



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **Mount Rogers Primary School**

Report of Review, 2021

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## Publication and independent Review Team details

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Date of School Review: 29, 30, 31 March and 01 April 2021

Principal of Review School: Felicity Levett

*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:

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- ACT Review Team members: 1. Jason Walmsley, *Principal of Charles Conder Primary School*  
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Report Date: 01 April 2021

***Report of Review, 2021*** prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate  
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date: 14 April 2021

## 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.

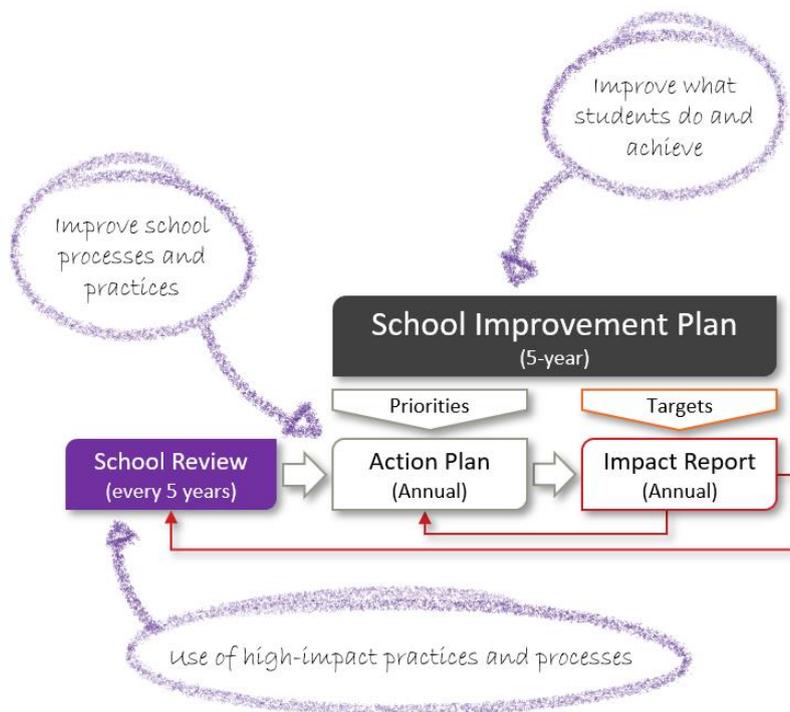
Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school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

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### 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

- The Mount Rogers Primary School Strategic Plan 2017-2021 responds to recommendations of a school review in 2016 and has three strategic priorities: increased percentage of students making expected or above expected growth as measured by Performance Indicators in Primary Schools <sup>1</sup>(PIPS) data and NAPLAN targets; students developing the skills and dispositions of inquiry learners as measured by Kath Murdoch's 'Learning Assets for Inquiry' (years 3-6) and Kathy Walker's Developmental Domains (Kinder - year 2); and improved student mental health, physical well-being, and connectedness with school. Each priority incorporated broad targets. NAPLAN targets were set by the ACT Education Directorate.
- Impact Reports provide evidence of reporting on strategic plan targets over time. During a meeting with the leadership team, members described that they were now more focussed on analysing student growth through school level data rather than the NAPLAN achievement targets set by the system. Therefore, action plans in recent years are, in part, disconnected with the original strategic intent.
- The school is currently focussed on data relating to reading and wellbeing. School monitoring of data is still at an early stage, but the leadership team provided several examples of where analysis of school level data has prompted whole school interventions.
- Annual School Board Reports document the required reporting elements to the school community. School Board members who were on the Board last year, had some understanding of the general data around school performance.
- Annual School Board Reports, Impact Reports, Action Plans, the school Report of Review, and the Strategic Plan are available on the school's website.
- Parents/Carers had limited understanding of the strategic agenda of the school.
- Staff generally described the strategic agenda through the strategies of implementing Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) and the creation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Both these are system supported, evidenced-based strategies. Teachers demonstrated a commitment to improving the reading outcomes of students. They were aware of targets relating to growth indicated through PM Benchmark testing.

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<sup>1</sup> PIPS is now referred to as BASE

## NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

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### Domain descriptor

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

### Findings

- The school has a data collection schedule that is actioned by all teachers.
- The review team evidenced spreadsheets used by teachers and they were able to demonstrate how PM Benchmark and mathematics pre- and post-testing had been used to determine starting points for teaching. This data is stored on Excel software.
- There is evidence that data is presented at staff meetings.
- PBL data of both positive and negative incidents is recorded by staff. In interviews, members of the PBL committee demonstrated how this data was examined every three weeks to determine school focus. Teachers interviewed were concerned by the workload associated in recording the large volume of data.
- The school in association with a senior psychologist from the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Education Directorate implemented a school developed wellbeing survey. As this data is relatively new, analysis of trends at the school level is yet to occur.
- The school collects annual Australian Gifted and Talented (AGAT) and PAT M (Progressive Achievement Tests - Maths) assessments. These data are primarily used to determine students with particular gifts and talents. While some teachers talked about the use of PAT M data to determine student groupings, many teachers wanted more training to use this data more effectively to determine starting points for teaching.
- BASE is collected and now analysed by Professional Learning Teams (PLTs).
- Student reports include teacher evaluation of sub-elements of personal and social capability. Moderation of this data for use as a whole school data set is still to be conducted across the school.
- Analysis of annual parent, staff and student school perception survey data led to the targets in the current strategic plan.
- Parents/Carers had little understanding of school performance in relation to student outcome achievement. They generally described the performance of the school through the type and variety of school programs and their close relationships with staff.

## 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

- In 2018, the school began the systematic implementation of PBL. Across the school PBL RISE (Respect, Inclusion, Safe, Engaged) expectations are displayed and staff and students refer to these expectations in various contexts. A wellbeing room for students has been established and a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) mat is available for use by students during break times.
- Implementation of PBL fully within each classroom is still in progress. Parent/Carer understanding of the PBL expectations varies. PBL data informs the school about focus areas regarding student behaviour.
- Communication across the whole school community are positive and respectful.
- Students, staff and parents/carers conveyed a strong sense of belonging in the school community. Staff feel very supported.
- Some staff would like a continued push to provide clearer communication.
- Staff reported that dealing with disruption takes up some time, with some teachers identifying this as requiring more time than others. While the review team evidenced little disruption to learning in classrooms, students interviewed felt that disruption to learning could still be minimised.
- Students generally felt that they could, at times, be more challenged in their work. The Inquiry and Walker learning approaches adopted by the school aim to provide greater student engagement.
- A staff team is working with an ACT Education Directorate's Indigenous Education Worker to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures into the school curriculum. This work complements a well-used 'Bush Tucker' Garden.
- All staff now use the SeeSaw<sup>2</sup> Application to communicate student learning and class notices. Some staff use SeeSaw to communicate with parents to share activities they can do to support learning at home. Parents appreciated the use of SeeSaw as a way of connecting them to the learning, but many wanted a more consistent approach.
- Many teachers described the collegiate approach fostered by the introduction of a PLC. This allowed more professional interaction at both the whole school and team levels.
- The school's Home School Partnerships Communication Guide describes processes for communication between the school and parents/carers.

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<sup>2</sup> Seesaw is a platform for student engagement and is used as a learning management system

## 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 leadership team have engaged services from the ACT Education Directorate, government health services, various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services, private and government hearing and vision screening services, private and government paediatricians, speech therapists, and the West Belconnen Child and Family Service to enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.
- There has been a significant focus on upgrading learning and administrative spaces to better cater for the needs of an increasing student population.
- In 2019, the school identified a gap in supporting high achieving students and developed a staff position with expertise in this area to begin to collect baseline data using Progressive Achieve Test in Maths (PAT M) and ACER General Ability Test (AGAT).
- At the beginning of 2021, the leadership team reviewed meeting schedules to ensure that time was prioritised for teams to work together to analyse student data.
- The school has numerous Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) supporting physical and learning disabilities within a small group program, and mainstream classrooms. The school has planned for additional LSA support for developing Occupational Violence Risk Assessment (OVRA) plans in 2019-2021 and has developed guidelines for teachers to support LSA's in their roles.
- The school is developing a process to identify students with additional needs and strategies to monitor their progress and evaluate programs to meet individual student needs.
- Identified students have Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) written with parents and implemented from K-6.
- Highly gifted year 6 students have an opportunity to participate in the Magellan program<sup>3</sup> run by Melba Copland Secondary School, which is a local high school.
- Teachers are responsible for identifying and catering for the needs of English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) students.
- The physical spaces in K-2 are designed to cater for the Walker learning approach<sup>4</sup>.
- Loose part play is supported by equipment in the playground.

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<sup>3</sup> The Walker Learning Approach an evidence-based pedagogy that provides a unique balance between the children being active participants in their learning and explicit instruction. It uses play-based learning, investigative learning, and inquiry-based learning as key educational tools.

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- Some furniture has been designed to support differentiated teaching and learning. However, some teachers mentioned that they would like further training on the use of multi classroom spaces.
- Technology is available and is used primarily to support inquiry research.

## 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

- The school has built a school-wide team of highly experienced teachers who have a variety of skill sets. The leadership team are seen as supportive of the day-to-day practice and learning of teachers.
- The school undertakes professional learning activities over a 3-week rotation of professional learning, staff meeting and whole school PLT.
- School leaders recruit staff to align with school priorities. School leaders with expertise in PLCs and teachers with skills in inquiry and Walker learning approaches have been recruited for the school.
- The leadership team uses the emerging PLC strategy to assist teachers to develop and share deep understandings of how students learn. PLTs have provided an opportunity for staff to engage in professional discussion focussed on teaching and learning.
- Early childhood qualified teachers are well placed in the junior school.
- Staff are committed to continuous improvement and the school's explicit improvement agenda. Teachers are engaged with, and supportive of the emerging work in PLTs focussed on improving student reading.
- There are processes in place for year level teaching teams to collaborate and plan in meaningful ways. Team leaders collaborate with classroom teachers during Planning and Collaboration Time (PACT) to work on shared approaches and to develop consistency within the team.
- The principal engages in principal-to-principal mentoring relationships.
- The PACT team are in the early stages of participating in collegial observations to further develop their expertise.
- Established practices for providing observations, feedback, coaching, and mentoring are yet to be designed or implemented. Teachers articulate that they would welcome opportunities to observe colleagues, participate in mentoring and/or coaching relationships and receive regular feedback on their teaching practice.
- All staff are expected to develop a professional development or a performance management plan with their team leader.
- Teachers are given the opportunity to take on leadership roles in teams such as PBL and PLC advocates. Other staff lead various operational aspects of the school.

## NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

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### Domain descriptor

*The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.*

### Findings

- The leadership team have taken steps to develop a 'Guaranteed Curriculum' for English and mathematics in PLTs to provide vertical alignment for curriculum, assessment, and reporting.
- Spence, Melba and Flynn Preschools are held in high regard by the community. The three preschools are managed by and feed into Mount Rogers Primary School. All sites currently celebrate exceeding ratings across all domains of the National Quality Standards which recognise the high calibre of learning provided in all three preschools.
- Students in K-2 are provided with authentic learning experiences through the Walker Learning approach. Walker Learning aims to develop student social, emotional, and oral language skills as they develop their understanding of English and mathematics curriculum outcomes. The review team observed students being provided with the opportunity to learn through play and active investigation using concrete, hands-on, authentic materials, and resources. In years 3 and 4 the curriculum is delivered through Engagement Matters - Walker learning.
- In years 5 and 6, students are exposed to the Kath Murdoch inquiry process.
- Across the school there is an expectation of a wider 'inquiry' process. The review team observed that in general the inquiry was teacher directed.
- Specialist teachers deliver the curriculum in science, arts, Mandarin, sustainability, library, and digital technology. The use of specialist teachers varies across the year levels.
- In some areas of the school an attempt has been made to address the personal, social and emotional capability through health education and the inquiry process.
- The school has composite classes from year 1 to 6.

## 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

- Teachers and leaders recognise that students are at different stages in their learning and progress at different rates. The school holds the belief that all students can learn, and every child should have the opportunity to learn.
- Grouping is the key differentiation strategy used across the school, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics. Some teachers place students in small groups within and across classes to support individual learning needs.
- Across the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, some teachers use in-class assessments including pre-tests to determine groupings and to identify starting points for teaching.
- Year 5 and 6 students were able to describe the rubrics in research projects to provide an understanding of the levels of achievement required.
- Students expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with the level of challenge and extension they experience in their classes.
- LSAs work in classrooms with individual students or small groups as directed by the classroom teacher to support students' additional learning, wellbeing and/or behavioural needs. LSAs mentioned that further training would support their effectiveness in this role.
- Teachers consult with families to develop ILPs and to document reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of individual students.
- Teachers participate in PLTs to monitor the progress of students and to adjust their teaching in response to student progress in the area of reading.
- SeeSaw is used in varying ways across the school. Some K-2 teachers use SeeSaw to provide information to families about where students are in their learning and what they might do to support their child's further learning.
- The school has yet to articulate a systematic approach to differentiation that provides appropriate challenge for all.
- Parents are provided with some information on student progress and achievement through written reports, parent interviews and SeeSaw.

## 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 introduction of PBL across the school has helped to establish positive relationships with students as a foundation for successful teaching and learning.
- The school has three key curriculum delivery approaches: The Walker Learning Model in Kindergarten – Year 2; Engagement Matters – Walker Learning Years 3 and 4; and Kath Murdoch’s Inquiry in Years 5 and 6. These approaches rely on specific pedagogical practices. However, there is inconsistent understanding and application of these practices.
- Elements of the Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expand Vocabulary (CAFE) pedagogical approach to reading are established in most classrooms across the school. Teachers make adjustments to the model based on the students in their class.
- In 2019 all K-2 staff participated in professional learning on the 10 Essential Literacy Practices delivered by Christine Topfer and Instructional Mentors from the School Improvement team. K-2 teachers use selected Essential Literacy Practices to guide literacy instruction in the early years.
- PLTs are beginning to discuss teaching practice after analysing data to establish more consistent pedagogical approaches.
- Students relate differing experiences, levels of challenge, and quality of feedback depending on the teacher. Student understanding varied about what they are learning, why they are learning it and the steps they need to take to improve.
- In meetings, the leadership team outlined their plan to establish a consistent set of school-wide pedagogies.

## 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 leadership team has established many 'partnerships' to support student outcomes, however these tend to be more opportunistic rather than planned strategic relationships.
- The school has a connection with its local high school, Melba Copland Secondary School. The secondary school offers year 5 and 6 students with opportunities to participate in a variety of educational programs. These include the Magellan STEM program that provides a pathway of extension for selected students.
- The school also has a 'partnership' with St Paul's local church to run a weekly breakfast club to support the most vulnerable families to have a great start to the day. The partnership is reciprocated through an annual 'giving tree' event.
- The school has 'partnered' with Melba Men's Shed to support boys from the senior classes to build Meccano models. This mentoring program provides boys with friendly and positive experiences with older males, having fun constructing Meccano models in a group situation. It also focuses on the skills of perseverance, responsibility, and public speaking.

## Commendations

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- The staff at Mount Rogers Primary School demonstrates a strong commitment to improving student learning with a focus on the school improvement agenda.
- Throughout the school community there is a strong sense of connection which is illustrated in the caring and respectful relationships amongst all key stakeholders.
- Achieving work-life harmony for all staff is a high priority of the leadership team.
- Staff across the school feel their work is recognised and supported.
- There has been focussed and ongoing attention to improving learning and administrative spaces to accommodate expanding enrolments at the school.
- Outdoor environments, particularly in the pre-schools, are inviting and provide enriched opportunities for outdoor play.
- The sustainability program provides a rich context for learning.

## Affirmations

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- The leadership team has worked collaboratively to narrow the focus of the improvement agenda for all staff.
- Teachers express strong engagement with the improvement agenda of the school.
- The leadership team has implemented a considered approach to establishing a PLC. Staff now actively engage in discussion and use data to inform improvements in student learning, particularly in reading.
- There are clear expectations for student behaviour across the school and this has helped create a safe and supportive school environment.
- School leaders provide opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles beyond the classroom.
- Teachers have collaborated to identify a 'guaranteed curriculum' in many areas across the school.
- The school has implemented a system to identify gifted students.
- Teachers are beginning to use SeeSaw to describe to families where children are at and what they can do to support their child's learning.
- Teachers are working to refine pedagogical practices to support both inquiry and investigation.
- The school is working with external 'partners' to support and enhance student learning opportunities.

## Recommendations

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- Collaboratively develop a Mount Rogers Primary School Strategic 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, by incorporating explicit targets for student achievement that are well communicated to the school community. Progress towards targets should be monitored and initiatives and programs systematically evaluated for their effectiveness in producing the desired improvements in student academic and/or wellbeing outcomes.

- Build upon the school's assessment schedule and develop a data plan that clearly outlines the purpose for the data at the school, team and/or individual student level, and incorporates the full range of academic and wellbeing data. Build leadership and staff data literacy skills.
- Develop agreed processes to identify students with additional needs, develop strategies to support those needs, monitor student progress, and evaluate strategies.
- Develop and implement a professional learning plan that continues to build the professional learning community and provides individualised arrangements for professional learning, classroom observation, mentoring and coaching.
- Continue to develop 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. Explore ways of making the general capabilities and cross curricular priorities explicit in the curriculum. In particular, seek ways to use the Personal and Social Capabilities to drive improvement in student wellbeing and the Critical and Creative Thinking Capabilities to drive higher order thinking.
- Continue to develop staff capacity to cater for individual learning needs by offering multiple ways for students to engage with and express their learning.
- Define common expectations of teaching and learning that are grounded in evidence-based research.
- Develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent of the school.