



ACT
Government
Education

Red Hill Primary School

Report of Review, 2021

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Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 27, 28, 29 and 30 April 2021

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National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report of Review, 2021 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
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 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

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor

The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Findings

- The Red Hill School Strategic Plan 2016-2020 has three broad strategic priorities: improve learning and achievement for all students; develop an expert teaching team; and a safe, inclusive, and respectful school culture. The first priority has a focus on student outcomes in student literacy and numeracy growth. Targets relating to this are increasing average scaled growth in NAPLAN and the percentage of students achieving learning goals. The third priority has targets relating to student perception of feeling respected and safe. This plan was revised in 2019 with no change in the student outcomes sought. The school's annual Action Plans (AP) from 2016 to 2020 are generally aligned to the original strategic intent.
- The improvement agenda is communicated in staff meetings, newsletters to the school community, and in regular progress reports to the School Board. The School Board receives Annual School Board Reports that incorporate general school performance information. School Board members interviewed felt well informed about school progress over time. Parents interviewed were generally unable to talk about the strategic agenda or the achievement of planned student outcomes.
- The school's annual impact reports are compiled at the end of each year by the school leadership team and provide an analysis of planned targets. In the analysis of data, the team has triangulated NAPLAN with other data sources such as ACER Progressive Achievement Testing (PAT), A-E grades, and PM Benchmark data to provide a richer understanding of trends. The review team evidenced school responses to these data trends.
- At the beginning of each year, teachers and administration/support staff are sent an e-mail outlining the Professional Learning Plan (PLP) that incorporates the strategic agenda. The aim of the e-mail is to inform professional development discussions and outline expectations for professional learning. Staff generally described the strategic intent as improvement in writing, mathematics and positive education with little reference to the targets to be achieved. Across the school the review team evidenced a strong commitment to planned improvements.
- The school has strategically promoted staff action learning teams in the areas of positive education, writing, mathematics, and technology to support the development and implementation of plans that are aligned to the strategic agenda. The teams have considered and adopted, as appropriate, quality evidenced-based research. The Positive Education Implementation Team (PEIT) developed an alliance with Dr Justin Coulson, considered a leader in positive education, to draft its positive education framework. This was informed by the successful work in Positive Education by Geelong Grammar School.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/ regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Findings

- The Red Hill School Assessment Plan 2021 has been primarily written for use by the school leadership team and describes for each data collection tool the applicable year levels, who uses the data and why. The data tools include:
 - > PAT Mathematics, Spelling, Reading, Writing
 - > ACER General Ability Test and Social and Emotional Wellbeing assessment
 - > BEE spelling inventory
 - > Middle Years Mental Computation (MYMC)
 - > Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA)
- The review team observed detailed annual School Board reporting as evidence of detailed analysis of school level data at the end of each year. The analysis included other data tools not included in the data plan such as A-E report analysis, school surveys, PM Benchmark and BASE (formally called Performance Indicators in Primary Schools).
- The school's Assessment Schedule 2021 is focussed on teachers and describes assessment timelines for a variety of assessment tools.
- The review team evidenced data trackers on spreadsheets for PM Benchmark Reading, Reading Strategies, BEE Spelling, Response to Intervention (RTI) progress and SENA. Some data trackers were cross referenced with several priority groups of students.
- At the school level teachers participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that include Spiral of Inquiry¹ to examine trends in data and investigate strategies for improvement. The school has adopted the Disciplined Dialogue² approach to data analysis. The Positive Education Implementation Team (PEIT) is one example of a data driven school level group of teachers seeking evidenced based strategies to achieve desired outcomes. The team is still developing further data sources to support their action planning.
- Year level teams analyse data sets to determine how groups of students within each cohort have progressed over time. The teams use this analysis to devise appropriate curriculum for their cohort. Across the school there was variation in how individual teachers use data to determine starting points for teaching and to monitor progress over time.

¹ The Spiral of Inquiry proposed by Timperley, Halbert, and Kaser in 2014 suggests adopting a curiosity mindset to identify what is going on for learners and to develop some hunches about what is leading to the current situation, before deciding what to do about it.

² Disciplined Dialogue technique has been based on research by Emeritus Professor Neil Dempster, Griffith University and refers to all-embracing professional conversations that are positively focused on the moral purpose of schools

- There are examples of the school providing data analysis training. Some teachers expressed a need for further training on the use of data, particularly with the PAT suite of tests.

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

- Through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP), Red Hill School cultivates a culture that focuses its students on purposeful and meaningful learning across all learning areas. Students found their inquiries interesting, and some said they would welcome increased challenge in certain areas of their learning.
- Staff were aware of Red Hill School's Positive Relationship Policy and Procedures and were able to describe the steps taken at a classroom and whole-school level to promote a safe and supportive environment for learning.
- Staff identified an opportunity for increasing the consistency in responding to challenging student behaviour and follow-up communication from the school leadership team.
- The staff display a shared understanding of restorative practices to develop, maintain and restore relationships. The review team evidenced several examples of student understanding of these practices.
- Teachers highlighted one of the best things about working at the school is the strong collaboration that occurs within teams, and the support year level/specialist teams give each other. Collaborative team planning was mentioned as a strength for promoting a positive climate for the school as a workplace. The PEIT is focussed on building both staff and student wellbeing across the school.
- Classrooms featured essential agreements of expected behaviours for students. These are developed with student input and reviewed regularly by teachers. The school aims to utilise the Positive Behaviours for Learning framework to develop essential agreements for non-classroom settings.
- The school has a strong student leadership program that commences at the end of year 5 in preparation for year 6, where students take on a range of leadership roles across the school. Across years 1 to 6, there is a Student Representative Council that facilitates student voice in the school.
- The Red Hill Interests and Pursuits Program (RHIPP) enables students to engage in a range of community involvement activities, peer mentoring, and identified school roles. These activities are designed to build connection and a sense of belonging within the school. Students interviewed indicate they also develop 'life skills' and independence through these experiences.
- Students indicate they are supported in their learning by caring teachers, and that the teachers at Red Hill School make learning enjoyable. The review team evidenced classrooms that were calm, and students were engaged and focused on their learning.

- Parents interviewed said that their children look forward to school and that they are happy when they come home from school. Parents indicated they feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to the school, and that diversity is embraced by the staff. Recently, the Parents and Citizen association (P&C) was awarded a parent engagement grant to support 'welcoming activities' for new families and the parent buddy program.

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

- School leaders and teachers work strategically to use learning and wellbeing data to make considered decisions for resourcing.
- Significant resources have been targeted to meet the needs of students, particularly for those who are not making expected growth in their learning through the RTI model.
- Students with funded support have Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are allocated to support their needs. Staff and parents speak of the positive impact of this additional resource in classrooms and across the school generally.
- Resources are allocated to support English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) students and a designated teacher works with these students regularly according to need. A Defence Liaison Officer (DLO) supports defence families who arrive each year.
- The leadership team have allocated time within the weekly timetable for teaching teams to meet for collaborative planning. School leaders are supported to attend all collaborative planning sessions; supporting teachers with their understanding of curriculum and how to plan for quality teaching and learning experiences.
- A 'team leader' model has been implemented to provide additional support to each team.
- The school resources a number of specific small-group programs aimed at meeting student learning and engagement needs. Examples include: Deadly Boomerangs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, RHIPP, Year 6 Leadership Groups and musical ensembles. Students involved in these programs report high levels of satisfaction with these experiences. Other student groups such as Gifted and Talented have their needs met within the curriculum.
- Identified teachers have been supported to build student and staff's capacity to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool to support learning.
- Sets of ICT devices are available for student use and reviewers observed these being used by students for research, assessment task development, and other learning experiences. Some staff raised the issue of the need to upgrade some devices to allow them to effectively explore the use of this technology to higher levels.
- Classrooms and adjacent areas are used effectively. Shared spaces are a series of lively and purposeful learning zones. This is providing a range of options for learning from individual to small group, and whole class break out spaces.
- Significant resourcing has been targeted at enhancing the outdoor space to improve student well-being and engagement. Students interviewed shared their appreciation of these spaces.

- Some teachers commented that they would like additional teaching resources to enhance teaching and learning.

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

- The review team observed a school-wide and personal commitment to improving teaching practice and expertise to improve student learning outcomes. School leaders give precedence to the ongoing professional learning of all staff focused on improving classroom teaching. The school has a plan that identifies the professional learning undertaken to progress the school's strategic priorities.
- The school works to ensure a culture of collaboration within and across teams through its PLCs and teaching teams. Teachers value the expertise and collegiality of staff.
- PLCs support teachers to use a spiral of inquiry to work together, explore evidence-based practice, reflect on data and collaboratively problem solve. Teachers speak of shifts in their practice and outcomes for students as a result of their action learning. Some teachers could identify notable increases in effect sizes as a result of change to practice.
- Some teachers engage in individual action research. Some leaders and teachers are undergoing or have completed post graduate study in related fields.
- Peer coaching partnerships provide opportunities for teachers to work together and learn from each other's practices. Teachers can nominate to visit each other's classrooms, make observations, and provide feedback on identified problems of practice. Teachers who have participated comment positively that the peer coaching supports their continued professional growth. Some teachers reflect a desire for more explicit feedback by leaders about their teaching practice, and time to participate in ongoing coaching opportunities.
- Teachers meet weekly for collaborative planning sessions to drive consistency in curriculum, assessment, and delivery of the PYP program. These meetings in their year level teams, provide time for teachers to meet, plan, share and reflect collaboratively, supported by the PYP co-ordinator or team leader.
- The school has established processes to support the induction of teachers who are new to the school or profession. New educators to the school are assigned an experienced teacher mentor for support.
- The executive hold annual professional discussions with teachers and teacher performance and development plans are constructed with reference to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the school's AP.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom in areas of expertise and/or passion, across a range of initiatives as well as opportunities for team leader roles.

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

- As an authorised IB PYP school, Red Hill School provides an inquiry-based transdisciplinary curriculum delivery framework for the Australian Curriculum. The Programme of Inquiry (PoI) articulates a clear sequenced plan across the years of school and identifies what teachers should teach and what students should learn. The PoI is visible in the school and communicated to the community.
- The school has mapped the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards to the PYP transdisciplinary themes and the PoI documents across the school.
- Curriculum planning starts with the Achievement Standards. Units of inquiry are planned with a 'backward by design' approach using the Standards.
- The school's PYP coordinator and other school leaders work with teams to collaboratively write, reflect on and evaluate curriculum. Units of inquiry are developed through transdisciplinary themes, and planning documents identify key concepts, learner profile attributes, approaches to learning, central ideas, lines of inquiry and guiding questions.
- Where possible specialist teachers make authentic links to classroom Units of Inquiry; where this is not possible, specialist Units of Inquiry are developed based on the Australian Curriculum.
- The Preschool aligns the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) with IB PYP principles and practices.
- The leadership team are working to map the General Capabilities against the PYP Approaches to Learning more deeply to ensure that all aspects of the Australian Curriculum are delivered and assessed.
- The school review team have evidenced many examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures perspectives highlighted within the curriculum.
- The Positive Education framework has been developed to support student wellbeing and social-emotional learning.
- The school reports against the Achievement Standards using the Australian Curriculum. Assessment and reporting processes identify what and when assessments are performed for each year level. There is some evidence of rubrics and checklists being used to guide assessment in a variety of learning areas. Moderation occurs in teams to ensure consistency in reporting.
- ILPs are developed in consultation with all stakeholders for students who have been identified as requiring adjustments in learning to access the curriculum.

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

- Teachers describe a number of formative assessment tools to determine where students are in their learning and use these along with pre-assessments to determine starting points in their teaching.
- Individual student goal setting is evident in all classrooms. Learning goals for writing and mathematics are identified from the literacy and numeracy progressions of the Australian Curriculum. Teachers speak of conferencing with students to set goals, provide feedback and identify new goals when previous goals are achieved.
- Teachers use open-ended tasks as a way of catering for the diverse needs, interests, and levels of readiness in their classes. Other strategies include assessing prior knowledge, the regular use of formative assessment and scaffolding. Grouping students in small groups within and across classes; and providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways are also described as strategies.
- Differentiation is supported by pedagogical choices such as Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop and the Daily 5³, as particularly evident in the junior school.
- The school's RTI processes include the 'MultiLit' suite to support student reading development.
- ILPs are developed for students who have been identified as requiring adjustments to enable them to successfully access the curriculum. ILPs are designed, reviewed, and adjusted as required in consultation with parents.
- Teachers use Seesaw to communicate and share learning with parents on a regular basis. Parents described how they appreciated the regular updates and snapshots of learning in the classroom. Some teachers are extending the use of Seesaw to describe learning intentions, success criteria and what parents can do to support learning.
- Learning spaces are utilised flexibly and creatively to cater for diverse needs of learners. In some areas of the school, students are co-creators of the spaces to meet their individual learning needs.

³ Daily 5 is a literacy framework that instils behaviours of independence, creates a classroom of highly engaged readers, writers, and learners, and provides teachers with the time and structure to meet diverse student needs. Because it holds no curricular content, it can be used to meet any school, district, state, or national standards

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

- School leaders provide ongoing professional learning to staff in relation to evidence-based pedagogical practices, i.e., Workshop Model, 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy.
- There is evidence of consistent pedagogical practice across sub schools - Daily 5 and Count Me in Too (CMIT) in the junior school, Workshop Model and flipped learning in the senior school.
- Leaders articulated their desire for teachers to draw on a wide repertoire of evidence-based practice. They also expressed a view that they do not insist on a desired practice as they do not want staff to be restricted in the practices that they implement. Some teachers have commented that they would like to see a more cohesive approach to the implementation of pedagogical practice across the teams.
- An inquiry approach to learning has been enthusiastically embraced by all staff.
- Student agency in their learning is prominent across the school. For example, there is choice in ways to investigate and share learning, year 6 exhibition, choice in learning experiences and kindergarten investigations.
- The leadership team entrusts committees, e.g., ICT, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Positive Education to explore and promote effective pedagogical practices. These teams work collaboratively and are deeply committed to their work.
- Teachers recognise the importance of making the learning visible. In particular, the school's commitment to individual goal setting, feedback, high visibility of learning intentions and success criteria, including the IB Learner Profile, is providing students with clarity about what they are learning and what success looks like.
- Teachers and leaders identified the opportunity for developing more consistent approaches across the school in the use of rubrics, individual conferencing, and giving effective feedback to students.

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

- Red Hill School has established a range of partnerships within the community that are focused on supporting students to engage in learning, build connections within the community, enhance their learning experience, and foster a strong sense of belonging in the school.
- The principal is actively involved in promoting and guiding school partnerships, and a range of staff are involved in coordinating student engagement within them.
- Staff have observed evidence of improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for students involved in these partnerships – particularly students taking part in RHIPP. This evidence tends to be anecdotal or documented via collation of student voice or their completion of activities. For some partnerships, the leadership team has surveyed students to gauge their engagement and enjoyment of the activity.
- Partnerships established at the school include:
 - > The co-development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee with parents/carers, the 'Deadly Boomerangs' student action group, and Scotty Gorringe. The RAP is a living document that informs yearly actions to build cultural integrity at the school.
 - > Adam Shipp of Yurbay and Tyrone Bell of Thunderstone working with staff and students to build Indigenous gardens with the intention they become living teaching resources.
 - > An onsite 'Healthy Kids Canteen' that incorporates student volunteers. In 2021, school leadership and the P&C negotiated with the canteen provider a return to the use of cash in order to support student financial literacy skills.
 - > The Spark Reading Program where identified students benefit from trained reading mentors drawn from business.
 - > The Voyager Park Community Partnership Project that utilised authentic parent, staff, student, and community voice to redevelop the shared-use community park. This project enables the school to expand its physical education curriculum (outdoor sports and bike riding) for students.
 - > Engagement of Dr Justin Coulson to commence development and implementation of the Red Hill Positive Education (PE) Framework which elevates the school's commitment to improving staff, student, and community wellbeing for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes.

Commendations

- All staff at Red Hill School are personally committed to improving the learning and wellbeing of each and every student.
- Whole-school committees drive innovation in practice and promote strong relationships within the school community.
- The leadership team actively analyses a broad range of data to inform whole-school decision making. They are proactive in engaging staff in discussions about data.
- There is a collective commitment from staff to provide high quality learning experiences for students and to develop them as independent learners and effective collaborators. There are deliberate efforts to promote within students a sense of service to their community.
- Strong trusting and caring relationships are evident across the school community. Strong connections have been established within the community and parent/carers indicate they feel welcome and included. Students say they feel cared for and have positive relationships with all staff at the school.
- The school is innovative in using its physical space to maximise learning for students.
- Collaborative planning structures are a strength of the school and are critical to fostering strong partnerships between teachers and for building their expertise.
- Red Hill School has comprehensively developed a rich and engaging curriculum. This curriculum is explicit in the guaranteed understandings, skills and attributes that will be developed in all learners. The progression of learning for students across their years within the programme of inquiry is clear.
- There is widespread use of the Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions to set learning goals with students and monitor progress over time.
- The school has entered into a range of community partnerships to support student learning in the school, promoting strong connections between students, staff, parents/carers, businesses, and community organisations.

Affirmations

- The school has paid attention to the importance of teachers making regular use of collected data to target teaching, reflect on their impact, and monitor student growth. Data conversations are occurring regularly during PLCs and collaborative team planning sessions. This is building a culture of data-informed practice.
- The school has processes to identify students with learning needs and supports these needs in both the curriculum and with an RTI team.
- The school uses a variety of ways to encourage parents to engage in school life and student learning.
- Professional Learning Communities foster a culture of collaboration where teachers work and learn together.
- The school offers teachers a range of valued leadership opportunities.

- The school is supporting teachers to develop differentiation strategies to cater for the wide range of student learning needs.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to learn about and implement a variety of evidence based pedagogical practices in regard to reading, writing and social and emotional learning. This is building a consistency of practice across teaching teams.

Recommendations

- Develop a Red Hill School Improvement Plan 2022-2026 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. Progress towards targets should be monitored and strategies systematically evaluated for their effectiveness in achieving outcomes.
- Continue to develop a systematic plan and processes for the collection, analysis and use of a full range of student achievement and wellbeing data. Continue to provide staff training as appropriate.
- Continue to support teachers to use technology to maximise learning.
- Continue to develop, refine, and support the processes for teacher observation, mentoring and coaching, particularly with respect to the strategic agenda.
- Continue to develop clarity on the expectations for teaching and learning for the school to support both new teachers and teachers moving between year levels.
- Continue to support teachers to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Explore how a focus on critical and creative thinking can promote challenge for all students.
- Continue to develop, refine, and evaluate partnerships, particularly in support of the strategic intent.