ACT Government
Education

**Wanniassa School**

Report of Review, 2020

Date of School Review:      07, 08, 09 and 10 September 2020
Principal of Review School:   Kate Marshall


*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:
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Report Date:             10 September 2020


***Report of Review, 2020*** prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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# Foreword

2020 has been characterised by extreme weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic. ACT public schools, as community hubs, have been greatly impacted by these events. Despite this, they have continued to deliver high quality education to all students whilst also supporting their communities.

As noted further in this document, school improvement in the ACT is based on a five-year cycle. School Review (Review) considers the entire journey a school has undertaken during this period.

## Impact of COVID-19 on School Review

Findings from Review are based on what external and local experts read, see and hear in a school. In preparing findings from Review consideration has been given to the rapid response ACT public schools undertook for the COVID-19 home learning period, and the impact this had on observed practices and processes.

Additionally, due to travel restrictions some Lead Reviewers from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) were unable to lead Reviews on the ground. In these cases streaming technologies, and the support of experienced ACT reviewers, enabled the review to continue. Careful attention was given to ensuring the Review methodology and findings were not compromised.

☒   This Review had an on-the-ground Lead Reviewer from ACER.

OR

☐   This Review had a Remote Lead Reviewer from ACER.

# 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 support annual implementation of a school's 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 findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, as well as Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

## Where does Review sit within the 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. Additionally, schools are provided differentiated support and feedback by internal and external experts. School Review is one way that this differentiated feedback is provided and typically occurs at the end of the 5-year school improvement cycle.
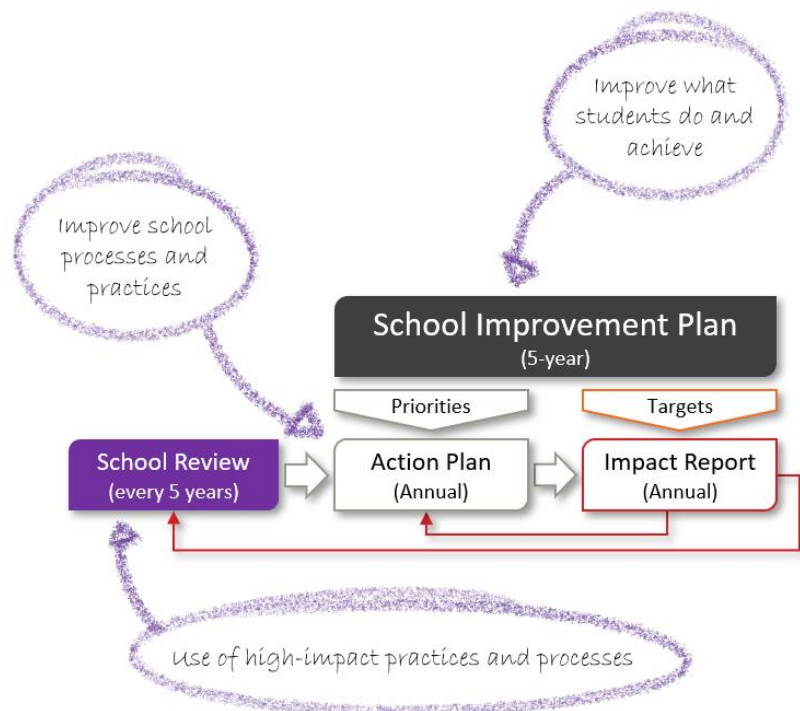
# What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

## Commendations
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
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
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 effectively implementing its 5-year School 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 *Wanniassa School Strategic Plan 2017-2021* has two priorities: Drive an explicit learning agenda that challenges and extends students in their learning; and, build a culture of high expectations for learning and behaviour. Outcomes to be achieved and targets are more concerned with strategies than student outcomes. The 2017 to 2019 action plans generally follow the Strategic Plan.

- The *Wanniassa School Impact Report 2019* describes progress on the broad NAPLAN and PIPS data over three years. Analysis of the progress data is limited.

- School Board reports demonstrate that the school is providing required data on the reported year.

- School plans and reports are located on the school website.

- Newsletters available on the school's website provide limited information to parents on school achievement or progress on the school's improvement journey. Parents interviewed recalled Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) as a major change in the school but were unaware of other aspects of the school improvement agenda.

- Senior Campus (SC) teachers talked about general improvements happening in the school such as Visible Learning but had little understanding of the strategic agenda or progress towards targets. SC teachers were unable to recall discussions on school-wide data.

- Junior Campus (JC) teachers talked about discussions around PIPS and NAPLAN data but could not recall changes in practice arising out of those discussions. The concepts within the PBL approach are well understood arising out of a campus analysis of student wellbeing data.

- Introduction of 'Visible Learning' and 'The 10 Essential Instructional Practices for Literacy', demonstrates that the leadership team is focused on improving teaching and learning across the school through the introduction of evidenced-based practices. Through interviews with staff the review team evidenced a strong widespread desire for continuous 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 *Wanniassa School P-10 Assessment and Reporting Framework 2018* describes national and school-based assessments and reporting processes. An additional reporting item was listed for 2019. The framework describes a general program for assessment and reporting but the purpose of each assessment in driving school or classroom improvement is not clear.

- The JC Assessment Schedule 2020 outlines both the type and timing of assessments and appropriate targets in English and mathematics. There is a stated expectation that all students not meeting achievement targets be discussed with the appropriate team leader. The review team noted that the targets did not adequately cater for above average students. Student assessment data are stored in the 'Grade Expert' platform on a standalone school laptop.

- The school leadership team spoke about school-level NAPLAN, PIPS, and student wellbeing data. There was less evidence of using these data to examine priority groups. Teachers and other staff had a limited understanding of these data. There was limited evidence of the use of systematic classroom assessments to provide cohort or whole-of-school information.

- Student wellbeing data are recorded on the school's administration system.

- Curriculum leaders use PAT-R and PAT-M (reading and mathematics) data to inform class or group placements. The SC teacher responsible for EAL/D students uses data to determine educational adjustments. Some SC staff use pre-tests to determine student understanding prior to implementing the teaching program.

- In the JC, the review team noted a more sophisticated use of data, particularly in the early years, to inform classroom planning for learning.

- Learning support teachers described how data drives Individual Learning Plan (ILP) planning.

- Within each campus the formation of professional learning communities is enabling some discussion of data. Some school leaders talked about a need for further processes to guide these discussions such as 'problems of practice'.

- The review team noted across the school, and at all levels, the need for further training in the use of student learning data, tailored to each staff member's role.

- Parents interviewed were unable to convey any understanding of school or individual student data.

# 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

- SC students are very capable in their communication about what constitutes a strong learning environment and the skills and attributes they expect of teachers. These attributes were well articulated and are summarised as: knowing me; knowing about my learning; caring about me; making time to give me one-to-one help when I need it; and having good knowledge about the subject they are teaching.

- Students and parents spoke of strong and caring relationships between staff and students. Most parents felt welcome within the school.

- SC school leaders emphasise the need for student wellbeing through design and delivery of formal wellbeing lessons within the learning timetable. Students are observed to respond well to the content and pedagogy in these classes which engender significant student input and engagement.

- The school's physical master plan reflects an emphasis on creation of areas designed to promote learning and enable diversity in pedagogical approach. Significant renovation and renewal work already completed successfully meet this intention.

- There is observable staff support for the essence of PBL across the school, primarily through teachers' developmental and positive approach to communications with students and support for the positive reinforcement merit scheme.

- Despite school-wide promotion of general expectations for student behaviour and engagement, across many SC classes there are moderate levels of unchecked off-task behaviours. Articulation and awareness of student behavioural expectations is more visible within the JC through signage and shared language.

- In some JC classes, the poor behaviour of a few students regularly interrupts the flow of teaching and learning. Behaviours of some students occupy significant teacher and school leader time. Across the school, time spent on behavioural issues is diminishing.

- The establishment of the SC Student Services allows for a success on management and support of identified behavioural and attendance issues.

- Many staff spoke with optimism about the school's direction and leadership. Similarly, many staff commented on the growing sense of staff collegiality and relationship building particularly in the SC. Teachers reported that professional discussions have become more focused on learning beyond an emphasis on student behaviour. A small number of staff expressed concern that their voice was not being heard.

# 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
- Through guidance of the school's leadership team, the ACT Education Directorate supported SC masterplan has enabled strategic allocation of resources to develop flexible learning spaces including several large classrooms, a library refit, and learning support area to enhance flexibility and purpose of learning environments.

- The redesign of the SC timetable has increased time for mathematics and English across years 7-10. This intervention was informed by data indicating low levels of performance and growth, over time, in both areas.

- This change has resulted in a reduction in class time for history and social science, and science, for year 9 and year 10. Some staff and students have voiced their dissatisfaction with the reduction to science lesson time across the school year.

- Significant increases have been made to staffing allocations to the SC across the areas of student wellbeing, learning support units, and student services with the aim of improving student learning, engagement and attendance.

- Similarly, establishment of the learning support unit in the JC has required some resource reallocation.

- Allocation of shared release time of one hour for each JC team requires ongoing management to facilitate student centred discussion and planning in weekly PLCs.

- Teachers across the school report visible investment in technology to support learning including the recent appointment of a technology technician.

- Recent physical enhancement and expenditure on the JC has focused on creating flexible learning areas.

- The school's presentation of the 2020 budget in graphic form provides improved transparency of expenditure at a time of significant change, and has led to a short-term increase in available funds from the ACT Education Directorate.

# 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
- There is evidence of teachers engaging in professional learning activities to develop their ability to respond to student learning needs.

- Noticeable professional learning includes Visible Learning, 10 Essential Instructional Practices for Literacy in the early years, and PBL.

- School leaders are supportive of developing teacher's expertise through informal feedback or observations.

- The JC professional learning agenda has been created to strategically improve teacher pedagogy.

- Team leaders are involved in teachers' day-to-day practice, with a focus at times on the individual teacher professional learning.

- Teachers described a willingness to receive constructive feedback from colleagues and school leaders in a more formal process of mentoring or coaching.

- Across the school attention is being paid to recruit staff with expertise in specific areas to support student needs.

- Staff are provided with leadership opportunities in a variety of ways outside the classroom for example year coordinators, PBL coaches, wellbeing curriculum coordination, and work experience coordination.

- Curriculum leaders engage in PLCs with teachers to discuss student learning data. During PLC time teachers analyse data to identify ability groups.

# 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
- School leaders expressed a need to develop consistent curriculum planning practices and documentation across the school.

- There is little evidence of a whole-school consistent approach to curriculum and there appears to be an opportunity to build teachers' knowledge and capabilities in curriculum development.

- SC curriculum documents linked to the Australian Curriculum are emerging in some curriculum areas and/or year levels.

- In some areas in the JC, the Cambridge curriculum and student profiles are driving curriculum planning in preference to the Australian Curriculum.

- Across the school there is an attempt to align assessment to the Achievement Standards. The school is now reporting using Achievement Standards.

- Preschool curriculum planning is coherent and aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework.

- Koori preschool is leading the incorporation of the cross-curricular priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures across the preschool classes.

- There is some evidence of the Indigenous Education Officer supporting teachers to incorporate cultural perspectives into the curriculum.

- In the JC there was evidence of moderation particularly in the sharing of writing samples.

- SC staff are using the Australian Curriculum exemplars to guide moderation.

- There is evidence of an intention to promote the personal and social capabilities within the school, however the connection of this and other general capabilities is not visible within the planned or delivered curriculum.

- It was observed that curriculum is planned either individually or in small teams.

# 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
- Some teachers, but mostly school leaders, contact parents when developing and reviewing ILPs. Some families are currently opting not to engage in this process.

- ILPs are developed by the learning support lead teacher in the SC. Teachers and leaders at the JC develop ILPs.

- Some teachers are using systemic data to identify starting points to group students. There were some references made to pre-testing.

- At the JC, students are grouped according to ability with some evidence in the early years of teachers (K-2) assessing and adjusting groupings as required. This was evident mostly for reading instruction.

- SC students talked about the lack of time to fully understand concepts before moving on to the next topic.

- The EAL/D moderation continuum is used to assess identified EAL/D students for targeted support.

- SC learning tasks are generally delivered at one level with adjustments through teacher support and expected outcome for individual students.

- Teachers and leaders recognise a range of student needs across key learning areas. Team leaders are committed to supporting classroom teachers in planning learning activities to encourage student participation and engagement.

- The school has re-established the learning support model for SC students.

- Some learning support facilities (including both libraries, Learning Support Unit – Autism (LSUA) JC and LSU/LSC SC and various classrooms JC and SC) have been re-furbished to better support students' individual needs.

- Semester reports provide feedback to parents and carers on student attainment.

- Google Classroom and the Seesaw app. are being used in some areas of the school to connect with families, and to capture individual student learning. Some parents talked about Seesaw as a way of understanding where their child 'was at' with their learning.

# 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
- SC school leaders are developing rubrics to support learning expectations and feedback conversations

- Some JC planning documents include learning intentions and success criteria. This was evidenced in student books in Kindergarten.

- SC students talked more about the learning activity they were participating in rather than the learning intention.

- JC teachers provide varying levels of feedback to students to inform what actions they can take to make further progress in their learning.

- The review team evidenced specific strategies to support effective teaching of reading and writing, particularly in the early years.

- There is evidence of implementation of the 10 Essential Instructional Practices of Literacy in the early years.

- Student writing samples in Kindergarten show writing connected to texts read.

- The school has committed to a three-year partnership with educational consultant, Corwin, to embed Visible Learning across the school. Some classrooms display learning intentions and success criteria to articulate what students are expected to learn and be able to do.

- Some JC teachers provide feedback directly connected to the learning intentions and success criteria and are at the beginning stages of supporting students to set their own learning goals.

- The school leadership team has expressed commitment to developing a Wanniassa School Pedagogical Framework to guide and reflect teachers' commitment to consistent and effective teaching and learning.

# 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

- There is a strategic partnership with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) for the delivery of units of competency in Certificate II Skills for Work and Vocational pathways, predominantly using e-Learning. A memorandum of understanding outlines the terms of the partnership. Funding for delivery is provided by Skilling Australia. The teacher responsible for working with the CIT is benefiting from the professional learning provided by the CIT instructors. This is a three-year program with planned periodic evaluations.

- The school is establishing partnerships with local college teachers who have expertise in vocational training to support the students in achieving qualifications at this school. A teacher is studying a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to facilitate this partnership.

- A partnership with Foodbank Australia has enabled free breakfast options for students each morning and lunch for students each day. Whilst there is not yet formal data around the impact of this initiative, a range of students commented on the positive impact that this has had for them.

- The Koori preschool makes connections with Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre and Allied Health professionals at Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. Community members are invited into all preschool groups to support educators with the development and planning of learning about culture.

## Commendations

- The school leadership team clearly demonstrates commitment and enthusiasm to continue to develop a whole-of-school agenda for continuous improvement.

- There is evidence of a school-wide staff commitment to student success and a preparedness for continual improvement.

- There was significant collaboration to achieve co-designed learning area enhancements. Physical learning spaces are clearly focused on facilitating effective learning while building pride and ownership by students and staff.

- Students and parents appreciated the level of care given by staff.

- Students appreciate the level of staff support for their wellbeing.

- The school has developed a strategic partnership with the Canberra Institute of Technology to better cater for student learning options and needs.

## Affirmations

- There is a school-wide trend towards collecting and analysing data to inform how teachers respond to student learning and wellbeing needs.

- The school leadership team is creating structures and providing time for teaching teams to get together to analyse data.

- There is an improving level of staff support and collegiality.

- Parents feel their young people are cared for and supported by school staff.

- There is a strong focus to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students who have additional needs.

- Staff and students talked about a strong sense of inclusion and acceptance of cultural diversity.

- School leaders have focused on recruiting staff to build expertise.

- Staff are all working on curriculum as a priority focus area.

- Some staff are continuing to use online platforms to share learning with families.

- There is widespread enthusiasm to develop consistent practices.

- Parents are feeling more connected to the school.

## Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop a Wanniassa School Strategic Plan 2021-2025 that is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning, and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes, by incorporating explicit targets for student achievement that are well communicated to the school community. Progress towards targets should be monitored and initiatives and programs systematically evaluated for

their effectiveness in producing the desired improvements in student academic and/or wellbeing outcomes.

- Build upon the school's assessment framework and schedules, to develop a data plan that clearly outlines the purpose for the data at the school, team, and/or individual student level; and incorporates the full range of school academic and wellbeing data. Develop consistent processes across the school for staff to engage with data to inform teaching and to measure growth in student and cohort achievement over time. Build leadership and staff data literacy skills.

- Continue to develop both curriculum and organisational responses to provide a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, and inclusive, and that promotes intellectual rigour.

- Develop and implement a professional learning plan that provides individualised arrangements for professional learning, classroom observation, mentoring and coaching.

- Provide staff training on the Australian Curriculum. Continue to develop a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery, based on the Australian Curriculum, that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. Explore ways of making the general capabilities and cross- curricular priorities explicit in the curriculum. In particular, seek ways to use the personal and social capability to drive improvement in student wellbeing.

- Continue to develop staff capacity to cater for individual learning needs by offering multiple ways for students to engage with, and express, their learning.

- Continue to refine common expectations of teaching and learning that are grounded in evidence-based research.

- Continue to develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent of the school.