



ACT
Government
Education

**EXTERNAL REVIEW
REPORT for
AMAROO SCHOOL**

2016

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Introduction: Overview of the 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 review process every five years. This document captures the findings of the panel during this cycle of school review.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation and validation, 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 three days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the National School Improvement Tool that informed our commendations and recommendations.

Section A: School Context

Amaroo School is a P-10 school located in the Gungahlin region. The school has a current enrolment of 1,681. The school's current student profile includes 158 students from Defence Force families and 550 students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) background. There are 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently enrolled. The school provides for 67 students with special needs and the school has two learning units for students with autism (LSUA's).

Amaroo School has seen steady growth in enrolments from 2012 to 2014. The establishment of Bonner as a new suburb and several new schools within the Gungahlin Network has had significant impact on the school's priority enrolment area. As a result, student enrolments will continue to grow and are expected to increase significantly in the next planning cycle, resulting in a potential school population in excess of 2000 students. The panel notes that this anticipated growth will have significant impact on infrastructure requirements and resource allocations.

Due to the large number of Australian Defence Force families, the school has a transient enrolment pattern. In 2012- 2015, 270 students enrolled in interstate schools and 62 overseas. Further to this, 212 students moved to other ACT government schools.

Because of the continual growth in enrolments, the school has needed to recruit additional staff each year, and between 2013 and 2016 the staffing profile grew by 27 classroom teachers and 19 administrative staff. A significant percentage of newly recruited staff members have been in their first three years of teaching and this has meant that the school has needed to place a very high priority on professional learning and building capacity.

Amaroo School services a community with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) background of 1073 (2015) and this has remained quite stable throughout the review cycle, and is above the median of 1000.

From 2012 onwards, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team: all SLB's were newly recruited; three changes in the Business Manager's position; and in 2016 a newly appointed SLA. The panel has noted that these changes have had impact on the consistent implementation of the school's plan. The leadership team this year has made the strategic decision, driven by data and stakeholders' feedback, to move the school from four (early childhood, primary, middle and senior) sectors to two (primary and secondary) with the intent of building a one school ethos.

Amaroo School's school motto is 'Towards Tomorrow Together' and the school values are 'excellence' and 'inclusion'. The school has articulated that learning is the main purpose for both students and teachers.

Section B: School Performance

Amaroo School has outlined in its plan, one key priority: improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

The school has examined longitudinal system data (NAPLAN), demographic, and school satisfaction data in preparation for the review. The panel has also examined Performance Indicators in Primary School (PIPS) scores.

The panel noted that the PIPs data revealed that the school's reading scores have been consistently above the ACT system average. Whilst students experienced growth in mathematics, in 2014 and 2015 they were slightly below the ACT system average.

Student NAPLAN data shows no significant trend in improvement in reading and numeracy. The panel found that the school was at times, above, within and below the school's system targets set in the school plan in reading. This variability of performance was also evident in numeracy from 2013 to 2015. In 2015, Years 3, 5 and 9 were within the expected target range for reading and numeracy. Against ACT and North Gungahlin network means from 2013 to 2015, Amaroo School was below in most elements of NAPLAN, although in Year 3 in 2013 and 2015 they were predominantly above in both. In some years in some year levels across the life of the plan, student results in writing have exceeded the ACT mean. The school has recognised that it is failing to increase the percentage of students that reach their expected growth and that this will be a priority for the school over the course of the next improvement cycle.

Amaroo has had a high average level of attendance(94%) over the course of this improvement cycle. The school has established procedures to deal with student absences, including SMS messaging, letters to families about ongoing absence and support plans for those with attendance issues.

The school has a strong focus on purposeful learning and high expectations and from 2013 onwards, over 90% of students have stated that they believe "my teachers expect me to do my best".

Over the life of the school plan, Amaroo has continued to modernise learning by transitioning to a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Google Apps For Education (GAPE) environment. There has been consistent growth in the data about the use of technology. For example, 88% of students in 2015 believed they have access to equipment such as computers, internet and digital cameras compared to 78% in 2013. The panel noted that student survey data affirms that students feel they are provided with an ICT rich environment for learning.

As a result of low satisfaction levels expressed by students (just 31% in 2015) in relation to how well behaviour is managed, the senior leadership team has reviewed and is implementing a new Building Quality Relationships (BQR) policy.

During this four-year improvement cycle the panel found that Amaroo School has placed a strong emphasis on building a professional learning culture. In 2013 and 2014, 95% of staff engaged in professional learning and 81% of staff were satisfied that they received constructive feedback about their practice. The panel found that there has been a strong focus on reflective practice, coaching and whole of school learning.

Amaroo School has a very good reputation in the community. It is evident the parents feel a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Partnerships are valued and maintained and this is evidenced by 85% of parents who are satisfied with their child's education at the school.

Evidence cited

- PIPS performance and growth data 2013 to 2015
- NAPLAN data 2013 to 2015
- School Satisfaction Data 2012 to 2015
- School Summative Evaluation Report 2016
- Student Attendance Data 2012 to 2015
- Demographic Data 2012 to 2015.

Section C: School Improvement Planning and Implementation

There are multiple evidence sources supporting an improvement agenda at Amaroo School. It is obvious within the work of the leadership team and classroom teacher teams. There are structures and documents within the school which support improvement.

School improvement planning:

Amaroo School identified its single improvement priority in 2013, having reflected upon student learning data in the previous planning cycle. As a result, the 2013-2016 school plan sets out to improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes. In support of that priority area, the school leadership team identified four key improvement strategies and attendant actions for improvement, summarised in the following table:

TABLE 1: Amaroo School Key Improvement Strategies 2013-2016

Priority	Improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students			
Key Improvement Strategy	The establishment of an explicit improvement agenda	The embedding of practices, structures and culture of a professional learning community	Developing the capacity of staff to deliver high quality learning	Further developing partnerships with parents in the education of their children
Key Actions	Sector improvement plans	Transforming collaborations – professional learning teams	Peer coaching – collaborative coaching	Literacy and numeracy workshops for parents
	Whole school professional learning plan	Transforming assessment – SMART goals	Whole school professional learning – formative assessment	Student led conferences
	Consistent use of Understanding by Design and provision of quality feedback	Transforming instruction – response to intervention	Whole staff professional learning – goal setting processes	Gifted and Talented program
	Professional pathways practices	Transforming teacher development – reflective practice, coaching and whole school learning	Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers	Bring Your Own Device and Google Apps for Education strategy
		Transforming leadership – PALLS project	Instructional leadership – Professional Practice School Leader C	Engaging our community via innovative technology
				Solar Choice partnership

Annual Operating Plans translated the key improvement strategies into staged actions. Each sector within Amaroo School then articulated sector plans, describing local actions in support of the school-wide priority.

There is evidence of staff involvement in the setting of priorities and targets (particularly at the sector level) but less evidence of the involvement of the broader school community. The panel noted that the improvement plan was broad in its intent and lacked specificity in target-setting, making downstream reporting of improvement a challenge for the leadership team.

Priority Areas

Strategic Priority: Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students

Key Improvement Strategy 1: The establishment of an explicit improvement agenda

This strategy is supported by four improvement actions:

1. Sector improvement plans
2. Whole school professional learning plan
3. Consistent use of Understanding by Design and provision of quality feedback
4. Professional pathways practices.

Achievements

The panel found evidence in planning documents of intentional improvement at the sector planning level and an oversight structure allowing for alignment. What was less clear to the panel was the actual alignment in terms of the meeting of strategic targets. The panel commends the school for its recent decision to reduce the number of sectors within the school from four to two, on the basis of enhancing that line of sight.

The school is to be commended on its approach to whole school professional learning. A collaborative process to implementing a whole school approach, including the setting of high expectations for staff, is evidenced and is one of the ways the school has built an expert teaching team.

Similarly, there is strong evidence of a consistent adoption of a common programming approach – the use of Understanding by Design (UbD). The panel validates the school's assessment of this as a core underpinning of practice at Amaroo. UbD documents have assisted the school in making strategic actions visible in classrooms. The leadership team is commended for the commitment to quality feedback to teachers on their planning.

Amaroo's approach to teacher Professional Pathways practices is commendable: each teacher has a professional conversations folder, capturing deliberate and regular feedback, mapped against the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). This is also conducive to supporting teacher engagement with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) professional learning and registration processes.

Evidence cited

- Previous External Validation Report (2012)
- 2013-2016 Amaroo School Plan
- Annual Operating (and Action) Plans 2013-2016
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–2015
- Sector Plans 2013-2016
- Amaroo Workforce Planning 2014-15
- Amaroo Professional Learning Plan
- Professional Conversations 2016
- Amaroo executive team feedback on PLC implementation (2013-2015)

Key Improvement Strategy 2: Continue to embed the practices, structures and culture of a Professional Learning Community

This strategy is supported by five improvement actions, derived from the research base relating to Du Four’s professional learning communities:

1. Transforming collaborations – professional learning teams
2. Transforming assessment – SMART goals
3. Transforming instruction – response to intervention
4. Transforming teacher development – reflective practice, coaching and whole school learning
5. Transforming leadership – PALLS project

Achievements

At Amaroo School the implementation and impact of professional learning communities (PLCs) is highly visible. The leadership team has systematically set about implementing rich PLCs; and this includes the establishment of Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) as subsets of collaborative planning across the school. Resources (including people and time) have been allocated in support of the overall model.

Meetings at Amaroo School have purpose – a focus on student learning, and there is an agreed structure in place to conduct those meetings. The school is using research-based evaluation tools to monitor their location on the PLC implementation continuum, and the panel found evidence of ongoing refinement of the Amaroo model, as a result.

The PLTs have allowed opportunities for teaching teams to reflect deeply on individual students in their classes. Data walls and data collection tools are evident and form the basis of professional conversations at PLT meetings, particularly in P-5.

The school has invested in the capacity building of staff around creating SMART goals, as part of its focus on improving the quality of learning in classrooms. In 2015, the annual review of this effort resulted in the adoption of the disciplined dialogue lens to specifically focus discussions on the analysis of results, and the identification of new actions. From this has flowed the

articulation of a school-wide data collection plan. The panel felt this is evidence of reflective implementation.

In various sectors in the school, responses to the learning data have been introduced. In the area of reading for example, strategies included the provision of additional learning time (P-5), a targeted reading program (6-8) and study groups (9-10). Work is now being undertaken by the leadership team to systematically analyse the impact of these strategies. The panel noted this as an opportunity for further focus in the next strategic cycle, as it will allow the school to track growth across the P-10 continuum.

In 2014, Amaroo School took part in the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALLS) project and it has continued to provide the focus for the PLT and PLC work. In particular, the introduction of literacy walk throughs, formative assessment, moderation practices and action research projects are visible, documented and reflected upon.

The leadership team has identified the transience of staff as a barrier to their progress further along the continuum of establishing PLCs. Staff change has meant continuous orientation of new team members to the model and practices. However, the panel noted the significantly positive impact the PLC model has had on many aspects of Amaroo's intent to create an expert teaching team and a positive learning culture.

Evidence cited

- Amaroo executive team feedback on PLC implementation (2013-2015)
- System Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys (2013-2015)
- Collaborative coaching records
- NAPLAN data sets (2013-2015)
- Amaroo School Data Plan
- Individual Learning Plans, Personal Learning Plans
- Disciplined dialogue records
- Student led conference strategy documents.

Key Improvement Strategy 3: Develop capacity of staff to deliver high quality learning through instructional leadership, collaborative coaching and professional learning

This strategy is supported by five improvement actions:

1. Peer coaching – collaborative coaching
2. Whole school professional learning – formative assessment
3. Whole staff professional learning – goal setting processes
4. Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers
5. Instructional leadership – Professional Practice School Leader C

Achievements

The panel found Amaroo School's approach to teacher coaching and professional learning to be a sophisticated and multi-leveled model. Elements of the model are well resourced, documented and actioned.

The school has created a Professional Practice School Leader C position in 2014 and established a Professional Practice Hub in 2015, both of which signal the school's improvement intent regarding teacher growth. Timetabling and staff allocations further support staff to access research-based professional capacity-building.

As part of the implementation of this strategy, the Classroom Practice Continuum (CPC) was introduced in 2015. This has allowed teachers to generate tangible descriptors that define their professional capacity as they move through their professional career. The panel notes the high concentration of Amaroo teachers attaining Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification (five in total) and the fact that there are four more members of staff currently undertaking assessment in these areas. Indeed, Amaroo practices have been held up as exemplars by the certifying body, TQI, and their stories of teacher development are captured in a range of AITSL videos.

Of particular note was the effective adoption of formative assessment as a key lever to improve student learning outcomes and to allow teaching teams to plan for future learning opportunities. An explicit professional learning program was introduced (with 95% take up by staff) and the panel found formative assessment strategies in Amaroo classrooms and in teacher planning documents. Furthermore, students appear familiar with it as a way of assessing their own learning. Bump it up Walls and student-led conferences are examples of this.

As a result of the work at Amaroo, there is an open and trusting school climate. Teachers expect peer assessment of their teaching and they engage positively in the feedback sessions built into the model.

The school leadership team has surveyed staff against this Key Improvement Strategy. Not all staff value the coaching strategy as an effective contribution to their professional growth (only 73% reported a strong correlation). The expressed intent of the school is to continue to embed the culture of collaboration in support of teacher capacity-building.

Evidence cited

- Staff Satisfaction Surveys (2013-2016)
- Amaroo School Professional Learning Plan
- Amaroo School Collaborative Coaching records (2013-2015)
- Professional Practice Hub documentation

Key Improvement Strategy 4: Further developing partnerships with parents in the education of their children

This strategy is supported by six improvement actions:

1. Literacy and numeracy workshops for parents
2. Student-led conferences
3. Gifted & Talented (G&T) program

4. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and Google Apps for Education (GAFE) strategy
5. Engaging our community via innovative technology
6. Solar Choice partnership

Achievements

Amaroo School enjoys strong community support. The panel noted the very high levels of parent and family participation at school events (for example, 589 families from P-5 attended a goal setting evening in 2016) and satisfaction survey results suggest that up to 90% of parents feel strongly engaged. Parents have also been provided with clear information about how the school intends using technology and a strategic ICT plan is in place. Specific actions are outlined with regard to how the technology reaches out into the school's wider community.

Embedded strategies around student voice are also evident at Amaroo. A powerful example of this is the student-led conference model, where students construct the conversation with parents and their teacher/s and talk about their learning journey.

The school has engaged with their families in the implementation of two key initiatives – the Gifted and Talented (G&T) program and the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategy. Each of these is highly visible and achieving their intended results and each has built-in consultation opportunities for families. Evidence of this success is to be found in the high satisfaction levels of parents in relation to the school working with them to support their child's learning (74%) and in relation to effective communication between the school and families (85%). The BYOD take-up rate for phase one rollout to Years 9 and 10 (in 2015) was 93%.

The commitment (both in intent and resourcing levels) to support innovation is evident in every classroom in the school. Teachers are making use of Google Classroom as a planning and sharing platform, to differentiate and support learning both at school and at home. Student involvement in the Amaroo Student Technical Experience Crew (ASTEC) is highly regarded within the school community and is providing pathways for students who have talent in the area of information technology. Again, this work includes families and the broader community in workshops and exhibitions.

The Learning Frontiers initiative includes collaboration with external partners (Google Australia and the Inspire Centre at the University of Canberra) and allows students and staff to gain exposure to cutting edge technology integration in schools. The panel found significant energy around this work at Amaroo.

The Amaroo leadership team reflects positively on their achievements against this improvement strategy. The panel validates the work already done at Amaroo and commends the school leadership team for the continued resourcing and energy they have placed at the disposal of staff driving this agenda.

Evidence cited

- Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys (2013-2015)
- Amaroo ICT Plan (2014-18)
- BYOD data
- Learning Frontiers evaluation
- Student-led conferences

Reflections

Amaroo School has regularly reflected upon its school improvement journey during the life of this school plan. This has included regular checks on progress towards targets set in Sector and Annual Operating Plans. The school has also used stakeholder feedback to build upon each year's improvement achievements.

Amaroo School notes its relative success against some of the key improvement strategies contained in the 2013-2016 school plan, but also recognises that key targets in student learning outcomes have not been realised consistently. When the school leadership team considers their NAPLAN results, for example, there is not a strong story of student learning outcome improvement year on year. Given that the school plan has been centered around a single priority of improving student literacy and numeracy outcomes, this is cause for the school to recalibrate its improvement strategies.

The leadership team identified challenges to the continuity of the improvement agenda as a result of changes in school leadership. The panel reflected on the impact this change may have had on the oversight of progress against school targets.

Section D: National Tools Self-Evaluation Results

National School Improvement Tool

The panel noted the following in relation to the **Explicit Improvement Agenda** domain.

- 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.
- The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement, but limited attention has been given to specifying detail or to developing a school-wide approach (eg, plans for improvement may lack coherence, be short term or without a whole-school focus).
- The communication of performance data to the school community tends to be sporadic.

Comments and Findings

Strategic, Annual and Sector Plans have been developed, and targets and timelines are evident in these documents. Teachers do not consistently identify what the whole-school agenda is (targets, goals, etc.) Teachers in teams have identified a range of actions to bring about improvement in their respective areas; the line of sight between these areas and the strategic improvement agenda is not always visible.

- There is evidence that a number of teachers value action-based research as a way of identifying best practice to bring about improvement in learning outcomes for students (e.g. the 'Calculators', 'Daily Five' and 'Learning Frontiers').
- A wide variety of data sets have been collected (and curated) by staff; however, there has not been a systematic process for sharing this with school community.
- Within some teaching teams, teachers are taking responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve their SMART goals and are using data on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts to meet those goals.

Within the **Analysis and Discussion of Data** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *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. There is a documented school plan and timetable for the annual collection of data on student achievement.*
- *Time is set aside for the discussion of data and the implications of data classroom practices. These discussions occur at 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.*
- *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.*

Comments and Findings

- Teaching teams in the primary sector meet regularly and discuss a range of pre and post test data in literacy and numeracy, monitoring the progress of every child, identifying gaps in learning and considering ways in which they can close these gaps. Data in literacy and numeracy is being monitored every five weeks and teachers are measuring the progress of every child.
- The tracking of every student's progress is evident where there are established data walls and regularly maintained tracking spreadsheets.
- There is evidence of some teaching teams analysing a range of literacy and numeracy data sets, triangulating this data in Action Research teams, like the 'Calculators' and 'Daily Five'.
- Data is being used by teaching teams to develop SMART goals for the cohort at each team meeting.
- There are teachers and leaders at Amaroo who reflect a sophisticated understanding of data concepts (eg growth and triangulation).
- Target populations (e.g. G&T, Learning Support & EAL/D) are well tracked and monitored for growth.

With respect to **A Culture that Promotes Learning** domain, the panel noted the following.

- *There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.*
- *A strong collegial culture has been established. Teachers have an overt and shared commitment to the improvement of teaching and an openness to critique by colleagues. This is reflected in the fact that teachers regularly invite leaders and colleagues to visit their classrooms to observe their teaching.*
- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems.*
- *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.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*

Comments and Findings

- Staff, students and parents alike speak about the school with great pride and a sense of belonging.
- A collegial culture has been deliberately forged and nurtured (e.g. staff expressed their sense of being inspired to have professional courage).
- Parents were very visible in many parts of the school, and participation (volunteering, attendance at events) is high.
- There were classroom examples of purposeful learning achieved through practices including learning goals, tuning in, explicit teaching and checking for understanding.
- The school enjoys a very good reputation in the community.
- The cross-age tutoring and Student Leadership at Amaroo (SLAM) contribute to the positive culture of the school.
- The school practice of student-led three-way conversations about learning and student-led conferences are evidence of building a strong culture of learning.

The panel noted the following in relation to the **Targeted Use of Resources** domain.

- *A range of initiatives are being implemented to make more effective use of available resources to enhance teaching and learning.*
- *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 (eg, 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 (eg, 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 and technology are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*

Comments and Findings

- Initiatives such as Cross-Age Tutoring, Learning Frontiers, G&T, EAL/D and Action Research groups are examples of innovative resourcing to support learning at Amaroo.
- Through student focus meetings, individual learning needs are being identified and addressed across the school.
- The school has resourced a model of release of teachers so that they can plan in teams with leaders.
- Systematic processes identify EAL/D, learning support and G&T learners and targeted resources support their learning.

- The school has flexibly responded to stakeholder feedback and set about resourcing and restructuring support services for student wellbeing and engagement.

Within the **An Expert Teaching Team** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *Teachers and school leaders take personal and collective responsibility for improving student learning and wellbeing, working together and learning from each other's practices. The sharing and showcasing of best practice are common.*
- *School leaders place a very high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff and on the development of a school-wide, self-reflective culture focused on improving classroom teaching.*
- *School leaders participate in professional learning activities, learning alongside teachers, and the school supports teachers to continue formal study and celebrates professional success.*
- *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.*
- *There is a documented professional learning plan and the school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching. Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*

Comments and Findings

- In some teaching teams at Amaroo, there is an emphasis on the joint analysis of student work and on teaching strategies for improving student learning. These teachers collaboratively plan, deliver and review the effectiveness of lessons.
- Formal processes for conducting professional conversations with staff are evident and teachers develop Professional Pathways plans that are reviewed regularly with supervisors.
- A Professional Practice leadership position and other identified staff drive the professional learning culture and practices at Amaroo.
- A Professional Practice Hub has been established and this facility and its associated resources supports the focus on continuous improvement in teaching, building capacity and a culture of professional learning, particularly in the junior campus.
- This school has been recognised and commended at the national level (by AITSL) for their evidenced practices in developing expert teaching teams. Currently there are five nationally accredited Lead & Highly Accomplished teachers, and a further four are pursuing this.
- Teachers are observed by colleagues and leaders up to eight times each calendar year and provided with extensive feedback (e.g. self and peer reflections, vignettes of teacher practice).

- The model of classroom observation and feedback has matured from a model of peer observation without clear protocols and procedures to a more collaborative coaching model where the focus is more aligned to learner need and school wide priorities.
- Beginning teachers are supported by a comprehensive induction and formalised mentoring program.
- A Classroom Practice Continuum aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers provides the framework for monitoring, supporting and providing feedback to teachers about their practice.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside of the classroom and supports their development through the school's Aspiring Leaders professional development program.
- In team meetings, teachers discuss student work, effective teaching practices and collaboratively plan.

In the domain **Systematic Curriculum Delivery**, the panel noted the following.

- *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.*
- *School leaders talk about embedding fundamental cross-curricular skills such as literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking within all subjects, but there is little evidence that school-wide strategies are in place to drive a consistent approach.*
- *Discussions about curriculum delivery tend to be sporadic and reactive with a year level focus rather than being driven by a leadership team with a whole-school approach.*

Comments and Findings

- Teachers develop units of work based on the Understanding by Design approach. These plans are completed according to a school-wide set of expectations which include: alignment to the Australian Curriculum; differentiated learning (core, support and extension) and assessment and reflection.
- School leaders provide feedback on these plans which are collaboratively developed by teaching teams.
- Scope and Sequence documents for all Key Learning Area are not evident.
- There is intent within the school to enact a restructuring of roles and organisational structure of the school (particularly affecting 6-10) aimed at strengthening the school's ability to develop and deliver a whole-school curriculum plan.

In consideration of the domain **Differentiated Teaching and Learning**, the panel found the following.

- *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.

- *Different needs of students are addressed, and 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.*

Comments and Findings

- Widespread evidence of the use of Google Classroom (and other online opportunities) supports differentiated learning for students.
- The school systematically supports the use of formative assessment strategies including rubrics, criteria for pre-task and post-task and grasp tasks (integrated KLA assessments) and reflection.
- Differentiation is planned for within assessment tasks and feedback to students is likewise differentiated.
- Targeted professional learning in PLCs is building staff capacity around formative assessment and differentiation
- Many PLTs look at the planning- data cycle and then plan targeted support. Teams set SMART goals for each concept taught.
- Teachers use strategies like 'bump it up' to set learning expectations.
- Identified students have ILPs, PLPs and TLPs and the development of these is shared and then supported by school leaders.
- Structures exist within the school to support the needs of identified G&T students (e.g. enrichment classes)
- Classes often centre around well-articulated learning goals – individual and group, short, and longer term and students can articulate these.

The panel noted the following regarding the domain **Effective Pedagogical Practices**.

- *School leaders spend time working with teachers to improve their teaching practices, including modelling, evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching.*
- *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 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

- Teachers have 'professional courage' to implement a strong culture of learning and innovation.
- Teachers spend time with each other observing and providing feedback, and leaders also work closely with teachers, modelling, observing, coaching and providing feedback.
- There is evidence of significant professional learning about effective teaching,
- The school's commitment to PALLS (predominantly relating to reading) is evident and teachers are using a range of highly effective teaching practices in literacy.
- There are multiple examples of clear learning expectations in classrooms.
- Students are provided with timely and explicit feedback through practices such as Bump it Up, the Google Classroom and blogs, self and peer assessments.

In the final domain **School-Community Partnerships**, the panel found the following.

- *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.*
- *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. However, there may be limited evidence of improved student outcomes as a result of partnership activities – possibly because there has been insufficient time for them to demonstrate an effect.*
- *(Some) 'Partnerships' tend to be mutually convenient arrangements (eg, exchanges of expertise or the sharing of facilities between institutions or organisations). Such 'partnerships' often are established by individual members of staff and have limited whole-school support or engagement.*

Comments and Findings

- There is evidence of a key partnership with AITSL to not only support the building of teacher capacity within Amaroo classrooms, but in influencing best practice nationally. Through this partnership teachers have been nationally accredited and the resultant processes and practices have cemented this school's reputation around building an expert teaching team.

- The Learning Frontiers partnership with Google Education, ACEL and University of Canberra's Inspire Centre, builds staff capacity and enriched and innovative learning opportunities for students.
- The Duke of Edinburgh initiative facilitates beneficial partnerships with community agencies.
- The school is actively seeking ways to partner with parents and carers to engage them as partners in learning. This is evidenced through extremely high levels of participation at key school events.
- The school has high levels of community use of its facilities.
- The strong links with the local senior college allow a seamless transition for Amaroo graduates. The connections also manifest in curriculum conversations and sharing of assessments to build teacher capacity at both schools.
- Members of the school community work very hard to connect with business, charities and community organisations to enhance learning opportunities for students (e.g. Money Smart, Solar Choice Energy and sister school arrangements).
- Amaroo Angels (parent volunteers confirms the highly engaged nature of the school community).

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

The National Safe Schools Framework Tool was used by Amaroo School in term one, 2016 to reflect on their school culture. This reflection was a collaborative process conducted during a whole school meeting. Staff in groups and across sectors discussed and reached consensus about the ratings for each of the nine elements. Staff were asked to consider the evidence that would support their deliberations.

Amaroo School has used this tool to triangulate earlier student feedback in relation to how well behaviour is managed in the school. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 only one third of students were satisfied that this was well managed. Further, in 2015, only 45% of students believed that teachers at the school treat students fairly. Through participation in a research project in partnership with the University of South Australia in 2014 about the prevalence and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies, the school has been able to draw on additional data in their reflections.

In the National Safe Schools Audit Tool, two key areas were identified for improvement:

- student wellbeing and student ownership and engagement, in particular, the adoption of a strengths-based approach to student learning and participation
- skill development and safe school curriculum, in particular, the teaching of social and emotional skills in all subjects and across all year levels

In response to the data collated from both the National Safe Schools Audit Tool and other data sets, the school has redeveloped its Building Quality Relationships policy which is to be fully implemented in 2016. A number of strategies to support social and emotional learning in the school have been implemented and the panel noted some of these new initiatives including a Cross Age Tutoring Program, leadership programs and a Graduation Points schemes. Students spoke highly of these during interviews with panel members.

Section E: Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

Amaroo School is commended for the following.

1. A collaborative coaching culture exists here. This results in the development of capacity, expertise and professional courage. Teachers at Amaroo expect to learn from each other and this culture is characterised by disciplined dialogues (including feedback).
2. The school's improvement agenda has shifted the focus from teaching to learning. This is evidenced in the embedding of professional learning communities and teams focused on student learning data. As a result, there is a prevalence of highly effective teaching teams. Teachers and leaders make excellent use of SMART goals in their respective teams. Teams are applying 'actionable knowledge to improve practice'.
3. The embracing of an innovation agenda is highly commendable. This is evidenced by a strong focus on 21st Century learning through the embedding of cutting edge technology throughout the school and the enlisting of the Amaroo community in that journey.
4. The way the school has implemented targeted programs to meet the needs of specific student populations. There is evidence of highly effective Gifted & Talented responses and programs in support of students with English as an Additional Language/Dialect.
5. The thorough embedding of formative assessment as a tool to identify and respond to student learning needs. There is a shared commitment to individualising the learning for students and this is evident in planning documents, reports and in classrooms. The learning is visible at Amaroo.
6. The continued fostering of a happy and optimistic school culture. The school enjoys the support of its community as a result of inclusive and positive practices and a focus on knowing every child. This has served Amaroo well through periods of immense growth and provides a strong foundation for future growth.

Recommendations

The panel recommends Amaroo School pays attention to the following opportunities for improvement during the next planning cycle.

1. Continue to build a 'one school' ethos from pre-school to year ten. Align current policies, structures, procedures, rituals and symbols that exist in sectors, to bring about a seamless transition for students in learning and school culture.
2. Develop a more explicit school improvement agenda which is narrow, sharp and focussed with clear targets and timelines to guide the whole school's attention on identified priorities. Further develop the newly established leadership structure of the

school with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure that the key improvement strategies are systematically embedded in practice.

3. Develop a whole of school plan for curriculum delivery which includes scope and sequence documents for all Key Learning Areas to ensure continuity and progression of learning pre-school to year ten. These documents should align with the Australian Curriculum, and include the explicit articulation of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
4. Continue to build a whole of school approach to data collection and analysis. Identify areas for improvement, trends in student growth, and bring about consistent practice amongst individual teachers and teaching teams in interpreting and responding to individual, class and cohort data.
5. Continue to implement the Building Quality Relationships policy to support a whole of school approach to the building of positive and caring relationships and the promotion of behaviour expectations.
6. Further articulate and embed a pedagogical framework for P-10 at Amaroo that makes clear the research-based teaching practices that are expected of all teachers.

Section F: Record of School Review Process

The following people were members of the external School Review Panel for Amaroo School conducted on 26-28 July 2016.

Name: Julie Murkins	School: Principal, Lake Tuggeranong College
Name: Cindie Deeker	School: Principal, Duffy Primary School

As chair of the Panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external School Review process.

Name: Christina Rogers	
Signature: 	Date: 7 1 9 1 16

As Principal of Amaroo School I accept the School Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Gai Beecher	
Signature: 	Date: 2 1 9 1 16