

Garran Primary School

Annual Action Plan Report 2017

Context

Garran Primary School enjoys a strong reputation in the ACT community and places for enrolment are at a premium because of its consistent high academic standards, judged by many parents and carers on the school's success in NAPLAN as well as the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). This has meant a strict enforcement of enrolment policies in an aim to limit the number of out-of-area enrolments that has previously occurred.

The school student population continues to diversify, with a large number of international students and students from different backgrounds attending the school. With restrictions on out-of-area enrolments, the staff has observed changes in the makeup of the student body and this is a factor in enrolments into ALP classes.

The 2017 school year was one marked a planned program of development and enrichment as the school settled after the significant changes of 2014-2015. In 2017 the school had two major goals for the year, described in four priorities. The first was to establish a program to ensure pedagogical consistency to maximise potential and achievement across the school while also valuing individual skills, interests and talents of staff and students. The second was to build the trust and confidence of the relationship between families and the school. In accordance with the required processes, the original plan was modified and approved by the Director School Improvement.

Collated evidence reflect that the school has achieved both. The result is a more focused plan that takes advantage of the comprehensive and detailed plans used in the last three years. While 2017 saw fewer staff changes, and those mostly to do with retirements, planning once again had a clear focus on ensuring integration of the staff introduced in 2016 and 2017. There was a very real effort to ensure that the pride and excellence that underpins our school was understood and built on. The executive has focused on cross-school planning and pedagogical consistency in the interests of well-sequenced learning for students. In accordance with the Plan, the executive has also worked with staff to encourage a sense of shared responsibility for successful learning for all students, taking account of their natural aptitudes and experiences.

That said, in 2018 the executive and staff intend to look at identified, comparable high performing schools in NSW with a view to enhancing shared professional learning and

broadening outlook and practices. The staff is aware that different schools respond to different communities but believes there is a lot to be understood and shared.

Methodology

Staff and executive staff were supported by the parent community in implementing the detailed Annual Operating Plan. Close attention was paid to records of meetings and administrative activities at all levels. The aim was for transparency and clear communication to all stakeholders. Team meetings were also seen as an important vehicle for discussing school strategies and targets.

The senior executive and two additional executive members assumed responsibility for driving the Annual Operating Plan. Data and other information, including perceptions, were discussed, checked and analysed.

Data sources for analysis of targets included:

- (1) Australian Government School Survey 2017
- (2) 2017 External School Review Report
- (3) Formal school records, e.g. newsletters to the community, executive minutes, staff meeting minutes, staff professional learning, A-E grades for reports, executive notes
- (4) Board minutes, P&C minutes, notes from parent meetings
- (5) NAPLAN reports; PIPS, trend data and Australian Early Development Census (AECD); My Schools website
- (6) Observations, discussions and anecdotal information provided by executive staff
- (7) School developed surveys x2

Evaluation of Performance

Priority 1

In 2017 Garran Primary School will focus on providing the attributes of a safe and supportive environment to foster student well-being and meaningful involvement in the success of the education program; families and staff will work together to help students thrive.

Priority 1 aimed to ensure a safe and supportive environment that contributes to well-being and a successful education program

Improvement strategies for priority 1

- Embed BounceBack as a school-wide focus for student wellbeing and coping with disappointments and distress
- Increase student understanding about ways to increase their success at school
- Affirm the importance of the school as a safe and successful working environment

Targets and outcomes

Using school satisfaction data from 2016 as a base, and referring to students, families and staff and considering questions relating to a safe and supportive environment, including:

1. Students

- a. Student satisfaction with *feeling safe at school* will increase by at least 3% in 2017 (78% in 2016). Not achieved – *the result dropped by 5% to 73%; like schools – 77%*
- b. Student satisfaction with *useful feedback about my work* will increase by at least 4% in 2017 (80% in 2016). Achieved – *result improved by 10% to 90%; like schools – 81%*
- c. Student satisfaction with *the way student behaviour is managed* will increase by at least 10% in 2017 (51% in 2016). Achieved – *result improved by 12% to 63%; like schools – 54%*
- d. Student satisfaction that *teachers treat students fairly* will increase by at least 5% (56% in 2016). Achieved – *result improved by 11% to 67%; like schools – 71%*
- e. Student satisfaction that *teachers' take student opinions seriously* will increase by at least 10% year on year (61% in 2016). Not achieved *but an increase of 1% to 62%; like schools – 65%*

2. Parents

- a. Parent satisfaction that their child feels safe at school will remain at or above 2016 level (95% in 2016). Not achieved – *result dropped by 5% to 90%; like schools – 91%*
- b. Parent satisfaction that teachers provide their children with useful feedback will be at or above 95% (94% in 2016). Not achieved – *result dropped by 5% to 90%; like schools – 86%*
- c. Parent satisfaction that student behaviour is well-managed will remain at or above 95% (99% in 2016). Not achieved – *result dropped by 3% to 88%; like schools – 79%*
- d. Parent satisfaction that teachers treat students fairly will remain at or above 95% (95% in 2016). Not achieved – *result dropped by 10% to 89%; Like schools – 89%*
- e. Parent satisfaction that teachers take parents opinion seriously will increase to above 90% (89% in 2016). Not achieved – *result dropped by 1% to 88%; like schools – 81%*

3. Staff

- a. Staff satisfaction that students' learning needs are being met increases by at least 5% (85% in 2016). Achieved – *result increased by 12% to 96%; like schools – 92%*

In addition,

- b. Staff have developed measures to understand student major factors affecting student feelings of wellbeing – to answer the question, how do we know that (individual student) is progressing well personally and academically? Not done
- c. Staff have discussed and taken action in relation to wide discrepancies between staff and student opinion in a range of satisfaction data in items including: *teachers treat students fairly, student behaviour is well managed, taking student opinions seriously*. Not achieved. *There remain wide differences between students and staff in the following areas: a) teachers treat students fairly (Students=67%; Staff=97%); b) student behaviour is well-managed (Students=63%; Staff=96%); c) Students=62%; staff=81%)*

General outcomes to be achieved

1. By the end of 2017 Garran Primary School will provide objective evidence of its progress in ensuring that its safe and supportive environment contributes to student well-being and a successful education program. Achieved.

NOTE: The school provided discipline records as evidence that student perceptions are at odds with formal records and the experiences of staff who have worked at other schools in the ACT and more broadly. Staff have commented that the general demeanour of the students as a group means that relatively minor incidences of misbehaviour are seen as serious. The staff agrees that contradictions because of a

small number of students who present with more difficult social and/or emotional issues, requiring stronger student welfare and support structures which also involve the families of those students.

2. The school has evidence of cooperation between staff and students' families to help students to thrive. **Achieved**
Staff have provided opportunities through information sessions, parent-teacher meetings, 3-way interviews, Learning Journeys, information in newsletters. Parents rated the school at 88% for taking parents opinions seriously (like schools – 81%); 87% for working with parents to support their child's learning (like schools – 83%); 89% for valuing and maintaining community partnerships (like schools - 86%); 93% for being able to talk to my child's teachers about my concerns (like schools – 93%).

National Quality Standard Area Covered by this Priority

In order of significance:

Leadership and service management

Children's health and safety

Relationships with children

Educational program and practice

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Physical environment

Progress: Priority 1

Over the years Garran Primary School has enjoyed a strong relationship with parents, carers and the wider community. The school has a well- deserved reputation for its high standards, rich curriculum, student achievements and the very nature of the students and school climate. This is in a context of a highly educated community with equally high expectations about the education of their children. The parents have consistently indicated that they are time poor, but deeply interested in their children's education and want to be involved.

The major purpose of priority 1 was the provision of a safe and supportive environment that contributes to well-being and a successful education program. This was given a higher priority in 2017 because a) student wellbeing is a major factor in student success at school and b) past surveys have indicated that staff and student opinions about important factors

affecting wellbeing are not aligned. The identified discrepancies were to be a focus in 2017 and were set out in targets for priority 1.

Attention was paid by staff, under the leadership of the executive team, to the ways parents thought they could be more successfully involved with their children's education. These include the organisation of meetings with staff, assemblies, the types of issues parents expected to be involved with and the ways the school could communicate more effectively.

Many initiatives were taken by staff, including staff meetings, team meetings, careful data collection and increasingly high levels of parent involvement. In most areas staff expressed very positive attitudes about their students and about the quality of teaching and attentiveness to the needs of students – academic and for their welfare.

Staff have very positive attitudes to students and their learning: they *take their students concerns seriously (96%)*; *encourage them to try new ideas and think independently (93%)*, *have high expectations (93%)*. They believe that every student can be a success (92%). Parents and students very largely agree.

An important benefit for staff and students is that staff are satisfied that *the school looks for ways to improve (94%)* and *that being part of Garran Primary is important to them (100%)*.

In the 2017 Survey, parents answered very positively questions relating to school/family relationships. Included are, *Teachers at this school provide my child with useful feedback about his or her school work – 94%, up 19% on 2016*; *I can talk to my child's teachers about my concerns – 95% up 15%*; *This school takes parents' opinions seriously – 89% up 16%*; *My child's learning needs are being met at this school – 85% up 14%*; and *This school works with me to support my child's learning – 83% up 16%*.

While the staff states in a number of questions that they have strong relationships with students, there are discrepancies with student opinions about whether they are treated fairly, about whether they can talk to teachers about their concerns and whether they feel safe at school.

Despite this, students still differ from their teachers in a number of important ways. They do not think teachers treat students fairly (29% difference); they do not think they can talk to their teachers about their concerns (26% difference); they state they do not feel safe (25% difference); and they do not think student behaviour is well-managed at the school (37% difference). For some of these, the parent responses seem to reflect the opinions of students.

The first two require further examination, but staff are at a loss to understand this persistent perception except to note that it is more common now for older primary students to talk to each other and perhaps use the internet to find answers to problems. All staff have anecdotes about the types of subjects about which students do seek their support or advice.

Staff are confident that rules about behaviour are clearly understood by staff and students and that staff are generally consistent in applying the rules. Staff believe that they are fair but acknowledge that there may be personality differences that affect students' perceptions. Levels of experience in managing students may also be a factor.

An examination of student behaviour records demonstrates that Garran is a very safe school with comparatively very few disciplinary problems – that could mean that students who have behaviour or social problems stand out. And indeed, a few students with complex issues are hard for staff to manage, whatever the school. That said, a major attraction for staff at the school is the general demeanour of the students – they are seen to be polite, cooperative and keen to do their best. Visitors to the school invariably comment about how 'lovely' and 'good' the students are as they go about the school. Garran does not have problems securing relief teachers based on willingness, as opposed to a perennial problem with availability.

The school has implemented BounceBack more fully into the welfare program. This is valued and enjoyed by students and is seen as a 'must keep' program.

An important part of the school's philosophy is to engage students in their learning by giving them opportunities to be involved in decisions and also giving them a voice about what they are learning and why. Helpful feedback about what students are learning is valued by parents and students. Staff, parents and students believe that the staff expects them to do their best and has high expectations.

One element for further attention, compared with other ratings, is that only 78% of staff state that that they involve students in decisions and planning.

Priority 2

In 2017, Garran Primary School will increase its focus on science, technology and numeracy. Literacy will remain an important part of the teaching program.

Priority 2 aimed for the successful involvement of all students in curriculum programs in science, technology, literacy and numeracy and for students to recognise that these subjects are important parts of their learning at school.

Improvement strategies for Priority 2

- A high priority for STEM subjects for students P-6 and within the Garran community
- Ongoing focus on Literacy and Numeracy, including strategies for adding value as students progress through the school

Targets and outcomes

1. 100% of students use technology as part of regular classroom learning – minimum standard being an hour a day Partially achieved – *Increased use in classrooms, particularly in early childhood*
2. At least 80% of staff, students and families state that there has been a marked increase in students’ use of technology at school in 2017 Achieved – *Students = 89%; staff = 89%; parents = 85%. School purchases to increase technology in classrooms; use in wide range of curriculum areas; heavy booking for equipment*
3. At least 80% of teaching and classroom support staff state that they have grown in confidence to use technology in the classroom and also, 80% of staff state that in 2017 they are able to use a range of programs to enhance information technology in their classrooms. Achieved for teaching staff – *93% of teachers stated at the use of learning technologies are an integral part of teaching at this school, an increase of 18% compared with 2016 including increased staff confidence; specifically included in team meetings; focus for specific staff meetings; specific evidence not collected for other staff*
4. NAPLAN and other system and school-based assessments will be used as major measures of the school’s ongoing achievement in the areas of numeracy and literacy. Specifically for year 3 and 5 NAPLAN:
 - 2% increase on 2016 percentage of students in bands 5 and 6 for all literacy subjects and for literacy NAPLAN Year 3: *Achieved for spelling;*
 - 5% increase on 2016 percentage of students in bands 7 and 8 for all literacy subjects and for numeracy Achieved NAPLAN Year 5: *Achieved for reading, writing, spelling, numeracy*
5. Teachers of students in years 4-6 have implemented strategies that increase the value that is added to the achievements of students in the senior school, as measured in NAPLAN. Achieved. *All areas except grammar and punctuation. It should be noted that NAPLAN comparisons between cohorts is difficult but attention to trends is beneficial. In addition 89% of staff use results from system testing and processes to inform planning. This is comparable to the average in like schools (88%).*
6. The effectiveness of the school’s specialist program for science has been evaluated with a view to ongoing development and including ways to involve classroom teachers and parents. Not done. Evaluation scheduled for 2018.
7. 80% of students from preschool to year 6 have found science lessons interesting. Achieved. *Parents and students have expressed appreciation for the focus on STEM, the provision of a specialist teacher and expressed a wish for even more time devoted to STEM.*

General outcomes to be achieved

1. By the end of 2017, 80% of students are successfully involved in planned curriculum programs that have increased their confidence, knowledge, skills and active involvement in:
 - science
 - technology
 - literacy and numeracy

Achieved. *The school continues to provide high standards for its student in literacy and numeracy, and in 2017 in Science and technology. In relation to literacy and numeracy Garran performs above ACT averages in all areas. In a high achieving school it is difficult to increase achievements as measured by NAPLAN. In 2018, Garran will actively work with other high achieving schools in the ACT, and in NSW in particular to look at strategies that may assist the school.*

In science and technology the school has made strong progress with rewarding results for students and the support of the community. It should be noted that despite this, including significant investment and strong bookings for equipment, students responses to 'At this school I have access to equipment such as computers, internet and digital cameras' remained roughly equivalent to 2016 (89%) and slightly below like school average (92%).

2. By the end of 2017 80% of students state that science, technology, numeracy and literacy are important parts of the learning at school.

Achieved. *See figures against targets.*

National Quality Standard Area Covered by this Priority

In order of significance:

Educational program and practice

Children's health and safety

Leadership and service management

Relationships with children

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Physical environment

Progress: Priority 2

The executive is firmly established as a strongly functioning leadership team with a clear focus on meeting school and directorate goals. Again, goals were seen to depend heavily not only on developing and enhancing staff expertise, but also increasing communication with and involvement of families as meaningful partners in their children's education.

In a school like Garran, the good opinion of parents is crucial. The Australian Government School Survey demonstrates that were satisfied that the school looks for ways to improve

(94%), that teachers motivate children to learn (90%), that they can talk to their child's teacher (93%) and that the school expects children to do their best (97%).

As well, 90% of parents acknowledge that community partnerships are valued and maintained and many parents were positive about the communication by the school in the open-ended section of the School Survey. There were many positive comments about the approachability and competence of the executive team as well as the visibility of the principal. There was respect for the professionalism of the staff.

A new focus in 2017 was on STEM subjects. This has been seen by staff, students and parents as an important new initiative and from the start, the school built on past successes in the science competition and played a prominent and successful role in STEM within the ACT. Not only was the appointment of a specialist teacher to support STEM valued by parents in particular, staff also stated that the focus meant purchases of hardware, software and programs have added quality to classroom practices in information technology. They use learning technologies as an integral part of learning and teaching (93%). Information technologies remain important to families and students and both would like the school to do even more. The P&C provided strong financial support for this initiative. STEM will remain a definite focus in 2018

Literacy and numeracy remained important at Garran. Professional learning and staff feedback continued to focus on consistency of practice across the school to ensure systematic skills development with particular attention to differentiation to take account of students' individual levels. Because of disappointing result for value adding from years 3 to 5 in 2016, this aspect of teaching and learning was given additional attention in 2017.

In teams, staff members were actively involved in decisions about school practices in literacy and numeracy to build consistency in the research-based approach from preschool to year 6. This commitment helps the school to maintain high standards in teaching and learning, increasing teacher skills. Ongoing leadership, commitment and hard work have helped to enhance literacy and numeracy skills acquisition across all curriculum areas.

In 2017, the achievements of students in year 3 in NAPLAN and other school based assessments are noteworthy with indications that students continue to perform at levels above the ACT average. All year 3 students performed at or above the national standard, with the majority falling into the proficient (top two) bands.

Comparisons with 'like schools' indicated a slight drop in results overall but staff also identified a number of individuals within the cohort whose skill levels were lower than in previous years. Data derived from PIPS foreshadowed this trend. The Executive discussed the impact of tighter enrolment policies and changes in enrolment demographics which is having an effect on ALP classes also.

In 2016 students in year 5 also performed above ACT averages in all test domains, but increases in performance in 'like schools' showed that Garran was not adding value between years 3 and 5 to the same extent as in like schools. Staff disappointment with the results

lead to a decision to focus strongly on this aspect of teaching and learning in 2017. As a direct result of determined intervention to ensure 'added value' year 5 performances remained above ACT averages with notable increases were notable increases (12% - 20%) in all percentages of achievement in all domains except Grammar and Punctuation (-4%).

Staff will be involved in forming links with 'like schools' in the ACT and NSW to share professional learning and pedagogy, with a view to developing new strategies to increase success for students in the top three bands and to add value taking account of PIPS and NAPLAN results. This will be an ongoing interest for the staff – comparisons are continually being made by parents and by those with responsibility for ACT education. Garran will be expected to maintain its high standards and the additional lens of the ways 'like schools' perform will become sharper.

There have been many positive benefits for students through the inclusion of STEM alongside literacy and numeracy. In 2018 there will be a continuation staff development to provide common professional learning to help induct new staff and also to build professional best practice. This will include understanding the research that underpins practice, team and whole staff relationships, morale and ongoing commitment to excellence. Leadership at all levels is a vital underpinning.

Priority 3

In 2017 Garran Primary School will strengthen the capacity of all staff through a systematic approach to professional learning to improve or increase skills and knowledge necessary to fulfil individual and collective responsibilities to the school, students and families of Garran, now and into the future.

Priority 3 aimed to ensure that staff are involved in a successful whole school and individual professional learning program to enhance the effectiveness of pedagogy and other curriculum and education programs offered to students and the Garran community. It also aimed to support staff with effective coaching and professional feedback.

Improvement strategies for Priority 3

- Professional learning plans to meet school and individual professional learning needs and administrative requirements
- Mentoring and professional learning feedback from peers and supervisors
- 4 year review cycle for all major programs and enrichment activities

Targets and outcomes

1. 90% of all staff, (including regular relief teaching staff, administrative staff and LSAs) state that they are satisfied, or very satisfied that their professional learning is challenging, developmental and relevant to their class and/or school responsibilities. Partially achieved. *Staff have a school and individual professional learning plan and they have been involved in forming these. However, staff have indicated in a number of places a degree of disaffection. Examples include: 'This school takes staff opinions seriously' has dipped 7% to 81%, though 81% is still comparable to the average of like schools (83%); I feel I belong at this school (78%); there is a sense that we are all on the same team (81%).*
2. 90% of staff, including regular relief teachers, state that they are receiving professional coaching and/ or feedback from colleagues, peers and supervisors a minimum of twice a year and also state that this has helped improve their professional practices and fulfilment of other responsibilities. Partially achieved.
3. A review cycle informs decisions about professional learning, teaching and learning and also other programs that are to be introduced. Achieved
4. Executive leads staff to project about future curriculum and also the planning to underpin future needs for professional learning. Achieved
5. Staff are involved in decisions to help manage workload. Achieved but to be examined. *There is a representative staff workload committee that meets regularly. 81% of staff state that 'This school takes staff opinions seriously' – in 2016 this was 88%;*

General outcomes to be achieved

1. A high quality professional learning plan, developed annually focuses on the collective needs of staff as well as the individual needs and/or development goals of individual staff members. Achieved for all teaching staff
2. Every staff member has a personal professional learning plan that addresses individual and school-wide issues. Achieved for all teaching staff
3. All staff are provided with constructive professional feedback depending on need. Achieved
4. Executive staff have exercised formal supervisory responsibilities, using known practices and with the major purposes being guidance, recognition and support. Partially achieved – *an additional time allocation was identified for staff with particular needs. This meant that experienced staff may have had less attention than they would have preferred. However, the survey does not allow accurate information from which to draw conclusions about the needs of particular groups.*
5. Peers are active participants in coaching, supporting and mentoring colleagues, especially in teams. Achieved

National Quality Standard Area Covered by this Priority

In order of significance:

Educational program and practice

Leadership and service management

Physical environment

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Relationships with children

Children's health and safety

Progress: Priority 3

Garran Primary started 2017 with a normal and expected staff turnover of staff especially compared with the school's experience in 2015 and to a lesser degree, 2016. The executive is firmly established as a strongly functioning leadership team with a clear focus on meeting school and directorate goals. Positive comments were made about the hard work, commitment, expertise and availability of the members of executive.

In the Australian Government's School Survey staff in particular expressed positive views including that the school was welcoming to new staff and students (93%). They were satisfied with the high standards at the school (93%) and were appreciative of being on the team (92%). Most teachers rate the school in the high 90s for the vast majority of 'deliverables for any school.

In addition, they state that the leadership is representative of the school (93%), stands up for the school (97%), that when it acts it has the best interests of the school's interests at heart (96%), they are model members of the school (93%). In open comments staff expressed appreciation for the openness and accessibility of the leadership team.

In the same survey, in open comments, parents/carers valued the dedication of the leadership team, the visibility of the principal and the culture of learning that has been restored. They appreciated the high standards (93%), the culture of learning and the professionalism of the staff in general. Parents/ carers also expressed appreciation for the quality of communication (90%). They valued the ways that students' achievements are celebrated (97%).

However, along with the strength of leadership identified in the Australian Government School Survey some staff indicated aspects of the school's operation that they have found less satisfying than in 2016. One was whether staff had a consensual approach to managing issues (85%) and whether the way decisions were made in the school was appropriate (82%). Also expressed was a lower satisfaction with the usefulness of feedback (78% compared with 91% in 2016), the celebration of professional achievements (78% compared with 91% in 2016) and the value seen in staff opinions (81% compared with 88% in 2016).

In discussions, the Executive team felt there may be some validity in the (minority of) staff observations about professional feedback in particular as a lot of their time was dedicated to meeting staff development and performance needs to ensure that all staff were providing the high level of professional expertise to be found amongst more experienced staff. Unfortunately, the survey means the actual staff who expressed these opinions cannot be known and it could be that they were staff who received more feedback and observation. That said, the fact that this opinion was expressed means that the Executive will focus on this in 2018. The recognise the value of what was done in 2016 and will move to ensure that all staff experience high quality mentoring, coaching and professional observation and feedback.

Staff may also need the opportunity to enunciate the levels of support they feel are appropriate. To help build the satisfaction levels beyond the current 85%.

At 67% the effectiveness of communication amongst all staff needs to be examined as well as ways to ensure that staff felt included. This may also be a factor in 81% of staff being part of the same team and a similar score relating to the value accorded to staff opinions.

It could be conjectured that a number of factors are at work with some of the contradictory percentages in the staff survey in particular. It may be that the strength and cohesion of the executive creates an impression that decisions are a foregone conclusion. It may be that the pressure on school leaders for 'results' puts a lot of pressure on schools, through their executive to 'deliver'. It may also be that some staff are less willing to change practices or accept the responsibilities that are now required of people who work in schools – teachers in particular.

All that said, the staff at Garran have worked persistently to provide students with a high quality education. It is a high performing primary school by almost any measure and that is brought about by a staff and community working in the best interests of the students they are bound to serve.

