



ACT
Government
Education

O'Connor Cooperative School

Review Report Summary, 2018

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Overview of the school review process

Approximately a quarter of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. The reviews are an important part of how the Directorate supports and monitors school improvement. Reviews provide schools with quality and independent feedback, tailored to the school's context. Each school is reviewed at least every five years, providing valuable opportunities for self-reflection, planning and improvement.

Reviews are undertaken by experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT), a nationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices. Each review team generally consists of two to three reviewers, however, the number of reviewers and length of review depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of the school.

Reviewers closely consider each school's performance data and speak with a wide range of staff, students, parents and community members to get an accurate picture of the school. Following the review, the school receives a comprehensive report. The report outlines the key findings and recommended improvement strategies to maximise student outcomes. The report concludes with a set of commendations, affirmations and recommendations to assist in future planning and to support school-wide improvement planning.

The following summary contains the commendations, affirmations and recommendations from the review report.

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.

Commendations

O'Connor Cooperative School is commended for the following.

- The community places a high level of trust and confidence in the learning and teaching delivered by a committed and professional leadership and staffing team.
- The staff, students and parents at O'Connor Cooperative School have a common understanding of the mission and values and a unified commitment to these. They work collaboratively to enact and reinforce that culture. These are reiterated in the school song, sung at all gatherings, and highlighted in the positive relationships evident throughout the whole community.
- Personalised learning, through a play-based approach, has resulted in a happy cohort of learners who are optimistic and excited to come to school. The students and their families have an enormous sense of belonging and pride.
- Individualised case conferences support students with complex or specifically identified needs and these students have ILPs or targeted support plans which are enacted. The creative and targeted use of resources to support all students is highly effective.
- A rich connection with parents is evident and a number of parents are regularly engaged purposefully in the school. Examples include formal and informal communication with teachers, volunteering in classrooms, delivering enrichment and extension activities, community singing, fundraising, and improving the learning environment. This deep connection with the school continues with a strong parent and student alumni.
- O'Conner Cooperative School uses music to bring the school and community together, supporting development of oral language in young learners and reinforcing values and beliefs. Through the school song, students also build social responsibility and environmental understanding.
- There is a strong focus on improving literacy. There is a thoroughness of documentation and planning, in conjunction with an evidence-based approach to student learning. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data including student work samples coupled with teacher observations has ensured individual learning is closely monitored.
- Making the curriculum locally relevant and accessible to all students has been prioritised. This values and builds on students' existing knowledge and varying backgrounds. Students have a strong voice in their learning and are encouraged to pursue their passion and interests.
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- Cultural learning is strongly evident with community members sharing cultural identity, rituals and history. This was particularly evident in building the cultural competency of the community in Aboriginal and Torres Islander heritage, histories and environmental connection to the land.
- A highly supportive leadership team has increased the capacity of teachers through targeted professional learning and a modelling and mentoring culture. Teachers have also participated in action learning projects in partnership with Turner School to improve their practice.
- A rich hands-on learning space provides a seamless connection between the indoor and outdoor environments.

Affirmations

The Review Team offers the following affirmations for O'Connor Cooperative School.

- The leadership team has ensured that the school remains focussed on its two key priorities for improvement. New initiatives, programs and processes at O'Connor Cooperative School align closely to these priorities.
- Leaders work closely with staff and are regularly in classrooms supporting teachers. High levels of trust provide a strong platform for sharpening a focus on providing explicit feedback to teachers about their practice.
- Resources have been allocated to providing technology infrastructure in the school (interactive whiteboards, iPads and Chromebooks). There is opportunity to further explore how technology can be used effectively to maximise learning.
- Being a small school, the leadership team has recognised the importance of networking with other schools to ensure teachers have the opportunity to share practice and learn from others. The Early Childhood network is an important partnership for O'Connor Cooperative School, and the leadership team takes the initiative in strengthening the links.
- A whole-of-school approach to the ways of teaching literacy is emerging and opportunity exists to refine this approach and document the expected practices.
- School staff members are exploring approaches to the teaching of Mathematics and which data sets will best support them in monitoring learning. There is intent to develop a whole- of-school approach in the next planning cycle.
- The leadership team has ensured that science and the arts (particularly music) have a very strong profile in the school.

Recommendations

The Review Team recommends O'Connor Cooperative School pays attention to the following opportunities for school improvement during the next planning cycle.

- Develop a school improvement agenda for the next planning cycle that has a narrow and sharp focus on achieving measurable student learning and wellbeing outcomes. Identify clear targets based on a systematic analysis of a full range of data sets. Support teachers in taking responsibility for changes in practice required to meet those targets.
- Revise the current data sets used in the school and consider which data sets will best support the school in scrutinising school performance and pinpointing strengths and weaknesses in learning and wellbeing. Develop and document a data plan to support the systematic collection, analysis and use of data. Continue to support teachers in using data to personalise learning.
- Continue to build a strong collegial culture in which there is a shared commitment to the improvement of teaching and an openness to critique by colleagues. Consider how teachers can regularly receive formal feedback about their practice.
- Continue to refine, document and implement a whole-of-school pedagogical approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Continue to work with teachers to ensure that in curriculum planning and delivery, priority is given to the progressive development of students' deep understandings of concepts and big ideas as well as the development of the General Capabilities.

- Regularly review current partnerships to evaluate whether these are having the intended impact in improving outcomes for students, are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school and partnered organisations.