



ACT
Government
Education

Garran Primary School

Review Report 2017

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Introduction: Overview of the External School Review process

As part of the Australian Capital Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) 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 School Review was conducted over three 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

Garran Primary School is a preschool to year 6 school located in Garran in the South Western network. The school has celebrated 50 years of operation in 2017. It has a current enrolment of 562 students, supported by a staff of 43. School enrolments have been increasing since 2013 and the school is at capacity in terms of its current facilities. Demand for enrolment is high. The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage value has remained consistent for the life of this current plan and well above the average (2015 to 2016). The Priority Enrolment Area has changed for the school and this will have an impact on the enrolment demographics for the school with less families able to enrol from outside of the priority area.

The number of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect has gradually increased to approximately 46 percent of the school population. Thirty-five different nationalities make up the student population. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remained stable.

The school has two preschools, one learning support unit, 18 mainstream classes and seven accelerated learning classes.

The current principal was appointed in term 3 2015. A relieving principal was in place for the first half of the 2015 calendar year. Two new senior leader B appointments were also made in 2015. A significant number of new teachers joined Garran Primary School in 2015. A new strategic plan was developed for 2015–18 in consultation with an education consultant and the school community. Garran Primary school has been reviewed mid-way through its current cycle.

Section B: School performance

Student learning data

Analyses of student learning data from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for Garran Primary School for the review period (2015 and 2016) suggest a school performing well above ACT averages and above, or substantially above, national averages across all domains and points. The school is well within and often above the confidence ranges of jurisdictional targets.

Compared to national mean scores and when controlled for Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage value, Garran students in year 3 in 2016 achieved close to similar schools for numeracy, spelling and writing and above in reading, and grammar and punctuation. Year 5 students achieved below that of their peers in similar schools in all domains but were above, or substantially above, national mean scores. In 2015, for both years 3 and 5, the school's average was substantially above national mean scores in all domains except spelling, which was above the national mean score. Spelling for year 3, and punctuation and grammar for years 3 and 5, were below like-schools.

With reference to the percentage of students in the top two bands of achievement in the 2016 NAPLAN tests, the percentage of students at Garran Primary School achieving high or very high levels of proficiency in all domains is well above the ACT average. When compared to the achievement of peers in like-schools, Garran Primary School students had higher percentages in the top two bands for year 3 in reading, writing and numeracy. In year 5, in 2016, the percentage of students in the top two bands in like-schools was higher for reading, writing and numeracy than Garran Primary School. In 2015, Garran Primary School's performance against ACT schools, in terms of the number of students in the top two bands, is strong. In comparison to like schools, for reading and writing for years 3 and 5, the percentage of students in the top two bands is close to or slightly above like schools and numeracy just above for year 5 and below for year 3.

In relation to student gain between year 3 and year 5 (2014 to 2016), when compared to like schools, growth is slightly less than that for reading, writing and numeracy. For reading, writing and numeracy (2013 to 2015) the growth is comparable with students starting above and finishing above like schools.

Entry-level performance data, described in Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), suggests that students are beginning their formal education journey above the ACT average for both reading and mathematics. The mean raw scores for reading and mathematics for Garran Primary School are substantially higher than that of the ACT average when tested during the respective year of measurement. Growth mean raw scores are consistently above that of the ACT.

Stakeholder perception data

The primary source of stakeholder perception data used at Garran Primary School is the annual stakeholder satisfaction surveys.

Garran Primary School students believe that teachers expect them to do their best. This aligns with a school ethos reflective of high expectations and commitment to excellence. When comparing the proportion of students in agreement with most other national opinion items, Garran Primary School students tend to have slightly lower levels of satisfaction than the ACT average for the 2015 and 2016 surveys. The panel observed happy, engaged and focused students at Garran Primary School who express high levels of satisfaction and pride in their school.

Over the two years, staff reported much higher levels of satisfaction than the ACT average in how well student behaviour is managed at the school, and the feedback they receive about their work. In most other national opinion items, levels of satisfaction, particularly in 2016, are above ACT averages. When comparing the proportion of staff in agreement with each national opinion item from 2015 to 2016, there has been improvement in a number of items. Garran parents and caregivers reported high levels of satisfaction for each national opinion item with significant improvement between 2015 and 2016. Parents articulated high levels of trust in the school's leadership team and staff and equally high levels of satisfaction about how Garran is meeting the needs of their children.

Evidence cited

- School Satisfaction Survey 2015–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- My School website
- Annual Action Plans 2015–17
- School Strategic Plan 2015–18
- Annual School Board Reports 2015–16
- parent, student and staff interviews with the panel.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority areas

Garran Primary School identified five priorities as part of their strategic plan.

- **Priority 1:** To monitor and analyse each student's progress to ensure high expectations are linked to higher performance for all students, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- **Priority 2:** To ensure that staff are equipped to be a confident and skilled workforce that is mature in its operations, communicates well and manages change with professional grace and integrity through full involvement and engagement in developing capacity for setting and achieving high expectations for students and staff.
- **Priority 3:** To implement a program with a clear focus on student health, wellbeing and support.
- **Priority 4:** To develop and support collaborative community partnerships with a clear focus on clarity of rules and effective two-way communication.
- **Priority 5:** To review all major curriculum programs, specialist programs and enrichment activities as part of a regular cycle of quality planning and decision making about future directions.

The priorities were supported by 39 key improvement strategies. The panel noted that a significant number of performance measures (113) were developed for the 2015 Action Plan.

Strategic priority 1: To monitor and analyse each student's progress to ensure high expectations are linked to higher performance for all students, particularly in literacy and numeracy

There were seven performance measures that focused on: establishing agreed whole-school strategies and collaborative practices to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students; using data to inform practice; actively engaging students in their learning and providing them with timely feedback; and students consistently achieving expected growth or better in NAPLAN. All seven performance measures were identified and reported on.

Twenty-five targets were set in 2015 and 19 of these were fully achieved, five were partially achieved and one was deferred to 2016. In 2016, two targets were set, one fully achieved and the other partially achieved.

The resulting improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for students were highlighted by the following:

- A target was for 75 percent of students to achieve at or above expectations as measured in school and system testing and evaluations, and the school achieved well in excess of the 75 percent in all areas. (2015)
- A target was for 75 percent of students in years 3 and 5 to achieve at or above system targets in NAPLAN, and the school achieved in excess of 80 percent. (2015)
- A target was for 90 percent of students in years 3 and 5 to achieve at or above system targets in NAPLAN, and this was achieved. (2016)
- A target was for 90 percent of students in year 5 to demonstrate that the school is effective in adding value to student performance, and 78 percent of students demonstrated this. (2016)

An established literacy committee actively engaged all staff in decisions about whole-school practices in literacy teaching and learning that are evidence based and developed a consistent preschool to year 6 approach. A comprehensive plan for literacy was developed, and this included expected pedagogical practices around the teaching of literacy. This was supported by professional learning and informal mentoring to develop individual teacher capacity. A scope and sequence was developed, supported by a criterion reference tool for writing.

Student learning was supported by teachers developing explicit individual and group learning intentions and success criteria. Students could express to the panel that they understood what they were learning and the purpose of the learning. Students were able to identify what success would look like and were actively involved in the work required to reach the high expected standard. Common assessment tasks were identified for monitoring and reporting student progress in literacy. Staff in preschool to year 6 use a range of data collection models to measure student progress. Teachers are expected to be able to articulate the progress and achievement of each student. Teachers regularly review student data in their team meetings to further understand their cohort. The panel noted student data monitoring procedures, particularly for identifying students with additional needs. School staff use agreed intervention strategies, including consistent school-wide strategies, to support student achievement. In each case that a student's progress is causing concern, including capable students who are underperforming, timely discussions have been held with parents and carers.

The school has also reviewed curriculum documentation, with a specific focus on the refining of previously written integrated units. These were refined, according to pre-test results, to meet the needs of current students. This included the development of three-tiered questions to support differentiated practice. The panel found evidence across the school of the three-tiered questions that teachers had designed to cater for the diverse needs of students through rich learning tasks.

In 2017, the school has focused its attention on developing a whole of school approach to the teaching of numeracy. A representative numeracy committee is driving reform.

Strategic priority 2: To ensure that staff are equipped to be a confident and skilled workforce

Strategic priority 2 is to ensure that staff are equipped to be a confident and skilled workforce that is mature in its operations, communicates well and manages change with professional grace and integrity through full involvement and engagement in developing capacity for setting and achieving high expectations for students and staff.

There were 10 performance measures that focused on providing high quality professional learning to build the capacity of all staff, collective strengths, consistent pedagogical practices and communication.

Thirty-six targets were set in 2015 and 20 of these were fully achieved, three were partially achieved and 13 were not achieved or were deferred to 2016. Three targets were set and achieved in 2016.

All 10 performance measures were reported on, highlighted by the following:

- 100 percent of staff members had a professional learning plan to continue to improve their skills and applications in the classroom and administration. These were included in Professional Pathways goals for all staff. This was achieved. (2015)
- 100 percent of staff members who presented workshops reported that they received developmental feedback and support. This target was achieved. (2015)
- The school has a professional learning plan, developed for semester 1 and semester 2, that focuses on the collective needs of staff and/or developmental goals of individual staff members. This was achieved. (2016)
- 90 percent of staff, including regular relief staff, are satisfied or very satisfied that their professional learning is challenging, developmental and relevant to their class and school responsibilities. This was achieved. (2016)

The school provides a learning program that focuses on emerging professional needs for teachers. The panel noted the development of an expert teacher register that identifies teacher expertise. Teachers with particular skills provide professional learning for peers to build capacity in desired whole-school practices. The panel also noted that this approach is providing leadership opportunities for classroom teachers. The school uses the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals to inform the responsibilities of teaching staff, including executive and aspiring leaders. Professional Pathways plans are used to support staff in identifying areas for professional growth linked with the school's strategic plan.

Staff meetings and team meetings are primarily devoted to professional learning and staff also share practice in regular collaborative planning sessions in teaching teams. Professional learning in a broad range of expected practices, including approaches to the teaching of numeracy (Count Me In Too and Middle Years Mental Computation), have been prioritised. Teachers leading the implementation of strategies in line with the school vision are provided both in-school and external support (i.e. modelling, discussion time, visits to other schools, and system professional learning to equip them with the skills needed to be successful). A professional learning tracking system has been established and staff are expected to explain how external professional learning links to their pathways and the school plan.

Strategic priority 3: To implement a program with a clear focus on student health, wellbeing and support.

There were four performance measures for this priority, focused on building student health and fitness, building student resilience and resolution skills, as well as a focus on improving staff mental health and physical fitness.

Twenty-five targets were set in 2015 and 11 of these were fully achieved, five were partially achieved and nine were not achieved or deferred to 2016. Five targets were set in 2016, three were achieved and for two there was insufficient evidence to measure success.

All four performance measures were reported on, highlighted by the following:

- 75 percent of parents supported the school's directions to encourage their children to be fit and healthy. This was achieved. (2015)
- The school newsletter/app advised parents and carers of relevant community activities to support health and wellbeing. This was achieved. (2015)
- Bounce Back was a regular feature of the school's program to build student confidence, resilience, capacity to work with others and seek advice and help when needed. This was achieved. (2015–16)

Student agency has been a priority for the school. Considerable work has occurred across the school to ensure that students develop and understand their learning goals and can describe why particular learning experiences are important. The explicit use of success criteria supports students in understanding when they have achieved their goal. As a result, of the focus, students are able to identify and set goals they would like to achieve at school, bringing student voice into their learning. They have identified their most valuable personal strengths and are able to say how they can develop these. Students have identified areas they would like to improve and are able to describe how they will do this to make their lives better; this includes what they can do to help themselves be healthy.

To ensure that teachers really understand students and where they are at in their learning, staff spend the first two weeks of school getting to know their students by reviewing data, conducting individual interviews about children's interests, conversations with specialist teachers, including the additional needs teacher and the English as an Additional Language or Dialect specialist, and get to know you interviews with parents to build student voice in the learning.

The Bounce Back program was implemented in 2015 to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Garran students. It is now embedded in planning documents and classroom practice. Bounce Back is a whole of school initiative and a scope and sequence is being followed by teachers. At assemblies, key learnings are reinforced. The panel noted the visual cues of this program in classrooms and throughout the school.

Strategic priority 4: To develop and support collaborative community partnerships with a clear focus on clarity of rules and effective two-way communication

There were six performance measures for this priority, focused on: building a strong community of parents; staff and students working together to prioritise and implement initiatives to enhance teaching and learning across the whole school; and working collaboratively with the community to ensure strong two-way communication that shows understanding for and respects the responsibilities of all parties. There was also a clear focus on the commitment to the Indonesian program.

Twenty-one targets were set in 2015 and 12 of these were fully achieved, four were partially achieved and five were not achieved or deferred to 2016. In 2016, three targets were set, two were achieved and there was insufficient data to measure progress for the third.

All six performance measures were reported on, highlighted by the following achievements:

- At least six newsletter items provided parents and carers with information about important school policies and programs. (2015)
- 80% of parents and carers reported that the information sharing initiatives provided by the school were helpful or very helpful. (2015)
- Aims of the school's Indonesian program were provided to parents and carers. (2015)
- 80% of parents and carers reported that the school app is valuable to them. (2015)
- 85% of parents and carers reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the ways they are informed about and involved in their children's learning. (2016)
- 85% of parents and carers reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the ways the school communicates with them. (2016)

Parents, carers and the wider community are involved in a wide range of activities designed to enrich the school as an exciting and aesthetically pleasing environment for teaching and learning. The panel noted the LinC (Learning in Community) program and the ties it has created with parents and the classroom and between parents as a community. The Eco-Ranger program is a result of parents, teachers and students working in partnership to enrich student learning around sustainability and healthy living. The STEM festival links students with experts in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. There are strong links with the Canberra Innovation Network, which resulted in a parent forum on the state of science teaching in the ACT. Garran has established joint staff and parent committees that meet regularly to move the school forward in the areas of playground improvements, traffic safety and to seek sponsorship to further enhance learning. The school has established a BRIDGE (Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement) school relationship and forged strong ties with Wonosari Baru School in Indonesia. The panel noted the strong connection that the parent community enjoys with Garran Primary School. Parents indicated that they feel meaningfully informed about and are involved in the wider purposes of the school, including academic, social health and aesthetic environment.

The Parents and Citizens committee and school board understand the different responsibilities in relation to the school, its management and decision making. They expressed to the panel their confidence in the present school leadership team.

The panel witnessed the three-way interviews where students have been supported to talk to their parents about their learning goals and how they and their teacher address these within the classroom.

Strategic priority 5: To review all major curriculum programs, specialist programs and enrichment activities as part of a regular cycle of quality planning and decision making about future directions

There were five performance measures for this priority, focused on identifying essential programs and optional programs within the school and developing understanding within the community about why particular programs and enrichment activities have been chosen.

There was also a focus on staff working collaboratively to prioritise and implement successful initiatives and being actively involved in decision making processes.

Six targets were set and four of these were fully achieved, one requires further investigation as the outcome is unclear and the other was not actioned.

All five performance measures were reported on, highlighted by the following:

- 80% of parents and carers reported satisfaction with the information provided to them by the school. (2015)
- 88% of families stated that they have opportunities to be involved with the school. (2015)
- 95% of parents and carers indicated 'I can talk to my child's teachers about my concerns'. (2016)
- 89% of parents and carers indicated 'This school takes parents' opinions seriously'. (2016)
- 85% of parents and carers indicated 'My child's learning needs are being met at this school'. (2016)

All major programs and enrichment (along with all activities that are featured on the school calendar) have been reviewed since 2015 with a cyclic review in place for the future. Staff have reflected on these at staff meetings and provided feedback for improvement for key school events. The panel noted the clear communication in the 'How It Works' documents, which are distributed to parents to build their understanding about how events and programs work at Garran. Parent feedback about programs is sought through surveys and forums.

Each year the staff have the opportunity to consider the effectiveness of enrichment programs when decisions are made about current and new programs to be offered. Parents are consulted about programs and enrichment activities on which they place particular value.

Reflections

- The Garran Primary School senior leadership team, staff and parent community are to be commended for the work completed in implementing the first two years of its strategic plan. Garran Primary School remains a school of choice due to its high expectations for academic excellence and strong results. The school also pays particular attention to the holistic development of the child and offers a rich co-curricular program in a safe and supportive learning environment.
- High levels of trust have been restored following a period of significant instability for the school. The leadership team members have been open and transparent with the school community in all that they do, respect and acknowledge the professional and experience of staff and recognise the value of student agency in learning. Staff, the school board, and the wider community are now united in their objective to be an example of excellence in education. The school is well positioned to develop a new vision for the school and collaboratively develop the next strategic plan with its community.

Evidence cited

- School Satisfaction Survey 2015–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- Annual Action Plans 2015–17
- School Strategic Plan 2015–18
- Annual School Board Reports 2015–16
- parent, student and staff interviews with the panel.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

Within staff and team meetings, Garran Primary School teaching staff have explored each of the domains of the National School Improvement Tool to guide planning and thinking. In preparation for the school's review, evidence was collected for each of the nine domains and reflected on by the teaching and leadership team.

National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda

- *The school has developed an agenda for improvement in partnership with parents and the community and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings, school newsletters, parent–teacher meetings and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *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, and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g. not accompanied by timelines).*
- *The school's focus on data is driven more by external requirements (e.g. NAPLAN, My School) than by an internal desire for good information to guide school decision making and to monitor progress.*
- *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

- Garran Primary School's Strategic Plan (2015–18) identifies five priorities in relation to: improved literacy and numeracy; developing capacity of staff; improved student health and wellbeing; improved community partnerships; and a revision of all curriculum and specialist programs. There is alignment between the priorities and the key improvement strategies.
- Strategic planning documents were collaboratively developed in consult with the board and external consultancy. School priorities are shared with staff and the local community at regular intervals.
- The 2015 Annual Action Plan set a very wide range of performance measures (113) to be reported against. This was significantly narrowed in 2016. Approximately half the targets set in 2015 were fully achieved. Most notably, in 2016 the target of 90 percent of students in years 3 and 5 achieving at or above system targets in NAPLAN was achieved. The breadth of expected improvement has made it difficult for the current leadership team to sharpen a focus on improving learning outcomes.
- Teachers identify student voice, numeracy and the implementation of learning goals and success criteria as the key improvement priorities.
- The school leadership team has reflected on progress to date against priorities, to consider which key improvement strategies have become embedded practice and is working towards a new vision for the school for this next strategic planning cycle.
- Parents describe the re-building of trust between school and community as being the most significant improvement.
- The leadership team ensures that key improvement strategies have a firm research base.
- Numeracy and literacy committees have been established to drive improvement.

DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data

- *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.*
- *An ad hoc approach exists to building staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data.*
- *Software may be used for the analysis of school results, including the performances of priority groups, but analyses generally do not extend to studies of improvement or growth.*
- *School data are presented to staff in meetings, but presentations tend to be 'for information' rather than a trigger for in-depth discussions of teaching practices and school processes. Information about the school's performance is communicated to the school community, but may lack explanation or analysis. There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

Comments and findings

- NAPLAN results are within the confidence range of Directorate set targets and mean scores are generally well above ACT means in all domains.
- The school collects a range of whole of school data sets including NAPLAN, Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), and Schedule for Early Number Assessment. A range of diagnostic test instruments are also used and data from these is captured in tracking tools.
- CogAT results are presented to staff with support in how to use this data to inform teaching.
- A school-wide approach to the analysis of whole of school performance data has not yet been developed.
- The school has not yet developed a way of collecting and analysing behavioural and wellbeing outcomes data.
- Junior and senior data tracking tools have been developed in 2017. Pre- and post-testing practices to measure student growth is a feature of teachers' practice. Staff discuss data in teams and this is used to form mathematics, reading and spelling groups and to identify students with additional needs.
- Whole of school data performance (NAPLAN, PIPS etc.) is discussed with teachers in meetings, however, opportunity exists for deeper exploration to inform school policy and practice. Teachers' access and use of these results is an area of focus for the school.
- Parents have a general awareness of the school's performance in NAPLAN.

DOMAIN 3: A culture that promotes learning

- *The school ethos is built around high expectations and a commitment to excellence. There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.*
- *There is a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school.*
- *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. 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.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*

Comments and findings

- Parents and staff express a high degree of confidence in the leadership team of the school. There is evidence of high levels of restored trust.
- Garran Primary School has a firm focus on academic achievement. Rich tasks, a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects) and a range of co-curricular academic programs support a learning environment of academic rigour. Benchmarks for reading are explicit and aspirational.
- The school has introduced a social and emotional learning program (Bounce Back), which has been scoped and sequenced.
- Clear and documented expectations of student behaviour are evident. Classes are calm and focused learning environments.
- There is an explicit focus on engaging parents in their children's learning through formal scheduled interviews, three-way conversations to develop learning intentions and learning journey celebrations.
- Students articulate the high expectations teachers have of their learning both in their conversations with reviewers and in the feedback they provide in student perception surveys.
- Caring and respectful relationships between all stakeholder groups were noted by reviewers. Teachers support each other and articulate the value of this.
- An active student leadership group and the Garran Government student representative group supports student voice in the school. Student agency is evident through students setting and reflecting on their learning goals.
- The school connects with its community through newsletters, a phone application, the class representative program, SeeSaw, Facebook, ParentLink and workshops for parents about supporting student learning.
- Student achievement is celebrated across the school.
- Although school results reflect strong academic performance, opportunity exists to continue to build high expectations of student progress, particularly growth in NAPLAN between years 3 and 5 against like-schools.
- Staff morale is generally high and improving reflected in improved perception survey data and the way in which teachers speak of the school and leadership team.

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 learning spaces are used creatively and technology is accessible to the majority of staff and students.*

Comments and findings

- Systematic testing (CogAT) as well as a range of other diagnostic tools, which are tracked, supports the school in identifying individual student needs.
- Every teacher uses the Response to Intervention model to formally identify the individual needs of their learners.
- Fortnightly additional needs meetings are held to identify students for additional support and align resources and programs to needs. Highly systematic processes have been introduced to assess individual literacy needs in the early years.
- Targeted individualised and small group intervention programs support the needs of students with learning difficulties, and English as an Additional Language or Dialect.
- A well embedded accelerated learning program provides opportunities for students with potential or identified gifts and talents to be accelerated and/or have the curriculum compacted in identified areas.
- Before school mathematics and writing programs supplement student learning.
- The school has introduced a Bring Your Own Device program, supported by the Parents and Citizens committee, for years 5 and 6 and Chromebook class sets supports the use of information and communication technologies for learning in years 3 and 4. Students report variability on how often they use their devices for learning in classes.
- Rich and stimulating learning environments have been created in classrooms. Ageing buildings and pressure for space due to enrolments provides a challenge for the school.
- Teachers have access to technology infrastructure to support teaching and learning.

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.*
- *Strategies are in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff members 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 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 members.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction.*

Comments and findings

- Regular team meetings support the sharing of practice between teachers.
- Formalised mentoring arrangements and an induction program supports the needs of new educators and staff.
- School-wide and individual professional learning is aligned to improvement priorities. Professional Pathways plans drive individual professional learning needs.
- Through a register of expertise, teachers can identify and learn from colleagues with particular skills.
- Whole of school professional learning focus areas have been identified for staff meetings across the year. These have been informed by teachers' individual learning goals and school priorities.
- Staff are encouraged to engage in postgraduate studies.
- Targeted professional learning for staff working in the accelerated programs and additional needs teams has been provided.
- Opportunities exist for experienced teachers to become lead/highly accomplished teachers.
- School leaders have a regular presence in classrooms although systematic processes for formal observations, modelling and feedback are not yet established.
- The school has developed an observation proforma aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Peer observations and informal mentoring occurred in 2016.
- Action research supports the school to evaluate the Accelerated Learning Program.
- Teachers are provided with supported opportunities to lead committees, act in higher positions and present professional learning.

DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

- *The school has a documented plan for curriculum delivery that includes year level and term plans, but the progression of learning from year to year is not always obvious and the relationship between the pieces of the plan (the year, term and unit plans) would benefit from further clarification.*
- *The school curriculum plan and curriculum delivery 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. 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

- Philosophy statements underpin teaching and learning and inform curriculum planning.
- School planning documentation demonstrates alignment to the Australian Curriculum.
- A clear, detailed and explicit English program is in place. Teaching teams have developed scope and sequence documents for their multi-age groups.
- A scope and sequence for mathematics across the school is currently being developed. A science specialist teacher supports the delivery of the science curriculum. There is a strong focus on STEM subjects supported by key whole of school events.
- The Key Learning Area of humanities and social sciences, science, technologies and the arts are addressed through inquiry-based integrated units of work. The development of these plans occurs in teams using a school template. Attention is paid to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- An action plan for the integration of information and communication technology has been developed.
- Teachers work together in teams for a full day each term to collaboratively plan.
- There is variable practice in the use of criteria-based assessment and Australian Curriculum work samples to make judgements about learning against the achievement standards. Reporting is aligned to the achievement standards. There is a reliance on marks to make judgements.

DOMAIN 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

- *School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. This includes the 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.*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

Comments and findings

- A high priority is placed on teachers knowing their students well. Teachers review data, conduct individual interviews with students and families and work with specialist teachers to determine starting points for teaching at the commencement of the year.
- Some workbooks show differentiated tasks related to individual learning intentions with explicit and aligned feedback.
- Integrated units are underpinned by an inquiry-based learning approach, which supports differentiated practice, particularly through the three-tiered key questions focus.
- Regular assessment supports teachers in identifying and addressing gaps, informing grouping and monitoring learning.
- Whole of school professional learning about differentiation and highly effective practices has supported teachers in better personalising the learning.
- Teachers discuss student progress in team meetings.
- Differentiated literacy and numeracy groups across year levels supports extension and consolidation opportunities for students.
- Individual Learning Plans have been developed and are being implemented for students with special needs.
- Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of presentation techniques to support individual learning styles.
- Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning through setting learning goals and having choice about how they demonstrate their learning. Students can articulate their individual learning intentions.

DOMAIN 8: Effective pedagogical practices

- *School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school, and expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways of doing this, although the principal and other senior leaders may not themselves have clear positions on the kinds of teaching they wish to see occurring across the school or be 'hands on' in driving improved teaching practices.*
- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, mathematics, 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, are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

Comments and findings

- In staff and team meetings, teachers explore and discuss evidence-based effective teaching practices.
- Expected teaching strategies for the teaching of reading, writing and spelling are evident in the school's English program.
- A specialist science teacher is supporting teachers in delivering the science curriculum.
- Learning intentions and success criteria to provide clarity about what students are learning and able to do was explicitly visible.
- Students reported some variability in the quality and detail of feedback they receive about their learning. The use of Google Classrooms, rubrics, learning intentions and success criteria supports a feedback culture in the school. Feedback to students in workbooks was variable. In some, feedback was explicitly linked to the success criteria.
- Expected teaching strategies for the teaching of reading, writing and spelling are evident in the school's English program.
- Teachers have engaged in a range of professional learning focus areas including focused questioning in order to be explicit, the development of rich tasks, promoting student agency and differentiated practice. The learning is carried through into planning and teaching.
- Expected whole-school practices are evident in planning; for example, inquiry-based learning in integrated units.
- Evidence-based approaches to learning, such as Count Me In Too and Daily Five, are being discussed.

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. All partners have a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, the purposes of the partnership.*
- *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.*

Comments and findings

- Parents and families are recognised as partners in their children's education evidenced in the high levels of engagement at key school events, learning journeys, three-way conversations and regular contact with classroom teachers. Opportunities exist to draw upon the high and varied levels of skill in the parent community to further support the work of the school.
- Strong links between the Canberra Innovation Network and Garran Primary School are evident, resulting in the school hosting a community forum focused on inspiring young people to pursue careers in the STEM field.
- School events, like Science Week, showcase the school and industry experts support this endeavour. STEM festivals also link students with experts. The school works with Alfred Deakin High School in a gifted and talented science program.
- Garran Primary School has a sister school in Indonesia.
- The school participates in a number of activities in the community including Rostrum, Eco Rangers, sports clinics and charity fundraisers (e.g. Marymead).
- Through a formalised link with the University of Canberra, the school is supported to provide a range of student activities in the LinC (Learning in Community) program.
- A strong and active Parents and Citizens committee supports the school through fundraising events, an active canteen, and the fostering of key business partnerships in the local community, including a strong partnership with the Southern Cross Club.
- The ParentLink program encourages wider parent representation, consultation and effective communication.
- The mathematics enrichment group is supported by a parent with expertise who conducts these lessons.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

The school leadership team led a collaborative process with the community to reflect on school progress against the National Safe Schools Framework using the School Audit Tool. In doing so, the leadership team identified strengths and areas for future development. The school intends to address the areas for future development in this next strategic planning cycle, aligning these to the recommendations provided in this review report.

Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

Affirmations

The External Review Panel offers the following affirmations for Garran Primary School.

- Garran Primary has a whole of school approach to the use of learning intentions and success criteria to focus teaching and learning on the next explicit step in learning. In the most advanced stages, this work includes feedback based on the learning intention and the opportunity for students to focus on that learning in their next work. This supports personalised learning for students.
- A comprehensive Bounce Back program has been implemented to address social and emotional learning.
- The expert teacher register values teacher expertise, builds capacity in desired whole-school practices and maintains a focus on continual school improvement through shared practice and professional learning.
- The engaging and challenging integrated units of work are designed to cater for the diverse needs of students through the three-tiered question approach and rich learning tasks.
- The whole-school approach to intervention supports learners with additional needs.
- Learning spaces for students that are stimulating, attractive, and very conducive to learning.
- There is a strong focus on refining the school's numeracy program and a whole of school literacy focus has resulted in a comprehensive approach to the teaching of literacy supported by an explicit scope and sequence plan.

Commendations

Garran Primary School is commended for the following.

- The school leadership team has employed collaborative and professional strategies to build a strong team that is working together to focus productively on improving student outcomes in an environment anchored in trust. This has resulted in a cohesive, happy and positive tone within the school. The staff value the approachability of the leadership team, their desire to hear all view points and their proactive follow-up.
- The school has strong reputation as a high performing school through sustained sound NAPLAN results. This has made it a school that is in great demand. The review panel commends the school's ethos of high expectations and commitment to excellence.
- The leadership team and staff show professionalism, dedication and commitment. Parents express a high degree of confidence in the school. Both the leadership and teaching teams consistently articulated their passion and commitment for their respective roles in the school. This was overwhelmingly supported by the students interviewed by the panel who acknowledged the great teachers they had and their enjoyment of learning.
- The Accelerated Learning Program recognises students with potential and identified gifts and talents. This program is rigorous from the student identification process through to the teaching and learning. Teachers engage in professional learning to support their specialised practice in catering for these students. This program is underpinned by evidence-based practices and includes targeted social and emotional learning experiences. Teachers are engaging in action research to evaluate its effectiveness.
- Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community. High levels of parental engagement are evident and a highly active Parents and Citizens committee and school board supports and champions the needs of the school. Staff provide multiple opportunities for parents to connect with each other, teachers and most importantly with their child/children's learning.
- The rich co-curricular program focused on STEM that provides challenging learning for students that is connected to the real world through partnerships with the community.

Recommendations

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

- Develop a plan for improvement that has a narrow and sharp focus on core learning priorities expressed in terms of specific rather than general improvements sought in student performance. Develop realistic but challenging targets. Consider initiating targets at a classroom level that are then established and owned at a team level and subsequently incorporated into school-wide targets to support teachers in understanding and taking responsibility for changes in practice required to meet the targets.
- Document a data plan and timetable for the annual collection, communication, analysis and use of student performance data to monitor progress to proficiency. Consider overall school performance in academic outcomes, as well as monitoring attendance, behavioural and student wellbeing. Ensure that this plan also includes an analysis of the performance of identified priority groups, cohorts, classes and individuals. Continue to grow a culture of using data to inform teaching with a particular emphasis on the comparisons of pre- and post-test data. Ensure data analysis includes individual student growth as well as whole-school growth.
- Continue to build a culture of self-reflection in the school by providing opportunities for teachers and leaders to observe classroom practice and provide feedback. Ensure that the feedback provided includes both affirmations and constructive critique to stimulate this self-reflection. Consider how coaching arrangements can support teachers in building their capacity to refine practice in the areas identified from feedback.
- Continue to develop a pedagogical framework for learning and teaching that articulates the evidence-based practices expected of all Garran teachers. Ensure that evidence-based teaching, assessment and feedback strategies identified for the school is consistent practice in all classrooms. Continue to provide multiple opportunities for these practices to be shared enabling teachers to learn with and from each other.
- Continue to develop and refine the whole of school curriculum plan, paying particular attention to the development of scope and sequences for all Key Learning Areas. Ensure that mapping processes are in place to identify and address any gaps in the content and skills expected. Review assessment across the school, with particular reference to consistency of practice in the use of criteria closely aligned to the achievement standards to make judgements about student learning rather than the use of numerical marks. Ensure that the consistent use of work samples from the Australian Curriculum supports teachers in making judgements and moderating.
- 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.

Section F: Record of school review process

The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Garran Primary School conducted on 18, 19 and 20 September 2017.

Name: Christina Rogers External Review Panel – Chair

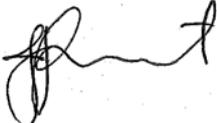
Name: Shane Gorman External Review Panel – Principal Member
Wanniassa School

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: 14/12/2017

I, Jenny Priest, as Principal of Garran Primary School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Signature: 

Date: 14/12/2017