



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **EVATT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Review Report 2017

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## Introduction: Overview of the External School Review process

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As part of the Australian Capital Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) are required to participate in an External School Review every five years. This document captures the findings of the External Review Panel during this cycle of school review.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation against the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), 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 School Review was conducted over three days and involved a wide variety of data-gathering approaches, including desktop review, observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the NSIT to inform the affirmations, commendations and recommendations for this school improvement cycle.

## Section A: School context

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Evatt Primary School is located in the northern suburbs of Canberra in the Belconnen Network of schools. The school was opened in 1974 to service the educational needs of the growing Belconnen community.

The school enrolls students from both the Priority Enrolment Areas of Evatt and McKellar, as well as from more than 30 outer areas in the Belconnen region (58 percent of the student population are in-area students). The current enrolment of the school is 329 students, and enrolments numbers have increased from 2013 to 2016, with a slight drop in 2017. Forty-one students identify as having English as an Additional Language or Dialect and 12 as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. There are three preschool classes and three learning support units. Fifty students have Individual Learning Plans and 10 have Personalised Learning Plans.

Evatt Primary School has developed new values during this strategic planning cycle: success, optimism, acceptance and resilience, represented by the acronym SOAR (the school's emblem is an eagle).

The school learning program is supported by a range of co-curricular initiatives including the Ride or Walk to School program, the Fresh Tastes initiative and a strong partnership with Melba Copland Secondary School to support enrichment opportunities in the arts, mathematics and science. Evatt Primary School is an ACT Smart Sustainable School.

The number of teachers at Evatt Primary School has remained quite stable, although there have been a number of changes to teaching staff and executive positions across the life of the plan. The principal was appointed in 2011.

## Section B: School performance

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### **Student learning data**

Across the life of the plan, Evatt Primary School has achieved variable results in student learning for the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). In 2013, the school was above both Belconnen and ACT mean scores for year 3 reading and spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy, but below in writing. In 2015, the school was above both like-school and national means for both grammar and punctuation, and numeracy for year 5. Year 5 numeracy has also been close to, and then above, mean scores in 2015 and 2016 for both Belconnen and ACT. For all other years of the plan and domains, the school remains predominantly below ACT mean score averages. Progress in relation to Belconnen mean score averages is variable, at times above the mean.

The school's performance against targets for improvement set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate were within the expected range in all domains, with the exception of year 3 reading, and years 3 and 5 numeracy in 2016. The panel noted that the proportion of students below national minimum standards fluctuated across the review cycle in all domains but reduced in year 5 numeracy from 18.8% in 2013 to 2.6% in 2016.

When analysing student growth performance across the life of the plan, the panel noted that the gain in numeracy (from 2014 to 2016) was well above like-school and all schools growth. Reading showed less growth than like-schools or all schools between 2013 and 2015 but the growth between 2014 and 2016 showed growth better than like-schools or all schools.

In the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), on entry the school's kindergarten cohorts have scored close to but below that of ACT mean raw scores in reading and mathematics. In 2013, students finished above for reading but below for all other years. In mathematics, students finished above the raw scores in 2013 and 2014 and equal to in 2015 and 2016. The panel noted that the percentage of students expressing as much, more and better than expected progress has decreased for both reading and mathematics across the life of the plan.

### **Stakeholder perception data**

The school's perception data from staff, students and parent community reflect a range of characteristics from strong to supporting the school to prioritise areas for improvement. The parent perceptions have varied across the life of the plan, predominantly below the ACT average in 2013 but improving to predominantly above in 2015, with a slight drop in satisfaction levels in 2016. The proportion of parents who are satisfied that their child feels safe at Evatt Primary School has remained predominantly above the ACT mean. Although this perception is not as well supported by staff and students, both stakeholder groups have a higher proportion of satisfaction levels from 2015 to 2016 agreeing with the statement 'I feel safe at the school' (students) and 'Students feel safe at this school' (staff). The panel noted that there has been a considerable focus on the building of a safe and focused learning environment, particularly in the last two years of the planning cycle.

Statements about teachers expecting students to do their best, the provision of useful feedback to students and that teachers motivate students to learn are viewed as strengths

by staff in the staff satisfaction surveys. Areas that will require the school's ongoing attention include: how staff perceive the management of student behaviour; how well staff feel supported; how staff achievements are celebrated; and that communication is effective. Results are more than 10 percentage points below the school type result. However, all of these have improved from 2015 to 2016.

The student satisfaction data shows variability in relation to the proportion of students in agreement with each national item compared to ACT averages across the planning cycle. In 2013, the satisfaction data was predominately above similar schools in most categories, however, the panel noted increased variability in subsequent years. In 2015 and 2016 the school was above the ACT mean in the statement 'My teachers provide me with use feedback about my school work'. The panel noted that this area has been a priority for the school. Perceptions that 'My teachers motivate me to learn' have been predominantly above ACT means. Student perceptions that they can talk to their teachers about their concerns, have their opinions taken seriously, and are treated fairly will continue to be areas of focus for the school.

### *Evidence cited*

- School Satisfaction and School Climate surveys 2013–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- My Schools website
- Annual Action Plans 2013–17
- School Strategic Plan 2014–17
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16.

## Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

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### Priority areas and achievements

Evatt Primary School identified three strategic priorities as part of their strategic plan.

- **Priority 1:** To improve student learning outcomes for all students.
- **Priority 2:** To ensure that wellbeing is part of our core business.
- **Priority 3:** Community partnerships are maintained and enhanced.

These remained the priorities for the school for the life of the plan. In support of these priorities, the school leadership team identified a number of key improvement strategies and attendant actions for each. There was clear alignment between the strategic priorities, key improvement strategies and targets. The targets were not consistent across the four years of the plan. The targets described in the annual action plans were not always incremental and consistent across the life of the plan. NAPLAN targets as proposed by the Directorate were incremental.

### Strategic priority 1: To improve student learning outcomes for all students

The performance measures for this priority were:

- years 3 to 5 NAPLAN mean scores with matched students
- PIPS results
- the number of students achieving or exceeding school-based achievement benchmarks.

The school's key focus in improving student outcomes was to build individual and collective teacher capacity through coaching and mentoring. The school engaged a critical friend to support teachers in deepening their knowledge of the Australian Curriculum. This consultant continued to engage with teaching teams to support their planning of units of work. The panel noted some strong alignment to the Australian Curriculum in planning documents and note that further work in planning remains a focus for the school.

Key teachers were identified as coaches and mentors; for example, the literacy/numeracy field officer, executive staff and the executive teacher for professional practice. Strategies developed to support the development of teacher capacity were:

- specific and targeted coaching and mentoring
- coaching and mentoring teachers in the junior school to support early intervention
- professional learning to support new educators to implement Daily Five and CAFÉ
- a 'faces on the data' room
- coaching to develop skills in collecting and analysing qualitative data.

To further improve student outcomes, the school focused on strengthening literacy and numeracy teaching, learning and assessment. The school improvement agenda has had a targeted and specific focus: in 2015, the Spelling Project; and in 2017, the Writing Project.

In 2015, NAPLAN Smart data were interrogated by the leadership team and spelling was identified as an area for improvement. The school undertook action learning, using quantitative and qualitative data and engaged with a research expert, using the data to

focus on improving spelling, grammar and punctuation. This body of work led to the development of a whole school approach in partnership with a local university to improve practices through the Triple Word Theory. Each teaching team defined their pedagogical focus and goals for building their knowledge and understandings. Progress of the team's goals was, and continues to be, supported and monitored by the field officer and executive. Although some school-based data sets show improvement, this work does not appear to have significantly impacted on improvement in NAPLAN spelling, and grammar and punctuation data.

In achieving improved growth in numeracy, the school utilised the expertise of the literacy/numeracy coordinator (2013), field officer and executive teacher for professional practice to ensure that staff were supported to be consistent in their expectations, planning, visible learning strategies, assessment and planning. The Progressive Achievement Test has been utilised by teachers across the school to benchmark progress in maths. Results show that gain in numeracy from years 3 to 5 (2014 to 2016) was well above like-schools and all schools growth.

Professional learning has been effective in ensuring a consistent approach in the delivery of effective numeracy programs. Teachers have engaged with Count Me in Too and Middle Years Mental Computation as tools for teaching and learning.

The 2013 year 3 reading results were strong. This cohort of students continued to perform strongly in 2015 year 5 NAPLAN reading, with mean scores exceeding the target by 23 points. To support teachers to assess and use data to inform individual student and cohort progress and continued improvement in reading, the school invested in benchmark kits and PAT Reading tests to support teacher judgement of student reading levels.

The school has implemented literacy programs such as the Daily Five, Triple Word Theory and The Big Write. The school also participated in the Principals as Literacy Leaders program, which involved whole-school professional learning relating to improving literacy practices. This included the school's action research project, focusing on spelling. Evatt Primary School is currently involved in the Writing Project, a system initiative to support the improvement of writing results across the ACT.

The development of a comprehensive assessment schedule and the Evatt Primary School data tracking tool has begun to provide staff, easy access to student achievement data. The range of data sources for classes across the school includes cognitive testing, Running Records (benchmarks), Progressive Assessment Tests in Reading and Mathematics, Bee Spelling, NAPLAN, PIPS, Individual Learning Plans and Personalised Learning Plans, data on students with an English as an Additional Language or Dialect, and data from Count Me In Too and Middle Years Mental Computation programs. Staff are currently spending significant amounts of time collecting information.

The school met most of its NAPLAN targets, (as set by the Directorate) in its annual action plans. Other targets identified related to improving student growth in PIPS reading and mathematics. The targets set were not met across the life of the plan. Targets were also set for reading benchmarks. The panel noted that it was difficult to track achievement towards these targets through reporting in board reports. Targets set for the percentage of students in the top two bands of NAPLAN, as articulated in the 2016 Annual Action Plan were not met.

## Strategic priority 2: To ensure that wellbeing is part of our core business

The performance measures for this priority were:

- school satisfaction data from students and staff
- wellbeing survey data
- community consultation
- school culture survey.

The school aimed to improve the wellbeing of students and staff over the life of the plan, acknowledging that changes culture take time to embed. Since the beginning of the plan, there have been several changes to the executive structure of the school. For the past two years there has been greater consistency in the leadership team, this in turn has indicated the strengthening of programs to support student and staff wellbeing. In 2013, staff reflected on available data and reviewed the social skills programs. Dissatisfaction with the status quo led staff to investigate and research alternate programs that centred on the school's beliefs that children who feel safe and secure are more able to learn.

The school has successfully implemented Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms and Friendly Schools Plus to support social and emotional learning programs across the school. All staff members have been trained in the use of Circle Time and the Learning Support Unit teachers facilitate this program on a daily basis.

In 2015, the school continued to embed a whole-school approach to explicitly teaching social skills and effective student management. The development of the school values, SOAR (success, optimism, acceptance and resilience) has been highly effective in supporting positive cultural change within the community. The whole community had input into the conceptual development of the values. SOAR is highly visible within the school community, through respectful interactions. Students, teachers and parents are able to articulate how the values have influenced improved behaviour. This along with the refining of the behaviour management policy and procedures has led to a safer and more engaging learning environment in 2017.

The school has increased the opportunities for students to have a say in the things they learn by engaging students in choice and a range of activities. The panel met with student leaders, members of the Student Representative Council (SRC) and individual students who all attested to having a bigger influence on what they say and do. Through the SRC, students have been given a voice in the creation of a safer, friendly and caring environment. Representatives from each class have been involved in the decision making processes for the development of a newly constructed sensory space and the Deep Blue room – a space for calm thoughtful thinking about behaviour choices. Clearly articulated acceptable and unacceptable behaviours that align strongly with the values program are highly visible throughout the school.

Staff members at Evatt Primary School have worked together during planned professional learning opportunities to develop trauma sensitive ways to manage challenging and complex behaviour. The leadership team has also collaborated with the community to facilitate and create a more aesthetically pleasing and physically safer learning environment, inclusive to all students.

The school satisfaction survey was a primary source of data in evaluating the effectiveness of key improvement strategies in this priority. In relation to this priority, targets from the perception data varied across the life of the plan and the achievement of these targets was also variable.

### Strategic priority 3: Community partnerships are maintained and enhanced

The performance measures for this priority were:

- school satisfaction data
- community consultation
- community feedback.

Over the life of the plan, the school has strategically sought partnerships that would support the school to improve students' academic and social outcomes.

The school has encouraged parents to partner in their child/children's learning through a range of events and activities, including workshops that focused on particular aspects of learning. Parents have also been encouraged to become classroom helpers. Though the number of volunteers in the classrooms decreased over the life of the plan, improved attendance at events such as the annual learning journey, parent interviews and three-way conferences was noted by the panel.

Parent representatives of the wider school community and the Evatt Primary School Board met with the panel and articulated a strong sense of trust in the leadership team and staff in meeting the needs of all students at the school. Opportunities for parental engagement were also discussed and these parents expressed satisfaction in relation to the open lines of communication. Parents agreed that there was a range of communication opportunities available to families that provided information about day-to-day matters. The panel saw evidence of a range of processes and strategies that had been put into place to enhance communication links, including the renewed website and a school mobile phone application.

Strong and meaningful external partnerships that have focused on improving teacher pedagogy were observed by the panel. The school has engaged a range of experts across the life of the plan. External tertiary establishments have also enhanced community relationships. These include collaboration with the University of Canberra in supporting a Nutrition and Occupational Therapy program and the Australian National University through the TRUST (Trauma, Understanding and Sensitive Teaching) program.

In support of students who are gifted and talented, or those who require more enriching and challenging learning, Evatt Primary School has established a close relationship with Melba Copland Secondary School (MCSS). Students from the school participate in the Magellan Project with other children from the MCSS cluster of schools in enriching learning projects. Students affirm that participation in this program has provided an excellent source of enrichment. This partnership has enabled the school to offer programs that were difficult to resource within the school.

Partnerships with local businesses and churches, the ACT Education Directorate's Fresh Tastes and Ride and Walk to School programs all support a strong co-curricular program.

Across the life of the plan, the school has monitored how well community partnerships are valued and maintained. By 2016, the school target was to increase satisfaction levels to

85 percent and this was exceeded in 2016. Other targets included measuring the number of volunteers in the school, how satisfied parents were about how behaviour is managed and information received about their child's progress. The panel noted that some, but not all, of these targets were achieved.

## **Reflections**

Across the life of the plan the school leadership team has maintained the three strategic priorities for improvement. As a result of this, the school has seen some improvement in results, particularly in the NAPLAN domain of numeracy. The school has also enacted significant cultural change, giving high priority to promoting wellbeing and encouraging more appropriate behaviour. The school has revised its values, supporting a strengthened and cohesive school culture. The school leadership team is to be commended for this work. It has experienced significant changes to staffing, particularly at the leadership level during this planning cycle. This has meant that it has been difficult for the school to fully embed some key bodies of work. Since 2016, the principal has led a united and stable leadership team and has had the capacity to strategically appoint new staff in line with the needs of the school. The school is now well positioned to continue its core priorities into the next strategic planning cycle.

## *Evidence cited*

- School Satisfaction and School Climate Surveys 2013–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- My Schools website
- Annual Action Plans 2013–17
- School Strategic Plan 2013–17
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16
- parent, student and staff interviews with the panel
- key school policy and program documentation including curriculum planning
- Evatt Primary School newsletters and website
- assessment schedule documents, behaviour and data trackers
- evidence of administrative meetings and timetables and professional learning calendar
- Evatt Primary School staff handbook and the Pedagogical Practices and Curriculum Delivery document
- Triple Word Theory document and the reading pamphlet for Principals as Literacy Leaders.

## Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

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The school's senior leadership team have attended professional learning to build their understanding of the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). Subsequently, leaders worked with staff to support them in also understanding and applying the tool. This included teachers conducting walk-throughs to collect evidence for each of the domains. The school board was also engaged, exploring the two domains most relevant for this group. A final self-evaluation was developed prior to the External School Review.

### National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

#### *DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda*

- *The school has developed an agenda for improvement in partnership with parents and the community, and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings, school newsletters, parent–teacher meetings and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*
- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from research evidence and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student's success.*
- *Targets for improvement are not specific.*

#### **Comments and findings**

- Evatt Primary School's Strategic Plan (2013–16) identifies three key strategic priorities: to improve learning outcomes for all students; to ensure wellbeing is part of core business; and to ensure community partnerships are maintained and enhanced. These priorities have remained the focus, as evidenced in annual action plans. Plans contain targets for improvement.
- Teachers identified a number of key focus areas for improvement including: the school's new values and approaches to behaviour management, and spelling, numeracy and writing. Teachers do not readily identify with whole of school systemic targets.
- There has been a whole of school focus on the teaching of numeracy with evidence of improvement particularly in the growth between years 3 and 5.
- There has also been a school-wide focus on improving spelling although NAPLAN results do not reflect improvement.
- The school has collected data about behaviour incidences since implementing a new policy in 2016 to monitor effectiveness.

- The school leadership team is aware of trends in student achievement levels in PIPS and NAPLAN.
- Processes are in place to analyse whole of school data sets and trends over time.
- Parents report that the improvement agenda of the school is not really clear to them.
- The leadership team has worked with experts from universities as well as engaging critical friends to support the improvement agenda.
- A highly consultative process engages all stakeholders in the improvement journey related to school culture.

### *DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data*

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders view reliable and timely student data as essential to their effective leadership of the school.*
- *One or more members of staff have been assigned responsibility for analysing the full range of school data, and summarising, displaying and communicating student outcome data for the school.*
- *Time is set aside (e.g. on student-free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data and the implications of data for classroom practices. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels.*
- *Software may be used for the analysis of school results, including the performances of priority groups.*
- *There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

### **Comments and findings**

- The school collates and analyses whole of school data sets including: NAPLAN, Progressive Achievement Tests, PIPS, attendance, behaviour and perception survey data. These analyses are completed with staff in whole of staff and team-focused meetings.
- NAPLAN results are within the confidence range of Directorate set targets for the school, although mean scores remain predominantly below the ACT means with the exception of year 5 numeracy. PIPS data is showing a downward trend in the number of students achieving expected and above expected results.
- There is an emerging system for collecting and analysing data. Electronic collections of data have been problematic and this has affected the school leadership team's ability to analyse the full range of data over time. The school has recently implemented a data tracking tool to support more systematic data collections and analyses.
- A school-wide plan for the collection and analysis of whole of school performance data has not yet been developed.
- The school leadership team regularly works with teams of teachers to discuss student performance data to inform teaching.
- The panel found evidence of the reporting of NAPLAN performance to parents in newsletters and at board meetings.

### *DOMAIN 3: A culture that promotes learning*

- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. There are very few obvious behavioural or engagement problems.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully, in their own ways and at their own pace. Individual talents are valued. Class 'busy work' is kept to a minimum, and an attempt is made to ensure that all students are engaged in challenging, meaningful learning.*
- *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.*
- *The school effectively implements its policies, for example, by ensuring that disruptive behaviour, bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly. The school has clear expectations for how students should behave and interact with one another, and in the main, relationships are caring and respectful. Some staff time is taken up dealing with behaviour problems.*
- *Staff morale is satisfactory.*

### **Comments and findings**

- The school redeveloped its values in 2016 and the panel observed that these are highly visible, well regarded and embedded in school culture.
- In 2016, the school redeveloped its policy and processes for promoting appropriate behaviour and addressing inappropriate behaviour. These are well understood by teachers. A time out space, the Deep Blue, supports students who are finding it difficult to regulate their behaviour. The panel observed calm and focused learning environments.
- Staff and student perception survey data indicates a level of concern about how well behaviour is managed, however, staff and students attested to improved student behaviour in line with SOAR (success, optimism, acceptance and resilience) values initiative, improved processes and the Deep Blue room.
- School values support a culture of respectful and caring relationships
- The school has invested in Trauma, Understanding and Sensitive Teaching (TRUST) professional learning to support a whole of school approach to responding sensitively to students.
- The school has documented expected practices for each classroom to support a focus on high expectations and quality learning. Classrooms 'check-ins' are conducted by the leadership team.
- There is a strong focus on wellbeing. A social and emotional learning program is in place. Students are encouraged to reflect in a highly supportive way on how their emotions might have an impact on their learning.

- The kindergarten has trialled the use of SeeSaw to support regular communication and feedback to parents.
- Attendance levels are consistent, although improving the rates of attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remains a focus for the school.
- The leadership team has reviewed timetables and school events, strategically planning to keep disruption to a minimum.
- The school has worked to build a very attractive and stimulating workplace for staff and learning environment for students.
- Through learning journeys, postcards home, information sessions, parent workshops, newsletters and apps, parent–teacher interviews and regular teacher contact the school partners with parents in the learning journey of their child/children.

#### *DOMAIN 4: Targeted use of school resources*

- *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 are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*
- *The school uses its human and physical resources to address the needs of students, although this may not be preceded by a systematic analysis of those needs.*
- *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 (e.g. problems in learning to read) or individual learning needs (e.g. gifted students, student from language backgrounds other than English).*
- *Technology is accessible to the majority of staff and students.*

#### **Comments and findings**

- The school has invested in information and communication technology infrastructure to ensure all classrooms have interactive whiteboards. Chromebooks have recently been purchased to support the learning.
- A pilot project using the Response to Intervention model has been developed for the year 1/2 cohort. Universal screening using diagnostic data has been trialled. A literacy support program (MiniLit) supports the needs of students identified in Tier 2. The leadership team intends to extend this approach school wide. Some staff expressed concerns that there are older students who have not yet been identified for intervention.
- All students with verified learning disabilities have Individual Learning Plans or Personalised Learning Plans, which outline the support they receive from classroom teachers, learning support teachers and officers.
- The school uses a case management approach, accessing external agencies to support identified students who have complex learning and behaviour needs.

- The needs of English as an Additional Language or Dialect students are resourced through the provision of teaching and learning assistant support. Targeted literacy instruction in literacy in small groups occurs for these students.
- The school is yet to formalise processes for identifying and supporting students with gifts and talents although enrichment and extension programs are in place. The school collaborates in partnership with Melba Copland Secondary School to enable students to engage in programs that enrich their learning.
- Some parents note variability over the years in how their child had been extended in classes.
- Teachers meet three times a year with the special needs team to discuss the progress and needs of their students.
- Flexible learning spaces are evident in classrooms.
- Learning support assistants work alongside teachers to support students with special and complex needs.
- The school engaged the skills of an executive teacher for professional practice as an expert in classroom practice.
- The budget is aligned to school priorities.

### *DOMAIN 5: An expert teaching team*

- *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.*
- *The school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching. Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *Strategies are in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff members 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.*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with the staff.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction, and in staff handbooks.*
- *Where it is necessary to manage unsatisfactory staff performance, this is done professionally and effectively, and in accordance with agreed guidelines.*

### **Comments and findings**

- In 2017, the school formalised coaching arrangements to support the school's continued focus on improved teaching strategies in numeracy. A coach has worked in all years 3 to year 6 classes modelling expected practice with plans for formalised observations and feedback in semester 2. Modelling and coaching in literacy and numeracy is also evident in preschool to year 2. Teachers can describe the impact of coaching on their classroom practice. Not all teachers have had access to coaching.
- Team leaders regularly conduct classroom walk-throughs to observe the use of expected practices.
- Professional Pathways plans are aligned to annual action plans.
- A staff handbook is provided to new teachers and there is evidence of some mentoring of beginning and new teachers, particularly within teaching teams and by leaders. Some teachers indicated that a more formalised induction program would have made for a smoother transition to the school.
- Professional learning for all staff, aligned to school priorities, is evident and includes literacy numeracy and trauma.
- Teachers are open to constructive feedback and report that regular observations by peers or leaders occur through walk-throughs and informally by coaches. A formalised process for lesson observation and feedback has not yet been implemented.

- Staff members are required to nominate areas in the school in which to lead or participate. Opportunities are provided for teachers to take on leadership roles.
- A formalised professional learning plan with associated budget has not yet been developed.
- Teaching teams are timetabled to be released together and have opportunities to plan, collaborate and learn from each other.
- Active recruitment strategies are evident to build a teaching team to meet the needs of the diverse range of learners and deliver the school's improvement plan.

#### *DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery*

- *The school curriculum plan and curriculum delivery (including the time allocated to particular learning) balance requirements to give priority to English and mathematics and to embed the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy in all school subjects.*
- *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 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.*

#### **Comments and findings**

- The school engaged a critical friend to develop curriculum planning and assessment documents aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The curriculum for most Key Learning Areas shows alignment.
- A Pedagogical Practices and Curriculum Delivery policy document has been developed that articulates the school's values and beliefs about learning and expectations for curriculum planning.
- Not all subjects have sequenced curriculum plans. Scope and sequence documents for English, mathematics and Japanese have been developed. There are gaps in the science curriculum. There is variability in the quality and alignment of assessment tasks.
- Levels of understanding of how to explicitly develop the general capabilities is variable.
- Teachers are provided with release time for a day once a term for formal curriculum planning. Teachers share responsibility for the development of multi-age plans. Opportunities are also provided for teachers to share their planning with colleagues from other multi-age groups.
- Formalised processes to track planning across the school, checking for full coverage of content descriptions for Key Learning Areas are not yet evident, although the senior leadership team provides feedback to teachers on their planning documents.

## *DOMAIN 7: Differentiated teaching and learning*

- *School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. This includes the systematic use of assessment instruments (standardised assessment tasks and teacher developed assessment tools) to establish where individuals are in their learning and to identify skill gaps and misunderstandings. Teachers also are encouraged to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.*
- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided. Students' workbooks also illustrate differentiated tasks and feedback.*
- *Reports to parents show progress over time and include suggestions for ways in which parents can support their children's learning.*

## **Comments and findings**

- A rigorous assessment schedule is in place.
- The use of data walls was observed by the panel and teachers meet in teams regularly to discuss the progress of students.
- Students set learning goals for reading and writing.
- Individual Learning Plans have been developed for all disability-funded students and to support students with learning difficulties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These students are supported for literacy and numeracy in small groups and the learning is personalised.
- Teachers have been supported in developing quality learning goals for students, particularly for those developed for Individual Learning Plans.
- Differentiated learning groups across each multi-age cohort for reading, spelling and numeracy is embedded practice, and in most cases, there is movement between groups when students show improvement or regression.
- Some teachers are highly skilled at using a very wide range of effective teaching strategies to differentiate the learning.
- Teachers use a range of mechanisms to provide feedback to parents about strategies to support their child's learning.

## *DOMAIN 8: Effective pedagogical practices*

- *School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school, and expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways to improve.*
- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, mathematics, and professional learning activities are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies in these areas.*
- *Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, high expectations of every student's learning, explicit teaching of skills and content, individualised attention as required, and timely feedback to guide student action are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

## **Comments and findings**

- The school has worked closely with experts from the University of Canberra to develop and implement a whole of school approach to the teaching of spelling (Triple Word Theory).
- The school's Pedagogical Practices and Curriculum Delivery policy document outlines the expected approaches to the teaching of reading, writing, spelling and mathematics.
- All staff members have participated in professional learning in the teaching of mathematics using the Count Me in Too and Middle Years Mental Computation tools. The school has participated in Principals as Literacy Leaders as part of its focus on improving the teaching of reading and writing.
- Learning intentions and success criteria, for providing clarity about what students are learning and able to do, were explicitly visible in classrooms and students have been able to articulate their learning.
- Expectations of teachers in how feedback is to be provided to students has been documented. There are examples of quality practice in providing feedback to students in various ways.
- Teachers have participated in action research projects about the use of data to inform teaching.
- In 2017, the school has identified two coaches to support both the junior and senior teams in using evidence-based teaching practices.
- All teachers have participated in targeted professional learning about the teaching of writing and in 2017 the school is participating in the Writing Project as a response to NAPLAN writing data.

### *DOMAIN 9: School-community partnerships*

- *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.*
- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions, local businesses and/or community organisations. All partners have a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, the purposes of the partnership and clear objectives have been set, expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students.*
- *Attention has been given to communication and to the sharing of experiences within the partnership; however, there may be no formal plan for reviewing the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.*
- *There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended.*
- *No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships.*

### **Comments and findings**

- The school has developed a robust and sustainable partnership with Melba Copland Secondary School and participates in the Magellan maths/science extension program, the high school's Regional Arts Program and other transition activities.
- The school has developed a number of links with local business (e.g. LJ Hooker and Bunnings) and is involved in the Fresh Tastes and ACT Smart Sustainable Schools programs.
- Evatt Primary School participated in a research project about spelling with the University of Canberra. This partnership involved working closely with experts to develop and implement a whole of school program. Other links with universities are evident and include professional learning in trauma sensitive practices and mentoring of pre-service occupational therapy students.
- In partnership with a cluster of schools, Evatt Primary School staff participated in an action research project with a local expert about using data to inform teaching.
- Through three-way conferences and the collaborative development of learning goals for every child, the school works to partner closely with families.

## National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

Evatt Primary School has completed the National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool, engaging staff, students and parents in a consultative process. Data from these three stakeholder groups was triangulated to determine whole of school results. The school identified three areas of focus:

- Engagement, skill development and Safe School Curriculum – the school is focusing on a cyber safety program.
- A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership – the school has strengthened student-led processes; for example the school leaders' program and Student Representative Council.
- Partnerships with families and community – this remains an ongoing focus for the school.

## Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

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### Affirmations

The External Review Panel offers the following affirmations for Evatt Primary School.

- The formalised coaching and mentoring by the field officer and executive teacher for professional practice, using the GROWTH model, supports beginning and more experienced teachers to develop pedagogies, skills and practices, which have supported improved learning in classrooms.
- The partnerships that have been established with Melba Copland Secondary School provide opportunities for students to access enriching and extension activities. Rich partnerships with universities, critical friends and other consultants are supporting the school's improvement agenda.
- The collaboration between the preschool and kindergarten teams, with the support of the team leader, to engage in professional conversation about student achievement and to share practices, have provided a strong and smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten.
- There is a culture of collaboration and teamwork evident through the rich and rigorous data conversations that occur in teaching teams about student performance to monitor progress and inform teaching.
- The whole of school professional learning program is well aligned to the school's improvement agenda.

### Commendations

Evatt Primary School is commended for the following.

- The school is well served by a committed and professional staff. Members of the board and parents have high levels of faith in the principal and staff of the school.
- The leadership team has placed a high priority on the promotion of wellbeing as core business. Parents value the very high levels of support and care provided by the staff.
- The initiative and collaboration in creating and delivering the Evatt Primary School SOAR values program and renewed approaches to managing behaviour has had a positive impact in creating positive cultural change. A highly inclusive learning environment is evident and the school has made significant inroads in developing a safe learning environment.
- Staff members have engaged closely in the TRUST program, to support and embed trauma sensitive practices to meet the needs of children experiencing trauma.
- The leadership team is highly committed to building a united team of teachers, learning support assistants and administrative staff.

- The whole of school focus on numeracy over the life of the plan is commended. The leadership team, including coaches, have worked shoulder to shoulder with teachers in implementing the expected approaches to the teaching of mathematics, monitoring data and resourcing this improvement focus over time. NAPLAN data indicates student growth from year 3 to year 5 has improved and is better than the growth of like schools and national mean averages.

## **Recommendations**

The External Review Panel recommends Evatt Primary School pays attention to the following opportunities for school improvement during the next planning cycle.

- Develop a plan for improvement for the next strategic planning cycle that has a narrow and sharp focus on core learning priorities expressed in terms of specific improvements sought in student performance. Develop meaningful and relevant targets clearly aligned to the intended improvement agenda that teachers can work towards.
- Document a data collection plan and timetable for the annual collection, communication, analysis and use of academic, attendance, behaviour outcomes and student wellbeing to ensure systematic approaches to whole of school data collections and analyses.
- Continue to build a culture of self-reflection in the school through a formalised, classroom teaching observations program. Ensure that processes for observation become systematic across the school and that feedback provided includes both affirmations and constructive critique to stimulate this self-reflection. Consider how these observations can align to the school's expected approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Formalise an induction program for the school.
- Develop a professional learning plan each year, reflective of the explicit improvement agenda, linked to teacher goals, which makes clear whole-school, teacher cohort, and individual teacher professional learning. Ensure the plan is adequately resourced.
- Review curriculum planning documents across all Key Learning Areas to identify any potential gaps, paying attention to vertical alignment. Ensure that the curriculum plan and delivery balances requirements to address all learning areas, paying particular attention to science. Review all assessment tasks across the school to ensure that they are high quality and challenging tasks that are well aligned to the achievement standards. Ensure that high priority is given to developing the capability of students to apply knowledge and skills confidently and effectively. Build the capacity of teachers to understand (using the continua) and explicitly teach these general capabilities at the appropriate level.
- Continue to implement the Response to Intervention model using universal screening processes to ensure that all students with specific learning needs are identified for intervention.
- To further strengthen a collegial culture of mutual trust, continue to ensure that there are processes for open communication and transparency about strategic decision making.

## Section F: Record of school review process

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The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Evatt Primary School conducted on 30 August to 1 September 2017.

**Name:** Christina Rogers                      External Review Panel – Chair

**Name:** Anne Simpson                      External Review Panel – Principal Member  
Chapman Primary School

**Name:** Rohan Evans                      External Review Panel – Principal Observer  
Yarralumla Primary School

I, Christina Rogers, as External Review Panel Chair endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the External School Review process.

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 03/11/2017

I, Susan Skinner, as Principal of Evatt Primary School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 03/11/2017