**Aranda Primary School**

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 13, 14 and 15 August 2019

Principal of Review School: Phil Gray

*National School Improvement Tool* *Review Report* prepared by:

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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?

**Education Directorate *Strategic Plan***

(4-year)

**Impact Report**

**School Improvement Plan**

(5-year)

**Action Plans** (Directorate and school)

Systematic Directorate support and engagement with schools

School Improvement Visits

**Annual 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 *Aranda Primary 2015-2016 School Plan* has three strategic priorities:Enhance teaching and learning; Strengthen community partnerships; and Engage students in their schooling. The first priority has a broad focus on reading, numeracy, National Quality Standards, writing, science, STEM, and cultural competencies.

Annual action plans (AAPs) provide targets for each year using data from NAPLAN (reading, writing and numeracy), PM Benchmarks, PAT-M and the School Satisfaction Survey. Data sources from which targets were set varied over time.

The school’s improvement plans, Board reports and AAP reports are located on the school’s website. The home page of the school’s website also outlines the strategic priorities.

The school leadership team regularly holds whole-school staff meetings on school priorities, strategic planning and targets.

The school leadership team has created AAP teams to progress priorities identified within the school plan and each AAP. All teaching staff participate in a team working to implement one priority. These include quality improvement (Preschool), mathematics, reading and writing, cross curriculum priorities and general capabilities, or communication. Teachers on these teams displayed an understanding and ownership of the strategic direction of the school using evidence and relevant data to establish baselines and track progress, implement and monitor key improvement strategies, and communicate with relevant stakeholders.

The AAP teams draw upon expertise in the school for strategies but as necessary sought evidenced-based strategies from universities or schools that have had success in implementing similar initiatives.

All teachers displayed a strong desire to improve practices across the school and improve student outcomes. In particular, teachers celebrated the success that the planned interventions were having on the outcomes of students in the early years of schooling.

Community information sessions were held to outline the performance of the school and detail the plans for improvement. While parents interviewed could not recall school targets or why they were set, they were satisfied that the school is always trying to improve.

# 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 well-developed data plan that is revised every year. The data plan clearly outlines the reason data are collected and the responsibilities of staff in using data for either systemic decision making or at the classroom level. The data plan incorporates academic data from sources such as NAPLAN, PIPS[[1]](#footnote-1), PAT-M, PAT-R, PM Benchmarks, the South Australian Spelling Test and Sound Waves[[2]](#footnote-2) while incorporating system School Satisfaction Surveys. The data plan also considers wellbeing data such as attendance, behaviour and the school-designed survey from *Be You*. The school balances systemic data with quality classroom assessments to provide a wider view of student achievement and wellbeing. School leaders acknowledge a need to explore data to detail performance across all curriculum areas.

Tracking spreadsheets have been designed for reading, writing and mathematics. These are used collaboratively by staff to analyse student achievement and growth in these priority areas.

The school also collects data through the school designed ‘Expertise Register’.This has enabled the leadership team to identify improved levels of confidence in the use of performance data to inform teaching. In response to confidence levels, targeted professional learning was delivered to staff focusing on how PAT-M data can support differentiation.

The school’s AAP teams use data at the whole-school level to support the introduction and monitoring of key strategic priorities.

Professional learning teams (PLTs) have been created for each year level, incorporating school leaders, the teaching team and appropriate specialist and learning support teachers. PLTs are given common time to meet regularly to use data to establish student achievement baselines, develop appropriate teaching or intervention strategies, and then track student progress. Teachers spoke about the high value they place on this collaborative process. This work currently focuses on the priority areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Many teachers described how they use data as a tool to reflect on their own teaching practice.

Parents talked about the school providing data on school performance. While they could not be specific, they felt the school was performing well.

# 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

Aranda Primary School demonstrates a culture of high expectations of growth for all learners. This is widely endorsed by the school community.

The physical environment of the school creates spaces for learning and play, showcases student work and demonstrates high expectations of learning for all. All classrooms are calm and purposeful environments.

Multiple modes of communication are utilised to provide information to parents. This includes the school website, newsletters and assemblies. The digital videos available on the school’s YouTube channel provide ongoing information and advice to families. The use of the Seesaw app. enables real time feedback to be given to families, enabling their participation in the learning program. Parents are encouraged to volunteer and contribute to learning by presenting expertise, reading with students, and supporting excursions, events and programs such as ‘Bush Kids’and the annual Science Fair*.*

The EAL/D teacher implements a range of strategies to ensure families are welcome, engaged and active in the school community. This includes individual conversations, collating testimonials in a range of languages, the Harmony Day event and the provision of packs that contain activities for use at home.

The school’s investment in a learning support liaison teacher demonstrates valuing of learning for students with disabilities through engaging their families in the school and providing a point of contact.

Strong, supportive relationships exist between staff, students and families. The values of kindness and respect are articulated as the foundation of relationships in the school. Parents displayed a high level of trust of the staff and a belief in the high quality of teachers, describing them as “caring, welcoming and approachable”. Parents believe there is a “strong sense of community”.

The review team noted a high level of collegiality across all staff. This is evident in the ongoing collaboration that occurs through formal and informal interactions across the school.

The cultural integrity self-assessment reflects the school’s action to explicitly embed the histories, culture and rituals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in educational programs. This is evident in class programs, Bush Kids, cultural immersion lessons, and visual displays around the school.

A wide range of clubs and activities are available to students to enhance school culture and develop personal interests. These happen before school and during breaks.

# 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

A high priority is given to strategically resourcing student support and intervention across the school. The learning support process is clearly articulated and enacted across the school. Particular attention is paid to providing connection and support for the families of students who have identified needs.

A strong special needs team meets regularly to monitor the progress of students with disabilities and those with identified needs. The team manages referrals to evidence-based interventions or external supports. This process also informs whole-school strategies. Learning support assistants are allocated to classes and students according to need.

The school has an explicit EAL/D program that uses in-class support, small group withdrawal, and monitoring student progress to support identified language needs.

High performing students are provided with opportunities to be extended through streamed groups for writing, reading and maths. The school offers competitions and festivals to support enrichment beyond the classroom for all students.

A specialist mathematics teacher role has been created to provide extension and intervention across the school. Class teachers regularly refer students to this teacher.

The school has a masterplan that guides investment in upgrades. This is supported by plans for maintenance and replacement of resources. The masterplan has enabled the school to provide improved learning environments and sustainable outdoor areas.

Students in years 3-6 utilise personal Chromebooks in learning. The school provides additional ICT resources for students who don’t have their own devices. Class sets of Chromebooks are provided for junior primary classes. Staff and students use Google Apps for Education to enhance collaboration. Students and teachers described having access to many and varied forms of technology to support learning.

Release time is organised to provide teaching teams with blocks of collaborative time. Additional time is provided for professional learning and the development of school resources.

# 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

A professional learning plan and expertise register enables the school to utilise and enhance the skills of all staff, including leaders. The expertise register is a reference for building teaching teams. The register is valued by all staff as a way to seek mentors.

A tailored induction program supports new staff to the school.

All teachers and school leaders participate in two lesson observations each term. This aims to promote sharing of practice. Observation notes are collated and inform the whole-school professional learning plan.

Every teacher participates in professional discussions with school leaders. These discussions are used to help extract the professional needs of staff and plan for improvement. There is a strategic recruitment process that recognises strengths and gaps in the overall staffing profile.

The expertise register is used to establish mentoring relationships. These matches are established formally by the school executive and informally between teachers.

Class teachers work in year level teaching teams. Through collaborative planning and interrogation of all available data, teachers determine starting points for teaching, design flexible groups, measure growth and modify or develop instructional strategies.

Staff are encouraged and supported to share their practice in other settings. This support extends to staff undertaking external learning.

All professional learning teams meet three times each term for data analysis and planning. These meetings are facilitated by executive staff. All meetings result in an action plan to improve student learning.

AAP teams meet formally each term but also meet informally to action their improvement area. These teams are vertically organised to ensure each teaching team has a representative. The teams present professional learning to all staff in staff meetings.

# 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

The *Aranda Primary Curriculum Delivery Plan* describes “what we teach and when we teach it” for the content areas of the Australian Curriculum. Professional learning teams have developed year-level rubrics for each subject area based on the Achievement Standards. These guide teaching plans for the year and each term. This is ongoing work for the school.

The leadership team allocates time each week to collaborative planning for each year level team. During this time teachers use data to plan, assess and moderate. Time is also provided for the review of curriculum between incoming and outgoing teachers for each year level.

Assessment processes in reading, writing and mathematics are aligned with the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and are used to establish where students are in their learning and to monitor learning progress across year levels. Individual learning plans have been established to document appropriate curriculum adjustments.

The curriculum timetable includes specialist teachers in French, STEM, music and wellbeing. The school has adopted the BounceBack program to support wellbeing at the school.

Teachers shared how they integrate learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in teaching programs. Some examples included the Bush Kids program in Kindergarten, using languages in music, and incorporating games during physical education lessons.

The school offers a variety of enrichment clubs and activities. Consideration is given to the balance of activities to meet a range of student interests and students stated they enjoyed the wide variety of activities offered at the school. Sustainability has a strong emphasis within the school. The school hosts an annual Science Fair. There has been an increase in the number of students engaging in this fair over time.

Teachers expressed support from the school leadership team in adjusting or designing units of work. Teachers reported high levels of autonomy in developing integrated units of work.

Kindergarten students engage in a Bush Kidsintegrated unit that is play-based and includes both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and the sustainability cross curricular priorities.

Google Apps for Education is used across the school to support student learning and teacher planning.

# 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 leadership team has invested in building the data literacy of staff. In addition to weekly release time, time is sanctioned three times per term for each year level professional learning team to analyse student learning and develop actions to address student gaps. This is led by school leaders.

The school has a clearly articulated process for identifying students requiring support. Parents are consulted in the development of individual learning plans for their child.

A variety of intervention programs are in place to support students in both mathematics and reading. Learning support staff provide in-class and withdrawal interventions to cater for students with specific learning needs.

Students reported that they felt challenged in their learning during extension classes and programs.

Teachers use performance data and student goals to target teaching in mathematics. This was evident across year levels and informed groupings in mathematics.

There is an expectation that teachers engage with students to conference their writing three times per term. This leads to the establishment of personal writing goals. Student goals and learning data are used to group students in writing activities.

Students were able to talk about instances where they were able to have “voice” in their learning.

The preschool team uses observational data to inform the professional learning team discussions. Targeted small group extension is provided for high achieving students.

Staff and students use Google Apps for Education to support collaboration. This occurs in real time to provide both peer and teacher feedback to students in writing.

Parents described feeling confident about their child’s learning and how to support their progress. Particular reference was made to the resources on the school’s YouTube channel. The Seesaw app. is used by students and staff to communicate learning to families. Some parents also use this to communicate with class teachers. An overview of the learning program is provided to parents through the Seesaw app from preschool to year 6.

The school has provided deliberate opportunities for professional learning about differentiation.

# 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 *Teaching and Learning Pedagogical Framework*. Explicit teaching and the gradual release of responsibility were clearly articulated in the documentation. Planning for integration across subjects occurs where possible and is implemented by the teaching staff. Within the pedagogical framework, the school has developed the Aranda non-negotiables document which outlines some pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning at the school. This is reviewed yearly by a representative group of teachers.

Students are provided with regular and timely feedback across all curriculum areas. Students articulated that teachers provide them with their next steps in learning and that feedback is often provided verbally or in written form.

Teachers use peer observations to share content expertise. This is aligned with each teacher’s performance and development goals.

Beginning teachers are provided with extra support in developing their practice. This includes a tailored program addressing their areas of need. Time is provided to the mentors to work with beginning teachers. The support program is reviewed yearly and adjusted based on staff need.

The team observed the use of learning intentions in most classrooms. Students also commented on the use of learning intentions and success criteria as features of their classrooms. Feedback was linked back to the success criteria.

Through the last planning cycle, the school has focussed on the teaching of writing. To build capacity, teachers participated in a network writing project and engaged with external experts. Both the school leadership and teaching staff recognise the positive impact this strategy has had on student outcomes and teacher confidence levels.

The *SeeSaw* application aims to assist students to see the growth in their learning over time.

In interviews with staff, some reflections were guided by the Australian Institute of Teaching and Learning Teacher Professional Standards and Professional Practice Continuum.

# 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

Aranda Primary School strategically looks for partnerships to support curriculum delivery. In some partnerships the student outcomes to be achieved are generally agreed. Some of these partnerships include:

* the STAR (Sequenced Targeted Aranda Reading) program. The school has invested significant resources in providing additional support for students requiring assistance to achieve reading benchmarks. To supplement internal resources to school trained seven community volunteers to assist the delivery of the STAR program. The reading objectives of the program (and therefore the partnership) were outlined at the training. STAR tutors record observational notes and student progress is shared with tutors, parents and class teachers. The STAR program has been in place at Aranda Primary School for six years.
* students from Aranda Primary School visit Cranleigh School to become engaged in learning with students who have complex needs. Aranda Primary School’s leadership team talked about indicators of success being increased empathy and understanding towards those with differing abilities. Students also develop an increased value for the importance of inclusion.
* the school works in partnership with University of Canberra staff to advance health and nutrition, STEM, and writing outcomes
* for the life of the plan the school has been improving its partnership with parents and community. One of the most significant strategies has been the implementation of the Seesaw app. The school monitors parent views of the application and engagement is now very high. Parents reported appreciating the effort by teachers to communicate student performance over time. Parents said, “the information allows them to support learning at home”.
* the school maintains a partnership with other schools within the system. The school has benefited from learnings from other schools around the implementation of evidence-based practices. The school has also facilitated many opportunities for staff to share expertise with staff at other schools both nationally and locally. Staff have shared expertise in the areas of ICT, best practice writing instruction, sustainability, professional learning teams, and literacy practices through visits arranged by the Australian Literacy Educators Association.
* the school’s partnership with Canberra High School which supports engagement through enrichment activities and positive high school transition experiences.

# Commendations

All staff displayed a strong desire to improve practices across the school to improve student outcomes. This is particularly evident in the expressed “enjoyment” and high level of engagement in professional learning teams.

There is a strong sense of community at Aranda Primary School. This is built on trusting relationships between and among staff, families and students. The school culture demonstrates a commitment to learning and positive wellbeing for all students. Parents talked about the high quality of staff at the school, describing them as caring, welcoming and approachable.

There is a collegial culture and professional strength in the staff as a whole. There is obvious high collaboration between staff, a willingness to seek and share expertise, and a common purpose in engaging students and achieving learning outcomes.

The school has provided opportunities for students to visit Cranleigh School, Holt. Students from both schools develop new relationships and understanding, based on the values of kindness and respect.

The school’s professional learning plan connects many aspects of professional learning across the school. The expertise register supports the plan and enables staff to share and build upon expertise in the school.

There is a high priority given to resourcing student support and intervention in literacy and numeracy, underpinned by building connection to school for individual families. This approach supports EAL/D students, students with disability, and students with specific learning needs.

There is a clear vision evident in the capital works and improvements masterplan. This enables the school to maintain and expand on current resources and infrastructure whilst exploring new opportunities that might arise.

The school has implemented a highly engaging integrated Bush Kid*s* unit of work for Kindergarten, maximising opportunities to bring together learning area content and cross curricular priorities from the Australian Curriculum.

Staff are supported to develop data literacy across the school and are provided time and clear guiding processes engage in focussed discussion about student learning.

The school provides an effective, tailored support program for beginning teachers.

# Affirmations

The school has developed AAP teams to enable teachers to understand and guide the strategic agenda of the school. The teams are representative of the full staff, including teachers, school leaders, and administration and support staff.

The school has a well-established data plan that guides whole-school decision making while also enhancing teaching and learning discussions for individual students.

Trackers have been developed to analyse student achievement and growth in the priority areas or reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has benefited from learnings in other schools around the implementation of evidence-based practices. The school has also facilitated many opportunities for staff to share their expertise with other schools, both nationally and locally.

There is a strong commitment to providing opportunities that challenge the high performing students.

The school has developed a clearly articulated whole-school curriculum plan for each learning area. The plan has visible links to the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards.

Sustainability programs are well developed within the school and are highly valued by the school community. This strong foundation has provided an opportunity for this cross-curriculum priority to be embedded in all learning areas.

The use of the Seesaw app. has enhanced communication across the school and is highly valued by the community as a way to engage in discussions about student learning.

The school places high value on the timely and regular use of feedback to improve student outcomes.

# Recommendations

Develop the Aranda Primary School Improvement Plan 2020-2024 so that it is consistent with the school’s vision for teaching and learning and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes and incorporates explicit targets for student achievement.

Continue to refine the school data plan to incorporate the full range of school data.

Continue to develop a professional learning plan that incorporates teacher reflection on practice, with coaching to drive improvement.

Continue to develop and refine the plan for curriculum delivery to clarify all aspects of curriculum implementation as well as teaching and learning expectations. As part of curriculum delivery, the school should develop a whole-school focus on the general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities.

Continue to develop the school’s capacity to cater for individual students by offering multiple ways for students to engage with and express their learning.

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

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

1. Performance Indicators in Primary Schools [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. a synthetic phonics and word study program [↑](#footnote-ref-2)