



ACT
Government

Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2015

for

FORREST PRIMARY SCHOOL



Introduction: Overview of the Validation 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 Validation process every four years. This document captures the findings of the panel during this cycle of validation.

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.

External Validation 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

Forrest Primary School has experienced significant change in the four years of the school plan. Successive school leadership teams have driven change in line with the school's overarching priorities. Some of the key changes include:

- The school has been a candidate as an International Baccalaureate (IB) school delivering the Primary Years Program (PYP) in December 2012 and hopes to become authorised as an IB World school in 2016.
- The leadership team expanded in 2013 with an Executive Teacher of Professional Practice (ETPP), a Community Partnerships officer in 2015 and an upgrade of the Business Manager classification.
- A renewed connection with the community during the last two years of the plan including changes to Parent and Community (P&C) roles and responsibilities and School Board positions.

Students attending Forrest Primary School come from a vast Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) of Forrest, Barton, Parkes, Deakin, Red Hill and Griffith. Forrest also has shared areas that include Kingston, Fyshwick, Oaks Estate, Symonston, Harman and Narrabundah.

The school has a diverse population of approximately 530 students from over 50 countries including 29 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students, 200 English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) students and a range of students with special learning needs.

In addition, Forrest has a transient clientele due to a range of factors within the local community demographic. This provides a challenge to ensure induction, retention and transition processes are thorough, enabling parents to have clear understanding of the school and its vision.

The school's enrolments have grown from 487 in 2012 to approximately 530 students in 2015. The school is to be commended on the Preschool to Kindergarten retention which has been consistently above 90 percent and it is projected to be 96 percent in 2016. With an overall increased number of students at the school there has been an increase in the number of students with an (EALD) background. In 2015, EALD students represented a large proportion of students. Forrest Primary has allocated resources by employing EALD specialist teachers across the school to support this particular group of students.

Forrest Primary School's well balanced proportion of staff experience has been maintained over the life of the School Plan. In 2015 the composition of staff is as follows:

- extensive teaching experience (48%)
- some experience (27.5%)
- new educators (24%).

The school aims to be authorised as an IB World school in 2016 and invests heavily in PYP training and works to maintain qualified teachers. The school attracts some teachers with PYP credentials. As the school approaches authorisation of the IB in 2016, it is expected that a greater number of IB teachers will be attracted to the school

There is a school wide commitment to the PYP and this is aligned to a professional learning plan. The PYP incorporates a differentiated Program of Inquiry (POI) from preschool to year 6, within this there are Units of Inquiry (UOI). The IB provides a Learner Profile that promotes international mindedness through attributes; Inquirers, knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open Minded, Caring, Risk Takers, Balanced and Reflective. Forrest Primary is committed to develop social and emotional capabilities of students including respect, openness, empowerment, congruence, inclusion, tolerance and integrity that encompasses all values of the school.

The relationship between the school and the community had suffered previous to this school improvement cycle, with many families leaving the school. There was some community dissatisfaction and concern with the role and relationship between the school and P & C. In order to improve the relationship between the school and the community, a series of interactive community forums were held with the intention of designing a school improvement process for the immediate future and the longer term. This endeavour, supported by the Directorate, necessitated the community re-establishing confidence in the school. The establishment of the PYP provided a strong community connection which in turn has built an improved focus on school improvement.

Section B: School performance

Forrest Primary School has collected both system and school data to monitor student performance and evaluate teaching and learning effectiveness. The school has utilised National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Performance indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), National Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), Performance Measurement (PM) Reading Benchmarks, Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics (PAT Maths), A–E assessment, Personalised Learning Plans (PLP), Individual Learning Plans (ILP) and the student welfare referrals.

Forrest Primary School articulated through its School Plan a commitment to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. The percentage of students making expected growth in NAPLAN reading over time shows variance both for whole school and within school match data which tracks progress between year 3 and year 5 at Forrest. The NAPLAN data illustrates that there may be early signs of improvements in year 5 spelling, and grammar and punctuation. Student growth in reading from year 3-5 (2012 -2014) showed students with a similar starting point at Forrest Primary School achieved greater gain compared to students at other schools. In 2015, Forrest Primary has introduced a targeted intervention model as a strategy to improve reading outcomes for students in year 1 and year 2.

The leadership team has acknowledged that the focus has largely been on literacy over the past four years and they have highlighted the need to specifically target a more inquiry based mathematics program in the next School Plan. The percentage of students making expected growth in NAPLAN numeracy over time shows variance both for whole school and within school

match data. Student growth in numeracy from year 3 -5 (2012 -2014), students with a similar starting point at Forrest Primary School have achieved greater gain compared to students at other schools. The panel recommends a strategic plan be formulated, to articulate to all stakeholders, how student improvements will be made in the area of mathematics. The plan can include high expectations for individual success and cater for the diverse range of students represented at Forrest Primary School.

The panel noted a wide range of anecdotal and point-in-time evidence of positive school climate over the past four years. Through a range of interviews, the panel collected evidence to support the Principal's vision to re-establish trust with the wider school community. Ninety-three percent of parents report that their child likes being at this school and 90 percent report that their child feels safe at this school. Overall 85 percent of parents state that they are satisfied with their child's education at Forrest Primary School. The consistent message from the parent forum, specifically from a parent that has been associated with the school for the past 15 years, was that the school is on a positive trajectory and that academic rigour over the past four years has been re-established.

Teachers report that they are well supported by members of the leadership team at Forrest Primary School. 100 percent of staff report that they know the values of Forrest Primary School and 89 percent of staff report they are satisfied that this school has high expectations in all that it does. This is also reflected in the student satisfaction results where 99 percent of students express that their teachers expect them to do their best. Furthermore, 91 percent of students report that this school celebrates their achievements.

The data also suggested some inconsistencies in the staff and student satisfaction surveys. It was noted that staff having overall satisfaction with the school and staff being appreciated for the work they do was lower than the state over the course of the plan except for 2012 when it was at state average. The panel suggests the leadership team utilise the strong relationships they have established with staff to develop a shared approach to communicating and reflecting on their teaching practice.

Evidence cited and its validation

School Satisfaction Survey

My Schools NAPLAN data

Performance indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data

National Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) data

Performance Measurement (PM) Reading Benchmarks data

Progressive Achievement Tests in Mathematics (PAT Maths) data

A–E assessment data

Personalised Learning Plans (PLP)

Individual Learning Plans (ILP)

Student welfare referrals.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Halfway through 2011, Forrest Primary School underwent a recovery process after a period of uncertainty, whereby the previous leadership had problematic relationships with certain parts of the community developing dis-satisfaction in numerous components of the school. A new principal and deputy were appointed and a new leadership team was developed. This leadership team had a renewed focus on improvement, teaching and learning. Both this team and its focus have been maintained over the duration of the School Strategic Plan. The school improvement priorities were selected following the 2011 validation cycle.

Priority Areas

The strategic plan for 2012-2015 then focused on four priorities:

- 1) Improve literacy outcomes for all students
- 2) Improve numeracy outcomes for all students
- 3) Engage and actively involve the whole community in delivering the school's strategic priorities
- 4) Provide education to National Quality Standard in the preschool.

The literacy and numeracy priorities centred on three goals, that is, moving a greater number of students into higher NAPLAN proficiency bands, achieving school benchmarks and growth as measured by NAPLAN and other indicators. All priorities have progressed with a committed staff and leadership team.

Strategic Priority 1: Improve literacy outcomes for all students

The measures used by the school to monitor the impact of this strategic priority were:

- the proportion of students in proficiency bands in reading and spelling at year 5
- the percentage of students achieving School Benchmarks in reading
- the percentage of students from year 3 to year 5 who achieve expected or above expected growth in NAPLAN reading results

Achievements

In literacy, throughout the life of the School Plan, the school has worked towards implementing whole school programs. First Steps Reading and Writing was delivered as professional learning and become the underpinning foundation to the planning and delivery of the literacy programs. The strategies and language associated with First Steps Reading and Writing are utilised in all class programs and are beginning to be used to differentiate learning at the classroom level. A Literacy Planner was developed to accompany the PYP planner which identified areas of differentiation. The school developed a systematic approach to spelling using a collaborative approach in gaining information from all teaching teams and developing an Essential Agreement about 'How spelling is taught at Forrest.' This has resulted in improved spelling results in year 5 NAPLAN spelling.

Response to Intervention (RTI) was implemented by the Executive Teacher Professional Practice (ETPP) and professional learning was facilitated in semester one of 2015. This is proving to be successful in students being supported to achieve year 1 and 2 reading benchmarks.

Reflections

The panel noted the RTI strategy is used to develop a process to identify students with targeted needs that provides baseline data to inform differentiation in the early years. Also, the school has participated in the highly successful Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALLs) professional

learning program enabling the leadership team to develop instructional leadership strategies to lead teams in literacy coaching and teaching.

The panel acknowledges the schools' summative literacy assessment plan and suggests the school develop a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model. This will enable the school to strategically develop teacher capacity, a system to analyse a range of literacy data in a formative approach and provides an evidence-based professional learning plan. The panel recommends the exploration of PLC models in cluster and network schools.

Evidence cited and its validation

NAPLAN data

School Benchmarks in reading

Priority 2: Improve numeracy outcomes for all students

The measures used by the school to monitor the impact of this strategic priority were:

- the proportion of students in proficiency bands in numeracy at years 3 and 5
- the percentage of students from year 3 to year 5 who achieve expected or above expected growth in NAPLAN results.

Achievements

The numeracy priorities have centred on moving a greater number of students into higher NAPLAN proficiency bands and increase growth as measured by NAPLAN and other indicators. The panel noted that Forrest has encouraged teachers to concentrate on familiarising themselves with the content and Achievement Standards of the Australian Curriculum. Mathematics resources have been purchased to support teachers to implement the Australian Curriculum, to differentiate and conduct authentic assessment.

In 2013, teachers identified the need for consistency in mathematics planning across the school. A planner has been developed and is used to identify strategies to differentiate within the classroom. The panel sighted a student assessment spreadsheet in which teachers input PAT Maths data in term 1 and term 4 of each year. Through the interview process the panel discovered that a number of teachers are trialling an inquiry approach to the teaching of mathematics. The NAPLAN data illustrates the proportion of students achieving in the proficiency bands in year 5 is increasing.

Reflections

The panel recommends the school widen their data collection from statistical analysis of NAPLAN to better make use of the term one PAT Maths assessment as a formative tool to inform the teaching of mathematics. The school has identified the need to move away from the reliance upon paper and pen tests, and use ACARA as a guide to evaluate student achievement and help teachers set open ended tasks thus allowing students to have varying access points to learning. The panel suggests moving towards a PLC model in order to systematically address a more fluid approach to tracking student progress and individualise learning. The panel also acknowledges the need to re-establish mathematics as a focus in the next School Plan.

The need for differentiation is reflected in the year 3 inconsistencies in band achievement. In 2014 there was a greater percentage of students in band 1 and band 2 and a decline in the percentage of students achieving in band 6. The panel recommends the leadership team work in collaboration with the wider staff to formulate a detailed strategy for improvement that

represents both the changing system data and the formative assessment collected on an ongoing basis in classrooms.

Priority 3: Engage and actively involve the whole community in delivering the school's strategic priorities

By the end of 2015 the school aimed to:

- Increase the proportion of parents who feel satisfied with the school through generalised written feedback
- Increase the proportion of parents who agree the school looks for ways to improve
- Maintain the percentage of parents attending school focus groups.

Achievements

When the IB PYP was introduced in 2012, the School Board formally endorsed and accepted that the school community was committed and supportive of working towards authorisation as an IB World School. From 2012 to 2015, teachers quickly moved from planning four Units of Inquiry (UOI) to six so that they would cover all Transdisciplinary Themes and as such, the Program of Inquiry (POI) became richer and consistent across the school. The UOI planning uses Backward by Design principles in that teams articulate outcomes at the beginning of the planning process and then plan learning experiences.

The school has implemented the PYP and parent focus groups as a strategy to embed a culture of positive change. The school has been committed to holding focus groups for parent feedback over the life of the School Plan. Focus groups have been held for the parents of preschool, kindergarten, year 3, year 4 and year 6 (these year groups were selected, as for the most part, as transition years). Targeted subgroups with particular interests were also invited with the intention of the school having a broader view of the whole school community needs. These groups included EAL/D, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and special needs students. The school has responded by addressing key issues that parents identified and then communicating with the relevant group of parents to communicate what changes have been put into place. The implementation of the Indigenous Homework Club has seen an increase in engagement levels of students and their families. The school continues to develop ways to improve enabling the whole school community to be engaged in improving student learning outcomes in particular in literacy and numeracy.

Reflections

The panel noted the improvement in positive school culture across the duration of the school plan. The leadership team has had a strong focus on developing positive relationships with all stakeholders. They have developed structures to have community input and the panel suggests they develop a plan to review these processes to ensure consistency in communication and strengthen the partnerships with parents and the wider school community. The school has the opportunity, through the implementation of KidsMatter, to engage students and the community in productive partnerships to both further promote a culture of learning and to sustain a positive school climate.

The panel found through the validation process, including school satisfaction data, that all stakeholders identified the need to further address Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) as a pedagogical tool for improving teaching and learning and communication.

Priority 4: Provide preschool education to National Quality Standard

With this priority the school sought to make progress in leadership and service management in the preschool against the NQS Improvement Plan.

In 2014 the preschool program was returned to the brand new building at Deakin and the school undertook the National Quality School (NQS) assessment. The preschool attained exceeding for every area of examination.

Commendations from the NQS assessment included:

- *The preschool educators and school leadership demonstrated particular strength in their focus on curriculum planning and decision making practices and in their comprehensive documentation of the program and of the children's learning.*
- *The interactions between the educators and children were of very high quality and there was a strong focus on giving children agency and hearing children's voice throughout the program.*
- *Family involvement in the preschool program demonstrated the value placed on developing partnerships between the service and home through respect for diversity and family culture and expertise.*
- *The service had a strong focus on embedding sustainability practices at the service and on supporting and teaching children to be environmentally responsible.*
- *The educators also demonstrated a strong commitment to valuing Indigenous culture and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the daily preschool program, in respectful and appropriate ways.*

The panel noted the successful preschool program and encourages the school to ensure this focus is sustained in the next school improvement cycle. The offsite preschool campus provides a challenge to embed an effective and frequent transition program which will ensure parents are well-informed of the Kindergarten program and be involved in the whole school community.

Summary

In summary, the panel recommends the leadership team review the strategic plan and establish a strong improvement agenda grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measureable student outcomes. Develop clear and explicit school wide targets that have been set and communicated to the community with realistic timelines.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

National School Improvement Tool

Forrest Primary School examined the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) and made determinations as to where the school is placed in each of the nine domains. The staff were given the opportunity to comment and be involved in discussion of the nine NSIT domains via a staff meeting. The panel sighted responses from each leadership team member, as well as, the collated staff members' responses and evidence was recorded to support decisions as to where the school is placed in the various performance levels.

After examining Forrest Primary School documents and interviewing executive and teaching staff, the validation panel has determined responses to the NSIT for Forrest Primary School. These responses were aligned with the school's own determinations of how the school is placed with regard to each of the nine NSIT domains.

It was noted by the panel that there is improvement taking place in various aspects of the school and it is foreseeable these improvements will further enhance the school's position on the NSIT in the near future.

In validating the school's journey against the National School Improvement Tool the panel noted the following in relation to the **Explicit Improvement Agenda** domain.

- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*
- *Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g., not accompanied by timelines).*
- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes.*
- *The school's focus on data is driven more by external requirements (eg, NAPLAN, My School) than by an internal desire for good information to guide school decision making and to monitor progress.*

At Forrest Primary School, the panel determined staff, students and parents all articulate that a key focus for the school has been, and continues to be the International Baccalaureate (IB) – Primary Years Programme (PYP). The introduction of the PYP has helped to re-establish trust between the wider community and the school, following a challenging time in 2011. Whilst the implementation of the PYP has proven highly successful and has driven teaching and learning at Forrest Primary School, this focus has not been clearly reflected in the 2012-2015 School Plan. The leadership team would benefit from sharing an agenda that is expressed in terms of specific improvements, including the articulation of the school's commitment to becoming a PYP authorised school in the next 12 months. The leadership team has identified the need to focus on the school's transient population and develop effective processes to map these students' growth in learning during their time at Forrest Primary. The panel supports this recommendation as an area of focus in the next School Plan.

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

- *School leaders pay close attention to data provided to them about the performance of the school (eg, NAPLAN results;) and identify areas in which the school is performing relatively poorly or well.*
- *An ad hoc approach exists to building staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data.*
- *The school has ensured that appropriate software is available and that at least the assigned staff have been trained to undertake data analyses.*
- *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.*

It was noted by the panel that a great deal of literacy and numeracy data is collected across the school and for this the school is to be commended. The panel cited evidence that some members of the leadership team analyse and share aspects of data collected with teachers or teams of teachers throughout the school. Further work is needed to strengthen the processes for the analysis of data, studies of growth and to ensure that there is consistency across the school in the way teachers respond to the data collected.

NAPLAN results and SMART data are shared with staff from across the school each year. For continued growth it will be important for the leadership team to be clear about the purpose for data collection and analysis and to articulate this vision to staff with an alignment with a professional learning plan. The panel recommends that the collection and systematic analysis of data be built into regular team meetings.

Within the **Culture that Promotes Learning** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *The tone of the school which reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning.*
- *There are few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems and behaviour management takes up little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully.*
- *The school has clear expectations for how students should behave and interact with one another, and in the main, relationships are caring and respectful.*
- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact and in the language they use in both formal and informal settings.*

The panel commends Forrest Primary School for the tone of the school, which reflects a commitment to purposeful learning. The school endeavours to ensure that all students are engaged in challenging, meaningful learning. The implementation of the Learner Profile, through the PYP, has provided a common language to drive expectations across the school.

Through interviews conducted with a range of parents, the panel noted that the school community is supportive of the PYP and speaks highly of its implementation and the positive focus it has brought to student learning. The panel noted that the optimistic and positive culture of learning at Forrest Primary School was reflected from both staff and parents.

The leadership and staff at Forrest have worked hard to re-establish a learning environment that is inclusive and focussed on learning.

Within the **Targeted use of School Resources** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *The school has developed processes for identifying student learning needs.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*
- *School leaders encourage teachers to address individual learning needs in classrooms.*
- *Physical learning spaces are used creatively and technology is accessible to the majority of staff and students.*
- *The school uses its human and physical resources to address the needs of students.*

- *Specialist diagnostic testing is organised for a small number of students with special needs, but teachers do not routinely administer tests to better understand specific learning difficulties (eg, problems in learning to read) or individual learning needs (eg, LBOTE, gifted).*

The school uses its human and physical resources to address the needs of students. This is best reflected in the way that English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) students are supported at Forrest. EALD students have access to a range of specialist teachers. In addition, the introduction of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model has helped facilitate a more targeted approach to addressing the specific learning needs of students experiencing difficulty in the area of reading in year 1 and year 2. These programs are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget and resourced with experienced educators.

Physical learning spaces are used creatively within a traditional school building and technology is becoming more accessible to the majority of staff and students. The panel suggests ICT remain a focus for the school and that it be used to enhance and support the targeted learning for all students.

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

- *The school undertakes professional learning activities, although these may not always focus on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning and there may not be a coherent, documented learning plan.*
- *The principal and leadership team are seen as supportive of, but not generally involved in, the day-to-day practice and learning of teachers.*
- *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.*
- *Where it is necessary to manage unsatisfactory staff performance, this is done professionally and effectively, and in accordance with agreed guidelines.*

In recent years the leadership team and staff have undertaken much professional learning related to the implementation of PYP. The leadership team have implemented a process for 'Teacher Talks' once per year and the principal has acknowledged the benefits of deepening this process for ongoing teacher development and feedback.

The school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching, and this process is largely supported by the Executive Teacher Professional Practice. Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have colleagues observe and discuss their work with them. The panel commends the school on these aspects of the school. Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to their colleagues. The panel recommends that the school formalise the coaching and mentoring process for staff, particularly to support both new educators and staff new to Forrest Primary.

Within the **Systematic Curriculum Delivery** domain, the panel verified 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 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.*

The introduction of the PYP in 2012 provided the vehicle to focus teaching and learning for all stakeholders at Forrest Primary School.

Staff and leadership members all reflect positively on the school's journey in the implementation of PYP and the process that is currently being undertaken in order to become a PYP approved school. Staff report that the recent visit from a PYP consultant has had a dramatic impact on their understanding of Units of Inquiry and how to improve the planning, teaching and learning associated with these. This consultation has allowed staff to deepen their thinking around inquiry and to better analyse the purpose of their Unit of Inquiry. The panel commends the commitment all staff at Forrest Primary have shown in the process of implementing PYP, this has helped the school to have a systematic approach to curriculum delivery.

Within the **Differentiated Teaching and Learning** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *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 (eg, differentiated reading groups in the early primary years), but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.*
- *Regular assessments of student learning are undertaken, but these often are summative and disconnected (eg, relating to different topics) rather than exploring long-term progress in students' knowledge, skills and understandings over time.*

Through a series of classroom observations the panel observed differentiation in a number of classroom, however it varied class to class and year level to year level. Some use is made of differentiated teaching, in particular through the reading groups in the early primary years, but in other classes, teachers often teach the same prescribed curriculum. The panel recommends the school develop a more systematic and cohesive approach to addressing individual learning needs in the classroom that embeds practice.

Regular assessments of student learning are undertaken by classroom teachers, but these often are summative in nature. The panel recommends the school analyse the current assessment schedule and look for ways to use the data collected to assist with differentiating learning in the classroom.

Within the **Effective Pedagogical Practices** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *School leaders take a close interest in the school's literacy and numeracy results, but generally do not engage in discussions with staff about effective teaching strategies.*

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

School leaders take a close interest in the school's literacy and numeracy results, however, the school could benefit from implementing a process to help facilitate discussions with staff about effective teaching strategies on a regular basis. Implementation of PYP has helped to develop some clarity about what students are expected to learn and has helped staff to focus on teaching and learning at Forrest Primary School. Teachers have access to a range of professional learning opportunities, with the key focus having been on PYP over the past four years. This has helped staff to develop a common purpose and language for learning at Forrest.

Within the **School-Community Partnerships** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *The school has external 'partnerships', but rather than being built around a coherent, jointly planned program of activities to improve outcomes for students, these 'partnerships' tend to be mutually convenient arrangements (e.g., exchanges of expertise or the sharing of facilities between institutions or organisations).*
- *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.*

The school has established one or more partnerships with families and community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. This is best reflected through the successful implementation of the Indigenous Homework Club. This panel sighted documentation outlining the club's purpose, planning, results and evaluations that have been undertaken to ensure the club continues to meet its intended purpose. The panel commends the detailed fashion in which the Indigenous Homework Club has been documented and the ongoing analysis and reviews that have been implemented to ensure it continues to improve outcomes for students. The school is encouraged to use this successful model to systematically review the effectiveness of other partnerships to ensure set objectives are articulated and purposeful to all involved.

National Safe Schools Audit Tool

The National Safe Schools Framework Audit Tool was used to evaluate the school's performance. Each staff member was asked to complete a paper copy of the School Audit Tool. The panel was presented with the raw data that highlighted areas of concern. The panel makes the following suggestions based on the data provided:

Areas of strength that were identified:

1. A clear vision for a safe, supportive and respectful school has been communicated across the school community
2. The school leadership school has a sound knowledge of the school community and its expectations for a safe school environment
3. Positive and respectful teacher to teacher relationships are maintained
4. A responsible technology usage agreement is in place in the school
5. Positive student behaviour is promoted and recognised
6. There is a strong school focus on student engagement

Key areas for growth and improvement as identified by the school include:

1. Skills and understandings are taught for cyber safety and for countering harassment, aggression, violence and bullying
2. Appropriate early student intervention involving support, skill development and social restructuring is undertaken
3. Ongoing support is provided to identified students and their families
4. Data is collected about harassment, aggression, violence and bullying on a regular basis to inform decision making about the safety of the school learning context
5. A safe school and/or student wellbeing community operates
6. Ongoing professional learning is undertaken on emerging school safety and wellbeing issues

The panel noted that KidsMatter, which is in the early stages of development and implementation, will address the majority of the areas requiring improvement listed above.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

Forrest Primary School is commended for the following.

1. **The leadership team for the manner in which it has focused on developing positive relationships amongst staff and the school community.** The staff have responded to the challenge of reuniting the school with the wider school community. This has created a tone in the school that is optimistic and is reflected in students being engaged in learning.
2. **The focus that IB PYP has brought to teaching and learning at Forrest Primary School is creating a language that is consistently used across the school.** This is enabling teachers and students to share their thinking, problem solve, work collaboratively and deepen their learning.
3. **The preschool is to be commended on the exceeding rating received through the NQS assessment and rating process.** The positive preschool program is reflected in the increasing enrolments at Forrest.
4. **The partnerships the school has established in working collaboratively to improve both the physical environment and enhance student learning and well-being.** This is reflected in the positive school community, the celebrating of cultural diversity and improved engagement from parents.

Recommendations

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

1. **Create and communicate the School Plan highlighting the school's commitment to becoming an accredited PYP school.** This can assist all stakeholders to share in the explicit improvement agenda and develop a cohesive approach to implementation across all areas of teaching and learning.
2. **Develop an evidence-based professional learning model and systemic approach to help build an expert teaching team and embed practice.** This will enable the leadership team to work as instructional leaders in order to improve the school wide commitment to the development of effective pedagogical practices.
3. **Embed a whole school assessment 'for' learning plan that informs the literacy and numeracy teaching and learning cycle.** This will enable the school to develop a strategy based on triangulation, ongoing analysis and use of a range of data to assist teachers to address differentiation in a formative manner.
4. **Develop and review strategies to address the complexities of having a transient student population enabling the school to strengthen the school wide processes to improve all student outcomes.** To work in partnership with schools and access community resources in order to meet the needs of the diverse group of students.
5. **Strengthen the Information Communication Technology (ICT) plan to enhance and support the targeted use for both learning and communication.** This will enable teachers to build professional knowledge, improve pedagogical practices and deliver a coordinated approach to parent communication.

Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Forrest Primary School conducted on Thursday 23rd, Friday 24th and Monday 27th August 2015.

Name: Jason Walmsley

School: Charles Conder Primary

Name: Julie Dixon

School: Isabella Plains Early Childhood School

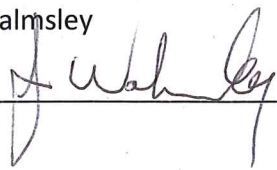
Name: Lucy Garvan

School: Canberra Boys Grammar

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

Name: Jason Walmsley

Signature: _____



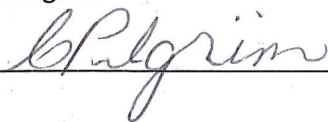
Date: _____

23/9/15

As principal of **Forrest Primary School** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Christine Pilgrim

Signature: _____



Date: _____

24.9.15

As co-director of Quality Learning Australasia, external lead 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: Jane Kovacs

Signature: _____



Date: _____

23/9/15