradual release of responsibility.

Recommendations

- In partnership with the school community, develop a Yarralumla Primary School Improvement Plan 2020-2024, consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning. The plan should focus, and to some extent narrow and sharpen, the school community's attention on core learning priorities, expressed in students' behaviours and outcomes. Include clear targets for improvement.
- Document a school plan for the collection of data on student achievement and wellbeing. The plan should include a full range of student outcome data, and detail how the analysis will provide information at the whole-school level, for applicable sub-groups, and for individual student progress. The plan will also include staff training as appropriate, and a communication strategy for school performance.
- Continue to implement the plan for improved student social and emotional development.
- Develop a professional learning plan that promotes a culture of continuous professional improvement and includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching.
- Continue to develop the whole-school plan for curriculum delivery that is aligned to the Australian Curriculum, including the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. The plan should inform how flexible delivery is designed and how the different needs of students are met.
- Continue to focus on the data teachers need to identify the starting points for teaching for each student and to monitor progress over time. Continue to support teacher understanding on how to address the individual needs of students in their class.
- Continue to develop clear common expectations for evidence-based teaching practices across the school.
- Continue to strategically develop or refine partnerships to support student outcomes, particularly the core learning priorities.