



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **Maribyrnong Primary School**

Report of Review, 2022

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## Publication and independent Review Team details

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Date of School Review: 25, 26, 27 and 28 July 2022

Principal of Review School: Andrew Buesnel

*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:

- Lead Reviewer: Robert Hassell, *ACER Senior School Improvement Consultant*
- ACT Review Team members: 1. Jo Jefferson, *ACT Education Directorate, Co-reviewer*  
2. Jenny Faul, *ACT Education Directorate, Co-reviewer*

Report Date: 28 July 2022

***Report of Review, 2022*** prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate  
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date 29 August 2022

## 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.

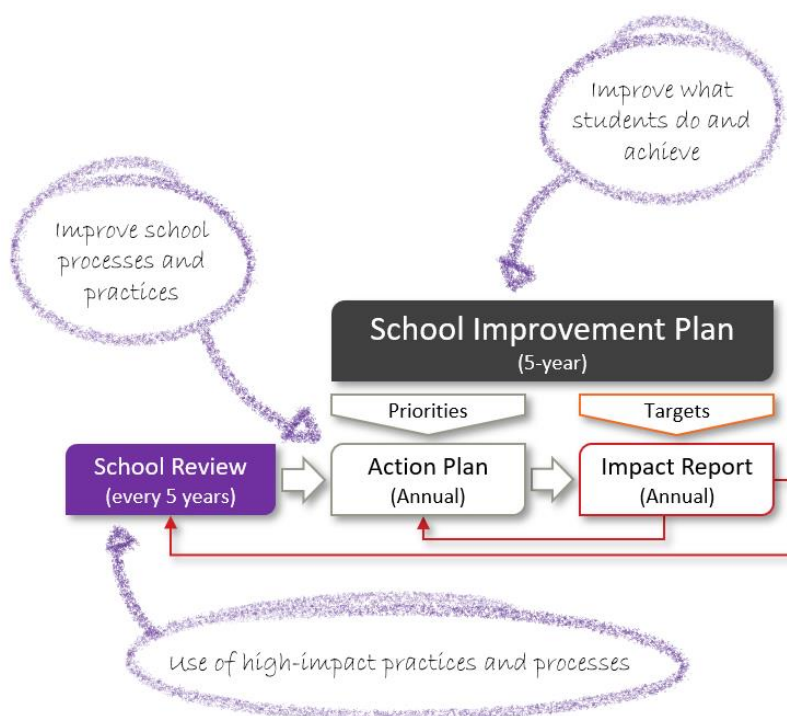
Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school 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

- Several improvement agendas have been established and published to the school community. These agendas cover writing, reading, mathematics, as well as student wellbeing, connection, and engagement.
- Broad targets for improvement in each of the published agendas have been set and communicated to the school community. The school leadership acknowledge that these targets are too broad.
- There is an expressed commitment from the leadership, school board, and teachers to narrowing the published agendas to a single agenda.
- The school leadership team, supported by the school board, expresses a commitment to improving student learning outcomes.
- Staff members expressed a commitment to improving teaching and learning for students at the year levels that they teach.
- Staff articulated that they are accountable for progress in student learning.
- A framework for monitoring progress towards the diverse and published agendas and targets has been communicated to the school community.
- Monitoring of progress towards the Australian Curriculum outcomes related to some of the stated academic targets is evident in year level documents and these targets are discussed in some of the year level teams.
- The school has high expectations regarding student attendance.
- The school has implemented Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) as the framework for student behaviour in the school's outdoor spaces.

## 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 collects data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and information on student wellbeing, engagement, and connectedness.
- These data are made available in a range of media for teachers and staff to access, analyse, and discuss.
- Some of these data are also summarised and published to the school community in annual reports and impact statements, in newsletters, and on the school website.
- The school sets aside time in meetings to discuss some aspects of the range of data available.
- The school has identified that quality classroom assessments, including formative and summative assessments, are a central part of the school's data collection.
- The school has identified and can demonstrate that it is collecting data on literacy and numeracy, wellbeing, and social and emotional development.
- The school has developed an annual assessment and data plan.
- Professional learning on the *Sounds-Write*<sup>1</sup> approach has been offered to all teachers.
- Leaders report that they review data from one or more of the data sets available with their teams twice each term.
- Annual perception surveys of parents and students are collected, and these data are included in annual reports and impact statements.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sounds-Write program, developed in the UK, offers the classroom and special needs teacher an instructional method that it is highly structured, cumulative, sequential, explicit, and code-oriented for teaching all children to read, spell and write using a phonics approach. See: [www.sounds-write.co.uk](http://www.sounds-write.co.uk)

## 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

- Teachers and staff express a belief that all students in their care are capable of learning.
- School documentation, school leader statements, teacher comments, and remarks from support staff and students establish that student learning and improving student learning is the school's primary focus, though a shared and consistent school-wide position is yet to be apparent.
- The school leadership emphasise positive and caring relationships between staff, students, and parents.
- Teachers, staff, and students express that they feel cared for and valued at the school.
- The school works to maintain classroom and outdoor environment that are safe, respectful, tolerant, and inclusive. In outdoor spaces this is supported by the implementation of PBL.
- The school promotes and maintains an environment where there are stated expectations, where student wellbeing is emphasised, and where students are able learn.
- Interactions between staff and students are caring and polite.
- Staff wellbeing is a high priority.
- The school is creating outdoor spaces which support and encourage learning.
- The school is implementing the Scottish Storyline<sup>2</sup> method to promote inquiry learning.
- Students, teachers, and staff express a sense of belonging to the school.
- Students are transitioned from the pre-school to kindergarten and from primary school to high school in successful, collaborative programs which involve students, staff, and parents.
- The transition plans support students to understand and adjust to new learning environments and staff.
- Leaders and teachers place a high priority on student wellbeing and care for the wellbeing and the improvements to learning that result.
- The children of Defence personnel have their wellbeing and consequent learning needs identified and supported.

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<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Storyline Method is a structured approach to learning and teaching that builds on the key principle that learning, to be meaningful, has to be memorable, and that by using learner's enthusiasm for story-making, the classroom, the teacher's role and learning can be transformed. See: [www.storyline.org](http://www.storyline.org)

## 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 has developed a process to identify the literacy learning needs of its students.
- The school resources a literacy intervention program with two highly skilled and experienced part-time teachers to address literacy learning needs of identified students.
- These two teachers also oversee provisions for students with English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) needs from years K-6.
- There is a Wellbeing Team which works to support students with additional social and emotional needs, ensuring supports are in place for those students.
- The school tracks students who require additional learning adjustments through the Learner Profiles document, which moves with the student each year.
- Identified students have Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) written with parents and implemented for students in kindergarten to Year 6.
- The small group programs in the two Learning Support Units (LSUs) are highly responsive to address individual student needs including supporting students to access their learning in mainstream classrooms and playground environments, as appropriate.
- Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are strategically allocated to support students with learning disabilities within both the small group programs and in mainstream classrooms.
- Additional LSA resourcing is in place to support Occupational Violence (OV).
- LSAs meet daily with their teaching teams to continue their ongoing development and to be highly responsive to student needs.
- The school employs a variety of approaches to support student engagement needs during break times.
- The school allocates a teacher expert and significant resourcing towards digital technologies.
- All students in the school have access to a variety of learning devices including iPads and Chromebooks. Students in years 3 to 6 are allocated Chromebooks on a one-to-one basis.
- The school contributes discretionary funds to the preschool outdoor learning spaces and to the improvement of outdoor learning environments to engage learners and support their wellbeing.
- The Defence Mentor Scheme supports families and the needs of the identified students



## 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

- Staff expertise is utilised and opportunities to share practice in team and staff meetings are provided.
- Teachers are teaching in areas of the curriculum for which they have formal qualifications and/or training.
- Specialist teachers and LSU and LSU-Autism (LSUA) teachers are highly skilled and have been supported with ongoing professional learning and contribute to a school-wide professional team.
- The school supports teachers to access professional learning related to their area of expertise.
- Teachers and staff members welcome opportunities for leaders and their peers to provide feedback on their practice, including informal mentoring, coaching, and modelling.
- The Teacher Professional Development Plan (TPDP) and Annual Professional Discussions (APD) provide some evidence that there are processes whereby teachers develop goals and discuss careers with team leaders and the principal.
- There is specific coaching and professional learning in *Sounds-Write* and digital technology.
- Teachers are involved in the development of the *Assessing to address each student at their point of need* document, capturing teaching teams' initial thoughts on formative assessment, what it looks like and how it might inform planning for each year level.
- Organizational structures are in place to support teachers to lead and to collaborate in teaching and curriculum teams in the areas of literacy, numeracy, early childhood, student wellbeing, cultural integrity, and PBL.
- Curriculum teams in literacy and numeracy include every teacher.
- LSAs feel valued and well supported by teachers and school leaders and have been provided necessary professional learning and information to effectively support students with additional needs.
- LSUA and LSU teams including LSAs receive specific training to support the differentiation of students in their care.

## 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

- School leaders and teachers acknowledge and prioritise the development of 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 school has mapped the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum to ensure consistent reporting across each semester in each year level.
- The school has mapped out the inquiry focus at all year levels.
- Some year level teams are working collaboratively on developing the curriculum to address the needs of students at that year level.
- Curriculum teams for literacy and numeracy, as well as specialist teachers, have begun work on scope and sequence documents for kindergarten to Year 6.
- Teachers identify that day-to-day planning is undertaken collaboratively with either their teaching partner or teaching team and is documented and stored in a variety of ways and spaces.
- The school has a number of documented position statements regarding curriculum delivery and expectations.
- Some year level teams are planning the teaching of cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities.
- The school leadership team recognises the importance of a process for quality assurance to ensure the curriculum meets expected standards and to enhance consistency and coherence across the school and have planning in place for this process.
- School leader support and participation in planning are valued by teachers.
- Teachers provide families with term learning overviews and opportunities to discuss and participate in student learning conversations, including goal setting, each term.
- Summative portfolios of student learning are shared with families each year.
- Reporting processes are aligned to the Australian 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

- Leaders and teachers have worked collaboratively to define what differentiation is and what it might look like in their classrooms.
- The principal and other school leaders recognise the importance of ensuring that teachers identify and address the learning needs of all students.
- The Maribyrnong Learning Profile is completed annually by families and provides teachers and leaders with insights regarding the wellbeing and learning of each child.
- The school tracks students who require additional adjustments through the learner profile document, which moves with the student each year.
- There is some systematic use of assessment instruments, including standardised assessments and formative assessments, at some year levels.
- Some teachers use information from the standardised and formative assessments to establish where individuals are in their learning and to inform teaching practice.
- Teachers are encouraged to respond to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross Curriculum Priority through the work of the Cultural Integrity Committee and this can be seen in some year level inquiry units.
- LSU and LSUA students are integrated into peer classrooms with support and teachers make adjustments to include these students.
- Parents and families are provided information about where students are in their learning through direct communication, reports, grades, and portfolios. Ideas on further support are also offered during interviews or follow-up phone calls.
- Early and sustained interventions are in place for most students requiring additional support in Literacy.
- There are processes and structures for Phase 2 student support using the *Sounds-Write* program. Each student's progress is tracked each lesson and shared with the appropriate teachers.

## 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

- The leadership team and some staff are discussing plans to establish a consistent set of school-wide pedagogies.
- The school principal and other leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning.
- Research-based teaching practices are evident in most classrooms and there are high levels of engagement in all classrooms using the *Scottish Storyline* method.
- Student reflections confirm the review team observations regarding engagement with the themes presented through the *Scottish Storyline* method.
- School leaders actively promote the *Scottish Storylines* method as an evidence-based teaching methodology and support staff in using this method to create learning environments that are engaging and challenging.
- Teachers as Researchers (TaR), a University of Canberra and ACT Education Directorate Affiliated Schools Program, is being implemented by a small group of teachers to improve student learning through teacher development, school-based research in curriculum, and pedagogy.
- Students report that some teachers are clear about what is being taught and what they need to learn.
- Some teachers clearly articulate their teaching and learning processes and strategies for their year level.
- The preschool practice is informed by the Early Years Learning Framework.
- There is some provision of ongoing detailed peer feedback to teachers on their classroom practices.

## 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

- The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with families and a number of individuals, businesses, and organisations.
- There are a number of highly successful initiatives driven by teachers which connect students to real-life context and community that further support student engagement and wellbeing. An example is the Maribyrnong Menders and bike program.
- The school leadership team supports and has in place an agreement with the University of Canberra and ACT Education Directorate as part of the Affiliated Schools Program, the aim of which is to improve student learning outcomes through teacher development, school-based research, and innovation in curriculum and pedagogy.
- The school partners with Defence Member and Family Support Branch, on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia, to support Defence students and their families to minimise the impact of mobility on education.
- The principal and deputy principal regularly review the effectiveness of the school's partnerships and associations. An example provided is the strategic withdrawal from a program which did not contribute to the expected school wellbeing and learning needs of staff and students involved in the program.
- The school works closely with the Parents and Citizens Committee to improve the outdoor physical learning spaces within the school by developing an inclusive, co-operative, and structured play area for students.
- Annually the school invites parent input into student wellbeing and learning needs and to actively contribute to those needs by being involved in curricula or extra-curricular programs.
- The school has an active and mutually beneficial partnership with *Community @ work* who run a before- and after-school student care program.
- The school has an active partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community which has resulted in the design and building of several useful and integrated outdoor learning spaces.

## Commendations

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That Maribyrnong Primary School is commended for:

- The flexible arrangement of classrooms and the outdoor environment of the school in light of the recent increase in school enrolment.
- Staff and student wellbeing being prioritised.
- Collecting a range of data on student outcomes (including academic, attendance, and behavioural outcomes) and information on student wellbeing, engagement, and connectedness.
- The response to annual perception surveys of parents, teachers, and students.
- Communications of summaries of selected data to parents, caregivers, and the wider school community.
- Having a school board, leadership team, teachers, and staff who are committed to improving student learning outcomes.
- Actively seeking ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with families and a number of individuals, businesses, and organisations.
- Having several highly successful initiatives driven by teachers which connect students to real-life contexts and the local community that further support student engagement and wellbeing.
- Developing a process to identify and respond to the literacy learning needs of its students.
- Tracking students who require additional adjustments through the use of the learner profile documents, which move with the student each year.
- Providing opportunities for teachers and support staff to experience leadership and contribute to school priorities.
- The process of successfully transitioning students to kindergarten and from primary school to high school.
- Recognising the impact wellbeing has on learning.
- Having teachers and staff who are highly committed to creating a school environment that promotes and supports student and staff wellbeing.
- Committing considerable resources to creating the right conditions for learning, including the provision of additional support for students who need it.

## Affirmations

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That Maribyrnong Primary School is affirmed for:

- Having a range of literacy, wellbeing, engagement, and behavioural data, collected in various forms, and used for discussion and analysis at team meetings. Some numeracy data are also collected and discussed.
- Making data sets available for teachers to analyse and discuss at a range of meetings.
- Identifying that quality classroom assessments, including formative and summative

assessments, are a central part of the school's data collection.

- Implementing the PBL framework.
- Implementing the *Scottish Storyline* method.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the school's partnerships and associations.
- Working on scope and sequence documents for kindergarten to Year 6.
- Allocating a teacher expert and significant resourcing towards digital technologies to increase teacher capability in teaching digital technologies and to develop student knowledge and skills.
- Allocating teachers or staff with expertise and resources in the specialist learning areas of music, French, science, physical education, and the library.
- Sharing of teacher practice at year levels.
- Defining differentiation, what it looks like, and how it informs planning in each year level; beginning to discuss how this might look across preschool to Year 6.
- Implementing the work around PBL.
- Strengthening the incorporation of the Cross Curriculum Priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Culture in teaching and learning.

## Recommendations

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- That the school leadership, together with the teachers and staff, refine the collection of data through collaboration, analysis, and discussion to establish and drive a single, clear, and focused improvement agenda for the school.
- That the school leadership, teachers, and staff prioritise the development of 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.
- That leaders, teachers, and staff collaborate to define what successful learning looks like in the context of Maribyrnong Primary School.
- That the school leadership, teachers, and staff build on a school-wide culture of professional expectations, accountability, and commitment to excellence and equity in learning outcomes by agreeing to a common pedagogical approach, setting guiding principles for professional learning communities, and developing a formal process for feedback, mentoring, and coaching.
- That Maribyrnong Primary School consults with and shares with the ACT Education Directorate, the School Board, parents, students, staff, and the wider school community the explicit learning agenda and the vision for the school.