



ACT
Government
Education

**EXTERNAL REVIEW
REPORT for
MALKARA 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

Malkara School is located in Hughes in South Canberra and is part of the South/Weston Network of Schools. It provides a program for students who have moderate to severe intellectual disabilities and autism. Many students also have associated sensory or communication impairments, or a physical disability. Students enrol from the south of Canberra and nearby New South Wales, and many are transported to school by bus.

Students are aged from 4 to 12 and class groups are small, with an average of seven students in each. Students are placed in classes according to their age and educational needs and are supported by a teacher and at least one Learning Support Assistant (LSA).

Enrolment numbers at Malkara have fallen during the life of the plan. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) had an impact on students accessing early intervention programs and because of this programs were closed in 2014 at Malkara School. Enrolments have hence fallen to 84 students in 2016 as a number of families have chosen mainstream preschools with additional support through NDIS. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up 9.5 percent of the school population and 17 percent of students bring English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D). Typical of all special education programs, there are a higher proportion of boys to girls.

The Malkara School prescribed leadership structure comprises a Principal, one Deputy Principal, two School Leader Cs (SLCs) and one Executive Teacher (Professional Practice) (ETPP). There have been some significant changes in the composition of the leadership team during the life of the plan. Despite the reduced enrolment numbers, the overall number of staff has remained the same, due to the increase in part-time work arrangements. Some staff personnel changes have occurred due to the closure of Early Intervention Programs, however the staffing profile has remained predominantly the same.

Other impacts on the school over the past four years include the 2014 ACT Education Directorate decision to remove school-based nurses. Schools now have responsibility for the management of student health-related information and support. This initiative, known as Healthcare Access at Schools (HAAS), has been a consideration for Malkara School and implementation will occur by term 4, 2016. The establishment of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and attendant scheme, as a way of planning for and dispersing appropriate care for Australians with disabilities, has also resulted in changes to the way Malkara School staff work with families and ancillary care providers. There are a number of therapists now working with students across the school and the leadership team has developed

a number of protocols and processes to monitor and maintain appropriate levels of therapy aligned to students' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

Significant upgrades to facilities have occurred since the beginning of this planning and review cycle. These include a new hydrotherapy pool, library, two new classrooms, a new art room and a conference facility. There have also been substantial playground upgrades including staff and active break courtyards, shade shelters and renewed fencing. The Parents and Citizens Association has provided substantial funding to support these refurbishments.

Section B: School Performance

Malkara School has outlined in its 2013 – 2016 Strategic Plan the following four priority areas.

- To continue striving for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies
- To provide a total communication environment for students at Malkara School
- To expand inclusion opportunities for all Malkara students
- To strengthen the Malkara teaching and learning cycle

Students at Malkara do not undergo standardised, system-wide testing. All data gathered is individualised for the context of students with moderate to severe intellectual impairment and autism. Individual data is gathered on achievement of ILP goals that are reported twice yearly using a four point scale.

During the period of the plan the school has tracked ILP Achievement Rates. In 2013-2014, ILP achievement rates indicated positive growth. During 2015, ILP achievement rates showed a negative growth. The school reflected that this was in response to increased rigour in the assessment and data collection practices in place and the fact that staff were building their capacity to become familiar with the improved assessment and reporting practice. To continue to build staff capacity in regard to the ILP achievement targets, professional learning in 2016 has focused upon writing more rigorous ILP goals. They use the exemplar of SMART goals to enable accuracy and accountability and focused assessment with the use of the following tools.

- Universally Accessible Emergent Literacy Battery
- The Bridge literacy assessment
- Waddington Maths

While students at Malkara do not participate in surveys, parents and staff perceptions are measured through annual School Satisfaction Surveys. During the period of 2013-2015, parent responses to surveys have been overwhelmingly positive with parents indicating that they are highly satisfied with their child's education and that the school has high expectations and caters for the learning needs of all of the students. While only a small number of parents responded to the survey, the area ranked the lowest was in regard to 'my child feels safe at school'. The panel noted that some students have complex behavioural needs which require individual behavior plans and targeted support. In response to this feedback from parents, Malkara School is reviewing the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and is considering how parents can contribute to the ongoing development of Behaviour Support Plans.

Staff trends from the satisfaction surveys indicated that staff cater for student needs, build strong relationships with students and ensure positive communication between home and school. Survey data also indicated that staff have high expectations, differentiate the curriculum to cater for students and are actively engaged with the profession. The panel noted evidence of this during the review in the practices of teachers in classrooms. In response to some identified areas for development; celebrating professional achievements, opportunities for leadership and increased participation in decision making and improved communication between staff at school, many new initiatives were put in place. This included acknowledgment of staff with a certificate of appreciation, devolving tasks from the leadership team to classroom teachers to enhance leadership opportunities, teachers leading professional learning communities and genuine processes of consultation around upgrading playgrounds and equipment purchases.

The school has responded strategically to two further items that were identified for improvement: 'Teachers at this school use results from system testing and system processes to inform my planning', and 'management of student behaviour'. To support the provision of meaningful data about student learning, the school continues to explore and develop assessment tools and tasks that are relevant to the setting of Malkara. Student behaviours at Malkara are complex and there is a need for staff to respond in targeted and individualised ways. Over the period of the School Strategic Plan a range of supportive strategies have been put in place including:

- staff professional learning is targeted
- there are clearly documented and communicated behaviour support plans
- alternate play spaces have been developed
- the Targeted Support Team assists the school
- staff have received training in TeamTeach
- the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy is implemented.

The panel noted that although the school has students with complex behavioural issues, these are managed in a way that preserves the learning environment.

Most students arrive at school on Special Needs Transport (SNT) and this has a positive impact on attendance. Student attendance is impacted by the complex medical fragility of some students at Malkara. There are positive supports in place, such as the School Chaplain, school nurse and staff, who maintain a close communication with families when students are unwell.

The school has focused on increasing the number of partnerships with schools. This has led to a significant increase in the number of volunteer hours in 2015. Volunteers also support the school hydrotherapy program and whole of school walks.

The school leadership team has been collecting data in relation to the key priority of 'continue striving for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies'. A school based survey tool was created to track the level of confidence of staff in applying these 'contemporary pedagogies'. Over the period of the tracking tool staff confidence grew from the start of the year to the end in 2014 and again in 2015. However, the data is unable to be compared for growth across two years.

The panel noted a very clear and strong link between the priorities of the strategic plan, key improvement strategies, key actions of the Annual Action Plan, staff pathways and identified professional learning. Alignment across these areas has supported the school in maintaining focus on key priorities and links the work of the school to the learning outcomes and

achievements. Whole school professional development, inclusive of teaching staff and learning support assistants supports the achievement of the priorities of the school's Strategic Plan.

Evidence cited

- ILP Achievement Data 2013-215
- Parent Satisfaction Survey 2013-2015
- Staff Satisfaction Survey 2013-2015
- Australian School Climate & School Identification Measurement Tool 2014
- Malkara Teacher Professional Accountabilities
- Sample Behaviour Support Plans
- Staff Meeting Minutes
- Term Calendar
- Teacher Meeting Minutes
- Sample leadership notes
- *Malkara Matters* Newsletter
- Sample Communication Book
- Sample Parent Information Community Events

Section C: School Improvement Planning and Implementation

The recommendations from the 2012 external validation report included contemporary teaching practices that were appropriate and of potential high-impact for the Malkara school practices and pedagogy.

In 2013, the school identified four main areas for improvement that closely aligned with the external validation recommendations.

School Priority Areas are to:

1. continue to strive for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies
2. provide a total communication environment for students at Malkara School
3. expand inclusion opportunities for Malkara students
4. strengthen the Malkara teaching and learning cycle

School Priority 1: To continue to strive for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies

School improvement in this priority supports the core purpose of Malkara School; to meet the educational needs of each and every student through contemporary pedagogies based on innovative research-based best practice in special education. Improvement in this priority was measured against the following targets.

- Students' ILP goal achievement rates reach an average of 80 percent or above.

- Maintain or increase parent satisfaction with the school.
- Reduce the proportion of injuries to staff and students.
- Teacher confidence in specialist pedagogies increases between beginning and end of year.

Over the four years of the plan ILP goal achievement rates indicate that between 2013 and 2016 there has been a decline in achievement of ILP goals i.e. a drop from 78 percent in 2013 to 69 percent in 2015. In reality this data reflects a continued focus on improving assessment and data collection tools and increased rigour in the use of data to support student achievement. As staff continue to build their capacity to write ILP goals using the SMART acronym, and evaluate student achievement using a wide variety of tools, ILP goals have become more specific and targeted to identified student needs.

Parent satisfaction is consistently high at Malkara and directly reflects the commitment and work of the school and parent community to ensure that the needs of the students are met, that families are connected and communicated with and that lines of communication are positive and supportive. Parents interviewed during the process of the external review spoke highly of all members of staff and the environment in which their children are learning.

Some students have very complex behavioural needs and low cognitive functioning and therefore at times are not always able to self manage their behaviour. A comprehensive tracking system identifies information relevant to understanding where the challenges may lie in reducing the impact of behavioural incidents at Malkara. As a result of this data collection Malkara has responded with TeamTeach strategies, walkie talkies for instant communication, sensory break courtyards and alternate play spaces. Identified students have comprehensive behaviour support plans that are clearly communicated and shared with all staff.

During the period of this strategic plan the focus on increasing teacher confidence in contemporary pedagogies was an imperative. Across the five identified pedagogies teacher confidence levels were used to track and indicate proficiency and skill development in each area.

Four Blocks Literacy Model is a fully embedded teaching and learning program enabling students to engage in reading and writing and is supported by the ETPP. The whole school commitment to learning in this area has been supported in an ongoing way with a 20 minute 'four blocks blast' at fortnightly teacher meetings, professional learning with the Four Blocks Literacy trainer and the inclusion of a literacy goal in the ILP of every student at Malkara.

The school has embedded the Carolina Curriculum in the early childhood teaching and learning model. All students in the preschool are assessed against the tool at the beginning and the end of the year and classroom teachers align and inform their program using this curriculum.

Strengthening autism pedagogy and practice began with two staff being trained as facilitators in the autism specific Positive Partnerships process. As trained facilitators they were then able to provide all staff with research based evidence of best practice in autism education. Staff were trained in using the Planning Matrix from the framework that enables them to meet the sensory and behavioural needs of students on the autism spectrum. Teacher confidence in autism pedagogy increased by 21 percent from 2014 to 2015.

The introduction of a hydrotherapy framework to maximise the benefits gained by students in the pool was the fourth strategy. The school engages a hydrotherapy consultant to assess and review programs, and a trained LSA supports classes. Data gathered indicates that teachers have a 23 percent increase in confidence in addressing the needs of students in the hydrotherapy.

The MOVE approach to supporting physical skills and independence was supported by identifying one teacher as a coach who supported classroom teachers and the addition of a MOVE goal into student ILPs where appropriate. Data from ILP attainment is evidence that 70 percent of MOVE goals were achieved by students and teachers were confident in applying this pedagogy with their students.

School Priority 2: To provide a total communication environment for students at Malkara School

At the heart of this priority sits the Malkara belief that every child has the ability and the right to communicate and be understood and to facilitate this they would need to develop a Total Communication Environment.

Key to attainment of this priority has been the work of an internationally recognised expert in the field of teaching literacy to students with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Throughout the life of the Strategic Plan the consultant's role has been expanded to include strengthening AAC practices at Malkara. The year 2013 saw the introduction of a new AAC system called PODD, Pragmatically Organised Dynamic Display, which provides a broad vocabulary that enables a more natural language exchange.

Over the period of 2014-2015 further professional learning was provided to staff. Staff began modelling the use of PODD with their students and the development of site specific PODDs were made. Additionally the Communication Matrix was introduced to enable the ongoing data collection that demonstrates the percentage increase in student improvement of their communication skills.

Over the life of the plan collected data indicates that between 95 and 99 percent of students have improved their communication skills, teachers and LSAs express increased knowledge of and confidence with the use of PODD. Action research has been conducted on the impact of PODD and over the research period the frequency of communication exchanges increased by 48 percent. Support and visibility of the leadership team also assisted the expectation of communication exchanges in classrooms and this supports the strengthening of culture and practice in regard to AAC.

In 2015 Malkara received an award from the international Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) in recognition of their outstanding work in AAC. It is important to note the words of the citations:

The whole school community has recognised the importance of ensuring all their students have a 'voice' and have worked hard to ensure that has happened in an appropriate and sustainable way. As a result, all staff have become more effective communication partners and the students attending the school are becoming much more competent communicators.

School Priority 3: To expand inclusion opportunities for Malkara students

Inclusion with neurotypical peers is particularly important for the development of social and friendship skills and communication. Being involved in a mainstream environment allows staff to observe students and support appropriate behaviours.

Malkara has actively sought inclusion partnerships across their network with both public and private schools and various other community partners who are able to provide successful inclusion experiences for their students.

The practice of inclusion provides valuable opportunities for learning for all those involved and the program has continued to grow over the period of this strategic plan. Networking and facilitating links with nearby schools is a core task of the Deputy Principal.

The school has been able to develop some strong relationships with St Peter and Paul Primary School who attend every Tuesday to support the Weekly Walking Together Program. The drumming group from Red Hill PS share drumming with the students and buddy classes from St Peter and Paul often attend for special events such as Science Day and the Torrens Gala Music Performance. The panel noted that the school would benefit from a review of these partnerships to determine their effectiveness.

School Priority 4: To strengthen the Malkara teaching and learning cycle

The introduction of a clear focus on the teaching and learning cycle was in direct response to the raising of expectations that all students at Malkara are learners first and foremost. This is supported by the school-wide belief that 'no child is too anything' to be an active learner. This imperative led to a focus on programming for learning that was based upon assessment, implementation and evaluation. It was important to develop clarity around achievable timeframes and accountability in respect of assessment, ILP planning, teaching and learning programs and reporting.

Processes enacted to attain this priority included:

- reviewing of all elements that comprise the teaching and learning cycle
- improving of templates for ILP and mid/end of year reports
- outlining the elements required in teaching programs and provide written feedback
- researching new tools to improve the assessment of student learning
- increasing engagement of all teachers with tools that enhance collection and evaluation of teaching and learning data.

A review committee collected and updated a wide variety of assessment tools and provided staff with an assessment file that reflects the school's focus on contemporary pedagogies. Teachers have been provided with a process for assessing and submitting programs each term for feedback.

To ensure continued focus on contemporary pedagogies, each student's ILP must include a literacy, communication, hydrotherapy and numeracy goal. When compiling end of year reports teachers ensure that the ILP and associated evidence that support attainment of goals informs the transition process for the following year.

The effectiveness of this strategy was evaluated in the following way:

- 16 of 18 teachers handed in their programs and assessments by the due date with accommodations being made for the remaining two staff members
- all students were assessed using at least two of the available assessment tools.

Evidence

- Four Blocks Literacy Model
- Accident and Injury Data by year
- Malkara Autism Spectrum Disorder Framework
- Malkara AAC Framework
- Malkara Hydrotherapy Framework
- Sample communication matrix assessment
- Consultant Feedback
- Sample Communication Profile
- Action Research 2015
- Guidelines for Teacher Work
- Summary of teacher Work Programs
- Teacher Feedback Sample
- ILP Report Sample
- Assessment Schedule 2016

Reflections

The Malkara School priorities have remained constant over the life of the School Plan despite the fact that there have been some changes in the composition of the leadership team.

Targets have been set each year in the Annual Operating and Annual Action Plans to measure improvement over time and this has been the key to effectively reflecting upon the continuous improvement journey of Malkara School.

It is important to note that there has been a clear and focused improvement agenda which has moved the school to a stronger focus upon learning and achievement for the students in their care. The four-year long commitment to striving for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies has seen a school-wide commitment to Four Blocks Literacy and the development of a total communication environment that supports each and every student to have a means with which they can have a 'voice'. The strategic focus on the core area of communication, especially AAC and PODD, enhances the whole school focus on improving upon and building student's skills in their chosen communication system.

Connected to the focus on their five contemporary pedagogies has been the improvement and clarity around the writing, assessing and reporting upon student achievement as specified by their ILP goals. Ensuring that each student has a literacy, communication, hydrotherapy and numeracy goal in their ILP has supported the staff to focus upon their planning and programming for learning.

Malkara School has developed a rich environment for their students to learn in, the staff work together as a team and the whole school commitment to success for all students is reflected in the calm manner in which the school operates and in which students learn. The school's signature behaviours that underpin their beliefs and practices demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the ongoing learning and development of all of the students in their care.

Section D: National Tools Self-Evaluation Results

The school conducted a process to self-evaluate using the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). The leadership team attended professional learning about the tool in preparation for leading a process of self-reflection. Parents and staff participated in the reflection through workshops. A small number of parents focused on four of the domains considered most relevant. Two other groups, a whole of staff group and a teacher group also attended workshops, engaged in discussions, and made judgements with associated evidence about progress for each of the domains. The information from each of these stakeholder groups was aggregated by the senior leadership team and then presented to staff for further reflection in a final consultation meeting. The leadership team analysed the findings and identified areas of strength aligned to the school's improvement priorities. Areas for refinement were also identified. There is clear alignment between the domains identified for improvement by the school and the panel.

National School Improvement Tool

The combined time reviewers spent in conversations with the principal, leaders, teachers, students, parents and board members was approximately eighteen hours. Another twenty-three hours was spent on review, moderation, writing and preparation for school leadership team feedback. A combination of individual and small group interviews with staff members, students and parents/carers were held.

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

- *The school leadership group, including, where appropriate, the governing council, have developed and are driving an explicit and detailed local school improvement agenda.*
- *There is a strong and optimistic commitment by all staff to the school improvement strategy and a clear belief that further improvement is possible.*
- *This agenda is communicated in staff meetings, school newsletters, parent-teacher meetings and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *Targets for improvement are clear and accompanied by timelines.*
- *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 and staff of the school tell stories of significant student improvement.*

Comments and Findings

- The school has developed a strategic plan and subsequent annual action plans and has identified four key priorities in this planning cycle: to continue striving for excellence in teaching practice using contemporary pedagogies; to provide a total communication environment for students; to expand inclusion activities opportunities and strengthen the teaching and learning cycle. This plan was developed in partnership with key stakeholders through staff workshops and study tours; parent meetings and executive 'blue sky' thinking.

- There is strong alignment between the Strategic Plan, Annual Action Plans, identified strategies and targets.
- The school has identified ways of tracking the first priority with teachers completing self-reflection surveys. The leadership team harvests this data and is using it to monitor progress towards goals.
- Targets are clear and have been monitored most of the time.
- Pathways Plans have clear links to the improvement agenda.
- Teachers clearly articulate some focus areas for improvement that have had school wide impact (literacy and AAC, in particular) and they have a deep commitment to these.

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

- *Teachers routinely use objective data on student achievement as evidence of successful teaching.*
- *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.*
- *Tests (e.g., commercially available reading tests) may be used by some teachers, but generally are not used as part of a whole-school assessment strategy.*
- *An ad hoc approach exists to building staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data.*
- *Software may be used for the analysis of school results, including the performances of priority groups, but analyses generally do not extend to studies of improvement or growth.*
- *School data are presented to staff in meetings, but presentations tend to be 'for information' rather than a trigger for in-depth discussions of teaching practices and school processes. Information about the school's performance is communicated to the school community, but may lack explanation or analysis. There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

Comments and Findings

- The school has analysed student achievement against Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). This analysis is becoming more sophisticated and the data is now interrogated for each type of goal: communication, literacy, academic, recreation/leisure, community, self-management, core priority, hydrotherapy and inclusion.
- There is evidence that the school leadership team has monitored staff satisfaction surveys, identifying areas for improvement and addressing these.
- The school is currently trialling ABLES as a potential whole of school assessment tool to collect and analyse learning data.
- Some standardised tests have been identified and are being introduced systematically across the school.
- The school leadership team is working towards a centralised process for the storing and sharing of data.

- Teachers use multiple faceted and fine grain data and evidence which is tailored to individual student need. The school is exploring and trialling a range of tools that will provide more sophisticated data in student performance in literacy and numeracy.
- The communication matrix is being used school wide as an assessment tool.

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

- *The school ethos is built around high expectations and a commitment to excellence. There is an expectation that every student will learn and achieve positive outcomes. Classrooms are calm but busy and interruptions to teaching time are kept to a minimum. Staff morale is sustained at a high level. There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.*
- *High levels of trust are apparent across the school community. Interactions are focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the school's ability to meet the needs of all students. There is a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school.*
- *There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems and behaviour management takes up very little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*
- *Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. There are agreed guidelines on such matters as greeting visitors, taking messages, and responding to queries promptly and respectfully.*

Comments and Findings

- The 'Nine Signature Behaviours' explicitly articulate the expected culture of learning at Malkara. Uninterrupted learning is one of these signature behaviours and there is evidence of high expectations about student learning in every classroom. The mantra of 'no child is too anything' permeates the culture of the school.
- The parent satisfaction survey data has remained consistently high. In 2013, 98 percent of parents believe that teachers at the school expect their child to do his or her best, 100 percent in both 2014 and 2015.
- The school has an enrolment profile that includes a number of students with complex behavioural patterns. Individual Behaviour Support Plans have been developed and implemented across the school. Students with complex behaviour are supported effectively and in a way that minimises interruptions to learning. The school is developing a whole of school approach aligned to the Positive Behaviour Learning process to build a common language and approach.
- The school is tracking and reporting on injuries to staff and students to monitor the safety and wellbeing of all.
- Daily communication with parents through communication diaries supports the building of strong partnerships in the learning journey.
- Individual Learning Plans are developed and reviewed in partnership with families for each student.

- There is a happy, vibrant and positive feel to the school, there are high levels of trust and teachers support and encourage each other.

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

- *The principal and other school leaders have given a very high priority to understanding and addressing the learning needs of all students in the school. This is reflected in the implementation of systematic strategies for identifying student needs and the development of creative school-wide solutions for addressing those needs.*
- *A range of initiatives (e.g., across-class and across-grade groupings for literacy and numeracy. The school deploys staff in ways that make best use of their expertise.*
- *The school has developed processes (e.g., systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs, although there may not always be good school records of student achievement and progress.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs (e.g., programs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students for whom English is a second language, Indigenous students, refugees) are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*
- *Physical spaces 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

- There has been a significant investment in improving the facilities of the school and school funds have been expended to support these improvements.
- There is evidence of the targeting of resources to support the school's improvement agenda including the engaging of a consultant, ongoing whole of school professional learning and the purchase of specialist resources (e.g. PODD).
- Physical spaces are designed to support the needs of students with very complex learning, sensory and behavioural needs.
- Technology is being used innovatively to support the needs of learners, particularly for those who are nonverbal. This includes whiteboards and iPads with Proloquo2Go.
- The whole of school Hydrotherapy program has been extensively resourced.
- Systematic processes for identifying student learning needs are emerging through the implementation of whole school assessment processes.
- There has been a significant investment in professional learning in highly specialised fields, e.g. autism specialist allocated to these students and trained as a resource to support others.
- The school has committed resources to support teachers leading key projects.
- A very active P&C generates significant additional funds which are allocated to support the identified priorities of the school.

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.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff who find it difficult to commit to the school's improvement agenda.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*
- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues, although there may not be formal mentoring or coaching arrangements in place.*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*

Comments and Findings

- The school executive team places a high priority on professional learning which is linked explicitly to the school's improvement agenda.
- A literacy and communication consultant has worked closely with the school, led professional learning, coached staff and visited classrooms and provided feedback about the implementation of a total communication environment (AAC).
- A hydrotherapy consultant has also supported the capacity of staff to deliver the whole of school program.
- The Executive Teacher (Professional Practice) coaches and mentors teachers in the 'contemporary pedagogies'.
- Staff members have been trained and support colleagues in the delivery of the Positive Partnerships (Autism).
- Learning Support Assistants engage in professional learning alongside teachers and are valued as co-educators.
- Very explicit feedback has been provided to the school about the implementation of AAC in every classroom.
- There has been an action research project in the school about the implementation of AAC.
- Staff are supported to engage in study tours to schools with recognised best practice.
- Four professional learning teams have been established and meet regularly to progress the school's priorities.
- Clear and documented professional accountabilities are evident.
- Although some informal coaching and mentoring is evident, there is no formalised process for providing feedback to teachers.
- There are various opportunities for staff to participate in leadership e.g. lead a PLT, higher duties positions, share expertise and lead learning at staff and team meetings.

- The staff skills board acknowledges the diverse range of skills that each staff member has and provides opportunities for staff to connect with colleagues who can share expertise with them.

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

- *Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the range of students with disabilities.*
- *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

- Malkara School is transitioning to the Australian Curriculum supplemented by AusVELS. There are a range of planning documents that have informed teaching, e.g. Carolina Curriculum, AusVELS, Malkara/Cranleigh Curriculum, Hydrotherapy, AAC but there is no whole of school curriculum plan that provides a clear reference for teaching and learning across the school.
- A teaching and learning cycle supports curriculum delivery.
- A literacy framework has been developed and is being systematically implemented. This plan is clearly articulated by staff and is evident in teacher planning. Across the school there is a consistent and informed approach to the implementation of the Four Blocks Literacy Model.
- Some assessment and data collections for literacy, numeracy and communication are evident.
- Staff see the students as capable learners who are able to access the Australian Curriculum/AusVELS.
- Word walls to support learning were evident in classrooms.

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

- *The school leadership team actively promotes the use of differentiated teaching as a strategy for ensuring that every student is engaged and learning successfully. It is recognised throughout the school that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs (e.g., accelerated programs, special support) if they are to be optimally engaged and challenged, and individual learning plans have been developed for those students requiring them. Differentiation is a priority of the school and a feature of every teacher's practice.*
- *Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students are used in all classrooms to make judgements about individual needs, to identify appropriate starting points for teaching and to personalise teaching and learning activities. Reports to parents and carers include details of how learning opportunities have been tailored to individual needs and of the progress individuals have made.*

Comments and Findings

- Each student has a highly detailed Individual Learning Plan that is written in consultation with families.
- Differentiated practice is evident in every classroom for every student.
- Adjustments are made to the learning programs and is constant, informed and connected to the learning needs of the students
- There is a deeply embedded culture of personalised learning and differentiated practice to ensure the successful outcomes of learners with diverse and complex needs.
- Teachers draw on a very wide repertoire of strategies and give deep consideration to novel approaches to personalise the learning.
- Teachers are highly perceptive and responsive to needs of students and their families.
- The language and practices observed during visits to learning spaces reflected respect for individuals, learning preferences and needs.
- The deeply embedded AAC program supports understanding between all members of the learning community.
- Teachers use a very sophisticated and highly personalised range of assessment tools to monitor progress, identify strengths and weaknesses and make judgements about student needs.
- Reporting to parents occurs daily and through multiple modes, including phone calls, daily communication books, emails, photo and video stories and formal reports which include detailed information about personalised learning and progress.

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

- *The principal and other school leaders have accepted personal responsibility for driving improvements in teaching throughout the school. They demonstrate a strong conviction that improved teaching is the key to improved student learning and have clear and well-known positions on the kinds of teaching that they wish to see occurring.*

- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, and professional learning activities are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies in these areas.*
- *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.*
- *There is some clarity about what students are expected to learn.*

Comments and Findings

- The school leadership team is driving a comprehensive professional learning program to further build the capacity of staff through the school's contemporary pedagogies. Professional learning is aligned to these expected practices.
- The school leadership team keeps abreast of research on effective teaching practices.
- There is a whole of school and embedded approach to supporting communication between students and staff. The school recognises that this pedagogical practice is fundamental in empowering learners and teacher use of it is highly sophisticated. This use of the AAC system, Pragmatically Organised Dynamic Display (PODD), enhances opportunities for all students to demonstrate their learning and to be connected with the environments in which they are learning.
- Explicit teaching of skills and content in a very highly scaffolded way is evident in every classroom. Teachers have clear expectations of learning and improvement.
- Through the literacy framework, a repertoire of expected teaching strategies for the teaching of reading and writing is evident.
- A strong focus on the teaching of literacy is maintained through the regular 'four block blasts' in teacher meetings.
- Students receive regular feedback on their learning and are supported to act on this information to continue to make progress with their learning.
- Clarity about what students are expected to learn is emerging as the school moves to developing a whole of school curriculum framework.

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.*
- *The student needs that partnerships are designed to address may not be made explicit and, rather than being carefully planned, individual partnerships tend to be opportunistic in nature. Communications between partners are largely unplanned and infrequent.*
- *No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.*

Comments and Findings

- A number of schools are partnered with Malkara School, with students visiting, interacting and supporting activities in the school. Some of these are more embedded and structured than others.
- There are partnerships with local schools to support inclusion, and where appropriate shared enrolments for students are in place.
- The school encourages parents to be partners in the learning journey through daily communication books, phone, email, formal interviews and professional learning (e.g. AAC). Some parents are also volunteers in the school.
- There are some links with organisations including churches, banks, community.
- There is a partnership with Australian National University to deliver the music engagement program.
- The partnership with Canberra Institute of Technology has resulted in staff recruitment for Malkara.
- The school is working closely with NDIS providers to ensure a streamlined support process in the school.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

All staff were involved in completing the National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool. Staff prepared for a whole of school meeting by individually completing the online audit tool. The school's leadership team facilitated a meeting to collate the responses and identify strengths and areas for improvement. The school staff determined that they undertake significant processes to support students through individual plan programs, highly scaffolded and differentiated teaching and learning and quality facilities for learning and recreation. Four priority areas have been identified for future focus.

- Explicit teaching of social skills through a whole of school social and emotional curriculum.
- Early identification and addressing of behaviours of concern to support students who have emotional, sensory or behavioural needs.
- Induction processes for new staff that commence throughout the year coupled with formalised mentoring.
- Strengthening of community and family partnerships through sharing of the contemporary pedagogies and practices (Four Blocks Literacy Model and PODD).

The panel found a strong alignment between these identified priorities for improvements and the recommendations provided to the school.

Section E: Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

Malkara School is commended for the following.

1. The consistent focus on the development of a total communication environment for students at Malkara. The systematic introduction of Augmentative and Alternative

Communication (AAC) focuses all staff on their collective responsibility to improving outcomes for students.

2. Embedding the Four Blocks Literacy Model in teaching and learning programs across the school, engaging students in a wide range of tasks through a diverse range of practices.
3. Building a school ethos around high expectations. The signature behaviour of respecting the teaching space and not interrupting learning supports this. The mantra of 'no child is too anything' permeates the culture of the school. Everybody understands that the priority focus at Malkara is learning.
4. The way staff stand shoulder to shoulder to care for each other in the conduct of their work in this complex setting. The leadership team places a very high priority on supporting the wellbeing of staff. They are highly visible and accessible. Professional trust between staff is evident across the school. Leaders, teachers and Learning Support Assistants all display a deep sense of responsibility for the learning and wellbeing of all students.
5. The focus on contemporary pedagogies that have aligned practice and planning for staff, especially in regard to: Four Blocks Literacy Model, Carolina Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs, Autism Approaches, Hydrotherapy. A commitment to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school.
6. An aligned improvement agenda. All staff, parents, P&C and Board members were able to clearly articulate the focus of the plan and the outcomes that the school has been working towards. Staff are clearly committed to focusing upon the core priorities of learning.
7. How well teachers at Malkara know their students. Differentiated practice is evident in every classroom. Staff are expert practitioners in catering for very complex needs. Staff were able to talk about their students in response to where they are currently in their learning, what they need to do next and how they will be supported to progress to the next step. High expectations of all students was evidenced as were classroom activities that were designed to meet students' learning needs, readiness and interests.
8. The Hydrotherapy program provides the students with a rich experience especially in regard to freedom of movement, relaxation and fun. The supportive, individualised and group programs that are developed in conjunction with physiotherapists and implemented with the assistance of the hydrotherapy LSA have rich and varied benefits.

Recommendations

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

1. Continue to develop and implement a whole of school curriculum plan aligned to the Australian Curriculum, supplemented by AusVELS and ABLES. Ensure that there is clear alignment between curriculum, assessment and reporting throughout the school.
2. Develop and implement a whole of school data plan that is pertinent for Malkara School, which takes into consideration best practice for students with disabilities and which harvests the rich information that teachers collect. This plan should support the school to monitor improvement over time in academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, as well as student well-being. More specifically these data sets should monitor literacy, numeracy, transition and ILP student achievement, as well as required but appropriate,

systemic collections (e.g. stakeholder). The school leadership team should continue to support staff in rolling up the individual student data they collect to examine trends and growth over time.

3. Continue to expand the 'contemporary pedagogies' of Malkara School to include clearly identified research-based teaching practices in mathematics and science and support teachers in building their knowledge of and capacity in using these.
4. Review the partnerships with the various schools connected to Malkara School and visited for the inclusion program, and consider which of these are clearly sustainable, strategic in intent and make best use of the expertise available. Define the objectives of each, ensuring that all are expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students. Strengthen partnerships with parents by finding ways for them to support the key learning goals at home.
5. Continue to develop a whole of school approach to promoting appropriate behaviour including agreed responses to managing the very complex behavioural needs of some students, including the explicit teaching of social skills.
6. Continue to develop and implement a process that provides opportunities for teachers to work together and learn from each other's practices through coaching and mentoring models, classroom visits and shared discussions and feedback about practices. Ensure that a comprehensive induction program is available for new staff.

Section F: Record of School Review Process

The following people were members of the external School Review Panel for Malkara School conducted on 14- 15 September 2016.

| | |
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| Name: Christina Rogers | ACER: Lead Reviewer |
| Name: Julie Cooper | School: Principal, Franklin Early Childhood 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.

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| Name: Christina Rogers | |
| Signature:  | Date: 23 / 09 / 2016. |

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

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| Name: Jennie Lindsay | |
| Signature: | Date: / / |