



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

**EXTERNAL REVIEW  
REPORT for  
MELBA COPLAND  
SECONDARY 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**

Melba Copland Secondary School is a dual campus secondary school situated in the west of the Belconnen district of Canberra. It is the only public school in the Canberra Region providing secondary education for all students from years 7 to 12. The school is an authorised International Baccalaureate (IB) school from years 7 to 12 with the Middle Years Program (MYP) in years 7 to 10 and the IB Diploma Program in years 11 and 12. The school has a vision to create a culture of high expectation in teaching and learning that fosters a supportive environment of respect, trust and intercultural understanding.

The school has a current student population of 563. Approximately 75 percent of students are drawn from within its Priority Enrolment Area (PEA). The school has experienced declining enrolments from 2012 to 2015, although in 2016 the total school enrolment has increased. The number of year 7 students enrolling has increased in the last two years. There has been little new housing and an aging profile in the local community; however a new estate development is predicted to have impact on enrolments in the coming years.

Over the life of the plan, the Index of Community Socio-economic Advantage (ICSEA) score has remained relatively constant and close to its highest level in 2012 of 1011. Since 2012 the enrolment number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students for which English is an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) has remained constant. The school includes a Learning Support Centre (LSC) on the High School campus and a Learning Support Unit (LSU) at the College.

The current principal took up the position with the amalgamation of the two campuses in 2008. The principal is supported by three School Leader B positions, two at the High School campus and one at the College. There are 13 School Leader C positions. The school has had relative senior leadership stability over the life of the plan.

Melba Copland Secondary School has undergone significant refurbishment in recent years. A Trade Skills Centre for Hospitality, Construction and Horticulture was completed in 2015. Facility modernisation has also occurred on both campuses, including improvements in the visual arts, design, engineering and photography, performing arts learning spaces, and the student services and career and futures suites on the senior campus, and a refurbishment of the Humanities classrooms on the junior campus.

## **Section B: School Performance**

### **1. Student Learning Data**

The school has set mean score targets for reading and numeracy for each of the years of this planning cycle as measured by the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The school has met these articulated targets in year 9 for three out of the four years. In year 7, these targets have been achieved in numeracy in 2013 and in reading in 2015. Over the life of the plan Melba Copland Secondary School has been below the ACT mean scores in all test domain elements for years 7 and 9. The school has also set growth targets from year 7 to 9 and the panel sighted this growth data. The growth targets were achieved in 2013, 2014 and in 2015 except for spelling.

During the course of the plan, the school has developed a significant whole school focus on literacy. With the introduction of Doug Fisher's '7 Literacies' and the introduction of a Response to Intervention (RTI) model to identify and cater for literacy learning needs, there is already evidence to indicate that this approach is having an impact on classroom practice and student learning. The school has also introduced Mental Years Mental Computation (MYMC) for students in years 7 and 8 to focus on improving numeracy results.

The performance data from the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BSSS) for the College shows variability in the meeting of targets over the life of the plan. The College achieved the target in 2013 of a median ATAR of 75 and only just fell short of the target in 2015 with a median ATAR of 74.05. The targets in relation to the number of students receiving a year 12 certificate or equivalent success and post school participation in work or study were not met. The College median ATAR has remained relatively stable increasing in 2015 from 2014. The percentage of students receiving a Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) has decreased from 2011 to 2014, increasing in 2015. The number of students undertaking Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBA) has been increasing over the life of the plan from 29 in 2011 to 44 in 2015, even though the number of students enrolled in year 12 has declined over the last five years.

### **2. Stakeholder Perception Data**

The introduction and successful authorisation of the MYP has provided a clear pathway from high school to college in the delivery of the IB. This curriculum offering combined with the introduction of the Magellan and the Honours Programs, as well as the clear focus on literacy, has had an impact on community perception with enrolments into year 7 increasing in the last two years. The overall proportion of parents in agreement with national items of the Parent and Carer Satisfaction Survey has improved over the last three years with an overall 10.6 percentage point improvement in parent perceptions.

Students, staff and parents who were interviewed by the panel universally agreed that the culture of the school was focussed on supporting student learning and wellbeing. They spoke of a "boutique" college, with students indicating that they felt connected to their school environment. Students interviewed also commented on how well students get along together and expressed their appreciation for the way teachers cared for and supported them. The panel noted that data from the Student Satisfaction Survey revealed that students felt that there were issues with how behaviour is managed at the school, and how student opinion is valued.

The panel found evidence in the Climate Survey data that over this planning cycle perception rates of staff have remained relatively stable.

### 3. Demographic Data

Strategies have been employed to engage parents and students to improve attendance and to decrease the suspension rate.

Attendance has steadily increased overall from 2012-2015 across all years: from 84.5 percent in 2012 to 88.8 percent in 2015. The panel found evidence of a focus on increasing student engagement in the school through a comprehensive program of 'Get Involved' activities, the monitoring of absences and a focus on increasing parent involvement.

Further, there has been a significant drop in suspensions since 2015 which can be ascribed to their focus on supporting student wellbeing on both campuses, increasing engagement and belonging and the implementation of clear policies and procedures in relation to managing student behaviour. The panel noted in interviews that the school also contributes the reduction in suspensions to a restorative justice approach based on relational practices as a better way of managing incidences.

**TABLE 1: Suspension Data Distribution 2012-2016**

Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
2012	8	33	29	6	2	4	82
2013	3	10	12	6	0	0	31
2014	6	26	9	3	1	0	45
2015	9	11	8	14	0	0	42
2016	8	11	3	1	2	0	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>225</b>

The school has strengthened partnerships with the local primary schools and one of these schools has already introduced the Primary Years Programme (PYP). As Melba Copland Secondary School has become an authorised MYP school, there is now a pathway from primary through to college in the delivery of the IB curriculum.

The number of students for which EAL/D has remained constant over the life of this plan: from 122 in 2013 to 120 in 2015. The College does have 60 International Private Students (IPS) who are well supported by the identified coordinator and by college staff.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has also remained constant: 30 students in 2013 and 28 in 2015.

### 4. Process Data

- The School collects data from literacy testing including: NAPLAN, Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT), Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R), Test of Word Reading Efficiency – Second Edition (TOWRE 2) and Online Literacy and Numeracy

Assessment (OLNA, year 11). The school has now implemented a RTI Framework based on tiered interventions. Tiers 2 and 3 groups have been staffed by classroom teachers with additional PL, and LSAs who have undergone training in skill builder program programs.

- The school has introduced Peer Observations to take place once each term. This is a formal process where teachers meet, observe a lesson and then share feedback regarding classroom practice.
- The school has analysed: Attendance Data, Enrolment and Retention Data and Suspension Data to strengthen the school community.
- Through the introduction of Professional Learning and Networking (PLAN), Annual Action Plans (AAP) and Faculty Action Plans (FAP) staff have clear processes to focus on the school strategic priorities to improve student learning and engagement and staff and student wellbeing.

#### *Evidence cited*

- Demographic data
- NAPLAN data and analysis documentation
- School Satisfaction Surveys and School Climate data and analysis documentation
- Student academic performance data sets
- School data and school data tool

## Section C: School Improvement Planning and Implementation

### Priority Areas

The school has an articulated improvement agenda, documented and reflected upon at regular intervals during the life of the School Strategic Plan through Annual/Faculty Plans and School Board reports. A number of targets have been set to achieve the three identified strategic priorities. The creation of Faculty Action Plans has assisted in focussing attention on the key improvement strategies.

The School has focused on three strategic priorities from 2013 to 2016.

1. Enhance student learning and performance
2. Participation and engagement
3. MCSS Wellbeing: enhance emotional and social intelligence of students and staff

The panel found evidence of a continuous line of improvement intent at Melba Copland Secondary School for each of these priorities. The school leadership team has identified priorities that emerged from the previous External Validation process and from the Satisfaction Surveys and the Student Wellbeing Framework 7-12. Structural revision and attendant resourcing is evident in the way the school articulates annual actions in support of the overarching priority areas.

The following table summarises Melba Copland Secondary School's key improvement strategies as drawn from the School Strategic Plan.

**TABLE 2: School priority areas and key performance indicators**

<b>Priority Areas</b>	<b>Enhance Learning and Performance</b>	<b>Participation and Engagement</b>	<b>MCSS Wellbeing: enhance emotional and social intelligence of students and staff</b>
<b>Key improvement strategies</b>	Students effectively use critical and creative thinking (QTM – Intellectual Quality)	Review communication and marketing strategy.	To enhance staff professional wellbeing and resilience.
	Establish and sustain quality assessment practices (QTM- Quality Learning Environment)	Develop community and marketing strategy.	Students demonstrate personal and social connectedness (QTM-significance)

*Source: School Strategic Plan for Melba Copland Secondary School. 2013-2016.*

## **Achievements**

### **Strategic Priority 1: Student Learning and Performance**

Key indicators for this priority confirm that targets have been set for NAPLAN, year 12 results and post school participation. The school achieved the growth targets set for NAPLAN in 2013 to 2015 with the exception of spelling. The school achieved the 2013 target for the number of year 12 students achieving an average ATAR, however the other identified targets were not met in this planning cycle.

The panel noted a number of identified strategies in each AAP to be implemented to work towards meeting the targets of this priority.

#### *International Baccalaureate Program – MYP*

The school has undergone the IB process for MYP authorisation, culminating in successful accreditation in 2016.

#### *Teaching and Learning*

The panel found evidence that there has been a significant focus on professional learning for staff, and through the implementation of a whole of school Professional Learning and Networking Plans (PLAN). Teachers have engaged in whole of staff professional development, action research teams and an observation and feedback program.

#### *Curriculum Development*

In preparation for authorisation as an MYP school and full implementation of the Australian Curriculum, there has been a review of school planning documentation to ensure compliance. Comprehensive planning documentation for years 7 and 8 was evident and course writing continues for years 9 and 10. The introduction and authorisation of the MYP provides students with the opportunity to study a rigorous international curriculum from years 7-12. A revised timetable structure and new reporting processes are in place.

#### *Literacy and Numeracy*

Staff have analysed NAPLAN performance data and as a result have introduced literacy and numeracy programs to improve student outcomes. The panel saw evidence of a suite of whole of cohort test data results, using a range of diagnostic test instruments to identify and respond to student needs. This regime of data collection commenced during this planning cycle. The RTI model for tiered levels of support in literacy has been introduced and the panel found examples of significant individual improvement in literacy for some students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 programs. The introduction of the Mental Computation program and small group support for numeracy in the High School are two strategies to improve numeracy.

The school has introduced the Magellan Program for more highly abled students as identified by diagnostic testing in partnership with local primary schools in year five. Enrichment programs in mathematics and science have been introduced to challenge some of these identified learners.

### *Year 12 Academic Performance*

The enrolment patterns as a 7-12 school have seen a contraction of the year 11 and 12 student populations, yet there has been a significant increase in the number of ASBA across the life of the plan. The panel noted evidence of a strong commitment to vocational pathway and workplace experience opportunities. The school's careers and academic advice team work closely with every student to ensure they have a clear and realistic plan for success, with pathway options considered. There has been a considerable investment in the establishment of the Trade Training Centre at the College.

### **Strategic Priority 2: Participation and Engagement**

In this strategic planning cycle the school has set a number of targets to improve participation and engagement of current students with a particular focus on improving attendance, retaining larger numbers of students from year 10 to 11, and increasing daily attendance rates.

The school identified from the analysis of school wide data, particularly the Client Survey data, the need to provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in a broad range of both curriculum based and co-curricular activities to further connect them with school. In doing so, the executive leadership team determined that there would be an enhanced sense of belonging and engagement, fewer behaviour incidents and improved attendance, and subsequently improved learning outcomes. The school also identified the need to expand the transition activities for students in local primary schools and the year 10 cohort with a view to increasing enrolments and retention of enrolments. With these priorities in mind, the school set targets for attendance measures: 2 percent improvement in each year level; enrolment retention and growth: transition retention from year 10-11 at 80 percent; year 7 enrolment growth (target of 100) and suspensions not exceeding an average of 10 per year level.

### *Targeted Programs for Engagement*

There is strong evidence that the school has targeted programs to engage and retain Melba Copland students. Through the 'Get involved' co-curricular program, partnerships with a number of local businesses, organisations, local schools and universities, and the organisation of special community events, the school has actively sought opportunities for students to participate in a very wide range of engaging programs. The panel found evidence that there was an overall general improvement in attendance across the year levels with the greatest improvement in 2015 where each year level increased more than 2 percent in attendance rates.

Through the College Headstart program, and other year 10 transition program initiatives, the school has focused on improving the retention rates from year 10 to 11 from within the school as well as attracting students from other P-10 schools. The panel noted that the school has not met the target of 80 percent transitioning from the High School to College but recognises that this is an ongoing priority.

### *Year 7 Increased Enrolments*

The enrolment data indicates that there has been a significant improvement in year 7 enrolments for 2016: the enrolments exceeded the target of 100 by 18 students. Through a range of initiatives including the Magellan Gifted and Talented Program for years 5 and 6; primary dance program, key cluster special events, and a series of transition visits to the High

School and parent interviews, Melba Copland Secondary School has remained focused on increasing enrolments in year 7 and beyond.

### *Strengthening of Partnerships to Support Participation and Engagement*

The panel noted that Melba Copland Secondary School has established a number of partnerships with local schools, community and businesses to enhance learning opportunities and to participate in diverse cultural activities.

A focus on cultural events through the Buroinjin and Pacifika programs was evident. Other partnerships include several links with local universities and training providers to support students in their learning. Also, there are targeted programs for engagement which include the Talented Athletes Program (TAP), F1 competition with Australian Defence Forces (ADF) and IT Creative media with the AIE. The school's commitment to community is further evidenced by their ANZAC commemoration and the NAIDOC assembly both of which are strongly connected to the broader community. There is evidence of a number of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) formalising key partnerships with businesses, organisations and the community.

### **Strategic Priority 3: MCSS Wellbeing; enhance emotional and social intelligence of students and staff.**

The panel found considerable evidence that the school has undertaken to invest significantly in student wellbeing to improve student learning outcomes. To this end, the Wellbeing Policy and Framework was updated in 2014-2015 to align with the policy and practices of the IB.

Student wellbeing and performance is monitored by the executive and identified teachers including pastoral care teachers across both campuses. Student management is underpinned by restorative practices in partnerships with parents/carers. All staff have undertaken Restorative Practices professional learning.

The Pastoral Care Program, which includes the GetInvolved@MCSS program, also supports the engagement and social and emotional needs of students. Further, staff have undertaken professional learning in Trauma Responsive Education to support student wellbeing.

There is a dedicated Learning Support Team who supports students with a disability and with learning difficulties.

The school set targets in the Satisfaction Survey from 2013 -2015 to improve student satisfaction with the school over the life of the Strategic Plan by 5 percentage points by 2016. The data has remained reasonably consistent across the life of the plan. The panel recommends that the school continues to focus on improvement in Student Satisfaction Survey data.

From 2013-2016 the school has maintained a commitment to student wellbeing through fostering connections between students on the two campuses including the cross campus school captains meetings, Pastoral Care curriculum program, TAP program, link to Mind Matters being developed, year 7-10 enrichment program and the Indigenous Student Action Research Program.

A strong indication of success in improving student wellbeing and engagement is the reduced number of disciplinary absences. The school has almost met its target of suspensions not exceeding 10 per year level this year and the data does show that suspensions have been decreasing since 2012.

## **Reflections**

Melba Copland Secondary School has endeavoured to take up the challenges and opportunities since 2013 to prosecute their improvement agenda.

The Review Panel validates the assessment of the school in terms of implementing the three strategic priorities.

- Enhance Student Learning and Performance
- Participation and Engagement
- MCSS Wellbeing: enhance emotional and social intelligence of students and staff

The panel notes that the leadership team has initiated programs to enhance student learning and performance. These programs have potential to improve student outcomes but the line of sight across all programs still needs to be refined to ensure there is an impact on meeting future targets, particularly for year 12 results in the College, and literacy and numeracy results for high school students.

During the course of this plan the leadership team identified the need to strengthen a school-wide literacy focus to improve student outcomes. This is now clearly embedded in all classrooms and it is supported by Peer Observations undertaken by all teachers. Student wellbeing is a strong focus across the campuses and should continue into the next plan.

### *Evidence cited*

- Strategic Plan 2013-2016
- Annual Plans 2013-2016
- Annual School Board Reports 2013-2015
- Satisfaction Surveys
- MCSS Wellbeing Policy and Framework
- Newsletters
- PLANS and FAPs
- MOUs
- The MYP Authorisation Report and curriculum folders
- RTI student evidence
- OBSSS longitudinal data
- MYP Authorisation Report and curriculum folders

## Section D: National Tools Self-Evaluation Results

Melba Copland Secondary School completed a self-evaluation, in consultation with key stakeholder groups, using the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). Board members, teaching staff and selected student representatives participated in the evaluation. Teaching staff were asked to evaluate domains 5 to 9 of the tool, and the executive leadership team reviewed domains 1 to 4. The school evaluated both campuses individually to highlight differentiation of priority areas for each of the two campuses. The staff findings provided a basis for discussion at School Board meetings. From this collaboration, a whole of school evaluation was then derived.

### National School Improvement Tool

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

- *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 and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*
- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from research evidence, international experience and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student's success.*
- *Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g. not accompanied by timelines).*

### Comments and Findings

- The school has developed a School Strategic Plan and subsequent AAPs and has identified three key priorities in this planning cycle: enhanced student learning and performance; participation and engagement; and wellbeing, enhance emotional and social intelligence of students and staff.
- Executive teachers have developed FAPs aligned to the identified strategic priorities.
- The whole of school PLANs are aligned to the strategic priorities.
- There are documented targets for each strategic priority in the AAPs, however the timelines, and accompanying milestones are not specific within these documents.
- Teachers identify a range of focus areas for improvement, the most commonly identified areas were literacy across the curriculum and MYP.
- Through consultation with community the school has expanded the IB curriculum to the High School by introducing MYP as an improvement initiative.
- Through the IB partnership, the school is drawing on evidence of international practice.
- The leadership team has analysed a range of data sets and are aware of some trends in the school, particularly for NAPLAN, attendance, VET, ATAR, behaviour and School Satisfaction Surveys.

- Through a number of initiatives, the school is endeavouring to improve student outcomes using research. These include: action research projects; partnerships with universities and the implementation of evidence based improvement strategies (e.g. literacy).

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.*
- *One or more members of staff have been assigned responsibility for implementing the annual plan, analysing the full range of school data, and summarising, displaying and communicating student outcome data for the school.*
- *Time is set aside (e.g. on pupil free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data and the implications of data for school policies and classroom practices. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels. The school can illustrate through case studies, meeting minutes and project plans how data have been used to identify priorities, take action and monitor progress.*
- *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.*

### **Comments and Findings**

- A range of whole of school and cohort data sets, for this planning cycle, have been analysed by the school leadership team including academic, behaviour, attendance and wellbeing statistics.
- This data is discussed in a range of forums including executive, staff and board meetings.
- A range of whole of school diagnostic testing has been introduced and is now being analysed. From this data students have been identified for literacy intervention programs, G&T and subject choices.
- The school is working to establish mechanisms for teachers to easily access a suite of data sets to inform their teaching.
- There is evidence that some teachers are using the diagnostic data to understand the learning profile of their classes.
- A whole of school approach is being developed to make clear what data sets will be collected, analysed and who has responsibility for this in the school. Through this emerging plan, the school is moving towards a systematic process of analysis and discussion.

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

- *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.*
- *Classrooms are generally orderly, although some are more so than others. Non-attendance is an issue for a small minority of students. However, many other students appear to be minimally engaged in productive learning activities.*
- *The school effectively implements its policies, for example, by ensuring that disruptive behaviour, bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly. The school has clear expectations for how students should behave and interact with one another, and in the main, relationships are caring and respectful. Some staff time is taken up dealing with behaviour problems.*

### **Comments and Findings**

- A comprehensive Student Services Policy Guide has been developed and is being implemented. Clear procedures for managing student behaviour, underpinned by a restorative justice and relational practices approach, are evident.
- There is evidence that student behaviour is affecting learning in some classrooms in the High School.
- Through a highly structured pastoral care program (Student Wellbeing Framework) which includes the embedding of the Mind Matters program, the wellbeing needs of students are being addressed. Through the provision of staff: pastoral care teachers, year coordinators and executive leaders, and a student services team, student wellbeing is being closely monitored and supported.
- To build a sense of belonging and increase student engagement in learning, a comprehensive 'get involved' extra-curricular program has been implemented, and through this, students have multiple opportunities to engage in a range of sporting, academic and cultural activities.
- Through the implementation of MYP, there is an emerging focus on the IB learner profile attributes as well as an emphasis on building a culture of coherent learning from year 7 to 12.
- Students, staff and parents alike speak highly of the school.
- A range of transition activities support students in moving from local primary schools to the High School.
- There is evidence of a range of opportunities for year 10 students to participate in college programs to support their transition.
- The school has placed a strong emphasis on valuing diversity and building an inclusive culture.
- Through MYP consultation processes, year 6 enrolment interviews, year 10 transition meetings and senior interviews the school is encouraging parents to be partners in education.

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

- *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**

- The school has commenced the implementation of a RTI model to systematically identify and respond to individual need. Through this a number of students have been identified for individual and small group literacy intervention programs and this has been resourced.
- The needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are being addressed. Individual plans are developed and resourcing has been allocated to support the needs of these students.
- There has been a significant investment in the IB program. For example, considerable funds have been expended to support the required professional learning and sustain the program.
- The school has prioritised and resourced the key priority of student wellbeing.
- Systematic processes for the identification of gifted and talented students are evident and this process begins in year 5 with cluster primary schools. The school has resourced the Magellan Gifted and Talented Program for these students and for those identified in the High School.
- The Honours programs provide opportunities for high academic achievement students to be challenged and recognised.
- There has been a significant investment in improving the learning environment for students across both campuses, including the refurbishment of several learning spaces in this planning cycle.
- Cross campus sharing of teachers to make more effective use of available resources is evident.

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

- *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.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff who find it difficult to commit to the school's improvement agenda.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*
- *The school undertakes professional learning activities, although these may not always focus on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning.*
- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues, although there may not be formal mentoring or coaching arrangements in place.*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction, and in staff handbooks.*

### **Comments and Findings**

- There has been considerable investment in professional learning to support the MYP implementation.
- Teachers are visiting each other's classrooms and providing written and verbal feedback to each other. This is contributing to an emerging focus on a professional learning culture.
- To support the school focus on improved literacy, lead teachers have been mentoring and coaching others in embedding the seven key literacy elements.
- An annual Professional Learning and Networking Plan (PLAN) is developed each year with overarching goals for professional learning. From this, professional learning communities meet and devise projects. Strengthened collaboration amongst teachers is evident.
- There is evidence of a suite of professional learning opportunities for staff aligned to the identified priorities.
- Professional Pathways plans have been developed for each teacher and there is a process for reviewing these.

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

- *The school's curriculum delivery plan identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements. The curriculum delivery plan reflects a shared vision (by the school's governing body, principal, school leadership team, and teachers) for the school, and provides a context for delivering the curriculum as detailed in the Australian or other approved curriculum and, where relevant, system curriculum documents.*

- *The school curriculum plan and curriculum delivery (including the time allocated to particular learning) balance requirements to address all learning areas, to give priority to English, mathematics and science, and to embed the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking in all school subjects.*
- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers and that the curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed, assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported. Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the range of students within each year level as well as those with disabilities and other particular needs.*

## **Comments and Findings**

- As part of the school's commitment to the MYP, there has been a significant focus on curriculum renewal to align with IB requirements.
- There are clearly documented, comprehensive planning documents as required of the MYP for years 7 and 8.
- The school is currently working to align year 9 and 10 planning documents to MYP requirements.
- The school has been implementing the Australian Curriculum and there is evidence of work to align requirements of this framework with the curriculum requirements of IB.
- Literacy across the curriculum has been a strong focus for the school.
- Teachers are planning in teams and the enacted curriculum is an ongoing focus for discussion as the school works to fully implement the MYP program in the High School.
- The school has liaised with the school community in relation to implementing the IB curriculum across the whole school.

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

- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided, including multiple pathways for transition to external studies (e.g. apprenticeships) for students in Years 10-12.*
- *School leaders are committed to success for all, but do not drive a strong classroom agenda to assess and identify individual learning needs or to differentiate teaching according to students' needs.*
- *Some use is made of assessment instruments to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and starting points for teaching, but this appears to be at the initiative of individual teachers rather than a school-wide expectation.*
- *Some use is made of differentiated teaching but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students.*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

## Comments and Findings

- The school has implemented the RTI model to systematically identify and respond to students with learning needs. Through this a number of students have been identified for individual and small group literacy intervention programs. Pre and post testing is completed in eight weekly cycles and individual student improvement is evident. Support for students with learning difficulties in numeracy is also being provided.
- Building teachers' capacity to differentiate the needs of learners has been a focus for the school through targeted action research projects.
- The school is moving towards a whole of school approach to the use of diagnostic testing to identify and address the learning needs of students and supporting teachers to use this data to inform their teaching.
- Some teachers are using a range of strategies to support the needs of their diverse learners including adjustments to content, process, product and environment. School planning documents show evidence of the adjustments required by teachers.
- Teachers are supported to make appropriate adjustments for students with individual learning plans.
- There are a number of differentiated programs to support high ability students. These include: Magellan, Fast track, TAP and Honours.
- A wide range of VET opportunities support the needs of learners.
- A high percentage of students are undertaking an ASBA in the school.

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

- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, 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, 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.*
- *School leaders are explicit about their desire to see effective teaching occurring throughout the school, but are less clear about what this might look like.*

## Comments and Findings

- There is evidence of a focus on continuous improvement in the teaching of literacy practices throughout the school through the embedding of the Doug Fisher's '7 Literacies'. Teachers speak about the inclusion of these practices in lessons.
- There has been professional learning for teachers and LSAs in specialised skill builder programs to support the literacy needs of identified students.
- Through the peer observation process, teachers are discussing and providing feedback on pedagogical practices.
- Timely feedback to students is evident and students speak highly of the explicit detail of this feedback.

- There is an emerging focus on a school wide pedagogical approach of inquiry based approach to learning as a result of the commitment to IB.

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

- *The school leadership team makes deliberate and strategic use of partnerships with families, local businesses and community organisations to access intellectual, physical and/or other resources not available within the school for the purposes of improving student outcomes.*
- *The school's partnerships are being successfully implemented and appear to be adequately resourced and sustainable.*
- *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 and clear objectives have been set, expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students.*
- *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.*

### **Comments and Findings**

- Very strong and sustainable partnerships have been established with local primary schools leading to opportunities for highly abled students (Magellan program); comprehensive transition activities for year 6 students; and a community arts program (for example, Dance Showcase)
- A formalised partnership has been established with the Australian National University (ANU) to mentor and support students in their transition to tertiary studies (Community Ambassadors Scheme).
- A partnership has been established with the University of Canberra (UC) to develop a reflection tool to evaluate students' learning.
- There is a formalised partnership between the school and Hall Rotary to support identified students with disadvantage and for students enrolled in alternative or enrichment programs.
- The Belconnen Regional Trade Training Centre is a formalised partnership with BSSS and the school for the delivery of vocational and training courses. A number of local businesses support the hospitality and construction courses.
- A very broad range of community links are in place to support key events and programs including: Pacifika, Menslink, Schlirp, Buroinjin Sports day, Rotary, Belconnen Community Services etc.

- A signature event in partnership with the cluster schools is the ANZAC commemoration ceremony. This is very highly regarded.
- Through formalised interviews with parents for every child enrolling in year 6; year 12 students preparing for graduation and year 10 students transition to the College, the school is focusing on strengthening parents as partners in their children's education.

### **National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool**

Melba Copland Secondary School completed the National Safe Schools audit. Through a Google survey platform, key stakeholders (staff, students and parents) had the opportunity to provide feedback. Discussions were then held at an executive leadership forum and at a Board meeting. Strengths and further areas for development were identified. Positive relationships between colleagues and student connectedness to the school were identified as strengths. The pastoral care program, meeting student group needs and peer support networks were also highlighted as strengths. The panel noted that the school has identified three areas for further development.

- A consistent approach to the implementation of the school's wellbeing policies and procedures.
- The development of a comprehensive induction program for new staff.
- A strengthened transition program from year 10 to 11.

## Section E: Commendations and Recommendations

### Commendations

Melba Copland Secondary School is commended for the following.

1. Its significant investment in, and commitment to, implementing and gaining accreditation for the MYP of the IB program. The school is congratulated on receiving authorisation as an MYP school in 2016.
2. The implementation of a whole of school approach to the embedding of literacy across the curriculum. The Doug Fisher '7 literacy' strategies are being consistently used in classrooms and teachers have been supported through professional learning and by literacy leaders to build their capacity to embed these in their teaching practices.
3. Investing significantly in the development and implementation of programs and policies, the provision of key personnel and time to ensure that student wellbeing is prioritised and addressed. The school has also invested considerably in programs to support student participation, engagement and belonging. MCSS and its feeder primary partnership strategy has established a sustained community involvement.
4. Moving to a RTI model to identify and respond to the needs of students. The recent implementation of systematic diagnostic testing is supporting the school in better understanding the learning needs of individual students. The Tier 2 small group and the Tier 3 individual intensive interventions are addressing gaps in learning in literacy. Through this targeted intervention, significant improvement for some students is clearly evident.
5. The attendant building of a teacher commitment to reflective practice is evident through the implementation of a highly structured and focused teacher observation and feedback program. Teachers speak positively about the opportunity to learn from colleagues and are very open and supportive of the process.
6. A very strong focus on meeting the needs of students registered in vocational education and training courses is evident. A high number of students are involved in ASBAs.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Develop a more focused, sharp and narrow improvement agenda for the next planning cycle with clear measurable targets for student learning outcomes and timelines. Establish clear accountability processes in the school to ensure that the identified strategies for improvement are rigorously actioned.
2. Finalise decisions about which data sets will be pertinent for Melba Copland Secondary School and then document a whole of school data collection plan and timetable for the annual collection, communication, analysis and use of individual student performance data. Identify those who will be assigned responsibility for implementing this plan and support teachers to interpret and use this data as a tool to differentiate the learning for students.
3. Expand the RTI model to a whole of school process, to identify the needs of all learners and put in place appropriate intervention and responses for the full range of students.
4. Embed a culture of robust critique of teaching practices through the continued implementation of the teacher observation and feedback program. Align more formalised coaching and mentoring models to this program to support improvement in expected practices.
5. Continue to build a culture in the school that reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. Ensure that there is a firm focus on high expectations of behaviour and engagement in learning.
6. Continue to explore ways to strengthen a one school ethos across both campuses, with a focus on effective communication practices, student and staff cohesion and seamless transition between year 10 and 11. The bringing together of multiple programs under the IB umbrella could support this.
7. Build on very successful MCSS and local school partnerships and establish a review and improvement strategy.

## Section F: Record of School Review Process

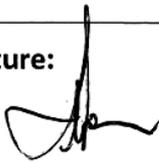
The following people were members of the external School Review Panel for Melba Copland Secondary School conducted on 17-19 August 2016.

<b>Name:</b> Christina Rogers	<b>ACER:</b> Lead Reviewer
<b>Name:</b> Kerrie Grundy	<b>School:</b> Principal, Narrabundah College

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

<b>Name:</b> Christina Rogers	
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 23 / 09 / 2016.

As A/g Principal of Melba Copland Secondary School I accept the School Review Report on behalf of the school community.

<b>Name:</b> Gary Lawson	
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 22 / 09 / 16