Ngunnawal Primary School

Report of Review, 2022

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Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 20, 21, 22 and 23 June 2022
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Report Date: 23 June 2022

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 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.
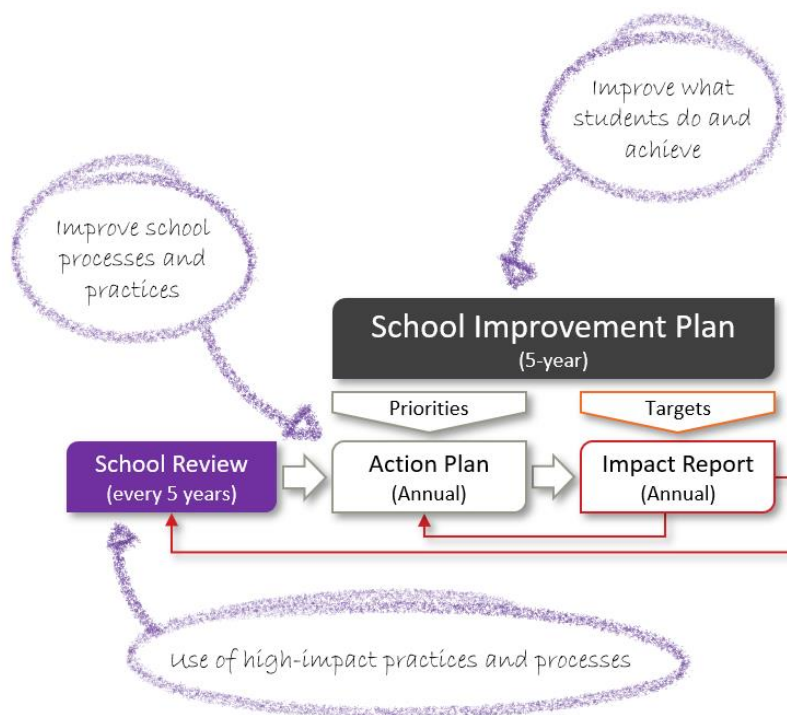
What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

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

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 explicit and strong improvement agenda in reading and wellbeing has been implemented, is established and has narrowed the focus of the leadership team and staff.

- The agenda for improvement has been developed in partnership with parents and the community and can be described by most parents interviewed and the school Board.

- There is evidence of the improvement agenda, including timelines, being communicated to the wider community: for example, in the annual impact reports published on the school website.

- There is a strong and optimistic commitment to the school improvement strategy by all members of the leadership team and staff, and a clear belief that further learning is possible.

- Staff and the Board are united and committed in their endeavours to improve student learning outcomes towards the achievement of the school improvement agenda.

- The leadership team has analysed data over several years, by using tools such as the school leader analysis of reading data, and has high levels of data literacy. The leadership team articulates a good knowledge of school performance data trends over several years.

- Priority group data – including students with a disability and others from Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families – are regularly examined.

- The leadership team, teachers and staff use data on a regular basis and are committed to finding ways to review and improve on current student outcomes. This is evidenced by the spiral of inquiry[1] and the PM Benchmark[2] reading tracker.

- Spiral of inquiry is used to systematically evaluate initiatives and their effectiveness. Staff and school leader evaluations of student data occur during Weeks 2, 4 and 5 each term. Processes are established for tracking progress when the data indicate that student achievement levels and/or wellbeing are below expected growth.

- The leadership team, teachers and staff tell stories of significant student achievement.

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[1] *The spiral of inquiry is a **systematic process for investigating and improving learner outcomes: academic, social and wellbeing**. There are many calls for teachers to use inquiry as part of their practice because of its associations with improved outcomes for marginalised learners.*

[2] *The PM Benchmark Literacy Assessment resources provide teachers with the right tools to accurately identify students' reading levels, use evidence to inform teaching practice and lesson planning, monitor students' reading achievement and progress over time, implement consistent assessment practices within and between schools, and capture data for school review and community feedback.*

- Teachers express a strong commitment to every student's success, to improving levels of achievement and wellbeing, to providing a safe and caring educational environment for every learner, and a willingness and desire to invest in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- There is an eagerness among all leaders, teachers and staff to learn from the research of the 10 Essential Literacy Practices.[3]

- Families indicate an expressed desire to be an active part of the school.

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[3] *Research suggests that the 10 practices form a framework that educators can put to use right away in a variety of classroom settings to have a positive impact on literacy development.*

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

- There are detailed and up-to-date data walls prominently displayed in the teacher meeting room and the principal's office. These show every student's current PM Benchmark in reading and the learners in the Response to Need[4] program. Teachers and leaders constantly reference these data walls.

- Data showing progress in student learning in reading (and occasionally writing and wellbeing) are referred to in the fortnightly professional learning team (PLT) meetings for each year level. PLT meetings are led by one of the executive leadership team and the year-level team analyses the data through the spiral of inquiry.

- There is a detailed annual schedule for the collection of wellbeing and academic data which includes lines of responsibility and accountability.

- Each leader regularly performs data analysis to inform decision making across the school and individuals as part of their role description.

- A range of leaders is responsible for the analysis of different aspects of the school's data collection. Areas for growth identified include: building capability to enable tracking of learning progressions in every learning area from Preschool to Year 6 (P-6); and using data more effectively to identify appropriate professional learning to support the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

- The school collects survey data from parents and carers and students on an annual basis. Teachers are beginning to use the Classroom Connectedness survey data in their responses to students in the classes on a regular basis.

- Appropriate software is used to analyse various data sets, with training support provided by key ACT ED staff.

- As well as data being discussed in PLT meetings every week (different year levels alternate each week) and in the weekly leadership meeting, relevant data are also discussed at the P-6 school engagement team meeting, on student-free days and in Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)[5] team meetings.

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[4] *This is Ngunnawal Primary School's interpretation of Response to Intervention: **a process used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson. E**very teacher will use interventions (a set of teaching procedures) with any student to help them succeed in the classroom – not just for children with special needs or a learning disability.*
[5] *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a **whole-school framework that promotes positive behaviour across year levels and helps schools develop safe and supportive learning environments**.*

- Wellbeing discussions happen at a whole-school level where trends, patterns across the school and concerns are highlighted. The details of wellbeing and achievement data for individual students and cohorts of students are discussed at year-level PLTs.

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
- The staff display a strong commitment to and understanding of PBL. The successful embedding of this program has enabled and entrenched positive and caring relationships to achieve successful learning and respectful interaction across all members of the school community.

- The work of the Early Years engagement officer and the P-6 school engagement team in building positive connections, both within the school and into the school community, has been pivotal to the creation of a warm and welcoming environment, where mutually respectful relationships are the norm.

- It is evident that there is an inclusive and caring atmosphere. Parents state that their children feel well cared for.

- Using Seesaw[6] and a range of other communication tools, including Classroom Connectedness, the school fosters an interactive educational partnership with parents. Children and teachers report that the use of Seesaw to share teaching programming details and student work samples is critical in connecting parents with student learning.

- A comprehensive and sensitive consultation process with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has led to the creation of icons for the PBL initiative, using Indigenous art and language. This has fostered a lasting connection with this group of parents.

- The school has structures, policies and procedures that enable academic and non-academic supports to be provided to students with individual needs. This has been nurtured through a range of programs and leadership support.

- The school values students' varying backgrounds through a strong focus on cultural integrity that is visibly evident in the Story Poles at the entrance to the school. Cultural integrity is embedded in the work of the leadership team and through the 8 Ways of Learning[7] that is used to inform planning of learning units, Koori Preschool and the Indigenous education officer.

- Parents are positive about the way the school has made Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education "everyone's business" by including all students in cultural and

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[6] *Seesaw is a platform for student engagement and communication. Teachers can empower students to create, reflect, share, and collaborate. Students "show what they know" using photos, videos, drawings, text, PDFs and links.*
[7] *This Aboriginal pedagogy framework is expressed as eight interconnected pedagogies involving narrative-driven learning, visualised learning processes, hands-on/reflective techniques, use of symbols/metaphors, land-based learning, indirect/synergistic logic, modelled/scaffolded genre mastery, and connectedness to community.*

educational opportunities. The continuity of meaningful relationships between students and teachers is identified as enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage effectively with education.

- The school has deliberately invested in the creation of an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The purchase of ergonomic and flexible-use furniture and the creation of a range of engaging and functional outside spaces are referenced by students as creating a more engaging learning environment.

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
- Leaders, teachers and staff who are given specific roles and responsibilities have expertise and are offered training to make sure that their time and the allocated funding are used effectively and directed towards improving learning outcomes for students.

- The school intentionally allocates time and discretionary funding to three part-time EAL/D teachers, specialist teachers, a leader with responsibility for community liaison, a youth worker, an Indigenous support officer, a library technician, and learning support assistants to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of students.

- The ACT Department of Education has appointed a psychologist. The school is working with the psychologist to use their time as a key member of the P-6 school engagement team to liaise with families and to directly address the wellbeing and learning needs of students in the classrooms.

- The new buildings, furniture and arrangement of spaces within the school are designed to meet the wellbeing and learning needs of a range of students.

- Class displays, books and manipulatives and other resources are purchased and used with purpose by students, teachers, staff and leaders.

- PBL has been implemented and embedded across the school. This program is enhanced by Response To Need (RTN) and the P-6 school engagement team.

- The P-6 school engagement team responds in a timely manner to students with identified learning needs referred to them from the PLT spiral of inquiry process and directly from teachers.

- The RTN policy and process underpins the work of teachers in classrooms and the Learning Support Unit (LSU) to meet the identified learning needs of students.

- The embedded and published behavioural and wellbeing policies and procedures focus on improving the environment for learning. They are further enhanced by prominent displays around the school and the common language used by students, teachers, staff and parents.

- Considerable staff time, funding and intellectual investment are invested in a variety of targeted school-community partnerships that meet the learning and wellbeing needs of students and families in the school community.

- There is a school-wide EAL/D program with designated staffing, with a variety of teaching and learning strategies and approaches for students requiring additional support for learning English.

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor
The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

Findings

- School leaders are driven to ensure the development of teaching staff, enabling high levels of knowledge and skill to improve student outcomes.

- The development of the school PLT meetings are successful in narrowing staff capabilities and focus toward student learning outcomes.

- Leaders support teams of teachers to operate as PLTs, where teachers have regular opportunities to collaboratively plan, share, practise and discuss student progress. PLT conversations are framed by guiding questions that encourage staff to consider: what they want students to know; how they will know if they are learning successfully; and how they will respond if students do not achieve the learning goal or need to be extended.

- Staff consistently identify support, collaboration and collegiality as strengths of the school in the creation of an expert teaching team.

- School leaders see the development of staff as central to improving student outcomes, as evidenced through the PLT structure, the new educator program and the feedback and observation process.

- For several years, professional learning has remained focused on the school priorities of reading and wellbeing, enabling the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning outcomes.

- Best practice in teaching and learning is modelled and showcased, formally and informally, through professional learning days, feedback, PLTs and the deliberate and careful construction of teaching teams.

- Teachers express satisfaction and indicate that high levels of professional growth occur due to the observation and feedback process.

- Teacher performance and development plans are aligned to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) classroom practice continuum (CPC). School leaders work alongside staff to identify a starting point on the continuum, with progress identified through the established feedback and observation process.

- The school has established a formal induction program to support early-career teachers and experienced teachers new to the school. This involves the use of the CPC to set goals, lesson observations (twice a semester), feedback on practice and the provision of a mentor for early-career teachers.

- Meeting protocols and standing agenda items, as well as the time set aside in these weekly meetings to share practice, reflect on student progress, and plan and refine the

curriculum, enable success and lead to improved student outcomes.

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
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curriculum, enable success and lead to improved student outcomes.

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
- School leaders are driven to ensure the development of teaching staff, enabling high levels of knowledge and skill to improve student outcomes.

- The development of the school PLT meetings are successful in narrowing staff capabilities and focus toward student learning outcomes.

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NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor
The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

Findings

- The leadership team has a stated and demonstrated belief and understanding that effective teaching will improve student learning.

- The leadership team is united in its understanding that research-based teaching and learning will improve outcomes for students.

- The leadership team has distributed roles and responsibilities that focus on supporting teachers to target improvements in student learning.

- Each of the leaders has an instructional role to actively participate in the classrooms of their team members.

- The leadership team has made a considered, evidence-based decision to spend a significant amount of time in classrooms on a regular basis.

- Students and parents acknowledge the visibility and accessibility of every member of the leadership team and the part they play in each child's education.

- The leaders provide regular feedback to teachers regarding the effectiveness of their teaching with reference to wellbeing and achievement data which are gathered, analysed and discussed on a regular basis.

- Teachers value the support and leadership that they receive and acknowledge the positive effect that this is having on their professional development and personal wellbeing and on student wellbeing and learning.

- Teachers refer to PBL, Reading Workshop,[8] 10 Effective Practices for Literacy, 8 Ways to Teach, and the spiral of inquiry as practices that are effective in their teaching and student learning of literacy and reading in particular.

- Classrooms display evidence of each of the practices adopted by the school. Parents and students acknowledge improvements in wellbeing, behaviour and reading as direct results of those practices being embedded.

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[8] *Reading Workshop comprises three components that work together to allow children to be taught skills, strategies, and behaviours that will help them grow as readers. Its structure supports children's development because it incorporates demonstration, guided practice and individual practice. The lesson structure enables the full enactment of the gradual release of responsibility across a reading lesson.*

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
- Every one of the school's many partnerships is targeted toward the wellbeing and learning needs of students and their families.

- Partnerships are strategically established through the P-6 school engagement team and RTN to address identified student needs. They operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within Ngunnawal Primary.

- There is clear evidence that practices within partnerships are regularly evaluated. Those evaluations are documented. Practices have been modified based on the evaluations.

- Students and families acknowledge and celebrate being active in the partnerships and speak highly of the resultant benefits to students' wellbeing and learning outcomes.

- The school allocates dedicated leadership and staff time and funding to maintaining, sustaining and regularly evaluating each of the partnerships.

- Each of the partnerships is integral to and contributes positively towards ongoing learning and wellbeing outcomes of students across the whole school. The partnerships are embedded as part of school culture.

- The childcare and after-school partnerships respond directly to the identified social and emotional wellbeing needs of the community of Ngunnawal Primary and have become part of the regular schedule and culture.

- Families and students are actively involved in the planning, development and ongoing evaluation of each partnership in which they participate.

- The established partnerships have contributed to the changed perception of the school in the Ngunnawal community and to awareness of cultural differences and needs among students and families.

Commendations

Ngunnawal Primary School is commended for:

- Applying its resources – using system funding for priority groups and individual students and discretionary funds in a targeted manner – to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students.

- Deliberately planning and managing the allocation of teacher, staff and leader time and expertise to meet the wellbeing and learning needs of students. These are directed to the explicit improvement agendas of reading and wellbeing.

- Intentionally adopting PBL and RTN as programs and policies to address the range and variety of wellbeing, behavioural and learning needs of enrolled students.

- Having school-wide EAL/D policies and procedures supported by three part-time teachers to address the learning needs of an increasing number of LBOTE students.

- Having a distributed leadership model where the roles and responsibilities of each leader are clearly defined and the focus is on research-based, effective teaching practices.

- Providing time for school leaders to be actively involved in the classrooms of teachers they lead.

- Having leaders who regularly use data to inform their leadership of teachers with the focus on improving and progressing student learning.

- Having a range of strategically established and evidence-based partnerships which address the identified wellbeing and learning needs of students and their families.

- Having allocated leadership, staffing and funds for the maintenance and sustenance of each school-community partnership.

- Having established documented processes and policies where each partnership is evaluated to monitor the mutual benefits for each partner and the individuals involved.

- The outstanding work of the P-6 student engagement team to create and nurture a positive school culture where all children feel safe, are respected and able to access learning.

- The outstanding work of the Early Years engagement officer to support the work of the wellbeing team through targeted and well-planned partnerships. That enables greater engagement in education for all students.

- The strong focus on cultural integrity, particularly the work in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, stories and culture into school life.

- The development of a school-context Curriculum Framework to prioritise learning and implement a guaranteed curriculum, referencing the Australian Curriculum and enacted through a curriculum-planning template that facilitates the development of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum perspectives.

- The embedding of the 8 Ways of Learning Pedagogical Framework in the curriculum-planning template.

- Enabling leaders and staff who are committed to and can analyse data to gain a clear understanding of current student achievement levels, including priority groups, and how

those levels have changed over time.

- Partnering with families in the implementation of the reading improvement agenda.

- The way in which teachers and staff work collegially and cooperatively within their teams.

- The culture of feedback, which is embedded across the school. This shapes goal setting and is used as evidence of progress towards teacher performance and development.

- The PLT structure which has been successfully established to foster and encourage a year-level shared responsibility for student learning and success.

- A strong culture and belief that all students can learn and improve in wellbeing and reading.

- The range of tailored and sustained interventions in place that are responsive to students' literacy and wellbeing needs. There are well-established mechanisms for students who are below standard for reading, including RTN.

- Highly individualised learning programs that are provided for students in LSUs, offering small-group learning environments that are tailored to the students' academic and wellbeing needs. Students in these programs have opportunities to engage in learning activities within their mainstream class in a way that is flexible and suits the needs of the learner and the preferences of the parent.

- The identification of students for RTN and LSU that includes the process of inclusion support for Tier 2 and 3 levels on the data wall in the principal's office. Referral of these students through the P-6 school engagement team is well understood and data informed.

- The data collected about PBL that is analysed regularly and provided to staff to inform decisions about re-teaching of certain behaviours. These data include a range of different facets such as attendance, behaviour and attitude to learning.

Affirmations

Ngunnawal Primary School is affirmed for:
- Having flexible curriculum, programs and teaching strategies which are being applied across the school to meet the range of individual learning needs found in each classroom.

- Having leaders who provide ongoing feedback about teaching and learning in classrooms through regular meetings, feedback loops and the spiral of inquiry.

- The work of leaders in encouraging creative, engaging and flexible learning spaces through the provision of ergonomic and multi-purpose furniture and innovative outside spaces that have the scope to enable the use of a wide range of effective pedagogies.

- The work that the school has undertaken to develop a consistent approach to the assignment of P grades to students with additional needs.

- The Classroom Connectedness survey that is allowing students to provide more targeted feedback on classroom climate. Teachers are using this survey data to reflect on and inform their practice and its impact on student learning and wellbeing.

- Providing feedback to parents on student learning through parent-teacher nights and academic reports. Feedback is communicated to parents via Seesaw so that they can see examples of learning and qualitative assessment feedback to students.

- Continuing to use multiple sources of data to allow school leaders and teachers to see trends and patterns in relationships between academic and wellbeing progress, as well as monitor improvements.

- Use of learning data by some teachers and in some learning areas to inform day-to-day decisions about teaching and learning in the broader range of subject areas.

- Having some mechanisms in place to extend high-achieving students in a range of learning areas external to the school.

- The design of teaching unit plans which show supported, core and extension learning activities for teachers to select from in response to student readiness for learning.

- Formative assessment which is used to make decisions about next steps for reading and in some other learning areas.

- Communication to parents through the Seesaw platform where samples of student learning activities are posted with a description of the tasks.

Recommendations

- That the school ensures vertical alignment and consistency from P-6 between the written and the enacted curriculum through PLCs.

- That the school builds upon existing data literacy skills and sources to enable tracking of learning progressions in every learning area from P-6.

- That the school uses available data sources to focus future professional learning on curricular strategies, teaching practices and pedagogies that will respond flexibly and creatively to the increasingly diverse range and variety of wellbeing, language and learning needs of the cohorts of students.

- That the school develops deep understandings of concepts and big ideas and the ongoing progress of cross-curriculum perspectives and general capabilities – such as teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving – among leaders, teachers and staff in the first instance and then all students.