



ACT
Government
Education

HARRISON SCHOOL

Review Report 2017

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Introduction: Overview of the External School Review process

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 four 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

Harrison School is a large preschool to year 10 (P–10) school in northern Canberra. The school currently has an enrolment of 1759 students and it is the second-largest public school in Canberra. Over the life of the strategic plan, enrolments have steadily increased and are predicted to continue growing due to increased high density housing in the surrounding area. The panel notes that this anticipated growth will continue to have impact on infrastructure requirements and resource allocations.

The school opened in 2008 as a preschool to year 6 school and expanded to include years 7 to 10 incrementally from 2011–14. The Harrison School values of respect, inclusion, teamwork, integrity, resilience and endeavour continue to shape all actions and interactions across the P–10 school.

The school's current student profile includes 158 students from Defence Force families and 819 students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) background. There are 42 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently enrolled. The school provides for 69 students with special needs. Due to the large number of Australian Defence Force families, the school has a transient enrolment pattern. Harrison School services a community with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) background of 1080 in 2016 and this has remained quite stable throughout the review cycle and is above the median of 1000.

Because of the continual growth in enrolments, the school has needed to recruit additional staff each year, and between 2013 and 2017 the staffing profile grew by 48 classroom teachers and 6 administrative staff. A number of newly recruited staff members have been in their first three years of teaching, and this has meant that the school has needed to place a very high priority on professional learning and building capacity.

In order to effectively manage the needs of students across preschool to year 10 in a very large student population, the school has created three sub-schools (P–2, 3–6, and 7–10) with three senior leaders (School Leader B roles) taking responsibility for each of the sub-schools. The senior leadership team has effected this change to ensure that the unique learning needs

of students in the early or middle years can be effectively addressed. Teaching teams have been established within each multi-age group to ensure teachers are well supported in smaller learning communities. A distributed leadership model supports this structure. The current principal has been appointed during this review cycle as well as a new substantive senior leader (B) for the years 7 to 10 sub-school. A number of new executive teachers have also been appointed as the school has grown.

Attendance rates in 2016 were 91.8 percent, which slightly exceeded the ACT target of 91.5 percent.

Section B: School performance

Student learning data

Across the life of the plan, Harrison School has achieved consistent level results in student learning data for the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The mean scores for each cohort have begun and remained below the national and ACT system means in all five domains for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 over the past four years. Reading and numeracy have been within the confidence level of expected growth across that time with the exception of year 3 numeracy in 2013 and year 7 numeracy in 2016. Improvements in the overall mean scores in all five domains in year 7 was noted. Some inconsistencies or a slight reduction in mean scores was noted across the remaining domains over the review cycle.

Achievement against Directorate-set targets for improvement in all domains were within the expected range, with the exception of year 3 reading in 2016 and year 3 numeracy in 2015. Year 7 numeracy in 2016 exceeded the set target.

The panel noted that the number of students at or below national minimum standards across the review cycle reduced in year 7 in all five domains while year 9 reduced in grammar and punctuation, and numeracy.

When analysing student performance across the life of the plan, the panel noted consistently stronger representation of students in the middle two NAPLAN bands for all four year levels tested. The percentage of students in the top two bands in all five domains was consistently lower than ACT percentages.

The percentage of students reaching and surpassing expected growth across the NAPLAN bands was observed in year 7 and year 9 numeracy. Similar growth results were observed in year 5 grammar and punctuation, and year 7 spelling. In the remaining categories growth was inconsistent or slightly below expected levels compared to students with the same starting scores nationally or from like-schools.

In the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), on entry the schools kindergarten cohorts have scored similar results to that of ACT students in reading and mathematics. Reading growth across the year has been consistently lower than expected, with up to 54 percent of students achieving expected growth. The expected growth in mathematics mirrors that of ACT average, with up to 85 percent of students achieving growth.

Stakeholder perception data

The school's perception data from staff, students and parent community reflects a range of characteristics. This data showed that the school has outstanding achievement in some areas, and also highlights other areas which the school could prioritise for improvement. The staff perceptions are very strong, with most teachers closely identifying with the vision and values of the school. These results are consistently above the ACT average for K to 10 schools.

Particular strengths of the school are that: 'technologies are an integral part of the learning and teaching' (94%), 'students can talk to their teachers' (99%), 'school takes staff opinions seriously' (78%), 'staff are well supported' (81%) and 'school sets high expectations' (89%). These areas are seen as strengths and significantly above similar schools. Areas for further development include 'recognition for professional achievements' (63%) and 'communication amongst staff' (67%).

The student satisfaction data consistently scored above similar schools in all categories, with the exception of 2015, when more than half of the responses were below the system average. A steady decline of perceptions is moving the school towards the system average across the review period. Students consistently reported that strengths of the school were that their teachers 'expected them to do their best' (92%) and that 'digital technologies were an integral part of their learning' (92%). Areas for improvement include 'behaviour management of students' (37% satisfaction) and 'taking student opinions seriously' (51% satisfaction).

The parent satisfaction data consistently reflects responses to all questions that are below system averages for similar schools in the ACT. Strengths were highlighted in 'teacher expectations of their child doing their best' (84%), 'my child likes being at school' (87%), 'my child feels safe at school' (83%), 'the school is well maintained' (86%) and 'teachers treat students fairly' (81%). Areas for improvement include 'my child's learning needs are being met' (63%) and 'this school works with me to support my child's learning' (66%).

Evidence cited

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

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority areas and achievements

Harrison School identified four strategic priorities as part of their strategic plan:

- strengthen the induction and professional learning program to support the ‘Harrison Way’ in our P–10 school
- build teacher capacity and confidence in implementing the Australian Curriculum
- build student voice across P–10
- strengthen the positive culture for all members of the school community.

These remained the priorities for the school for the life of the plan, with the exception of Priority 2, which was revised in 2016 to ‘build teacher capacity and confidence in providing high-quality, personalised learning’. In support of these priorities, the school leadership team identified a number of key improvement strategies and attendant actions for each. Targets for the priorities were set each year, although there was not always clear alignment between the strategic priorities, key improvement strategies and targets. Some targets set did not have a mechanism for collecting rigorous data to identify progress.

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen the induction and professional learning program to support the ‘Harrison Way’ in our P–10 school

The performance measures for this priority included the:

- percentage of students satisfied they are getting a good education at this school
- proportion of staff, student and parents showing satisfaction with induction processes
- proportion of staff using coaching approaches.

The school’s key focus was on building teacher capacity through teacher observations, differentiation and formative assessment. These actions were informed by the research work of work of Kath Murdock and John Hattie. The visible learning and the inquiry-based learning were strong and consistent pedagogical approaches. The embedding of the school’s six values reinforced their connection in conversations and practices observed across the community.

In addition to whole-staff professional learning, teachers worked collaboratively within year levels and more frequently in learning teams to develop programs and support improved curriculum planning and pedagogy. Identified team leaders are provided additional time to support colleagues and utilise a variety of informal coaching and mentoring models. Frameworks including the Early Years Learning Framework, inquiry-based learning and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers have been used to support teacher observations. Peers observe each other at mutually arranged times and this has supported the building of a culture of self-reflection. The panel noted that not all teachers had been observed as often as proposed.

Learning team meetings were also used to:

- align whole-team teaching as well as individualised coaching sessions. A topic was selected and staff identify options for actions.
- support probationary/contract teachers or new teachers appointed to the school. The mentors use the coaching approach process for induction, feedback following classroom observation and for completing reports.
- design student learning and individual support plans
- annual professional discussions between teachers and executive staff.

The school has also reviewed its approach to induction across the life of the plan. Processes have been refined and the panel noted a more formalised program in place to support new and beginning teachers. This includes the development of an induction pack and mentors being allocated to new staff. Induction processes for new families were also refined. Further work is planned with a view to embedding a more personalised process with mentors appointed to all new teachers and students.

Targeted professional learning throughout the life of this plan has supported the school's improvement agenda. Through professional learning communities, professional learning in: literacy and numeracy understanding across the curriculum strategies; teaching EAL/D students in mainstream classes and creating engaging classroom discussions focused teacher discussions. The proportion of staff using a coaching approach to reflect practice was 90 percent in 2013; 82 percent in 2014; 2015 was not assessed; and 2016 was not assessed, indicating that the target was surpassed.

The development of a coordinated student information database has yet to be developed to provide staff, student and parents with easy access to student achievement data. The range of data sources for classes across the school includes cognitive testing, PAT Reading and PAT Maths testing, NAPLAN, PIPS, Individual Learning Plans, EAL/D, Oxford Owl, Middle Years Mental Computations and social and emotional tracking. Staff are currently spending significant amounts of time collecting information. A balance of collecting and analysing data needs to be established to maximise the usefulness and application to student learning. The percentage of students satisfied they are getting a good education at this school was: not measured in 2013; 74 percent in 2014; 78 percent in 2015; and 71 percent in 2016 did not meet the target set.

The long-term data collected to measure satisfaction about the induction was discontinued in the satisfaction survey. However, the proportion of staff, student and parents showing satisfaction with induction processes was, in 2013: parents 91 percent, staff 65 percent, and students 90 percent. In 2014, satisfaction of parents was 100 percent, staff 78 percent, but students were not assessed. In 2015 no group was assessed and in 2016 no group assessed had steadily increased. The target of 80 percent was marginally less than the last measurement taken.

Strategic Priority 2: Build teacher capacity and confidence in implementing the Australian Curriculum

The performance measures for this priority included the:

- increase in NAPLAN mean scores for years 3, 5 7 and 9
- increase in the percentage of students achieving growth in NAPLAN numeracy for years 5, 7 and 9
- increase in the number of students achieving C standard and above in maths by year level
- reduction in the number of students achieving below the C standard in maths by year level
- proportion of teaching staff reporting increased confidence in teaching maths.

A key improvement was the increase in the number of students achieving C standard and above in maths by year level, which has reduced from an average of 92 percent (2013) across all year levels to an average of 85 percent (2016) across all levels.

The proportion of teaching staff reporting increased confidence in teaching maths was not formally measured but anecdotal evidence through discussions with colleagues and team leaders suggest that this has improved.

Significant time and effort has been allocated to building the understanding of staff in making appropriate and consistent judgements based on the Australian Curriculum standards across the school. Evidence of initial success in the early years P to 4 indicated positive movement of numbers of students improving from D/E grades to A, B or C. This has continued to fluctuate across the whole spectrum of year groups over the review period. Additional tools were designed and implemented by the learning teams to support more consistent moderation processes and to more closely align to the A–E grades of the achievement standards.

Over the course of the review period, the focus has been on improving teacher practice through the development of differentiated learning activities in all classes and interrogating student achievement. This has evolved through the effective use of data and information and communication technology. The school was able to show increases in the number of students achieving a C grade in semester 2 for most years compared with their performance in semester 1. A greater emphasis on collecting performance data, the use of diagnostic online tools and use of commercial programs and texts have provided teachers with a wide variety of benchmarks and performance indicators. The use of these data sources is yet to be fully coordinated and applied to enable the fine-grain targeting of the learning outcomes.

While the school continues to work on this journey, the review panel noted variability in the process of curriculum documentation and the lack of a seamless alignment across the school.

The majority of NAPLAN targets set by the school have not been achieved. Similarly, increasing the proportion of students achieving a C or better was not achieved. Observed programs and structures show students are participating in maths activities daily.

Strategic Priority 3: Build student voice across P–10

The performance measures for this priority were the:

- proportion of students satisfied they have a voice in decision making
- proportion of students achieving Personalised Learning Plan goals.

There has been a considerable focus on supporting students to set learning achievement goals and identify potential flexible learning options over the last two years. A school-wide focus on the setting of learning intentions and success criteria to assist student reflection was noted by the panel. The aim of both these strategies was to improve student voice in learning. The monitoring of student learning goals varied in approaches and rigour across the school. A well-established differentiation process developed in P to 4 classes was evident across the junior school. This was reflected in the majority of teachers who had created achievement plans for all students. These plans were used to differentiate literacy, numeracy and social development in the junior school. From years 5 to 10, progress is monitored through personal learning community classes.

The proportion of students achieving Personalised Learning Plan goals was not measured in 2013 but anecdotal information suggests that the 80 percent target was reached. In 2016, the school used information presented by teachers at team meetings, feedback from student-led conferences and exhibition of learning and student responses to the school satisfaction survey to measure whether or not the 2016 target, of 80 percent of students achieving their Personalised Learning Plan goals, was met. The school reported that this target was exceeded but recognised that a more accurate instrument for measuring this needs to be developed.

A feedback process has been developed via online portals such as the Schoology learning management system and Google Apps for Education, but was not fully embedded across the school. Personalised feedback for students through rubrics, marking schemes, learning journeys and student-led conferences were widely used. Seventy percent of students indicated that they received useful feedback about their learning. Digital portfolios (years 3 to 10), which included a reflective scaffold, were expected practice although some students and parents still need an explicit rationale to reinforce their purpose and usefulness. Sixty-six percent of parents believe that their child receives useful feedback on their learning.

Across the life of the plan, the school set targets in relation to the percentage of students believing they have a voice in learning. In 2014 this target was 70 percent and was not measured. In 2015 and 2016 the target was 75 percent and not achieved in either year, however, the panel noted that there was an improvement of 11 percent, and 34 percent neither agreed nor disagreed in 2016.

The school is endeavouring to embed a culture of inclusion and negotiation in the learning. Structures and scaffolds exist to allow students to work at their appropriate levels and with like-minded peers. Multi-age classes, vertically grouped enrichment and extension, identification protocols and practices along with targeted literacy and numeracy programs provide a smorgasbord of strategies to support individualised strengths and allow for choice. This was strongly supported and acknowledged by the students interviewed by the panel. In the satisfaction survey, 73 percent of students consistently indicated that 'the school gives me opportunities to do interesting things'. Staff satisfaction data reflects that 98 percent agree that 'teachers cater for the different needs of their students'.

Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen the positive culture for all members of the school community

The performance measures for this priority were the:

- increase in overall satisfaction of teachers, students and parents in school satisfaction surveys
- improved student attendance and suspension data
- opportunities for parental and community involvement and numbers attending events.

The table below tracks the progress of the school in relation to the first performance measure. Staff levels of satisfaction show an upward trend, with the exception of 2016, while student satisfaction levels show a downward trend. Parent satisfaction levels have remained relatively stable from 2014 to 2016.

Table 1: Percentage of overall satisfaction of teachers, students and parents in school satisfaction surveys

Year	% of parents	% of staff	% of students
2013	63	80	76
2014	75	87	74
2015	75	93	61
2016	73	86	68

Source: School satisfaction surveys

The school invested in improving student leadership structures and enhancing communication and celebrating success for students and staff. The panel noted a student leadership structure in place with leadership positions in years 4, 6, 8 and 10 aligned to the multi-age groupings across the school.

To enhance communication within the community, the school invested in updating its website, including an online Google Calendar, refined processes for staff responsible for particular functions and events, and implemented an app to allow easier access to school information. The online learning portal through the use of Google Classroom and e-portfolios were mechanisms for improving the partnership between parents, students and teachers in the learning journey. The panel noted from interviews held with parents and staff that communication remains a necessary area of focus for the school. This remains a challenge for a school with such a large and growing population.

Improved student attendance and suspension data showed increased attendance in five year-level cohorts followed through the years and the number of suspensions increased most years.

There was no official data collected measuring the opportunities for parental and community involvement and numbers attending events but there were calendar events regularly throughout the year for parents and carers to attend.

Suspension data reflects an increase in numbers across the review period. The suspension rate has increased to 2.4 percent of the population. This reflects the growing diversity and population growth of the school over that time. Attendance data remains very high across the school and varies slightly between 91 percent and 93 percent for respective year groups.

Reflections

The complexities of a school with a large and growing population with a diverse range of learning needs are a challenging one. The leadership team has worked to maintain an alignment between the growth of the secondary sector and the success of the embedded practices in the junior school. A challenge for the school for the next school improvement cycle is to consider what mechanisms need to be put in place to bring about a seamlessness of policies and programs from preschool to year 10. The establishment of three sub-schools with a newly aligned leadership structure serves to ensure that the needs of students at very different developmental stages are better met. It will be critical though that the senior leadership team identifies how the unique needs of each sub-school are addressed without creating disjointed processes and programs, making the transition for students between the sub-schools difficult.

Evidence cited

- School Satisfaction and School Climate Surveys 2013–16
- 2017 School Summative Report
- MySchool website
- Annual Action Plans 2013–17
- School Strategic Plan 2014–17
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16
- parent, student and staff interviews with the panel
- key school policy and program documentation including curriculum planning.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

The school has completed a self-evaluation using the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). Staff were introduced to the NSIT at whole-staff meetings to build familiarity with the tool and discuss the types of evidence that could be used to make an assessment for each of the descriptors in the nine domains. The school's senior leadership team individually made an assessment for each of these domains and then discussed individual perceptions. The purpose of this reflection was to deepen the understanding of all leaders and give further consideration to sources of evidence.

National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda

- *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.*
- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement, but limited attention has been given to developing a school-wide approach (e.g. plans for improvement may lack coherence, be short term or without a whole-school focus). Targets for improvement are not specific.*
- *Although there is an expressed commitment to improvement, this is not reflected in a high level of enthusiasm for personal change on the part of staff. The communication of performance data to the school community tends to be sporadic and/or is limited only to information that the school is required to report.*

Comments and findings

- The school's Strategic Plan 2013–2016 identifies four priorities: strengthen the induction and professional learning program to support the Harrison Way in our P–10 school; build teacher capacity and confidence in implementing the Australian Curriculum; build student voice across P–10; and strengthen the positive culture for all members of the school community. The panel observed that there is not clear alignment between the priorities, the key improvement strategies and the targets set.
- Teachers identify a wide range of key strategies for improvement including: a focus on improving literacy in the early years; embedding of school values and student agency; Harrison's universal practices; differentiation; common assessment and the use of data; and visible learning. Teachers are committed to continual improvement, but their enthusiasm has been affected by the range of initiatives, which some describe as overwhelming. Teachers do not readily identify with targets or make clear links to the changes in practice required to meet these. The visible learning initiative is having impact in preschool to year 6, in particular. There has been an increased focus recently in monitoring progress towards priorities through 'check ins' at executive meetings, the development of learning community action plans and discussions at staff meetings.
- The school has recently restructured its leadership team to drive strategic priorities and support focused attention on the particular needs of students across 10 years of schooling.
- There has been some analysis of school performance data. Consistency of practice and processes is emerging to support the close monitoring of progress. School performance data is shared with the board but not understood by the wider community.
- The school leadership team has aligned the improvement agenda to evidence-based practice, including visible learning and inquiry-based learning.

DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data

- *There is a documented school plan and timetable for the annual collection of data on student achievement and wellbeing.*
- *One or more members of staff have been assigned responsibility for implementing the annual plan, 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 school policies and classroom practices. These discussions occur at whole-school and team levels.*
- *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.*
- *The approach to building staff skills in analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data is ad hoc.*
- *Software may be used for the analysis of school results, including the performances of priority groups, but analyses generally do not extend to studies of improvement or growth.*
- *Information about the school's performance is communicated to the school community, but may lack explanation or analysis. There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

Comments and findings

- NAPLAN results are within the confidence range although mean scores remain below the ACT mean in all domains. Students predominantly start close to the ACT mean for PIPS but finish below for each year of the plan.
- Reflective conversations using a disciplined data conversation approach are occurring to measure the impact of visible learning.
- A school-wide data plan has been developed for 2017 and key staff have been assigned responsibility. This plan articulates how the analysis of data will be shared and how it will be used to bring about improvement. Leaders are working with teaching teams to build their capacity to use data to monitor progress and inform teaching.
- The school collects a very wide range of data sets including NAPLAN, PIPS, attendance, perception surveys, social and emotional wellbeing, school-developed student surveys, A to E academic performance, and diagnostic tests. There is an emerging use of systems to collect and analyse data.
- Diagnostic and NAPLAN data are available to teachers. The school is capturing more of its data sets electronically, to improve access and analysis.
- High levels of transience in the student population present a challenge for the school in measuring growth over time.
- The leadership team has developed assessment schedules for multi-age groups and there is increased consistency in the diagnostic data teachers use to measure progress. Discussions in teams is expanding as teachers consolidate the range of tools to be used.

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, attendance or engagement problems.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and 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.*
- *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.*
- *Some staff time is taken up dealing with behaviour problems.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*
- *Most parents take an obvious interest in their children's learning. Engagement is primarily through regularly scheduled parent-teacher interviews.*

Comments and findings

- The school's six values are embedded in key school documents, explicitly taught as learning dispositions and referred to regularly. Teachers use these values as learning opportunities.
- The school has maintained attendance rates between 90 and 95 percent.
- A code of practice articulates the expected behaviours of students at Harrison School. Documented policies and strategies are in place to promote appropriate behaviour and respond to inappropriate behaviour.
- A social and emotional learning program is evident. It has not been scoped and sequenced across the school.
- The school has developed and implemented student leadership structures and opportunities.
- Student voice in learning is evident across the school.
- Students share their learning with families through regular Exhibitions of Learning.
- Parents report to the review team that teachers readily provide timely feedback about their child's progress if they request it. This group indicate that more regular formalised feedback, including personalised report cards, would be appreciated.
- Some staff report that the rate of change is starting to have some impact on staff morale.
- Teachers highly value the collegiality of the learning community groups.
- The panel observed purposeful learning across the school. Staff and students feel a strong sense of belonging and enjoy coming to school. The Harrison Way is deeply embedded and is reflected in the way students and staff engage with one another.

DOMAIN 4: Targeted use of school resources

- *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, and 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

- In accordance with its school values, Harrison School is committed to providing an inclusive education for all.
- Tailored support programs are in place for students with disabilities. Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (Victorian) curriculum and assessment is being used to provide individualised learning programs for some students.
- Students have Personalised Learning Plans that outline the support they receive from classroom teachers, learning support teachers and assistants.
- A transition mentor provides assistance and supports children of Australian Defence Force families.
- A multifaceted approach to EAL/D support is evident including focused withdrawal, in class work, team teaching and coaching.
- A gifted and talented policy has been developed. Opportunities exist for students to be accelerated for Key Learning Areas.
- Student support team meetings are held regularly to monitor the learning and wellbeing needs of identified students.
- Students in years 7 to 10 bring personal electronic devices, and considerable resources are allocated in the junior sub-schools to support the integrated use of information and communication technology. Some students express concern about the reliance on technology as a teaching tool and indicate a desire for more explicit teaching.
- Scaffolded literacy and numeracy programs in years 5 to 10 support students to improve their learning. Some students find this program valuable and others express concern that they are in the wrong group or the learning is not engaging. Some staff find it challenging to develop a rapport with students and indicate further integration would make the program more valuable.
- A process is in place to identify and respond to student needs. Teachers refer students to executive leaders when they identify a potential learning need. Observations by executives occur and referrals are then made to the student support team.

- The school leadership team is working to streamline the sharing of records of progress across multi-age groups.
- Across-grade class groupings are embedded in practice.
- Team leader models have been developed to provide targeted expertise and support within smaller learning communities.
- The school supplements the professional learning budget allocations to provide targeted professional learning.
- The school has allocated resources to maintain and renew the learning environment.

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.*
- *There is a documented professional learning plan and the school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching.*
- *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.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*
- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction, and in staff handbooks.*

Comments and findings

- Walk-throughs by team leaders and classroom teachers to observe the use of expected practice in visible learning occur regularly in the junior sub-schools.
- Whole-school professional learning plans developed in both 2016 and 2017 articulate targeted whole-school and individual professional learning.
- Teachers have access to school-based and external professional development linked to whole-school improvement priorities including inquiry-based learning, literacy and visible learning.
- Professional Pathways plans align to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the school action plan. These are developed and reviewed annually.
- Teachers are supported in building capacity to effectively implement the Harrison School universal practices.
- Team leaders work collaboratively with teachers in team meetings, through pathway discussions, mentoring and informal coaching.

- Beginning teachers are formally supported through mentoring, observations and feedback.
- An explicit induction process has been developed to support new teachers to the school.
- A wider whole-school leadership structure provides opportunities for emerging leaders. This has enabled emerging leaders to take on responsibility for community learning teams and to work more closely with the executive leadership team to apply and embed school improvement priorities.
- Teachers and executives observe classroom practice and provide feedback. Reviewers found variability in the way these occur.

DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

- *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.*
- *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.*
- *Discussions about curriculum delivery tend to be reactive with a year-level focus rather than being driven by a leadership team with a whole-school approach.*

Comments and findings

- The Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework have been reference points for curriculum planning.
- Alignment of all curriculum areas to the Australian Curriculum is progressing as a priority. Some variability is evident across the school. Progress towards a seamless articulation across the whole school is being made.
- Guidelines to support the needs of EAL/D learners and those receiving learning assistance in English for years 1 and 2 have been developed and include suggested effective teaching strategies.
- There is broad evidence of collaboratively developed, quality integrated inquiry-based units. Scope and sequence documentation for these and other units is evident but clarity has been clouded by inclusion of the previously published ACT Essential Learning Achievements.
- Quality curriculum planning documents are emerging but a whole of school curriculum plan has not yet been fully developed.
- Guides to making judgements on learning against the achievement standards have been developed and reporting achievement against the standards to parents is evident.

- Semester outlines are provided to parents.
- Teachers plan collaboratively in community or learning teams.
- Processes are not yet in place to review the vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum for all Key Learning Areas.

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.*
- *Students' workbooks also illustrate differentiated tasks and feedback.*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

Comments and findings

- Students with additional learning needs are identified through formal testing, and have Individual Learning Plans that are readily accessible to teachers and parents.
- Students set learning goals, develop portfolios and engage in a guided reflective process about work samples in preschool to year 2. Students set learning goals in years 3 to 10 in individual e-portfolios. Parents are engaged in the learning journey of their students through an exhibition process.
- The school is using a variety of assessment tasks and some software to monitor individual, class and school progress.
- Scaffolded approaches to learning experiences are widely evident.
- The school uses multi-age classes to provide flexibility in meeting student learning needs.
- The use of the adjustment matrix supports teachers in making appropriate adjustments for learners.
- A variety of strategies to support EAL/D students including oral language and visual cues were observed by the panel.
- Teachers are using data sets to intentionally plan learning, although there is limited evidence that data is used as routinely in the senior school.
- Teachers work to extend more able students in their classes and can describe a range of differentiated practices they use to support learners.

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 of doing this.*
- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, and writing, 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, and individualised attention as required are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

Comments and findings

- Harrison School has engaged nationally recognised research consultants over an extensive period of time to focus professional learning on an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. Inquiry-based learning, one of the universal teaching practices, was strongly evident, particularly in the junior sub-schools.
- Other universal practices expected of teachers across the school include differentiation, integrated and collaborative learning, student voice and the use of formative and summative assessment.
- Approaches to the teaching of reading and writing aligned to evidence-based practice are strongly evident in the junior sub-schools. Some teachers interviewed express that the range of different approaches and programs they are expected to use is causing some confusion and duplication of workload.
- Learning intentions and success criteria for providing clarity about what students are learning and able to do is explicitly visible.
- Students report variability in the quality and detail of feedback they receive about their learning. The use of Google Classrooms and rubrics supports a feedback culture in the school.

DOMAIN 9: School-community partnerships

- *The school has external partnerships, but rather than being built around a coherent, jointly planned program of activities to improve outcomes for students, these partnerships tend to be mutually convenient arrangements (e.g. exchanges of expertise or the sharing of facilities between institutions or organisations). Such partnerships often are established by individual members of staff and have limited whole-school support or engagement.*
- *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, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.*

Comments and findings

- The school has a long-standing partnership with a sister school in Japan with reciprocal school visits, teacher exchanges and student connections.
- A memorandum of understanding is in place between AFL Australia and Harrison School.
- The school participates in the Alan Tongue Aspire program.
- A number of school events – including a twilight fair, art exhibition and Harrison Stories – provide opportunities for families to connect with the school.
- The school has a strong association with Gungahlin College including: accessing the SMART acceleration program; sharing of student performance data; transition programs and attendance at key events.
- In partnership with the University of Canberra, the school hosts pre-service teachers and has participated in professional learning and an action research program. Occupational therapy students also complete practicums at the school.
- The Smith Family has connections with the school supporting the needs of identified students.
- A Defence Force family hub supports new parents in connecting with one another. Transition officers support students in class, one on one and offers lunch programs to support new Defence Force families in the school. There is a particular focus on supporting families where deployment has occurred.
- To support the social and emotional wellbeing of students, the school connects with Gungahlin Community Services.
- Programs including Learn Right, Graffiti Art and Messengers support students with particular interests and needs.
- The school has strong connections with Well Station, which neighbours the school. Students access this working farm for a number of projects and programs.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

The school is yet to complete a National Safe Schools Framework audit as a school.

Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

Affirmations

The External Review Panel offers the following affirmations for Harrison School.

1. Engaging and challenging inquiry-based integrated units of work provide opportunities for students to pursue their interests, have a say in their learning and engage in rich learning tasks.
2. Learning and recreational spaces for students are stimulating, attractive, and very conducive to learning.
3. There is a collegial culture evidenced by teachers supporting each other both professionally and personally in learning communities. These communities are an important way for teachers to work and learn together in small groups.
4. Teachers' engage with data to better understand and cater for the needs of their learners. Teachers employ a range of differentiated teaching strategies to support the diversity of needs in their classrooms.
5. A comprehensive induction program to familiarise new teachers with the Harrison Way has been developed.

Commendations

Harrison School is commended for the following.

1. The Harrison Way, a community approach based on building high expectations and connecting students to their learning, is well known and applied widely across the learning community. Its explicit use in conjunction with the school values and student voice is consistently evident in all learning levels. The common language of the Harrison Way is well embedded in the conversations and actions of the students and staff. This reinforces a strong community culture and resulted in a cohesive, happy and positive tone within the school.
2. The rapid population expansion of the region has brought a greater level of complexity with a broader range of community groups and learning needs. The review panel commends the proactive manner and commitment to inclusivity and support for that diversity of needs. Of particular note are the formalised supports for the families and students of the Defence Force, those with EAL/D, and those with complex and special needs.
3. The professionalism, dedication and commitment of the leadership team and staff is consistently reflected in the very high levels of satisfaction in the school satisfaction data. Both the leadership and teaching teams consistently articulate their passion and commitment for their respective roles in the school. This is overwhelmingly supported by the students interviewed by the panel who acknowledge the great teachers they have and their enjoyment of learning experiences.
4. The visible learning and the inquiry-based philosophy are strong and consistent pedagogical approaches in the school. This is reinforced across all levels and effectively focused and connected students to their learning. It is supported by an evidence-based approach to improving practice and helping to facilitate improved learning outcomes. This is openly modelled and displayed across the school.
5. A strong focus on social and emotional learning has supported a whole-school student wellbeing approach. The parents and students interviewed note high levels of support provided by the staff and leadership team. They also note the approachability of the staff and the proactive follow-up when issues are brought to their attention.

Recommendations

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

1. 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 rather than general improvements sought in student performance. Develop meaningful and relevant targets clearly aligned to the intended improvement agenda. Consider initiating targets and key improvement strategies at a sub-school level that are subsequently incorporated into school-wide targets to support teachers in understanding and taking responsibility for changes in practice required to meet the targets. Continue to build a culture of data analysis at whole of school, sub-school, multi-age group and individual student levels.
2. Continue to build a culture of self-reflection in the school through the school's peer and leader classroom teaching observations program. Ensure that processes for observation become systematic across the school and that, over time, feedback provided includes both affirmations and constructive critique to stimulate this self-reflection. Implement accountability processes to ensure these practices are embedded. Consider how these observations can align to Harrison's universal practices and how formalised coaching arrangements can support teachers in building their capacity to improve in the areas identified from feedback.
3. Continue to develop the school's universal practices and build it into an explicit school-wide pedagogical framework for learning and teaching that articulates the evidence-based practices expected of all teachers across the school. Ensure that the school clearly defines the expected approaches to the teaching of literacy, numeracy, mathematics and science. Provide multiple opportunities for these universal practices to be shared enabling teachers to learn with and from each other.
4. Regularly review current strategic partnerships to evaluate whether these are having the intended impact in improving outcomes for students, are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school and partnered organisations.
5. Develop a whole of school curriculum plan that reflects a shared vision for learning from preschool to year 10 and includes explicit expectations of how consistent teaching and learning will occur across the school. Finalise scope and sequence documents from preschool to year 10 for every Key Learning Area fully aligned to the authorised curriculum. Ensure that mapping processes are in place to identify and address any gaps in the content and skills expected.
6. Continue to explore how parents can be encouraged to be partners in their children's learning, paying particular attention to: how parents receive feedback about their child's learning; and how to best meet the needs of the significant number of families from EAL/D and Defence Force backgrounds.

Section F: Record of school review process

The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Harrison School conducted on 15–18 August 2017.

Name: Christina Rogers External Review Panel – Chair

Name: George Palavestra External Review Panel – Principal Member
Canberra College


Name: Fran Dawning External Review Panel – Principal Observer
Neville Bonner 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: 20/10/2017

I, Jason Holmes, as Principal of Harrison School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Signature: 

Date: 20/10/2017