



ACT
Government
Education

LYONS EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOL

Review Report 2017

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Introduction: Overview of the External School Review process

As part of the Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory are required to participate in an External School Review every five years. This document captures the findings of the External Review Panel during this cycle of school review.

In broad terms the panel sought to determine, through evaluation against the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

The external review was conducted over two days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including desktop review, observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the NSIT to inform the affirmations, commendations and recommendations for this school improvement cycle.

Section A: School context

Lyons Early Childhood School provides an education setting for students from birth to eight years of age. The school's vision is for every child to thrive as they discover, imagine, question, challenge, create and expand their thinking and understanding of themselves and their world. Play pedagogy informs teaching and learning, and the motto 'Work hard, Play Hard, Be Kind' supports the school's culture and practice. Opportunities are provided for the development of the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language domains of each student.

The school is in its ninth year of operation and currently delivers education services to 139 families from 28 suburbs. Enrolments have increased each year from opening to February 2014. There has been a slight decline each year since mid-2014. Some children leave the school in the same year as their sibling in year 2 because it is more convenient for families to have their children in the same school. Fifty-two per cent of families access the long day care and out of hours school care on-site that is provided through the school's integrated services model.

The student population is linguistically and culturally diverse, with families bringing cultural heritage from 36 countries. Thirty-two language backgrounds are reflected across the school and the percentage of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (preschool to year 2) as increased across the life of the plan.

The current principal was appointed in 2008. During this school improvement cycle, the preschool to year 2 staffing profile has included new educators and contract, temporary and part time teachers. At least 50 per cent of teachers have had less than five years of experience across kindergarten to year 2. There have been changes in the senior leadership team and a high proportion of staff accessing extended leave. In 2017 the school has experienced its first permanently appointed leadership team, and the staffing profile brings a balance of substantial experience in preschool to year 2 classrooms, play pedagogy, literacy and school leadership.

Section B: School performance

The staff at Lyons Early Childhood School reviews school and individual student performance using Performance Indicators for Primary School (PIPS) for Reading and Mathematics, parent and staff perception data captured through annual School Satisfaction Surveys, school-based surveys and a range of diagnostic tools.

PIPS data from 2013–2016 reflects performance that is consistently below Australian Capital Territory (ACT) raw scores in Reading. However, from 2014 to 2015 there was a slight increase in the percentage of kindergarten to year 2 students achieving within the expected range for Reading. Across 2013–2015 less than 50 per cent of students achieved expected or better progress in end of year PIPS results (Reading). There was significant improvement from 2015–2016 with an increase to 73 per cent. With the exception of the 2013 kindergarten cohort, the percentage of students achieving expected benchmarks in Reading increased as students moved through year levels.

PIPS Mathematics data reflects performance of just below ACT Mean raw scores in 2013–2016. From 2015–2016 the school significantly improved the percentage of students with expected or better growth.

The proportion of parents and carers in agreement with each National Opinion item within the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey is comparable to all Early Childhood Schools data except for how behaviour is managed. There has been a decline in the number of parents believing student behaviour is well managed. However, the panel observed calm and productive classrooms and positive interactions between staff and students with complex behavioural needs.

The proportion of staff who agree that they receive useful feedback about their work and have their opinions taken seriously has increased significantly from 2015–2016. Data from this period also reflects strengthening teacher perceptions regarding the school's focus on improved consultation and communication.

Attendance rates have been relatively consistent at the school (between 90 and 95 per cent) except for kindergarten and year 2 in 2014.

Evidence cited

- Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) 2013–2016
- Reading Benchmark data 2013–mid 2017
- System Satisfaction Survey data (Parents and Carers 2013–2016, Staff 2015–2016)
- School Assessment Tracking data.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority areas

Lyons Early Childhood School identified two priorities in its Strategic Plan 2014–2017, having reflected upon student learning data in the previous planning cycle and the recommendations of the 2013 External Validation Report. These are to:

- improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy
- embed a culture of high quality early childhood pedagogy across birth to eight years.

In support of these priority areas, the school leadership team identified the following key improvement strategies:

- develop a culture of data collection, analysis and planning for future directions across P-2 learning and teaching
- design and implement an explicit coaching and mentoring program that supports teacher capacity building
- develop the capacity of the birth to eight leadership team to drive improvement
- implement a literacy and numeracy support plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified students
- develop a strategic leadership model that supports the birth to eight
- environment
- design and embed formative assessment practices into K-2 learning and teaching
- implement relationship building practices across the school community to support safety and wellbeing of all students
- embed a culture of reflective practice across learning and teaching.

Annual Operating Plans translated the key improvement strategies into staged actions.

Achievements

The school executive team identified the need to develop a more targeted approach to school improvement for this planning cycle and established Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) led by instructional leaders to drive the school's agenda. These teams have been used as the vehicle to develop the capability of teachers in teaching literacy and numeracy using high quality early childhood pedagogical approaches. The panel found evidence of a continuous thread of improvement intent through this approach.

Leaders meet regularly with teachers in their teams, engaging them in robust discussions about student performance. The panel found evidence of a culture of data use in the curriculum areas of English and Mathematics. Protocols and systematic meeting structures enable rigorous and rich analysis of classroom data, shared planning, and moderation of work samples. A Disciplined Dialogue underpins conversations in these team meetings. Weekly data collection and analyses inform learning and teaching. An Assessment Schedule and online tracking system has been developed and refined during the life of the 2014–2018 School Plan and supports a systematic approach to monitoring learning.

Curriculum planning also occurs in these teams. The school has implemented a whole of school approach using Understanding by Design (UbD) as a framework. An external

consultant has supported this work across the life of the plan resulting in improved teacher confidence and capability in the relevant and rigorous implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The panel found evidence of detailed UbD plans aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

An intentional professional learning focus in Literacy has engaged teachers in inquiries into research informed practices to build their knowledge in this field. The school has invested in the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALLs) initiative. Focused literacy blocks and a number of strategies including use of best fit books, reading and writing workshops and Readalouds have been incorporated into the school's approach to the teaching of literacy. A whole of school approach to the teaching of Mathematics has also been implemented and teachers have been supported in building their capacity to use evidence-based teaching strategies. Focused numeracy blocks have also been introduced.

A culture of collaboration and reflective practice is evident in PLT meetings and this has supported staff in establishing a shared purpose, protocols and accountability. The executive team has engaged in professional learning about coaching to support them in the facilitation of professional reading, action research, cycles of observation and reflective dialogue with teachers. This focus has resulted in shared professional language and alignment of intentional practice. A formalised peer observation and feedback process is being implemented to further strengthen a professional learning culture.

Teachers use formative assessment tools to inform planning, and provide explicit feedback routinely to students, colleagues and families, through learning letters, semester reports, communication books, and Learning Passports that highlight 'polishers' and 'keepers'. The panel noted the significant value teachers and parents hold in the informal conversations that they share during supervised drop off and pick up times.

The school has implemented relationship building practices, to improve the quality of early years pedagogy and support the wellbeing and safety of all students. Teachers model and explicitly teach the '7Cs' dispositions that support wellbeing and agency of all members of the learning community.

The influence of the Early Years Learning Framework and the school's continuing commitment to play pedagogy is evident in the explicit expectations of teachers, timetabling of loose parts play, out-of-the-gate experiences, play by design opportunities, and access to materials and environments. UbD planning has become a springboard for play, and the school has developed strategies for measuring student learning through lenses of cognitive, social, emotional, physical and language domains.

The school set achievement targets in the number of students:

- achieving at or above expected benchmarks for each year level in Reading (100%)
- in kindergarten achieving at least expected growth in PIPs (100%)
- showing growth in A to E scores from semester one to two (100%)
- achieving their individual maths and reading goals (100%).

Following reflection by the Principal and leadership team, two of these targets were adjusted for the 2015 and 2016 years.

Key indicators for the school's priority of improving literacy and numeracy (PIPS and Reading Benchmarks) suggest that whilst the school has not met many of its targets, from 2015–

2016 the school significantly improved the percentage of students with expected or better growth in Reading and Mathematics. The panel reflected with the school's leadership team that careful consideration of setting meaningful and incremental targets based on a thorough analysis of current student performance for the next planning cycle will be important.

Reflections

Lyons Early Childhood School leaders have paid particular attention to the challenges and opportunities inherent in progressing their improvement agenda. The school staffing profile across the life of the plan, characterised by a significant number of new educators, staff on extended leave and changes to the leadership team has presented a challenge. The leadership team has identified the impact of staff transience on progress towards embedding quality early childhood pedagogy. Staff change has meant continuous orientation of new team members to the school's philosophy and practices. However, the panel noted the significantly positive impact the PLT model has had on many aspects of the school's intent to create an expert teaching team and a positive learning culture. The PLTs have become important forums for building teacher capacity through common planning and assessment, supported accountability through rigorous discussion of student performance, and enabled the sharing of practice, coaching and feedback.

The panel noted that the improvement plan was broad in its intent and characterised by a suite of key actions for improvement. Whilst the two core priorities remained consistent throughout the life of the plan, a very broad range of initiatives and new programs emerged in subsequent annual action plans and a clear alignment between each of these actions and the two priorities was not always obvious. The challenge for the School Leadership team in the development of the next Strategic Plan and subsequent plans will be to narrow and sharpen the focus for improvement.

Evidence cited

- External Validation Report (2013)
- Lyons Early Childhood Strategic Plan 2014–2017
- Annual Operating (and Action) Plans 2014–2017
- Annual School Board Reports 2014–2017
- Professional Conversations 2017
- School Performance Data
- Parent Letter to the Panel
- Observations of Professional Learning Teams
- Understanding by Design Curriculum Plans.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

School leaders attended professional learning about the National School Improvement Tool and subsequently led the school community in reflective discussions. A collective

evaluation, using individual, classroom, team and whole-school evidence, identified strengths in each domain.

National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda

- *The school has developed an agenda for improvement and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*
- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from research evidence, international experience and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g. not accompanied by timelines).*
- *The communication of performance data to the school community tends to be sporadic and/or is limited only to information that the school is required to report.*

Comments and findings

- The School's Strategic Plan (2013–2017) identifies two key strategic priorities: improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy; and embed a culture of high quality early childhood pedagogy across birth to eight years. These two priorities have remained the focus across the life of the plan, evidenced in annual action plans. Plans contain targets for improvement.
- Parents identify literacy and numeracy as the key areas for improvement and readily identify whole of school targets.
- The school has engaged external advice and worked with local universities to find ways to improve on current student outcomes.
- The school leadership team has analysed school performance data over the life of the plan.
- School leaders ensure the key improvement areas of literacy and numeracy remain a focus through regular team (PLT) meetings.

DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data

- *Data are used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning, to monitor improvement over time and to monitor growth across the years of school. A high priority has been given to professional development aimed at building teachers' and leaders' data literacy skills.*
- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders view reliable and timely student data as essential to their effective leadership of the school.*

- *Time is set aside (e.g. on pupil free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data and the implications of data for school policies and classroom practices. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels. The school can illustrate through case studies, meeting minutes and project plans how data have been used to identify priorities, take action and monitor progress.*

Comments and findings

- Lyons Early Childhood School uses a wide range of assessment tools to monitor student progress in literacy and numeracy. School performance in literacy, numeracy, stakeholder satisfaction and attendance is reported on annually.
- PIPS raw scores data for Reading and Mathematics have remained below those of the ACT during the life of the plan.
- From 2015 to 2016, the percentage of students achieving at least 12 months growth in Reading and Mathematics has improved significantly.
- Teachers, in their PLTs, engage in sophisticated conversations about English and Mathematics data and can describe how they use this data to reflect on their practice and plan to meet the needs of their students.
- A school plan for the annual collection of data on student achievement and wellbeing is yet to be developed.
- The leadership team is developing whole of school assessment tracking tools to support data analysis.

DOMAIN 3: A culture that promotes learning

- *Staff morale is sustained at a high level. There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.*
- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems and behaviour management takes up very little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully, in their own ways and at their own pace. Individual talents are valued. Class 'busy work' is kept to a minimum, and an attempt is made to ensure that all students are engaged in challenging, meaningful learning.*
- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact and in the language they use in both formal and informal settings.*
- *Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. There are agreed guidelines on such matters as greeting visitors, taking messages, and responding to queries promptly and respectfully.*

Comments and findings

- School leaders and teachers understand the importance of positive and caring relationships, in an early childhood setting, to successful learning. Parents articulate that staff know their children well and provide quality care and learning.
- The school places a high priority on building a sense of belonging for all children birth to eight years.
- The school's ethos and culture are reflected in the '7Cs' underpinning dispositions. These dispositions support the school's strong focus on social and emotional learning and ways to think successfully. These dispositions are explicitly taught and modelled by staff.
- Through a play-based approach to learning, students are encouraged to learn in their own ways and at their own pace.
- Documented procedures and practices for recognising positive behaviour and responding to inappropriate behaviour are evident.
- Staff work collegially within a learning environment that is respectful and highly inclusive.
- Parents express a very high degree of confidence in the Principal and teachers and the school's approach to learning.
- Teachers reported that they receive strong professional support from their colleagues and leaders, particularly through being a part of a PLT.
- Partnerships with family is a priority for Lyons. A dedicated school community support officer position supports effective parental communication and engagement.

DOMAIN 4: Targeted use of school resources

- *The principal and other school leaders have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the school and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.*
- *The school has developed processes (e.g. systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs, although there may not always be good school records of student achievement and progress.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs (e.g. programs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students for whom English is a second language, Indigenous students, refugees) are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*
- *Physical spaces are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*

Comments and findings

- Lyons Early Childhood School is committed to providing an inclusive education.
- The school's approach to identifying student need is underpinned by the Response to Intervention model.
- The school has developed and implemented an Assessment schedule.
- A process for referring students for support has been formalised. All teachers meet regularly with the leadership team to discuss the academic progress and wellbeing of every child and any emerging needs.
- Twenty students have been identified for Individual Learning plans and these have been developed in partnership with families.
- The school has allocated significant resources to support professional learning for the strategic priority of embedding high quality early childhood pedagogy.
- Students and families with English as an Additional Language receive support to meet their needs.
- The use of learning technologies as an integral part of the school has been raised by both parents and staff alike in satisfaction surveys as an area for improvement. Physical learning spaces (both indoor and outdoor) are used creatively and effectively. Considerable resources have been allocated to support the school's programs in outdoor learning, loose parts play and other play-based learning activities.

DOMAIN 5: An expert teaching team

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.*
- *The school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff who find it difficult to commit to the school's improvement agenda.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*
- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues, although there may not be formal mentoring or coaching arrangements in place.*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*

Comments and findings

- The development of teacher capability has been a priority across the life of the Strategic Plan. Considerable professional learning is aligned to school priorities. Teacher development in teaching Literacy and Mathematics; planning using the Understanding by Design model and play-based pedagogies is evident.
- All teachers have developed Professional Pathways Plans, which are aligned to the school's strategic priorities.

- A formalised peer observation and feedback process has been implemented in 2017. Teachers are open to feedback and some are able to describe changes to their practice as a result of the feedback provided.
- PLTs meet regularly and this supports teachers in working collaboratively, and learning from each other's practices.
- The school has engaged an external consultant to mentor and coach teachers in implementing a preschool to year 2 approach to curriculum planning.
- Guidelines for teachers in the Staff Handbook, make explicit the practices expected of them in the classroom during Literacy, Mathematics and play workshops.
- The school supports teachers new to the school through professional learning in the curriculum planning and pedagogical approaches expected at Lyons, although a documented and formalised induction program was not evident.

DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

- *The school's curriculum delivery plan identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements. The curriculum delivery plan reflects a shared vision (by the school's governing body, principal, school leadership team, and teachers) for the school, and provides a context for delivering the curriculum as detailed in the Australian or other approved curriculum and, where relevant, system curriculum documents.*
- *The school curriculum plan and curriculum delivery (including the time allocated to particular learning) balance requirements to address all learning areas, to give priority to English, mathematics and science, and to embed the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking in all school subjects.*
- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers and that the curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed, assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported. Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the range of students within each year level as well as those with disabilities and other particular needs.*

Comments and findings

- The Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework are the reference point for curriculum planning and assessment and reporting.
- A curriculum statement articulating the school's vision for learning has been developed. The Understanding by Design Framework is used to guide curriculum planning. Long- and short-term planning documents are evident.
- In their PLTs, teachers collaboratively discuss, develop and review curriculum planning tools.
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) work samples are used to moderate teacher judgments against the standards.
- An external consultant has been engaged to support the school in implementing Understanding by Design.
- The school's dispositions are used as a vehicle to develop the General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum.

- Teachers are encouraged to implement the curriculum creatively and responsively to meet the needs and interests of the early year learners. However, the leadership team takes responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the school's program through PLT structures.

DOMAIN 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

- *School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. This includes the systematic use of assessment instruments (standardised assessment tasks and teacher developed assessment tools) to establish where individuals are in their learning and to identify skill gaps and misunderstandings. Teachers also are encouraged to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.*
- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided. Students' workbooks also illustrate differentiated tasks and feedback.*
- *Reports to parents show progress over time and include suggestions for ways in which parents can support their children's learning.*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*
- *Reports to parents tend to be summative reports of how students have performed, with little guidance on what parents might do to assist in their children's learning.*

Comments and findings

- Loose parts play, outdoor learning and out-of-the-gate experiences have become critical contexts for differentiated teaching and learning. Teachers describe how these authentic learning environments enable them to activate and cultivate learner dispositions, which transfer into classroom situations.
- Teachers are committed to enabling children to learn in their own way, at their own time. Student choice is a feature of literacy programs across the school. Learners are encouraged to engage with 'best fit' books and identify purposes and forms for writing.
- Disciplined Dialogue protocols are used with skill and effect to identify needs, barriers to learning, support strategies and action plans during PLT meetings. Rigorous data analysis of individual student performance occurs at regular intervals.
- SENA (Schedule for Early Number Assessment) testing is providing a platform for team experimentation with differentiation in Mathematics.

DOMAIN 8: Effective pedagogical practices

- *The principal and other school leaders have accepted personal responsibility for driving improvements in teaching throughout the school. They demonstrate a strong conviction that improved teaching is the key to improved student learning.*

- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and professional learning activities are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies in these areas.*
- *Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, high expectations of every student's learning, explicit teaching of skills and content, individualised attention as required, and timely feedback to guide student action are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

Comments and findings

- PLTs are supported by instructional leadership. These teams are led by school leaders who bring expertise in literacy, numeracy and play pedagogy. Meeting structures, and engagement with critical friends and planning consultants reflect the school's focus on building teacher capability in designing and incorporating effective teaching strategies in these areas.
- Educators at the school apply evidence-based approaches and engage in research through connections with academics from local universities. Members of the leadership team model learning dispositions and contribute to the field of education through postgraduate studies.
- Embedding developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices has been an enduring focus. The school is committed to bridging their responsibilities and accountabilities as a public school in the ACT with the principles and practices inherent in its developmentally appropriate, play-based learning philosophy.
- Timely feedback to students to support learning was evident in student work samples and through teacher conferencing. Students can describe the 'polisher' feedback they receive.
- Students could describe what they were expected to learn. Setting, discussing and reflecting on personal goals and learning intentions is embedded practice.

DOMAIN 9: School-community partnerships

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.*
- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions, local businesses and/or community organisations.*
- *Attention has been given to communication and to the sharing of experiences within the partnership; however, there may be no formal plan for reviewing the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.*
- *There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended.*

- *No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.*

Comments and findings

- An integrated service model is in place to provide a model for education and care from birth to eight years. Agreed practices and procedures for education and care are evident and the care provider and school work on-site in close partnership.
- A memorandum of understanding between Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the school is in place to deliver the URFab early intervention mental health program.
- The school has built a partnership with the Woden Community Service to offer parenting courses, establish a playgroup, access case workers and other services to support families.
- The school has worked closely with the University of Canberra to implement a Maths program and support teachers in delivering it.
- Local residents have established a garden which supports the education experience of students at Lyons Early Childhood School. Students, staff and families access this resource frequently.
- The leadership team has established and regularly accesses a network of experts and critical friends in literacy, numeracy, early childhood pedagogy and curriculum design.
- The Parents and Citizens (P&C) Association is actively working with the Principal to develop ways of strengthening engagement and communication between families and school.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

At Lyons Early Childhood School, in targeted professional discussions around each element of the National Safe Schools Framework (School Audit Tool) teachers identified school strengths and improvements for each area. The school Board also engaged in this process. A supportive and connected school culture and partnerships with families and communities were identified as strengths. The school has identified engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum as areas for further development.

Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

Affirmations

The External Review Panel offers the following affirmations for Lyons Early Childhood School.

1. There is an obvious sense of pride and belonging that parents, staff and students feel towards the school. A respectful, safe and highly inclusive learning environment has been established evidenced by the genuine, positive and caring relationships.
2. A coherent and sequenced plan for curriculum delivery underpinned by the Understanding by Design approach to planning and teaching has been developed. The school has engaged a critical friend to coach teachers and support them in developing and implementing a school based curriculum aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.
3. Teachers are encouraged to pursue areas of interest and curiosity and take on responsibility for key initiatives in the school.
4. A formalised program of peer observation and feedback with clear expectations and protocols is being implemented and teachers are open to constructive feedback.

Commendations

Lyons Early Childhood School is commended for the following.

1. The Lyons Early Childhood School enacts a clear commitment to a student-centred approach to the development of the whole of child. Each child is supported to learn in their own way and at their own pace and take risks, in a rich, engaging and challenging learning environment. A culture of learning underpinned by the '7Cs' dispositions ensures a strong focus on supporting students' social and emotional needs as well as developing in young learners' effective ways to learn.
2. The school has built a strong professional learning community evidenced by the work of Professional Learning Teams that plan together and learn from each other's practice. The School executive lead teachers in disciplined dialogue monitoring student performance, planning and refining the learning and responding to student need. These discussions have supported the development of a strong collegial culture.
3. The school is well served by a highly committed and dedicated, research-engaged staff. Approaches to teaching and learning are founded on theory-based practice and the school has built a strong network of academic advisors who act as coaches/critical friends.
4. Authentic and engaging learning environments, including loose parts play, outdoor learning and out-of-the-gate experiences as well as the school's signature play-based pedagogical practices, have become critical contexts and strategies for differentiated teaching and learning. These environments and play-based approaches support teachers in activating and cultivating learner dispositions.
5. The school capitalises on the agility that its small size affords. Responsiveness to the needs of students is a strong feature of educational practice and resource allocation at the school.

Recommendations

The External Review Panel recommends Lyons Early Childhood School pays attention to the following opportunities for school improvement during the next planning cycle.

1. Determine which data sets (both qualitative and quantitative) will best support the school in assessing the holistic development of a child in their early years of learning. Formalise this in a Data Collection Plan and Timetable. Use this to inform the collaborative development of a narrow and sharp improvement agenda with associated targets. Ensure that this improvement agenda is widely communicated to parents, families, staff and students.
2. Draw together and document the discrete and sophisticated elements of the signature pedagogies of Lyons Early Childhood School to support induction and leading contemporary practice.
3. Formalise tracking processes for curriculum planning to identify and address potential gaps in learning outcomes across all Key Learning Areas and year levels.
4. Regularly review current strategic partnerships to evaluate whether these are having the intended impact in improving outcomes for students, are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school and partnered organisations.
5. Continue to explore and implement creative and flexible approaches to sharing and partnering with parents of early childhood learners.
6. Continue to explore the potential of technology to enhance parent engagement and maximise student learning.

Section F: Record of school review process

The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Lyons Early Childhood School conducted on 18 and 19 July 2017.

Name: Christina Rogers	External Review Panel – Chair
Name: Wendy Cave	External Review Panel – Principal Member Macquarie Primary School
Name: Jenny Loudon	External Review Panel – Principal Observer O’Connor Cooperative School

I, Christina Rogers, as External Review Panel Chair endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the External School Review process.

Signature: 

Date: 28/07/2017

I, Mary Hutchinson, as Principal of Lyons Early Childhood School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Signature: 

Date: 28/07/2017