



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **Calwell Primary School**

Report of Review, 2023

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## Publication and independent Review Team details

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Date of School Review: 8, 9, 10 and 11 May 2023

Principal of Review School: Katie Brown

*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:

- Lead Reviewer: Julie Murkins, *ACER Senior School Improvement Consultant*
- ACT Review Team members: 1. Jenny Priest, *Principal of Garran Primary School*  
2. Linda Francis, *Principal of Taylor Primary School*

Report Date: 11 May 2023

***Report of Review, 2023*** prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate  
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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## Overview of the School Review process

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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.

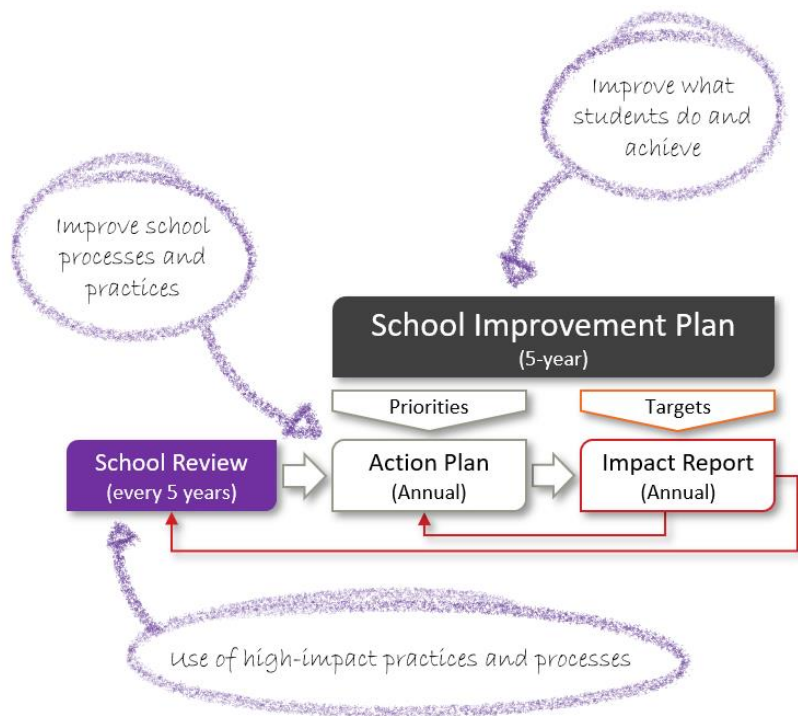
Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students,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

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## 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

- Calwell Primary School is operating within its School Improvement Plan 2019-2023 (SIP). The SIP articulates two improvement priorities:
  1. Students will be engaged, challenged and learn successfully.
  2. Build a positive and inclusive school culture to support student wellbeing and social emotional development and learning.
- Specific improvement strategies have been deployed each year of this school planning cycle, described in Annual Action Plans, with varying levels of impact. Leaders and teachers report significant loss of continuity and traction towards targets due to the pandemic and staffing challenges in 2022-23.
- In relation to priority one, there is evidence of gains in the adoption and embedding of some pedagogical practices and in the confidence of teachers to use data to pinpoint student readiness to learn. Challenges remain in embedding formative assessment and innovating in curriculum design and delivery.
- Readers' Workshop was introduced as a pedagogical strategy in support of priority one. Teachers report it as being an impactful approach as it provides opportunities for the individualising of reading goals. Students say that it gives them useful feedback on their learning. Many staff indicate a desire to see the introduction of the Writers' Workshop to further strengthen literacy outcomes.
- The school has focused on developing numeracy skills in all year levels. The key strategy has been the introduction of rich tasks in mathematics. Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) and National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data reflect steady growth in numeracy outcomes.
- In relation to priority two, there is evidence of the impact of the implementation of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) and of the introduction of Seesaw. Challenges remain in rolling out an impactful Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program and in reconnecting with the school's community.
- The school's parent body report awareness of what the school is working on, although there is limited involvement in the identification of those priorities.
- The communication of the school's progress - both internally and with the school community - has been varied. Teachers are aware that a number of strategies have stalled due to staff shortages or the loss of key in-house expertise. Leaders reflect that they have had to be redeployed to meet frontline gaps and this is diminishing the pursuit of improvement goals.

## NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

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### 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 had a focus on the collection and understanding of data sets in relation to student learning and wellbeing.
- There is a P-6 assessment schedule which describes the timing of the collection of multiple sets of data. The schedule is made available to all staff and provides a structure for teachers in relation to assessing students.
- The student tracking spreadsheet is providing opportunities for the collection and analysis of data. Items such as reading benchmark data, mathematics (for example, recall of number facts) and writing sample analysis are recorded. Some teachers make explicit use of this data to determine starting points for learning.
- The school invests in assessment programs such as Progressive Achievement Test – Mathematics (PAT-M), Reading, Comprehension and Spelling. These data are used by some staff and are seen as more purposeful in the senior years.
- BASE and NAPLAN data are analysed by leaders and some teachers. The school's performance in these assessments is provided via presentations to staff.
- Teachers' data literacy and engagement with data is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers use data to group students and to differentiate the learning program. Student achievement data are used for student goal setting in some areas of the school. Cohort data and tracking over time is less evident.
- School leaders use data to inform discussions in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Leaders are considering the data being used in these discussions. PLCs discuss both team-level and whole-school data. Disruption to the offering of PLC sessions is reducing data conversations.
- There is evidence to suggest that data analysis informs the identification of students who have additional learning needs. The student wellbeing team works to support this process.
- The school produces an annual report which includes some school performance data. This is made available to the wider school community.

## NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

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### Domain descriptor

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

### Findings

- The leadership team prioritise the wellbeing of students and actively seek to be available to support classroom teachers when the need arises. The importance of this is acknowledged across the school when setting the preconditions for learning.
- Staff demonstrate a high-level of commitment to their work and in supporting the students at Calwell Primary School.
- Generally, classrooms are busy and energised places. Students and teachers acknowledge that major inappropriate student behaviours are causing disruptions in the learning environment. Leaders are regularly involved in responding to these disruptions.
- The management of major inappropriate behaviour is a source of concern on the part of some staff, who seek greater consistency of response and intervention.
- The PBL Framework is guiding the implementation of the school values and rules. Clear expectations for behaviour is reinforced by posters displayed around the school. Positive behaviour rewards (tokens) are provided to students displaying appropriate behaviour. Staff say this is generally effective.
- Learner assets are embedded in the school. They are evident in the physical environment and in conversations between students and staff. Learner assets form the basis of a shared language in support of a safe, positive and connected school community.
- The school procedures for rewarding positive behaviours are seen by staff to be generally effective. Staff encourage and assist students to self-regulate and monitor behaviour.
- Parents interviewed during the review process praised the openness of staff and appreciate the way staff have sought to deeply understand their children.
- Teachers use the Seesaw application and report it is an efficient way of increasing communication with parents. Parents have provided feedback that Seesaw is helping to keep them up-to-date with their child's learning and what is taking place at school.

## NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

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### 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 uses human resources to support the learning and social needs of the students. The leadership team has employed additional Learning Support Assistants (LSA) and a youth worker to support teachers in managing student behaviour and learning. There are plans for the small group program to commence next term.
- Flexible resourcing previously allowed for targeted intervention programs in the junior and senior school. Plans are in place to resume this approach in the second half of 2023.
- Assessment data derived from diagnostic testing are used to identify students who require additional support. Over the life of the plan, there has been an increase in the number of students presenting with additional needs who require targeted support. Leaders are having to make creative resourcing decisions in order to best meet these needs.
- There is alignment of the school budget with school priorities. The school has made a significant investment in technology to support students and staff P-6. Chromebooks, interactive whiteboards, iPads and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning tools have been purchased. In addition, digital literacy and numeracy resources are available via subscription including Mathletics, Reading Eggs, SchoolZine and Seesaw.
- The grounds, buildings and the learning environments are well-maintained. Some building internals could benefit from a refresh.
- Classrooms have inherent flexibility, although that flexibility is not being maximised by teachers. Physical resources in some classrooms and learning settings to support identified pedagogical practices, are traditional.
- The school maintains a well-resourced teacher reference collection which is regularly accessed by teachers and LSAs. Classrooms and units also have year-level specific teaching resources.
- Specialist classroom spaces are used to reflect current curriculum priorities and teacher areas of expertise.



## NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

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### 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 a broad overview of the professional learning intent of the school. It is not clear how this overview is being enacted.
- There is a range of expertise among teachers and school leaders to deliver on the school's current priorities.
- Leaders endeavour to regularly work closely with teachers in support of professional growth. Timetable adjustments have been designed to accommodate this intent.
- PLC processes and protocols vary across the school. Teams have different approaches to collaborative strategies, such as shared analysis of students' work samples, student feedback and peer observation.
- Some staff report that mathematics and Readers' Workshop have been a focus for their professional growth and comment that they feel they are being effective in supporting student learning.
- New staff are provided with an induction at the beginning of the year outlining 'how we do things' at Calwell Primary School. Experienced staff provide mentor roles to new staff. Folders are given to all staff with information pertaining to the work of teachers and school organisation.
- The school has documented processes for conducting lesson observations. Some teachers express a desire to have more formal opportunities for leaders and experienced peers to provide them with feedback on their practice.
- All staff work with their team leaders to create annual personal development plans as part of the Australian Capital Territory Education Directorate processes.

## NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

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### 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 delivery of an innovative and relevant curriculum has been a school priority. Leaders and teachers report that this has been a challenge.
- The school has a range of short and long-term curriculum planning documents, which suggest a consistency of approach across the learning years.
- Long-term plans describe how assessment and reporting capture student performance. Teachers access these plans to begin their curriculum design.
- Teachers report varying degrees of collaborative planning. A number of teachers are working in isolation and have sought closer guidance on the part of leaders to maintain high quality curriculum planning. A recent decision to foster team planning time is designed to address this concern.
- There is limited evidence of leaders monitoring overall curriculum implementation to check for gaps or overlap.
- In the preschool, the curriculum is being designed and delivered with innovative and child-led inquiry the focus of lessons. There is evidence of this capturing student interest and fostering engagement.
- Curriculum planning and delivery is yet to provide opportunities for students to progress through the years of learning. Curriculum plans are being enacted in relation to discrete year levels. The review team is unable to identify where students, who are performing at or above expected levels, are afforded opportunities to access the following year's curriculum.
- The curriculum is described as 'core' and integrated learning areas. This is documented in a P-6 scope and sequence. The integrated units are delivering odd and even year units of work. Time is being prioritised for the teaching of English and mathematics. A focus on the general capabilities is yet to be evident, beyond the work in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers report, and planning documents confirm, that the integrated unit time is most often based on single learning areas. Leaders have identified this as an area of curriculum delivery in need of further focus and professional learning.
- Teachers are beginning to make flexible arrangements for the delivery of a locally responsive curriculum.

## NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

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### 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

- School leaders are committed to ensuring that the needs of individual students are met through differentiated teaching and learning.
- Teachers take time getting to know students, utilising student assessment data from the school assessment schedule to plan next steps for student learning.
- Teachers can articulate the process for identifying students for referral to their team leader and the student wellbeing team. This team meets regularly and is responsible for progress monitoring and data-based decision-making to support students.
- LSAs work in partnership with teachers to provide support for individuals and small groups of students who have been identified as requiring additional support.
- Intentionally planned differentiated activities are evident in pockets across the school. These are catering for students who require support, the core group and extension, where needed.
- In some classrooms, learning intentions and success criteria allow for differentiated feedback to students. This also occurs through conferencing and/or via written comments in workbooks.
- Bump It Up statements, differentiated success criteria, peer feedback, flexible student grouping and student work samples were observed in some classrooms to support students at different stages in their learning.
- Online platforms (for example Mathletics, Reading Eggs, Prodigy) are being used by teachers to allow further opportunities for differentiation and consolidation of student learning.
- Students with identified needs have Individual Learning Plans (ILP) which are written in partnership with parents. Parents provide additional information to ensure student needs are being accommodated. They include SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based) goals which focus on differentiated learning needs and identify strategies to achieve shared goals.

## NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

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### 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

- There has been a focus across the life of the plan on consistent pedagogical practices. Some structures to support teaching and learning are embedded, including learning intentions and success criteria along with the Readers' Workshop model. There is timetable clearly displayed in every class.
- Teachers utilise a range of pedagogical practices, some of which are not aligned to the school's improvement agenda. Leaders express a desire in supporting a more consistent and impactful approach, through the provision of targeted professional learning and collaboration.
- School plans identify the 10 Essential Literacy Practices as an overarching pedagogical approach. Some teaching teams regularly reference these practices.
- Linked to the school plan, professional learning around Readers' Workshop has resulted in this practice being evident in most classrooms. The workshop model supports teachers to work with small, differentiated groups and provides a structure for explicit teaching of reading strategies, practice time and feedback. Opportunities for conferencing are evident within the workshop model.
- The school analyses student data in relation to mathematics and identifies the rich task approach to the teaching of mathematical concepts. The school is in the early stages of implementation.
- Evidence of student goal setting is limited throughout the school. Some students and teachers are able to articulate learning goals in reading and writing.

## NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

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### 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

- Connection with families is the prime partnership priority of the school. Over the life of this plan, this partnership has been challenged by the pandemic and other external factors beyond the control of the school.
- There is evidence from parents and staff that the school has experienced a divided parent community. Leaders have found it difficult to effectively respond.
- The School Board has been active in seeking to unify the parent body and in supporting the school in addressing declining enrolments and staff shortages.
- Recently, the Parents & Citizens (P&C) has been re-established, supported by accessing a directorate grant. Members report that the focus has been on increasing the number of volunteers for specific events or activities, rather than having them commit to regular meetings or roles. The school is enjoying a significant increase in parent volunteering.
- Following a survey of parents in the school community, two main focus areas emerged. These include support of advocacy for their children and strategies for families in relation to supporting the educational journey of their child.
- Parental support for the school is strong in those who were interviewed as part of the review process. Parents report that the teachers know their children well. They also comment favourably on the school's use of communication tools, such as the Seesaw app.
- Connections with the local high school are being re-invigorated as part of providing the transition beyond primary school. Students speak about moving with their cohort of friends into the local high school. Leaders are planning further opportunities for younger students and families to engage with the broader public education community.

## Commendations

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Calwell Primary School is to be commended for:

- The school's improvement agenda being well-described and documented. This agenda is also being driven by well-defined targets and reported upon by reference to multiple sources of data. This allows teachers to make more evidence-informed decisions about what and how to teach their students over time.
- Staff have invested in understanding where each student is at in relation to their learning and wellbeing. Parents reflect positively on this school feature.
- The implementation of PBL has been an effective strategy in gaining a shared language for the agreed values and expected student behaviour.
- The school has designed and implemented learner assets as a whole-school approach to helping students understand themselves as learners.
- A sustained focus has been applied to the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the life of this school planning cycle. The well-implemented and well-monitored Readers' Workshop strategy is an example of a high impact pedagogical practice which has transformed the way the school approaches the teaching of reading.
- The school is committed to building the capacity of staff to engage with learner and wellbeing data. This has created a platform from which a student-centred approach is possible in curriculum design, pedagogical practices and differentiated learning opportunities in their classrooms.
- Strong connections between the preschool and kindergarten are avenues for teacher sharing, as well as providing a smooth transition for students.

## Affirmations

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Calwell Primary School is to be affirmed for:

- Staff being committed to creating a safe and supportive learning environment, where the wellbeing of every student is at the core of school practices.
- The school has benefited from having clear expectations in relation to the quality of curriculum documentation.
- Work has started on streamlining data collection and recording. The student tracking tool has potential to allow for deeper analysis of individual, cohort and school data.
- Flexible resource allocation is supporting the meeting of challenges in the school. This includes recruitment of specialist staff, as well as the deployment of additional support staff.
- Technology provision is widespread and students are making use of their devices to enhance their learning.
- Attention has been paid to the way the school welcomes and inducts new staff. This is building a strong sense of belonging.
- Staff expertise with effective pedagogical practices is engaging students in their learning.

Opportunities are being sought to share this with all teachers.

- The adoption of Seesaw, as both a communication and a community engagement tool, is affirmed by parents and teachers. As staff confidence grows in how to maximise its potential, this may bring greater levels of attachment to the school.
- Recent efforts to strengthen the involvement of the community in the school has resulted in high levels of parental volunteering. All parties report that this is having a positive impact on school-family connections and is allowing the school to regain lost ground.

## Recommendations

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- Build a shared vision with all stakeholders encompassing learner wellbeing, engagement and academic success.
- Foster and strengthen student wellbeing and engagement. This will be actioned by building upon:
  - > Clear expectations and responsibilities
  - > Systematic, data-informed school-wide interventions
  - > Continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- Build a collaborative learning community for students and teachers with a strong focus on high expectations, collective efficacy and student success.

This will be actioned by:

- > Strong alignment between the vision, the planning and the enactment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
  - > Privileged collaboration time using data as the basis of discussions
  - > Multiple and differentiated ways of supporting teacher growth (coaching, mentoring, observations and feedback).
- Co-design a new school-community engagement framework characterised by:
    - > Genuine opportunities for collaboration
    - > Authentic involvement in school direction-setting
    - > Parents as partners in their child's learning and wellbeing.