Monash Primary School

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 18, 19 and 20 June 2019
Principal of Review School: Matthew Holdway

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:
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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?
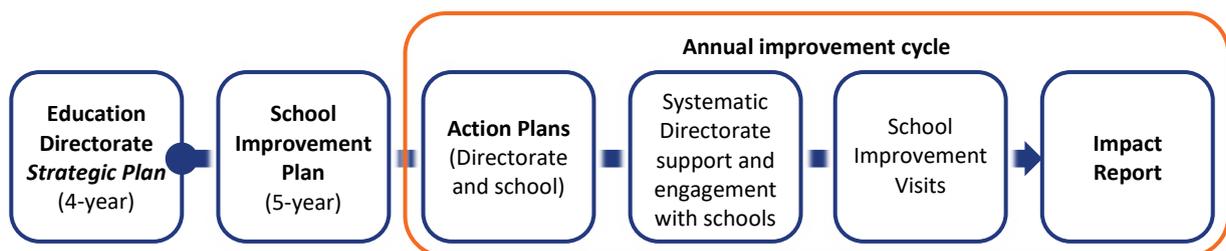
ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. School Improvement Visits (SIVs – which 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

- There is a commitment by all staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school with high expectations for student attendance, engagement and outcomes.

- *The Monash Primary School Strategic Plan 2016-2020* identifies two strategic priorities: deliver high quality education for all students; and provide a supportive, engaging and innovative environment for all students, staff and community members. Each priority lists six and five outcomes to be achieved, respectively. Targets are listed for each priority. Not all outcomes and targets are focused on student outcomes.

- Action plans over the life of the strategic plan have consistent priorities. Targets have changed.

- Annual school board reports on the school's website provide a summary of school achievement in Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), NAPLAN, and satisfaction surveys. An analysis of progress against the targets listed for that year was also provided. As noted in the 2018 school board report, the school tracked progress in targets over the four years of the strategic plan.

- The school has recently refined the 'Monash School Guiding Coalition' process where the school leadership team, and other staff as appropriate, analyse and communicate whole-school data sets such as NAPLAN, school climate and satisfaction surveys, PIPS, PAT-M (maths), behaviour and attendance.

- The school leadership team has cited several examples where student outcomes are improving as a result of planned interventions. Some improvements in student social and emotional outcomes are already evident as part of its inclusion initiative. In line with research, the team anticipates that an increase in significant improvements will be seen as planned interventions are embedded.

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
- In recent years, the school leadership team has developed sophisticated spreadsheets to store and display available data, particularly in reading and mathematics.

- Discussions with staff reveal a strong focus on quality data to drive school improvement.

- At the whole-school level, the Monash School Guiding Coalition and the school leadership team have analysed available data using a 'disciplined dialogue' approach to establish trends to determine goals and interventions. The creation of data trackers for NAPLAN, PIPS and PAT-M demonstrate the school's intent to monitor whole-school student achievement and progress over time.

- The *Monash Data Management Plan* indicates the multiple sources of data used by various levels of the school. It was noted by the review team that there is an intention to broaden the scope of the data plan over time to include all aspects of student achievement and wellbeing.

- There is an expectation that teachers use data to plan. Teachers talked about how they used mathematics and reading data in particular to determine starting points for teaching and to track progress. In recent times teachers have been analysing classroom data in other learning areas. Teachers also used a disciplined dialogue approach to analyse data. In general, teachers felt confident using the data made available to them.

- The school leadership team has rearranged the school timetable to allow classroom teachers collaborative planning time where they can use data to plan and monitor progress.

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

- During interviews with staff, students and community members, the review team heard consistently that the school was welcoming, open, respectful, inclusive and caring. There was a strong sense of community and belonging. A group of parents agreed that "the school is a happy and inclusive environment", "teachers really care about our kids", and "there is a strong community spirit". Students said, "teachers really care and help us with our learning". A support staff member commented that "the school was inclusive of all".

- There have been some behavioural and engagement issues in the school during the life of the plan. 'Friendly Schools Plus', 'KidsMatter', 'Be You', and 'Everyone Everyday', have been introduced. 'Positive Behaviours for Learning' (PBL) is being introduced in 2019. The school has modified its original 10 school values to four, aligning these with PBL.

- A school behaviour decision-making flowchart is documented with students using self-regulating strategies for their behaviour.

- Acknowledgment of Country was introduced in 2018. The school has self-evaluated using the cultural integrity continuum and has engaged parents and staff in writing a Reconciliation Action Plan. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum perspectives are highly visible within the preschool.

- Staff monitor attendance through the central database to recognise classes achieving greater than 90% attendance. There is a specific program to encourage attendance, namely 'Tick Tock School Rocks'.

- The online application Seesaw is used across the school to communicate with parents and families about their children's learning. In general, parents felt they were empowered to support their children.

- Learning evenings have been delivered to engage parents in their children's learning, with evidence of positive attendance.

- Clubs have been created for students at break times. In response to research, a new timetable was introduced in 2019 to move from two to three break times.

- Recently there has been a significant and deliberate strategy to build a positive staff culture. Staff comments demonstrate that they feel supported by the leadership team and they have more time to collaborate with others.

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 has developed a detailed Response to Improvement (RTI) framework for students at risk of not achieving outcomes in English, mathematics, and social and emotional learning.

- Two teachers are dedicated to Tier 2 RTI, with timetabled sessions outside of core instruction time in both phonics and mathematics. The teachers are supported by school leaders.

- Two teachers, together with school leaders, are responsible for small group sessions for Tier 3 RTI students. Individual Learning Plans (ILP) and Abilities Based Learning in Education Support (ABLES) curriculum underpin the formation of student learning goals.

- Student support team meetings have been established to ensure students of concern are regularly discussed and teachers are supported to implement strategies. Teachers meet with the team once per term.

- The role of pastoral care coordinator has been established to support students with their social and emotional needs. The Seasons for Growth program has been introduced to complement the school's social and emotional strategies.

- The release timetable was restructured to ensure teachers had time together as a whole team for collaborative planning. Reflection and planning days were introduced in each term and the leadership team has established a resource and planning room which is utilised for staff during collaborative planning and reflection days.

- Students with challenging behaviours have positive behaviour support plans.

- The school has appointed specialist teachers in health and sustainability (kitchen garden), Japanese, physical education, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and visual arts.

- In 2019 the school has adopted a full inclusion model and mainstreamed its students from the learning support units with withdrawal as required based on its RTI model.

- A part time speech and language pathologist has been appointed to support student needs and to assist in teacher practice.

- There is time allocated each week for collaborative coaching.

- The school has accessed school and Directorate funds to repurpose physical spaces for student learning; these include sensory spaces, withdrawal spaces for small groups, and reading nooks.

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

- School leaders place a very high priority on professional learning as a strategy for school improvement. There has been a strategic intent to provide opportunities to promote staff collaboration in teaching and learning to improve student outcomes.

- School leaders participate in professional learning activities, learning alongside teachers, and the school supports teachers to continue formal study such as a Master of Education and AITSL Highly Accomplished teacher certification.

- There are five teachers involved in a 'teachers as researchers' project with the University of Canberra; they have a focus on inclusion. Findings will be presented at the end of 2019 at a conference, and data will be used to create resources for schools.

- In 2018 the school implemented a professional learning model to drive whole-school and professional learning team collaboration. This model included establishing a guiding coalition to manage data; action inquiry research projects; examining data in collaborative team planning; and creating SMART goals.

- This plan also includes a comprehensive mentoring and coaching model and is driven by four guiding questions. Most teachers have a mentor and allocated time with their mentor. The school has documented a coaching model that involves collaborative coaching linked to the professional goals of teachers. Collaborative coaching occurs each week and is timetabled for, and with, teachers. These include instructional walks.

- It is evident that teachers have been encouraged, and provided with, opportunities to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.

- Disciplined dialogue questions are used to analyse data to set goals and priorities for intervention.

- The action inquiry cycle highlights the work of the whole-school professional learning community to drive professional learning. These inquiries have been underpinned by research and have resulted in deep learning around teacher practice.

- All new educators have a mentoring partnership agreement and participate in formal mentoring throughout the year.

- The school has developed a database of teacher expertise which is used to identify areas of focus for collaborative coaching.

- Scheduled 'developing self and others' meetings demonstrate how staff are providing professional support to each other in workshops. They have time with their mentors twice a term.

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 school uses the 'Letter and Sounds' sequence to teach phonics in the early years. The school is developing ways to extend this learning into the senior years.

- 'Power standards' have been developed by teaching teams describing the non-negotiable Australian Curriculum content to be covered in mathematics and writing. Specialist teachers for physical education, Japanese, and STEM have also developed power standards for their respective learning areas. Power standards for reading are nearing completion.

- For mathematics, there is a whole-school scope and sequence which is aligned with the Australian Curriculum and features the power standards. The scope and sequence is underpinned by Visible Learning principles. For each power standard, learning intentions have been created which reflect different levels of cognitive behaviour. These include applying knowledge, analysing, comparing, synthesising, reflecting and explaining concepts using mathematical vocabulary, through a problem-solving lens.

- The school is using ABLES to inform curriculum development, delivery and assessment for students identified for Tier 3 RTI, small group instruction. ABLES provides guidance materials and strategies to help teach students based on their individual learning needs.

- Differentiated strategies are visible in Tier 1 RTI planning for English and mathematics.

- The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are not clearly evidenced in all curriculum documentation. The school is developing curriculum to support social and emotional learning.

- The Early Languages Learning Australia (ELLA) online program is being used to enhance the learning of Japanese in preschool.

- Curriculum adjustment is expressed through Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for identified students.

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
- A shared understanding of differentiated teaching and learning aligned to research is emerging across the school.

- In 2019, staff have an explicit goal relating to differentiation in their professional development plans (PDPs). They have an opportunity to reflect on their progress in this area during the scheduled 'developing self and others' meetings, held twice a term.

- Staff have recently received professional learning on differentiation and sensory processing needs.

- Diagnostic, formative and summative student progress data are collected regularly and recorded in a central database.

- Longitudinal tracking systems were introduced for mathematics PAT-M, the Letters and Sounds phonics sequence, and spelling (Morrison McCall Spelling Scale). Using ABLES, learning overviews have been developed to guide small group instruction for students with additional needs in these areas.

- ILPs and ABLES plans are developed for students requiring additional support at the Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels of the RTI model.

- Students identified as Tier 2 and Tier 3 RTI receive small group instruction in English and mathematics.

- Pre-testing, formative assessment and diagnostic data support decision-making for differentiated, flexible groupings in reading and mathematics.

- An enrichment group for mathematics is held each week for identified students in years 3-6.

- Teachers conference with students individually to co-construct student learning goals, particularly for writing. Goal-setting approaches tend to vary across the school.

- The online application Seesaw is used across the school to communicate individual student learning progress to parents.

- Teacher planning documents in English and mathematics demonstrate intentional differentiation activities at the prerequisite, core and extension skill level.

- Parents receive two formal student progress reports each year that include suggestions for ways in which they can support their child's 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

- *The Monash Primary School Practice Framework* describes shared beliefs and a school-wide commitment to improving teaching and learning through evidence-based research.

- Coaches and mentors regularly model effective pedagogical practices in the classroom as a key component of the coaching and mentoring cycle.

- The 'Letters and Sounds' phonics sequence is used consistently in the early years.

- It is a school expectation that the Visible Learning approach is used to teach mathematics. Teachers focus on teaching strategies that move students from surface learning to deep learning through to transfer.

- Teachers readily attempt, and share, a variety of teaching strategies to improve student learning. Instructional walks and peer observations have facilitated teacher understanding of successful practices between classrooms.

- Writing checklists have been developed by teaching teams that are aligned with the power standards. These checklists are supported by rubrics and corresponding success criteria so students can see where to go next in their learning.

- The school uses 'bump it up walls' to visually display next steps in successful writing for students. Some staff use the Comprehension Accuracy Fluency Expand (CAFÉ) reading system.

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

- The school is affiliated to a partnership between the University of Canberra and the ACT Government. As part of this affiliation, the school provides opportunities for preservice teachers to provide clinics for selected students or observe teaching in action. In return, the school staff have access to University of Canberra staff for professional learning. The teachers as researchers element of this partnership has been fully embraced by the school. Five teachers are completing a school-based research project on inclusive education. Data, including student outcome and staff perception data, have been gathered as a baseline for the research project and will inform the success of the project over time. As the partnership is in the initial phase, progress is yet to be measured.

- The school has been developing a parent partnership, however intended student outcomes have not been made clear. The school has implemented many strategies over the life of the plan. A few of these include:

    > the school facilitates a play group every second Friday of term

    > students have provided performances for Goodwin Village residents

    > the school has adopted the online application Seesaw, to provide parents with real time feedback on student progress

    > a community hub for the breakfast club, second hand uniforms and a variety of parent focused activities

    > a school Facebook page that is used for parents to celebrate learning

    > the school has organised many in-school parents' information evenings on a variety of topics.

Commendations

- There is a whole-school focus on achieving the best outcomes for every student.

- The school has implemented a very successful professional learning community model which includes opportunities for leadership, research, further study, collaboration and improvements to practice. The school celebrates professional success.

- The mentoring and coaching model is highly valued and is a priority in the professional learning community. Teachers are allocated time for collaborative coaching, peer observations, feedback and reflection.

- There is a developing system to track and analyse data over time. Time is allocated for professional learning teams to analyse data to provide focus for planning.

- Staff morale is generally high, and staff feel supported and positive about the school's vision.

- The school has recently implemented an inclusion model which has been well supported and is already showing significant success with social outcomes for students.

- The school has implemented a comprehensive RTI model to address specific needs of students. The model is well resourced.

- Relationships between parents, staff and students are respectful, welcoming and honest.

- The leadership team promotes the development of staff as an expert and coherent school- wide teaching team.

- All teachers have been involved in action inquiry using research, evidence and evaluation. This has resulted in deep learning of pedagogies.

Affirmations

- Over the life of the strategic plan, Monash Primary School has maintained a focus on core priorities. The school's guiding coalition team has analysed whole-of-school data to identify trends in student outcomes and stated targets.

- The school leadership team and teaching staff have actively considered multiple sources of evidence to determine gaps and overlaps in student learning.

- The school has implemented, and is implementing, many evidenced-based strategies to support the development of student social and emotional wellbeing.

- Many strategies and initiatives have been employed to engage with families as active partners in their child's education.

- Careful and purposeful consideration has been given to the physical spaces of the school to maximise student learning.

- In an effort to narrow the curriculum, the school has commenced work on creating power standards for each learning area. Mathematics and writing standards have been completed and are already in use across the school.

- Planning documents for English and mathematics are designed to meet the learning needs

of different groups of students by explicitly encouraging differentiation using prerequisite, core and extension activities.

- There are curriculum delivery systems in place for each Tier of the RTI model.

- The school uses diagnostic, formative and summative data to inform differentiated groupings.

- The online application Seesaw is used to communicate student learning progress to parents.

- Teachers are proactive in using and sharing a variety of teaching strategies to improve student learning.

- The school has engaged with the University of Canberra's Affiliated Schools program. This includes a 'teachers as researchers' component. Five teachers have engaged with university staff to undertake formal academic action research into inclusion.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop a Monash Primary School Strategic Plan 2020-2024 that is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes. It should incorporate explicit targets for student achievement that are well communicated to the school community. The plan should clearly articulate strategies for improvement in a timeline that acknowledges capacity for change. Progress towards targets should be monitored and strategies systematically evaluated for their effectiveness in achieving outcomes.

- Continue to establish and implement a systematic plan for the collection, analysis and use of student achievement and wellbeing data.

- Continue to develop a school-wide, self-reflective culture focused on improving classroom teaching.

- Continue to develop a coherent sequenced plan for curriculum delivery across the school to enable teachers to effectively manage the wide range of curriculum expectations. This should include a strong focus on the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. Continue to build clear and consistent strategies to promote personal and social behaviours consistent with curriculum expectations.

- Continue to develop teacher practice to meet the needs of individual students by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.

- Continue to provide teachers with opportunities for deep learning of evidenced-based teaching practices, including those that promote student ownership of their learning; compiling and communicating agreed high impact strategies that will be consistent across the school.

- Continue to develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent. Ensure there is a clear understanding of the purpose of each partnership, and objectives expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students. Each partnership should have a formal plan for roles, communication and reviewing planned outcomes.