



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

**EXTERNAL REVIEW  
REPORT for  
MOUNT ROGERS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**2016**

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## Introduction: Overview of the School Review Process

As part of the Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory are required to participate in an external review process every five years. This document captures the findings of the review team during this cycle of school review.

In broad terms, the review team sought to determine, through evaluation and validation, the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges: in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

The external review was conducted over three days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the review team to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the National School Improvement Tool that informed our commendations and recommendations.

## Section A: School Context

Mount Rogers School is situated in the North West, Belconnen area of Canberra in the suburb of Melba. The school opened as Melba Primary in 1974, then amalgamated with Spence Primary in the 1980s forming the Mount Rogers Community School at the Melba site, named after the mountain behind the school. In 2008 the school was renamed Mount Rogers Primary. The school includes three preschools, two of which are in Flynn and Spence, and one being adjacent to Mount Rogers Primary School. Total preschool enrolments have risen from 80 to 110 in 2016. During the life of the plan the Mount Rogers preschool program was assessed, rated as Exceeding National Quality Standard.

The current School Principal, Mrs Sue Harding, has been at the school since 2009 and was joined by the current Deputy Principal, Mrs Felicity Levett, in 2012. Over the period of the school's latest Strategic Plan three new School Leader C appointments have been made. One appointment was directly in response to increased enrolments. Similarly the school reports that it has seen a 20% increase in teaching and administrative staff throughout the life of the plan. The growth in Junior grade enrolments has enabled staff selection to align with the Strategic Plan priorities and key improvement strategies. The 2016 student population from preschool to year 6 is 499 up from 360 in 2012.

The Mount Rogers Primary School values of Excellence, Respect, Honesty and Fairness informed the development of new school vision and purpose statements after the last school validation. The school developed a graduate student profile in 2014 as well as a statement in 2016, making clear 'staff beliefs about learning' e.g. 'At Mount Rogers we believe each child can learn when...'. The schools ICSEA score has remained relatively constant over the life of the plan.

The number of EAL/D students was at their highest between 2013 and 2015, dropping back to 2012 levels in 2016.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments at Mount Rogers Primary School has doubled since 2012. Similarly the number of ISP and the total number of students with Individual Learning Plans have increased significantly. In 2016 the school's psychologist resourcing increased from two to three days a week.

There have been considerable infrastructure enhancements at Mount Rogers School over the course of the plan. Five new open-plan flexible learning spaces reflect the school's commitment to the Walker Approach to Learning. New playground resources, a collaborative staff planning space, two additional office areas and a bike storage shed have also been added. Mount Rogers School acknowledges the work of its Building Services Officer in improving its learning environment and his positive influence on others. He received an award for his work in 2015 and was nominated by the Directorate in 2016 for an ACT Public Service Excellence Award.

## Section B: School Performance

As a means of improving student learning outcomes during the four year improvement cycle, Mount Rogers Primary School has identified the following four priorities in their School Strategic Plan (SSP):

1. Implementing consistent approaches to systems and processes across the school
2. Embedding consistent approaches to teaching and learning
3. Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students
4. The school's direction is consistent with the needs and priorities of the community.  
Mount Rogers Primary School has examined longitudinal system data (NAPLAN),  
Performance

Indicators in Primary School (PIPS) scores, demographic, and school satisfaction data in preparation for the review. The review team has also examined all these data sets.

The review team noted that the PIPS data across the life of plan, revealed that over two thirds of Mount Rogers Primary School kindergarten students consistently achieve expected or better than expected growth in reading and mathematics. In 2015 the end of year PIPS results compared to the ACT average, showed better and above expected growth in reading, and mathematics. At the same time the school has reduced the number of students achieving less than expected growth in both reading and mathematics.

In 2014 the school began tracking A to E results in English and Mathematics. In 2015 this was expanded to include all subject areas.

Over the previous three years there has been no improvement trend evident in NAPLAN reading and numeracy outcomes. While there is no improvement trend, in some years the review team identified that Mount Rogers NAPLAN data indicated that at times they were above and within the school's system targets. They were within system target range in years 3 and 5 for reading across the life of the plan. The only two areas where Mount Rogers outcome data was below school system data was in numeracy in year 5, 2014 and year 3 in 2015.

In 2013, year 3 NAPLAN results in reading, persuasive writing and mathematics exceeded the Australian school average. Data provided in the Summative Evaluation Report graph and tables, would benefit by the inclusion of comparative mean scores so progress across the duration of the plan can be tracked and used more effectively by the school. The panel was able to validate the accuracy of the school's achievement comparisons to statically similar schools.

To gain a deeper understanding of student growth the school mapped the cohort growth of students remaining at the school. This guided a focus on the teaching of mathematics over the life of the plan. This was done in collaboration with Mount Rogers critical friend, University of Canberra Assistant Professor Tracy Logan.

The student attendance rate at Mount Rogers Primary School in 2013 was 93%, 2014 92% and 2015 91%. Attendance rates in 2015 have dropped slightly under the Directorate Strategic Plan target of 92% of attendance for public school students.

In 2015 Mount Rogers began specific late arrival and absence tracking of students, informing parents in a timely manner, as well as supporting a small number of families who have chronic attendance issues.

Mount Rogers Primary School has had 48 suspensions across the life of the plan. The school's focus on improving children's mental health and wellbeing through the implementation of

KidsMatter has provided much needed support for both students and families in crisis who have social and emotional needs due to a range of issues.

Each year the school analyses data provided through School Satisfaction Surveys. The data set for parents showed that on the questions, 'overall I am satisfied with my students education at this school' and 'this school has high expectations in all it does', increased from a starting point in 2013 of, at or below the system mean to well exceeding the system mean in 2015 (91% and 90% respectively).

Significant and deliberate work to further engage parents on a regular basis with what happens each day at school was initiated at the start of 2015. This included the introduction of a school Facebook page and fortnightly newsletters providing a window into classroom curriculum and a focus on learning.

In 2013 and 2014 student satisfaction data showed that students' results fell below the ACT mean. The low 2013 results led to the decision by the school to introduce the KidsMatter framework in 2014. In 2015 student survey results show a marked increase in student satisfaction, with responses to 'I like being at school' improving from 68% to 89% (the ACT mean in 2015 was 89%) and 'I feel safe at school' also increasing from 68% to 89% (the ACT mean in 2015 was also 89%).

The most significant improvement was in response to, 'student behaviour is well managed at my school' which grew from 43% to 89% (the ACT mean in 2015 was 84%).

The review panel found that parent, families and community partnerships are highly valued and strongly evidenced at Mount Rogers Primary School. A large number of parent, curriculum and wellbeing workshops have been conducted each year to provide information about programs and strategies being implemented in the school and to respond to parent requests. The school is working to build attendance numbers at these workshops.

Mount Rogers Primary School actively seeks opportunities to connect with groups in the community, with the purpose of improving student learning.

During this four-year improvement cycle the panel found that staff professional learning at Mount Rogers Primary School has become more targeted, is embedded in practice and is linked to the school's strategic priorities.

### **Evidence cited**

- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2013
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2014
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2015
- My School Website
- NAPLAN Data 2013-2015
- PIPS Data 2013-2015
- Directorate School Satisfaction Data 2013 to 2015
- School Summative Evaluation Report 2016

## Section C: School Improvement Planning and Implementation

### Priority Areas

The four priorities mentioned in Section B were closely linked with the recommendations of the 2012 External Review Report. At the end of 2014 the school changed the focus of one of the priority areas in the Mount Rogers School Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016. The Strategic Priority 2: Embed consistent approaches to teaching and learning and embed the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework was removed because it had been achieved. As a result Strategic Priorities 2 and 3 were merged to form a new Strategic Priority 2: Embed consistent approaches to teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy with a focus on improving student outcomes. Within this priority a major focus became teaching and learning in mathematics and the introduction of the Walker Approach to Learning.

### **Strategic priority 1: Implement consistent approaches to systems and processes across the school Performance Measures SSP 2013-2016:**

- The percentage of identified processes being consistently followed by staff
- The percentage of identified processes written and endorsed

Key Improvement Strategies SSP 2013-2016:

- Review current system processes and practices at the school
- Develop system processes and procedures according to a schedule of work
- Implement, monitor and review the effectiveness of the system processes and practices.

### **Achievements**

The panel found evidence that the school has developed consistent approaches to systems and processes across the school. The following policies have been endorsed:

- The school has revised and aligned their Bullying and Harassment Policy. This was reviewed with a focus on linking it to Kids Matter strategies and *the Providing Safe Schools P-12 Policy*. These guidelines and procedures, along with responsibilities for school leaders, staff, students and parents are outlined in the policy.
- The existing Home Learning Policy was reviewed by staff and parents, informed by evidence including John Hattie's meta-analysis of research on the effect of 'homework' in primary schools. This resulting policy enhances the partnership between home and school reinforcing the Mount Rogers Primary School values and reflecting the graduate profile to develop students as curious learners.

Procedures have been developed for the following:

- Feedback from the community led to the development of an 'Incursion and Excursion Event Planning' checklist for staff to ensure timely communication of excursions and incursions to parents.

Procedures were developed to support the Directorate's target for attendance.

- In 2015 the school began specific late arrival and absentee tracking systems. They informed parents in a timely manner, as well as supported a small number of families who have chronic attendance issues.

Staff induction procedures have been outlined.

A response to intervention model has been developed that takes into account students with special needs, priority groups and including gifted and talented students.

### **Evidence cited**

- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2013
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2014
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2015
- Mount Rogers Primary School Assessment Policy
- Mount Rogers Primary School Home Learning Policy
- Mount Rogers Primary School Incursion and Excursion Event Planning checklist
- Mount Rogers Primary School Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Response to Intervention Case Management Flow Chart

### **Strategic priority 2: Embed consistent approaches to teaching and learning**

Performance measures SSP 2013-2014:

- The percentage of primary school teachers using all curriculum subjects to plan, teach, assess and report
- The percentage of preschool teachers using the Early Years Learning Framework to guide their observations, planning, reflection and reporting

Key Improvement Strategies SSP 2013-2014:

- Develop Mount Rogers curriculum organiser that reflects Australian Curriculum and aligns with our beliefs about teachers and learning
- Design and implement a process to support teachers to plan, teach, assess and report using the Australian Curriculum
- Document the process to ensure preschool planning is aligned with Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standards

### **Strategic Priority 3: Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students**

Performance Measures SSP 2013-2014:

- The percentage of students reaching school benchmarks in reading
- The percentage of students reaching school based targets in mathematics
- The percentage of students in Kindergarten who achieve expected or above expected growth in PIPS
- School achievement of Education Directorate NAPLAN set targets

#### Key Improvement Strategies SSP 2013-2014:

- Ongoing development of literacy and numeracy programs to enhance outcomes for all students
- Develop staff capacity to deliver high quality teaching and learning through instructional leadership, coaching and professional learning
- Strengthen consistent assessment, monitoring and reporting practices across the school

#### **New Strategic Priority 2: Embed consistent approaches to teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy with a focus on improving student outcomes**

#### Performance Measures SSP 2015-2016:

- The percentage of students reaching school benchmarks in reading
- The percentage of students reaching school based targets in mathematics
- The percentage of students in Kindergarten who achieve expected or above expected growth in PIPS
- School achievement of Education Directorate NAPLAN set targets

#### Key Improvement Strategies SSP 2015-2016:

- Ongoing development of literacy and numeracy programs to enhance outcomes for all students
- Develop staff capacity to deliver high quality teaching and learning through instructional leadership, coaching and professional learning
- Strengthen consistent assessment, monitoring and reporting practices across the school

#### **Achievements**

In 2014, Mount Rogers Primary School took part in the Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALLS) project to enhance pedagogy and practice to improve literacy outcomes for all students. The focus was on the introduction of the PALLS Oral Language Assessment, the refinement of the Letters and Sounds program in Early Childhood and the implementation of The Daily 5 strategies across the school.

To continue the development of numeracy programs to enhance outcomes for all students, all staff took part in targeted professional learning led by Professor Di Siemon on 'Big Ideas in Number'. Teachers discussed their beliefs about teaching and learning in mathematics, and every student in the school was assessed for 'Trusting the Count'. To support the focus on developing a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics the Mount Rogers Maths Scope and Sequence document aligned to the Australian Curriculum and Belconnen Network Maths 'I Can Statements' was developed in term 4, 2013 and has been implemented from 2015.

The panel agrees with the school leadership team that consistent assessment, monitoring, analysis and reporting practices across the school should continue to be a priority. Mount Rogers Primary School has introduced a whole school data tracking system. Teachers have begun to input a range of systematically collected data. The analysis and use of this data will inform classroom practice and enable SSP targets to be evidenced at classroom level.

Teachers are currently providing feedback on the draft whole school Assessment and Reporting Policy.

The implementation and impact of the Walker Approach to Learning at Mount Rogers Primary School is highly visible. The review team observed the vast majority of students happily engaged in their investigations, Educational Research Projects and inquiry learning. The leadership team has systematically set about implementing professional learning over the life of the plan. The Preschool programs achieved an Exceeding rating in all seven National Quality Standard areas by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. The Walker Approach to Learning has been implemented to transition students from a play-based preschool program, to a personalised plan based primary school approach. It has successfully grown with the students through the school. This model involves student investigations (embedded across P-2) and inquiry (years 3-6) which facilitate creative, exploration and independent learning. Explicit teaching connects to student investigations and provocations. Staff have committed to engaging with the Walker Approach to Learning and significant resources (including people and time) have been allocated to support the overall approach. This has included study tours to Melbourne and school visits by Kathy Walker and Shona Bass to coach teaching teams and deliver parent information sessions.

### **Evidence cited**

- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2013
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2014
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2015
- Mount Rogers Primary School Growth Data 2013 - 2015
- NAPLAN Smart Data 2013-2015
- PIPS Data 2012-2015
- Mount Rogers Preschool Assessment Ratings
- Walker Learning Approach Statements of Intent

### **Strategic priority 4: The school direction is consistent with the needs and priorities of the community**

Performance measures SSP 2013-2016:

- School satisfaction survey data indicates parent satisfaction with direction and consultation with the school
- The percentage of students who rate 'connectedness to school' and 'self-esteem' as successful in Wellbeing Survey

Key Improvement Strategies SSP 2013-2016:

- Identify needs through staff, student and parent workshops
- Document future direction of school
- Review processes and practices that support student connectedness to school and self-esteem

## **Achievements**

Mount Rogers Primary School enjoys strong community support. The panel noted the high levels of parent and family participation at school events and satisfaction survey results suggest that parents are satisfied with their child's education and the school has high expectations in all it does.

The P & C support the school through the running of the school canteen, uniform shop, discos, fetes, banking, clinics and clubs. The school's involvement in the Fresh Tastes program saw an agreement with the P & C to revise the menu options at the school canteen with the introduction of the 'Healthy Hut' and an increase in healthier foods being available at school. Significant and deliberate work to engage community organisations such as the local church breakfast club, Meccano Men's group from the Melba Men's shed, ANU Music Engagement program, Model Shipwrights Association ACT and previous partnership with the West Belconnen Family Centre – Early Links playgroup and HIPPY program all support the school. Parent survey data for 'community partnerships are valued and maintained', rose from 85% in 2013 to 88% in 2016.

As part of the implementation of priority 4, the school established a KidsMatter Action team to ensure the effective implementation of the framework and strategies across the school eg 'The Kids Matter Room.' The Kids Matter Action team continue to meet once a term to reflect on achievements and plan ahead. A whole school Social Skills overview guiding weekly lessons was developed. School funds supported by a KidsMatter grant will enable the program to be sustained. Student survey data for 'my school takes my opinions seriously', rose from 44% in 2013 to 84% in 2015.

The school linked the 'Ride/Walk' and the establishment of a mountain bike club, to its Key Improvement Strategy to support student connectedness to school. Mount Rogers participated in visits from Kenny Koala, BMX skills sessions and the bike club conducts regular rides in the local area. It also established an association with the Active Streets program. Parents were surveyed and a map displaying safe walk and ride to school routes was developed. Student survey data for, 'My school gives me opportunities to do interesting things' rose from 73% in 2013 to 95% in 2015.

The Mount Rogers leadership team reflects positively on their achievements against this improvement strategy. The panel validates the work already done at Mount Rogers Primary School and commends the school leadership team for the continued resourcing and energy they have placed at the disposal of staff driving its priorities.

## **Evidence cited**

- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2013
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2014
- Mount Rogers Primary School Board Report 2015
- Mount Rogers Primary Schools Satisfaction Survey Data
- The Healthy Hut Menu
- Kids Matter Scope and Sequence
- Kids Matter Professional Learning outlines

## **Reflections**

Evidence from Annual Operating Plans and Board Reports show that Mount Rogers Primary School has regularly reflected upon its school improvement journey during the life of its school plan. The school has also used stakeholder feedback to build upon each year's improvement achievements.

Mount Rogers Primary School notes its relative success against some of the key improvement strategies contained in the 2013-2016 school plan, but also recognises that not all key targets in student learning outcomes have been realised consistently. NAPLAN results do not show upward or downward trends.

The leadership team identified that they faced challenges over the life of the plan as a result of staffing changes, including members of the leadership team. The review team found that while this was the school's perception, there had been consistency in the articulation and enactment of the SSP and some achievement of school targets.

## Section D: National Tools Self-Evaluation Results

### National School Improvement Tool

The review team can confidently validate the schools own self-assessment against the National School Improvement Tool Framework. The external review team school assessment against the NSIT was undertaken by two reviewers over three days, coming to very similar conclusions as the school.

The combined time reviewers spent in conversations with the Principal, leaders, teachers, learning support assistants, students, parents and board members at Mount Rogers Primary School was approximately thirty two hours. Another twenty-three hours was spent on reviewer moderation, writing and preparation for school leadership team feedback. The review team appreciated the flexibility shown by the school in establishing an effective timetable allowing an adequate number of 1:1 teacher interviews and open classroom access for clear lines of sight to be drawn.

Reviewers found that every teacher spoken to knew about the tool and leaders, teachers and board members all spoke about their experience in the process the school undertook to both understand the tool domains and to complete their self-assessment. The school reported that they had undertaken NSIT professional learning and consulted thoroughly during 2015 and Semester 2 2016. Their key messages to staff were about valuing school-wide conversations, also about the improvement being important, rather than just the ratings. To this end prioritised, 'Where to Next' statements have provided the school and review team with important information to inform the next Strategic Plan.

We had evidence through reading, questioning and observing across all Domains that the espoused beliefs, values and vision of Mount Rogers Primary School were enacted across the whole school community.

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

- *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, international experience and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student's success.*
- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement. Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g. not accompanied by timelines).*

## Comments and Findings

The 'Where to Next' NSIT dot matrix provided the school and the review team with very insightful information for the consideration of future priorities areas.

It is evident there has been a strong commitment shown by the principal and leaders to ensure consistency around documenting expectations, policies and procedures over the life of the plan and staying the journey, while overcoming challenges as they arose.

The principal and leaders were highly receptive to all feedback from the review team.

Parents and the school board were able to articulate what the school priorities were and felt informed about the progress Mount Rogers has made over the life of the plan.

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

- *There is a documented school plan and timetable for the annual collection of data on student achievement and wellbeing.*
- *The school has ensured that appropriate software is available.*
- *Time is set aside (e.g. on pupil free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data and the implications of data for school policies. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels. The school can illustrate through meeting minutes and project plans how data have been used to identify priorities, take action.*
- *School leaders pay close attention to data provided to them about the performance of the school (e.g. NAPLAN results; Year 12 results) and identify areas in which the school is performing relatively poorly or well.*
- *Tests (e.g. commercially available reading tests) may be used by some teachers.*
- *An ad hoc approach exists to building staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data.*
- *Software may be used but analyses generally do not extend to studies of improvement or growth.*
- *Information about the school's performance is communicated to the school community. There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

## Comments and Findings

The school has rich data sets, easily accessible to all staff. Working with teachers in understanding how the data collected can be used; and discussions about the right evidence teachers require to inform planning decisions has been identified by leaders and teachers.

Mount Rogers has initiated a central management system to track data and teachers have been asked to take responsibility of entering their own data.

This and other assessment data is used by intervention, learning support and EALD staff (e.g. Letters and Sounds). It is used effectively to establish and monitor growth in the Reading Recovery program, MultiLit MiniLit and intervention support programs.

A draft Whole School Assessment and Reporting Policy exists and roles and responsibilities have been identified however evidence suggests there is variation across teams in its collection and its use.

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

- *There is a happy, optimistic feel to the school.*
- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning.*
- *There is a strong focus on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully, in their own ways and at their own pace*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*
- *Classrooms are generally orderly. Non-attendance is an issue for a small minority of students.*
- *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. Some staff time is taken up dealing with behaviour problems.*
- *Most parents take an obvious interest in their children's learning.*

### **Comments and Findings**

A strong focus on quality learning and high teacher expectations is evident in the majority of learning areas.

Mount Rogers welcomes parental involvement in student learning. Reviewers observed a number of volunteers working with small groups of students e.g. Maths Olympiad, Tournament of the Minds.

The school conducts regular parent forums, posts frequent Facebook messages, produces fortnightly newsletters, maintains an informative website and families are encouraged to be involved in learning expos in the senior years. Parents generally felt satisfied with the level of information the school provides.

The Walker Learning Approach involving investigations (embedded across P-2) and inquiry (years 3-6) facilitates creative and independent student learning. Comments from students and levels of engagement observed by reviewers reflect how valued and effective these approaches are.

Mount Rogers works to maintain a learning environment that reflects the school values and the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. This was evident through the presence of class principles, school values and communication boards within all classrooms.

Parents speak highly of the school and students are proud to be a member of their school community.

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

- *The principal and other school leaders have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the school and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.*
- *The school has developed processes (e.g. systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs, although there may not always be good school records of student achievement and progress.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs (e.g. programs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students for whom English is a second language, Indigenous students, refugees) are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*
- *Physical spaces and technology are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*

### **Comments and Findings**

Approaches used to deliver curriculum enable staff to flexibly address the needs of individual learners making maximum use of their physical environment. Teachers comment that they appreciate the creative opportunities that they are able to offer students to contextualise their learning.

The school is using locally raised funds from the P & C to support ICT and the employment of an IT Officer to support the school in resource management and strategic purchasing. Targeted funding has also been used to support programs around wellbeing, active lifestyle, playground and nutrition.

Mount Rogers Primary School has prioritised staff time, targeted expertise and utilised facilities to develop and implement a Response to Intervention model. Teachers and parents commented on the need for ongoing support and monitoring of students who have been in targeted intervention programs.

The Building Services Officer has been instrumental in the creation of building improvements across the school, maintaining attractive grounds and projects to support student learning.

Comments were made to the review team that the establishment of a larger library and book collection to support the school's literacy priority would be valued.

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

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.*
- *Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs, and to support staff who find it difficult to commit to the school's improvement agenda.*

- *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.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction, and in staff handbooks.*

## **Comments and Findings**

Learning Walks and Talks have been introduced this year with observation and feedback protocols evident. Focus areas and professional discussions connect to elements of the Walker Approach to Learning. This will be further embedded next year by building the capacity of more team members to facilitate regular learning walks and talks.

Evidence supports that teaching teams value working and learning collaboratively in open plan spaces and that they would value opportunities to learn from and with other teams.

Mount Rogers Primary School has established a dedicated area for professional learning and team planning. Reviewers were involved in planning, assessment and curriculum meetings in this area, noting it was a well-resourced and utilised space.

Staff expertise has been shared across teams in different years to build teacher capacity in the Walker Approach to Learning.

A teacher capacity matrix of expertise across all aspects of the curriculum would be a useful tool in the development of an annual professional learning plan for 2017. This would support opportunities for teachers to share their practice, utilise teacher expertise and to purposefully design pathways for teacher improvement.

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

- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers. 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.*
- *School leaders talk about embedding fundamental cross-curricular skills such as literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking within all subjects, but there is little evidence that school-wide strategies are in place to drive a consistent approach.*

## **Comments and Findings**

The three preschools achieved an Exceeding rating in all seven National Quality Standard areas by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

Mount Rogers Primary School has developed its K to 6 Mathematics Scope and Sequence which is aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The K to 6 English Scope and Sequence is in the development stage.

Statements of Intent from K to 4 are provided to the Principal fortnightly. Learning Intentions are communicated to parents through the Mount Rogers Focus on Learning newsletter each fortnight.

Leaders identified that further work is required to link Educational Research projects (ERPs) in years 3 to 6 with Australian Curriculum standards and assessment expectations e.g. success criteria.

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

- *School leaders explicitly encourage teachers to tailor their teaching to student needs and readiness. Teachers are encouraged to individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.*
- *Planning shows how multiple opportunities to learn are provided.*
- *Reports to parents include suggestions for ways in which parents can support their children's learning.*
- *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.*
- *Some use is made of differentiated teaching (e.g. differentiated reading groups in the early primary years).*

## **Comments and Findings**

Mount Rogers Primary School has developed their own report template which identifies ways in which parents can support their child's learning.

Teachers believe that if students are motivated and are provided with appropriate opportunities to be curious and follow their own interests then they are capable of successful learning.

Student tasks are shared with teachers in Google Classroom for feedback in some learning teams.

Evidence supports that students are encouraged to monitor their own learning and set goals for future learning in reading, writing and mathematics.

Tailored interventions by Learning Support Assistants based on Individual Learning Plan goals are in place for students identified as requiring additional support.

The review team observed teachers conferencing with students using targeted questioning and providing individual feedback to enrich investigations, provocations and educational research projects.

The panel noted the following regarding the domain **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 of doing this.*
- *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.*

### **Comments and Findings**

Mount Rogers has utilised critical friends to mentor and coach teachers around identified priority improvement strategies.

Targeted professional learning has been provided through the involvement in the ACT PALLs project and Di Siemon workshops in relation to the explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy.

A focus on explicit instruction, high levels of engagement and maintaining print rich environments are the identified platform areas used to provide teacher feedback in 2016 to align classroom practice.

The relationship between effort and success is evident. Teachers and students use the mantra 'work hard, get smart.'

In the final domain **School-Community Partnerships**, the panel found the following.

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.*
- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions and community organisations*
- *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.*

### **Comments and Findings**

There were 2,800 hours of parent and community volunteer support in 2015 that enabled the following enrichment activities to be provided to students: clubs, clinics, library, reading, boat builders, Maths Olympiad, Tournament of the Minds, school musical and discos. The P & C conduct an annual fete, run 'The Healthy Hut' canteen, uniform shop and student banking.

Community links supporting the wellbeing of students include: a weekly local church breakfast club, Melba Men's shed, ANU Music Engagement program and previous partnership with the West Belconnen Family Centre – Early Links playgroup and HIPPIY program.

The Mandarin LOTE teacher ran parent information sessions to connect families with the school and may wish to consider a further connection with the Australian/Chinese Friendship Society.

Strong educational links exist with Melba Copland College who conduct weekly dance workshops and music tuition. The school's involvement in Wakakirri and the ACT Bands Program further enrich student opportunities in the performing arts.

Mount Rogers Mountain Bike Club has formed partnerships with Melrose High School and Charnwood/Dunlop Primary School. Resources are being shared with the goal of establishing their own mountain bike track at Mount Rogers Primary school.

To ensure effectiveness and sustainability of partnerships the review team suggests that systematic reviews occur to determine if programs are achieving their desired intentions.

### **National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool**

The National Safe Schools Framework Audit Tool was used to evaluate the school's performance in term 2 2016. During a staff meeting teachers were given a brief overview then brainstormed against the 9 elements to make a determination about the level the school was currently operating at.

Valuable feedback was provided about the survey and further questions were asked by school leaders, to provide clarity over the data sets for some responses. In the school's Summative Evaluation Report comment was made about the difficulty posed due to data not being able to be aggregated electronically. Teachers also made comment that having an option to choose 'unsure' or 'I don't know' for some elements would be desirable.

The review team also identified that in the School Audit Results Summary from the National Safe Schools Framework website, the graphs presented were not clearly labeled. An alignment between the Summative Evaluation Report format and the website format for the data collected would be valuable.

Mount Rogers key strengths:

- Leadership commitment to a safe school
- A supportive and connected school culture
- A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
- Positive behaviour management.
- Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
- Partnerships with family and community

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

- Early intervention and targeted support - characteristic 8.1, 8.2, 8.3
- Policies and procedures - characteristic 3.1, 3.8
- Professional learning - characteristic 4.1

The review team found that Mount Rogers has successfully implemented the KidsMatter framework, and a Response to Intervention Model. Professional development, program coordination and parent education has built capacity to enhance student safety and wellbeing.

## Section E: Commendations and Recommendations

### Commendations

Mount Rogers Primary School is commended for the following.

1. Student centred decision making is a key feature of the school. Learning and wellbeing resourcing decisions have been made to make the best use of available staff to establish school wide approaches for wellbeing and for students requiring additional or specialist support. The school provides high levels of both academic and non-academic support to meet individual needs.
2. The Principal and leadership team have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda relevant to the context of the Mount Rogers Primary School community and needs of its students. They are committed and explicit about improving learning outcomes for all students in the school and address obstacles to school wide improvement so that the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school improves.
3. 'Getting it Right in the Early Years' and building on the success of pre-school pedagogies where exploration and independent learning are valued has been the basis on which decisions have been made. This has promoted a rich culture of inquiry at Mount Rogers Primary School through successfully implementing the Kathy Walker Approach to Learning.
4. There is positive and optimistic feel to the school. A strong collegial culture exists and Mount Rogers Primary School places a high priority on building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. Students love coming to school, and parents speak highly of the school. Mount Rogers Primary School has worked hard to maintain and improve learning environments that are safe, respectful, tolerant and inclusive. They view this as an imperative to successful learning.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. The review team believes that a continued focus on embedding priorities from the Mount Rogers Primary School 2013-2016 Strategic Plan would be desirable, especially the drive to build a whole school Mount Rogers approach around teaching and learning. Establishing multiple levels of accountability and monitoring will assist policies and practices to be embedded. As well the setting of explicit targets that are expressed in terms of measurable outcomes that teachers are able to use at a class level to measure growth, would be recommended.
2. That Mount Rogers Primary School uses its data to:
  - build a culture of self-evaluation and reflection across the school
  - identify starting points for improvement and monitor learning growth of students over time
  - determine what professional development is needed for teachers and leaders to build analysis and interpretation skills
  - communicate about class performance and progress including common student misunderstandings
  - put faces to information by displaying a full range of academic and wellbeing data
  - closely monitor the progress of individual students and continually adjust teaching in response to the progress that individuals are making.
3. That Mount Rogers Primary School establishes a formal and regular coaching and feedback program for teachers linked to its agreed beliefs about what effective teaching and learning looks like at Mount Rogers.
4. Mount Rogers Primary School continues its work to develop a culture where all students can feel they are safely able to take risks with their learning and are provided with timely written feedback related to standards based on success criteria.
5. Map the curriculum to align with the Australian Curriculum. Make explicit what (and when) teachers should teach and students should learn from Kindergarten to year six. Ensure there is a strong alignment between the overall curriculum delivery plan, scope and sequence documents, term and unit plans, classroom teaching and the regular assessment of student progress in relation to curriculum expectations. These documents should align with the Walker Learning Approach and include the explicit articulation of the general capabilities, cross-curriculum priorities, assessment and differentiation. Include in the plan strategies around the monitoring and accountability between the written and enacted curriculum.
6. Develop a strategic communication plan outlining the ways in which the school will provide information to all stakeholders. The strategy will define responsibilities of staff around the specific information that needs to be provided to the various stakeholders of the community (staff, parents and students), a timeframe for which information is delivered and who will deliver the information. The plan could define what communication channels stakeholders should use to provide feedback and how communication documentation is recorded.

## Section F: Record of School Review Process

The following people were members of the external School Review Panel for Mount Rogers Primary School conducted on 9-11 August 2016.

<b>Name:</b> Dianne Pekin	<b>ACER:</b> Lead Reviewer
<b>Name:</b> Cindie Deeker	<b>School:</b> Principal, Duffy Primary School

As chair of the Panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external School Review process.

<b>Name:</b> Dianne Pekin	
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 6 1 9 / 2016

As Principal of Mount Rogers Primary School I accept the School Review Report on behalf of the school community.

<b>Name:</b> Sue Harding	
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 21 9 / 2016