



**ACT**  
Government

Education and Training

# EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2013

for

**UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA HIGH SCHOOL  
KALEEN**



## Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for **University of Canberra High School Kaleen** conducted on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

Name: Colleen Matheson

School: Lyneham High School

Name: Rita Daniels

School: Daramalan College

Name: Jesse Sidhu

School: Melba Copland Secondary School

As chair of the panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external validation process.

Name: **Colleen Matheson**

Signature:  Date: 30/8/2013

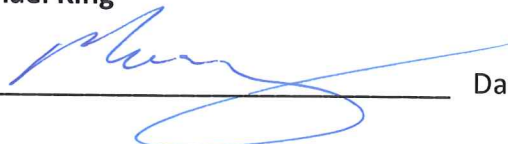
As principal of **University of Canberra High School Kaleen** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: **Denis Dickinson**

Signature:  Date: 30/8/2013

As co-director of Quality Learning Australia, external validators for the conduct of validation process in ACT public schools, I concur that the panel acted within the guidelines set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

Name: **Michael King**

Signature:  Date: 30 Aug '13

## Section A: School context

The University of Canberra High School Kaleen (UCHSK) is a small year 7 to 10 high school with a current population of 201 students. In 2013, 15 percent of students are identified as students with a disability, two percent as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and six percent as students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). The school includes a Learning Support Unit (LSU) and a Learning Support Unit Autism (LSUA). Fifty percent of current students reside in the Priority Placement Area (PPA). Over the life of the School Plan (2009-2013), the number of students enrolled, the percentage of students with a disability and the percentage of students who reside in the PPA have remained reasonably consistent.

Throughout the current validation period there have been several changes in the leadership team and, while classroom teachers have tended to remain in the school for extended periods of time, there have been reductions in teaching numbers reflecting changes in student numbers. In 2012 the decision was made to reduce the number of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and to employ an additional teacher to model the practice of team teaching. The appointment of a Literacy Field Officer (LFO) to the school in 2010 provided additional expertise to support teachers in improving literacy outcomes for all students.

UCHSK has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 1027 which is below the average ACT level. A small percentage of parents pay school voluntary contributions and the school receives a substantial staffing supplementation from the Education and Training Directorate. As a small school, UCHSK has worked to meet the challenges of maintaining school infrastructure, providing a range of curriculum options and managing staffing and other resources. The size of the school has also made it possible to develop a culture where staff genuinely know their students and their families, are aware of students' individual needs and work to provide a wide range of opportunities for students both within the school and the broader community.

As the school building has a capacity for 760 students and extensive grounds, it has been possible to make use of the facilities by sharing space with local community organisations, including Canberra Organic Gardeners, No Sweat Fashions, The Circus Warehouse, Kulture Break and Canberra Model Railways. The relationships developed have mutual benefits and the potential to widen the experience of students and engage the broader community in school life. The availability of space has also made it possible for the school to establish a number of open learning spaces where team teaching and more individualised learning can be developed.

In March 2011 a collaboration between The University of Canberra (UC), the Education and Training Directorate, Kaleen High School and Lake Ginninderra College was formalised and the school's name was changed from Kaleen High School to University of Canberra High School Kaleen. The partnership has resulted in many opportunities for the school to build relationships with the University, to link with experts and develop learning opportunities for students and staff. Students studying genetics and evolution made use of UC facilities and have been involved in the Early Bird Mathematics Program. As part of the school's Pastoral Care program UC undergraduates present the *Aspire Program* which links students to future directions. UC preservice teachers, as part of their course work, support UCHSK students as reading tutors. Teachers of Studies of Society and the Environment (SoSE) use the UC library staff and resources to build students' research and study skills. The University also sponsored a *Year 9 Future Directions Conference* and resources provided by UC made it possible to employ a *Musician in Residence* and buy new sporting uniforms. While the agreement has some operational

challenges still to be resolved, there is evidence that meaningful connections and considerable goodwill have been developed.

## **Section B: School performance**

The panel validated that the school uses National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data, in conjunction with school diagnostic testing data, to inform planning and decision-making regarding student learning. NAPLAN provides comprehensive data of year 7 and year 9 student performance in the areas of: reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy.

NAPLAN Literacy and Numeracy data over the life of the plan suggest that school performance has been consistent for this period, performing below ACT mean scores. For the past two years, since the Directorate established numerical targets, the school met or exceeded eleven of its twelve NAPLAN targets, within the defined confidence intervals. The school's year 9 writing mean score in 2012 was the only measure not to meet target, being marginally outside the lower bound of the target range.

The appointment of a Literacy Field Officer (LFO) in 2010 brought renewed focus upon literacy improvement. The initial efforts were directed towards improvement of reading. The results of these efforts are evident in the improvement year on year since 2010 of the growth in reading scores of students between years 7 and 9, and in the proportion of students achieving the higher bands, as measured by NAPLAN.

Over the life of the plan, the school has witnessed a decline in participation rates for NAPLAN testing. In 2010 the participation rates of year seven and year nine students were 93% and 90% respectively; in 2011 they declined to approximately 78% and 80% respectively, and; in 2012 participation rates were 90% and 75% respectively. This has been attributed to the strong preference of many parents that their children not participate in the testing. The panel notes that reduced participation rates diminish confidence in the ability of the data to truly reflect whole-school performance.

The student perception data from the annual system surveys, while consistently below the ACT high school average measures, shows gradual improvement since 2010. Of particular note are progressive improvements in the indicators of student engagement, such as 'I have a say in the things I learn', and 'I am doing school work that interests me'.

Parent perception data are consistently above ACT high school average measures. Over the life of the School Plan, improvement is evident in the areas of community partnerships and communication between the school and parents and carers, where the school performs significantly above the ACT high school average.

Staff perception data are generally consistent with other high schools in the ACT. Improvements in the involvement of students in their learning are evident in the staff perception data as they are in the student data.

Collectively, the perception data suggest there are opportunities to increase the school's focus upon collaboration and relationships among staff, executive, students, parents and carers.

Since 2010, the attendance of each year level has varied between 77 percent and 89 percent. The school has developed a 'zero tolerance' approach to student behaviour management, which has resulted in a suspension rate that is higher than the system average with well over fifty suspensions in the first semester for each of the past three years.

## **Evidence cited and its validation**

School Plan 2009-2013

Annual Operating Plans 2010, 2011, 2012

Annual School Board Reports 2010, 2011, 2012

Perception survey responses: students, staff and parents; 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012

NAPLAN Results 2010, 2011, 2012

Interview with school principal

Interview with Literacy Field Officer

MySchool website

Attendance data

Suspensions data.

## **Section C: School improvement planning and implementation**

### **PART 1: Improvement planning**

Following a period of change, a new School Plan was developed for 2009-2013. This plan was based on feedback from the 2008 external validation process and included seven priorities.

These priorities were:

1. Improve the literacy results of our students
2. Improve the numeracy results of our students
3. Provision of a quality and relevant education for students with special needs
4. Kaleen High School assessment procedures are consistent
5. Kaleen High School has completed the writing of all curriculum documentation
6. Expand and refine the role of student services to strengthen the school community and to meet the needs of students
7. Expand the educational role of Murnong Farm in the school and community.

Over time school staff recognised the difficulty of focussing on a large number of priorities and began to refine their foci. In 2012 the decision was made to focus on four key priorities:

1. Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of students
2. Provision of a quality and relevant education for diverse learning needs
3. Improving relationships with all stakeholders within the school community
4. Use Information and Communications Technology effectively to support UCHSK to improve outcomes for stakeholders as a learning community.

In 2012 the school set up four Teaching and Learning Teams to support the implementation of the Annual Operating Plan. These four teams are the:

- Differentiation Team

- Literacy and Numeracy Team
- Student Wellbeing Team and
- ICT and Innovation Team.

These teams meet weekly to take appropriate actions and to collect, collate and act upon the relevant data and the views of various stakeholders. Each team has worked using staff consultation, analysis of school data, forums and discussion, and has included input from the School Board, Student Leadership Group, Parents and Citizens' Association and the school executive team.

### **Evidence cited and its validation**

The School Plan 2009-13

Annual Operating Plan 2013

School Satisfaction Surveys 2009-12

Interviews with the Literacy Field Officer, the principal and the school Board Chair.

## **Section C: School improvement planning and implementation**

### **PART 2: Improvement actions**

#### **Priority One: Teaching and Learning – *Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of students***

Over the life of the plan, performance measures regarding literacy and numeracy skills of students have included:

- NAPLAN Mean Scores, against which targets have been established from 2011
- NAPLAN student growth scores year 7 to year 9
- development of scope and sequence and other curriculum documentation
- attitudinal and competency assessment of staff regarding literacy and numeracy.

The appointment of a Literacy Field Officer in 2010 provided the school with a strong focal point for development of a whole school approach to literacy.

A comprehensive set of scope and sequence documents were prepared for all year levels along with term planners to support staff in the development of literacy skills for students. These documents were complemented with extensive resources for teachers' use and were made available on the school's network. A comprehensive writing handbook was prepared in 2011 for use by staff and students and is freely available on the school web site.

In 2012 the school timetable was modified to include three thirty minute literacy lessons per week for all students working in small groups using the "Writer's notebook" approach. An action research project completed in 2012 revealed improvements in students' attitudes and confidence in writing. A 'Faces on the Data' room was established in 2013 to make visible students' performance in writing, reading, spelling and for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) students.

The school has extended the focus to include numeracy from 2013 with the extension of the 'Faces on the Data' wall to include students' numeracy performance. The panel concurs with the school's assessment that further development is required in the area of numeracy.

As identified in Section B of this report, the school met or exceeded eleven of its twelve NAPLAN targets, within the defined confidence intervals, in 2011 and 2012. The panel acknowledges the significant progress that has been made in the development of a whole school approach to the improvement of literacy skills for students. The panel also encourages the school to build upon these foundations in progressing the development of a whole school approach to numeracy.

Over the period of this validation, the school has had several changes in the school leader responsible for English. This has presented a number of challenges, particularly in moving towards implementation of the Australian Curriculum and its associated assessment standards. The panel concurs with the school's acknowledgement that implementation of the Australian Curriculum will need to be an area of focus in the next School Plan.

The school has also been challenged in identifying suitable diagnostic tools to monitor and track student progress in literacy and numeracy. Good foundations have been laid and the panel acknowledges the school's efforts in this endeavour.

### **Evidence cited and its validation**

Action research project 2012: 'Our new literacy program. Is it making a difference?'

Interview with Literacy Field Officer

NAPLAN data

Visit to the *Face on the data* room

Scope and sequence documentation.

### **Priority Two: Teaching and Learning – *Provision of a quality and relevant learning education for diverse learning needs***

Performance measures against this priority over the life of the plan included:

- the differentiation of curriculum across all courses and units, with consistent templates to modify tasks and provide appropriate assessment
- staff, parent and student perceptions of quality education.

A Major Assessment Template was developed and used to provide strategies and suggestions for modifications of content and assessment to meet the needs of individual students, particularly those with special needs. A process was put in place to ensure these templates are completed by all teachers. Parents are emailed assessment and teaching/learning information to provide them with up to date information about their child's learning. The principal plays a key role in over-sighting this process which ensures quality assurance and highlights its importance to the school. Differentiating the curriculum is a key professional learning focus for staff and the establishment of a Differentiation Team helped staff to continue developing their skills in understanding and embedding differentiation.

Clear instructions were provided for writing Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). A Management System provides teachers with strategies for writing ILP goals and guidance in monitoring and evaluating each student's progress. All students in the LSU and on ILPs were provided with an

iPad and the *Mathletics* program is used to support the development of numeracy skills with these students.

As outlined in Priority One, the school placed significant emphasis on developing literacy skills. The documentation for the literacy program is very impressive and supports all teachers to embed literacy skills in practical ways. Topics of high relevance to each of the year groups were selected and a clearly scaffolded structure has been provided for teachers, with a particular focus on improving student writing. A good analysis of NAPLAN data was undertaken and is being used to inform teachers of the learning needs of individual students.

Work is progressing on the introduction of Phase 1 subjects of the Australian Curriculum. Units of work in English and Mathematics were aligned with the Australian Curriculum.

Enrichment, a year 9 and 10 elective, was introduced across different subject areas. The program *Link2X* originally used a number of staff from UC to provide broader learning experiences for students but this aspect of the relationship between the institutions is not as strong currently. Overall the school benefitted from the UC connection with diverse opportunities being made available to both students and staff of the school.

The Major Assessment Template is a useful document for teachers and a good record that appropriate differentiation has been considered in planning units of work.

There is evidence of a strong commitment to meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties and evidence was presented to confirm that appropriate adjustments are made by all teachers in setting the learning goals of individual students.

The value of the enrichment program was acknowledged very positively by the students who spoke to the panel.

Positive staff satisfaction survey responses to the question “I cater for the different needs of all students” were generally very high and above the system average from 2010-12.

There is evidence of increasing parent support for the learning programs provided by the school. Positive parent responses to the system survey question “The things my child is learning are relevant to his/her needs” have improved significantly over the past four years.

The panel concurs with the school’s acknowledgement that the use of data to inform curriculum planning is an on-going challenge. While a lot of data is available, it is not always easily accessible. Positive staff responses to the statement “I use results from system testing and system processes to inform my planning” varied considerably over recent years. The panel also agreed with the school’s acknowledgment that implementation of the Australian Curriculum will need to be an area of focus in the next School Plan.

### **Evidence cited and its validation**

School Plan 2009-13

School Satisfaction Surveys 2009-12

Major Assessment Template

Interview with Team Leader Learning Support

Interview with Literacy Field Officer

Visit to “Faces on the Data” room



Interview with principal.

### **Priority Three: Student Environment – *Improving relationships with all stakeholders within the school community***

Performance measures against this relationships priority over the life of the plan included:

- positive student and staff feedback on the usefulness and relevance of Pastoral Care
- improvement in relevant parent perceptions in the school satisfaction surveys
- clearly defined processes and procedures for operation under a restorative justice model.

Improving student wellbeing has been a focus for the school over the past four years. A number of policies have been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders. The school philosophy on student wellbeing is based on restorative practices. Restorative practices were embedded in documentation and procedures at the school with the aim of using these practices consistently when dealing with student conflict. The school staff were provided with professional learning on restorative practices and the use of circle time. Systems were put in place for tracking various behaviours (attendance, truancy uniform, etc) and a focus card system established to support a restorative approach to behaviour management.

A dedicated Pastoral Care program was put in place to promote the personal and social development of all students as they strive towards individual pathways to success. Pastoral Care time is set aside on the timetable and Pastoral Care program documents offer support to teachers.

Students interviewed were proud of their school and felt a sense of belonging. They were aware of and able to use restorative language. The panel agreed with school's observation that restorative practices need to be now embedded in classroom practice. Continuing high suspension rates in the school and Student Satisfaction Survey data indicate that student wellbeing needs to remain an area of ongoing focus for the school.

One hundred percent of staff gave positive responses to the system satisfaction survey question, "I am supported by the school in the management of student behaviour"

The panel was impressed by the degree to which staff knew the students and their families.

The parents' positive response to the system survey question "Management of student behaviour is effective at this school" improved by 19 percentage points over the period 2010-12 and in 2012 was ten percentage points above the ACT system average for high schools.

A Student Wellbeing policy is in place. The panel suggests that this document should be an evolving document, renewed annually to incorporate and address the needs of staff, students and the community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

As outlined in the school context statement and in Priority Two, a range of programs to support a variety of identified students have been developed and implemented for students, many drawing on the expertise of UC and local community organisations.

#### **Evidence cited and its validation**

Pastoral Care program

Student Pathways

Student Wellbeing Policy

Student/staff/ Parent Satisfaction Data

Students Individual Learning Plans

MySchool website

Interviews with students

Interviews with teaching staff.

**Priority Four: Leadership and Management – Use Information Technology (IT) effectively across the school to support UCHSK to improve outcomes for stakeholders as a learning community**

Performance measures for this priority largely comprised records of professional learning, digital self help tools, documentation of action research projects, registers of communication and quality management systems reflecting agreed processes.

Documentation of professional learning, self-help tools, projects and quality management systems are being effectively organised on the school's G drive and a plan is in place to ensure that these are fully organised in the foreseeable future.

Teachers have access to iPads and there are IWBs in most classrooms. Students in the LSU and on ILPs also have iPads while mainstream students have access to computers in laboratories.

ICT use in the classroom has been detailed in some curriculum documents, including the Year 7 English Curriculum Plan which details specific skills to be integrated in the unit. In Mathematics, classes use IWBs regularly and electronic workbooks have been created for all units.

The school established an Information Communication Technology (ICT) Innovation Team using the train the trainer and engaging in the process models. This will provide a basis for developing further the effective use of technologies in the school. The use of Action Research Plans was embedded well in this area.

The panel found it difficult to verify achievements because of the lack of clear targets and objectives.

Staff survey feedback indicates that they regard learning technologies as an integral part of learning and teaching. Positive parent responses to the satisfaction survey question "The use of learning technologies is an integral part of learning and teaching" has remained consistent and largely at system level.

Feedback from the school stated that "LSU students use iPads on a daily basis for reading and Mathematics apps. Some ISP students use iPads and Kindles in mainstream classes to support specific learning difficulties." This was verified in discussions with students. iPads were used by staff as a communication device but are not available to mainstream students.

While there is evidence that ICT is being used to improve outcomes in some areas of the school, there seems to be some challenges with its effective use across all areas of the school. The school's plan for the Provision of Information Services is in need of updating as it covers the period 2008-10. It is likely that the Key Priorities listed in this plan would have changed considerably following the significant investment in IT provided by the National Secondary Schools' Computer Fund.

The panel agrees with the school's recommendation that there is a need for consistent whole school data collection and suggests that the school needs to refine data collection tools and use them consistently.

#### **Evidence cited and its validation**

Kaleen High School Information Management and ICT Plan 2010

ICT and Innovation Action Research Projects

Interview with leader of ICT and Innovation Team

School Satisfaction Surveys 2009-13

Quality Management System viewed on G drive

Interview with Team Leader Learning Support.

### **Section C: School improvement planning and implementation**

#### **PART 3: Reflection**

The documentation provided to the panel included a considered reflection on the achievements of the school with respect to its priorities and approaches to improvement in creating the foundations for ongoing success.

The school acknowledged that at the beginning of the school validation period, UCHSK adopted a large number of priorities. The school Executive Team recognised that having fewer priorities is more sustainable and doable over time. By 2012 the school had limited the number of priorities and was more focused in its efforts.

The school also recognised that despite staff enthusiasm, efforts were not initially coordinated, some staff felt overwhelmed and not all staff felt they were valued members of the process. In 2012 the school made the decision to set up four Teaching and Learning Teams aligned with the priorities and with each including staff from all faculties, administrative staff and two executive staff. This increased ownership, team work and collaboration, made planning easier and meant that the whole school could be informed of progress. The school is hoping to encourage each team, and, if possible, each staff member to undertake an Action Learning Research project.

As the school moves to the next validation period, it has reflected on the data collected, how it has been stored and how it has been used. The school acknowledges the need to store its data in a systematic way so that it could be used to inform future directions. UCHSK plans for each Teaching and Learning Team to be responsible for this process.

The panel agrees with the school's reflection on the appropriateness and effectiveness of its approach to improvement. In particular, the panel supports the school's desire to focus on a limited number of key school improvement priorities and to identify a consistent and methodical approach to the collection of data. Further, the panel applauds the alignment of the Teaching and Learning Teams with the school's priorities and the growing focus on the action research approach.

#### **Evidence cited and its validation**

School Annual Operating Plans 2009-13

School Plan 2009-13

Interview with principal

Interviews with staff members.

## **Section D: Commendations and recommendations**

### **Commendations**

The panel commends the University of Canberra High School Kaleen for:

- creating a positive and calm school environment that has seen students taking greater ownership of their learning and parents reflecting positively on the school's communications, responsiveness and commitment to student wellbeing
- the high level of energy, commitment and innovation of staff and their commitment to knowing students and meeting their individual needs
- meeting or exceeding eleven out of twelve NAPLAN targets over the past two years and the work undertaken to establish school wide structures to support improvements in literacy, in particular
- being innovative in utilising partnerships, including with the University of Canberra, to provide a broad range of opportunities for students to extend their horizons and grow their achievements
- establishing effective differentiation for students with special needs and developing structures and processes to monitor student achievement in literacy and numeracy through "Faces on the Data".

### **Recommendations**

The panel recommends that University of Canberra High School Kaleen:

- develop a clear focus on a limited number of school improvement priorities that explicitly target improvement in student learning and can be measured and sustained through the life of the School Plan 2014-17
- refine, identify and adopt tools that allow the consistent and methodical collection, management and analysis of data with a view to monitoring and reporting on individual and collective student progress across all curriculum areas
- reinvigorate the school's commitment to restorative/relational practices and staff commitment to embedding this approach across all aspects of the school's operations.
- review the current staff communication structures and processes with a view to enhancing collaboration between all staff, executive and supervisors
- build upon and refine the existing practices of differentiation for student with special needs, to ensure that the learning needs of all students, including the most able, are supported in every classroom.
- continue to develop documentation for and implementation of the Australian Curriculum, including assessment and reporting against the achievement standards.