



ACT
Government
Education

GIRALANG PRIMARY 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 three days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including desktop review, observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the NSIT to inform the affirmations, commendations and recommendations for this school improvement cycle.

Section A: School context

Giralang Primary School was opened in 1977. It shares the name of the suburb in which it is located. The suburb is named after the word meaning 'star' in the language of the Wiradjiri Aboriginal tribe of the Central West of New South Wales.

The school's vision is to 'provide a connected and supportive educational environment where staff are driven to pursue high quality adventures in learning, caring and achieving for our students and their families.' The school's values are caring, cooperation and courtesy.

A new principal was appointed to commence at the beginning of 2014. At the beginning of 2014, there were 195 students enrolled at Giralang Primary School, preschool to year 6. Currently there are 332 students enrolled at the school. A large increase in enrolments has impacted on cohort sizes. The school's unique design gives flexibility for open plan learning for team teaching and multi-aged groupings, while at the same time providing well defined spaces. The school has also undergone significant internal upgrades during this school improvement cycle with new furnishings, painting and carpets.

The school demographic has changed over time to include a high percentage of students with additional needs. Currently, 13 percent of the student population has a diagnosed disability; 18 percent of the student population has a Language Background is Other Than English; and two percent identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Section B: School performance

Giralang Primary School reviews school and individual student performance using:

- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and mathematics
- Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)
- student, parent and carer, and staff perception data captured through annual school satisfaction surveys
- school-based data.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

The school's National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) mean scores when compared against ACT mean scores in general have been lower in each of the domains over the four years for both year 3 and 5. The exceptions are year 5 reading (2014), year 3 writing (2013) and year 3 numeracy (2013), which were above the ACT mean scores.

The average growth has improved in all domains in recent years. Average growth in 2013–15 was below the ACT mean score in all domains except for grammar and punctuation. Average growth for 2014–16 has been achieved in reading, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. When compared to the ACT scaled score growth, students performed better in all three areas.

Giralang Primary School students' growth across 2013–15, when compared to like schools across Australia, was below the average achievement in reading, writing and numeracy. However, student growth has improved since the beginning of the school's Strategic Plan 2014–17. In 2014–16, reading was within range of like schools and numeracy slightly lower. The school has performed well in writing, with above average growth over the 2014–16 period.

Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)

Giralang Primary School students' Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) reading results have been slightly lower or lower than the ACT mean scores at the start of each year, with the exception of 2016 when the school started three points higher than the ACT mean. Despite similar starting scores, end of year growth has tended to be less than the ACT mean scores, other than in 2014. Mean scores and average growth for mathematics have remained similar to the ACT averages over the last four years. The percentage of students at Giralang Primary School who demonstrated average growth in both reading and mathematics has remained similar over the duration of the plan. However, there has been an increase in the percentage of students achieving less than average growth.

Stakeholder perception data

On average, results from the 2015–16 School Satisfaction Survey for staff have been higher than the ACT mean. In 2016, staff satisfaction was 100 percent for all but two items.

Student perception data has improved over time. The items 'I feel safe at school' and 'I like being at school' are significantly above the ACT mean. Although there has been an increase in complex behaviours, students feel that behaviour management in the school is handled more effectively. The introduction of the school values of caring, courtesy and cooperation, and the explicit

teaching of social and emotional learning are cited as reasons for increased positive perceptions of the school by the year 5 and 6 students.

Parent satisfaction survey results have been higher than the ACT mean for the past four years. The results have also been stable or have improved in all national opinion items across the four years of the plan.

Attendance data

Over the duration of the school's Strategic Plan 2014–17, attendance rates for the school have improved. The target is 90 percent attendance for each student; 78 percent of students have achieved this.

Evidence cited

- Giralang Primary School Summative Report
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16
- School Satisfaction Survey data 2013–16
- School Climate Survey data 2016
- PIPs data 2013–16
- NAPLAN data 2013–16
- My School website.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority areas

Throughout the life of the school's Strategic Plan 2014–17, there were four strategic priorities. These were to:

- improve student outcomes for literacy and numeracy
- achieve consistency in curriculum implementation and assessment throughout the school
- provide an educational service for preschool students of a national quality standard
- strengthen meaningful avenues of communication and partnerships with staff, parents and carers to nurture a connected school community.

Strategic Priority 1: Improve student outcomes for literacy and numeracy

Targets

The targets set for this priority focused on:

- the proportion of within school matched students achieving expected growth in NAPLAN literacy with a focus on reading
- the proportions of within school matched students in the NAPLAN proficiency bands
- NAPLAN mean scores in year 3 and 5 in reading and numeracy.

Key improvement strategies

In support of this priority, the school identified the following key improvement strategies:

- develop a school-wide strategy to facilitate tailored, early and sustained intervention for students identified as requiring additional support
- develop a personalised approach to learning for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education students
- promote the use of differentiated teaching as a strategy for ensuring that every student is engaged and learning successfully
- develop and implement a culture and model of professional learning, feedback, support through coaching, and mentoring.

Achievements

In 2014, at the commencement of the strategic plan, the MiniLit program was introduced. This was used as a tier-two intervention program to support readers. Students were identified as requiring intervention in reading and provided this in kindergarten to year 2. Data collected has indicated that 95 percent of students accessing the intervention program have significantly improved their reading outcomes. The school also introduced the PreLit program in the preschool in 2017, with some of the kindergarten students accessing the program. Further to this, every kindergarten student has a phonemic awareness screening assessment during their first week of kindergarten. From this screening, differentiated groups are formed, and these allow for targeted intervention and the formation of high achiever extension groups. This pre-assessment screening of all students and the intervention strategy has resulted in fewer students needing to access the MiniLit program in year 1.

The school has a strong focus on goal setting with students and their families. This ensures a personalised learning approach. At the beginning of each year, families are asked to write down their long-term goals for their child and share with the class teacher. Teachers conference with students to revise, discuss and formulate new goals for reading and writing. These goals are shared and are highly visible and accessible to students throughout the day.

Targeted feedback has been a focus for the school in all year levels. Feedback is given to the students around the goals they have set and improvement strategies are discussed and measured. The school has developed the expectation that teacher to student feedback needs to be timely and descriptive. Learning intentions and success criteria are co-constructed from P–6. This process has evolved over the course of the school improvement cycle. By 2017, the expectation is that

teachers will have all learning intentions visible to students for each lesson throughout the day. This was evident to the panel as students articulated their learning and steps to success.

The school staff has learnt about differentiation through the work of Carol Tomlinson. This has been an important part of teacher planning and practice. Agreed practices have been developed by staff on the differentiated classroom. Differentiation is evident in teacher programs and is an area strong progress has been made in. Differentiation is a point of discussion for teachers at their weekly collaboration session with their team leaders.

The GROWTH coaching model is used by the school leadership team to support their teams with improving classroom practice. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the annual action plan and professional development plans are all emphasised when teachers are developing their goals for a school year. The school also has good structures to support educators and teachers that are new to Giralang Primary School. This supports both teacher induction and ongoing professional growth.

In late 2015, the school leadership team introduced learning walks. These involve negotiating a focus area with a teacher and then a visit to the classroom with that focus in mind. A series of agreed questions are used in each visit. Before leaving the classroom, the teacher is provided with some verbal feedback. Feedback is collated, in writing, and is given to the teacher at the end of the day. Highlights of visits are shared with staff at the next staff meeting.

Teachers and school leaders, as part of the coaching and mentoring program, interrogate the data on a weekly basis. Each team meeting using the discipline dialogue framework, individual students, program progress, adjustment and classroom pedagogy are discussed. Teacher collaboration is an affirming point for the school and gives the staff a sharp focus on student achievement, growth and the planning of future targets.

Reflections

In 2014, the school exceeded the school-based targets for within school matched year 5 students for reading but just missed the target in numeracy. Also in 2014, the school met all targets for year 3 and 5 reading and numeracy set by the ACT Directorate.

In 2015, growth targets for reading and numeracy were not met. Year 5 showed growth in numeracy (88% less than expected growth). Most students showed growth in reading (56% less than expected growth), when compared with students across Australia at the same starting point. A two percent point improvement target was not met for year 5 reading but was exceeded for numeracy.

In 2016, growth targets for reading and numeracy were exceeded. The two percent improvement target was not met for year 5 reading and numeracy. Mean scores for year 3 reading and year 5 numeracy were within the range for target mean scores set by the ACT Directorate. The mean score for year 3 numeracy sat just below the target range.

Strategic Priority 2: Achieve consistency in curriculum implementation and assessment throughout the school

Targets

The target set for this priority focused on the proportion of within school matched students achieving a 'C' grade or greater in all Australian Curriculum subjects.

Key improvement strategies

In support of this priority, the school identified the following key improvement strategies:

- develop a suite of Giralang Primary School curriculum documents, including documents to support assessment, planning and teacher reflection, that align with current curricula
- develop an explicit, coherent and sequenced plan for curriculum delivery, including essential learning
- develop a systematic approach for the collection and analysis of diagnostic, formative and summative data while also maintaining a focus on rapid formative feedback to students.

Achievements

In 2014, the leadership team developed documentation to support teachers, specifically with planning when to assess, what to assess and how to reflect on assessment data. This also assisted teachers with programming and their own teaching practice. In 2014, the school also engaged with neighbouring schools to form the Kaleen Partnership Group. The group developed 'I Can' statements that were aligned to the Australian Curriculum. This work identifies essential learnings for each year group in each curriculum area.

In 2014, the school underwent a rigorous review of assessment tools. The school researched the most effect tools to be used for diagnostic, summative and formative assessment. Taking on both standardised and school-based assessment tools, an assessment schedule was developed and released to staff for implementation. Further revision of the tools occurred in 2015 with the introduction of a suite of ACER PAT online testing tools.

Reflections

In 2014, a 2 to 5 percent point improvement of proportion of C grades was met in the following curriculum areas. The target was met in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 in English and years 1, 5 and 6 for mathematics. All year levels in history achieved the target.

In 2015, a 2 to 5 percent point improvement target was met for years 2, 4 and 5 for English, year 2 maths, years 2, 3, 4 and 5 for science and years 2, 3, 4 and 5 for humanities. Targets were also met for years 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 for health and physical education, years 3, 4 and 5 for the arts, years 4 and 5 for technologies and years 2 and 4 for Japanese.

In 2016, a 2 to 5 percent point improvement target was met for years 1, 3, 5 and 6 for English, years 3, 5 and 6 for maths, years 1, 4 and 5 for science and years 1, 3, 5 and 6 for humanities. Targets were also met for years 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for health and physical education, years 1, 5 and 6 for the arts, years 1 and 5 for technologies and years 3, 5 and 6 for Japanese.

Strategic Priority 3: To provide an educational service for preschool students of a national quality standard

Targets

The targets set for this priority focused on the number of national quality standard areas achieving accreditation to an exceeding level.

Key improvement strategies

In support of this priority, the school identified the following key improvement strategies:

- embed a culture of reflective practice in relation to program delivery
- review the appropriateness of the design of the premises to provide appropriate services
- review, update and embed processes that will allow for supportive relationships with families to be maintained
- develop processes and practices that ensure a commitment to continuous improvement.

Achievements

Preschool educators, as well as their team leaders, have endeavoured to make programs visible in order for families and carers to provide feedback or reflections for the week. As input and engagement increased, the weekly program was sent home to families via email with the option of providing feedback. This has resulted in families being given the opportunity to sit with their child and talk about learning that is occurring, and providing input into the program.

Preschool educators engage with their team leader once a week for collaboration. This allows educators the chance to discuss anecdotal notes, programs, adjustments and ways forward using the Early Years Learning Framework.

Due to an increase in enrolments, the preschool offered three sessions in 2015 and 2016. With two sessions being conducted at the beginning of the week it was important that the appropriateness of the space was reviewed. Particular emphasis was placed on the main learning area, the family room and the establishment of a Koori bush tucker garden. Perception data indicates that upgrades to furniture, the use of learning spaces and the development of gardens were well received by parents and validated through the National Quality Standard process.

The school regularly looks for ways to strengthen home and school partnerships. The school has introduced a welcome barbeque to encourage families to form social networks within the community. Other actions include parent and carer information sessions and the introduction of Google Communities for preschool.

The preschool educators work closely with the leadership team to ensure that the Quality Improvement Plan is front and centre in all that they do. In 2017, the preschool team used the self-evaluation tool to gauge how practices and procedures were progressing within the Quality Improvement Plan. Adjustments are made to planning, and to areas that need regular updating.

Reflections

The preschool unit achieved a rating of exceeding the National Quality Standard in five out of the seven quality areas, giving an overall rating of exceeding the National Quality Standard.

Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen meaningful avenues of communication and partnership with staff, parents and carers to nurture a connected school community.

Targets

The targets set for this priority focused on the proportions of staff, student and parent satisfaction related to valuing opinions and ideas.

Key improvement strategies

In support of this priority, the school identified the following key improvement strategies:

- review, enhance and embed the school's values program
- build a professional learning community that promotes a positive organisational culture
- review and develop a contemporary communication policy
- continue to improve transitions
- identify and engage with potential community partners based on their capacity to contribute to improved student achievement or wellbeing
- embed and communicate an explicit school improvement agenda with the Giralang community.

Achievements

At the beginning of 2014, the school had identified seven values within a program called Step to a Star. In practice, however, some staff reflected the belief that this 2014 program had too many values, the program was tokenistic and didn't have an explicit teaching component. A new values program was developed. It is focused on three values of caring, courtesy and cooperation; is explicitly taught; and incorporates social and emotional learning from the Australian Curriculum, Friendly Schools Plus and KidsMatter. Social and emotional learning is now taught once a week, by the classroom teacher and with buddies the following week. Social and emotional learning is being embedded in all classrooms across the school.

A communication policy was developed in 2016. This was in response to increased enrolments and satisfaction surveys and was ratified by the school board.

A wide range of programs has been put in place to facilitate smooth transition points from preschool to kindergarten and year 6 to 7. These programs have been documented to ensure a transparent and inclusive timeline of events. Strong collaboration with University of Canberra High School Kaleen has ensured high visibility of leadership teams across both sites.

A number of community organisations have engaged with the school over the past four years. The Rats of Tobruk, University of Canberra, Australian National University, The National Arboretum, Coles Kaleen, Tennis ACT, Information Technology Educators ACT (InTEACT), GATEWAYs gifted and talented education program, the da Vinci Decathlon and the Magpies Club have all had significant roles within the school and were chosen based on their capacity to contribute to improved student outcomes or wellbeing.

The annual action plan is presented to all key stakeholders. Regular reports and updates are presented to the school board and the Parents and Citizens committee. The school improvement agenda is revisited on regular intervals at staff and team meetings.

Reflections

In 2014, all targets were met in relation to the proportion of parents' satisfaction with the exception of the item, 'community partnerships valued and maintained'. All teacher targets were also met.

In 2015, in relation to parent satisfaction, all targets were met with the exception of the item, 'overall I am satisfied with my child's education at this school'. There was strong growth in 2015 for the item 'the school takes parents' opinions seriously'. Parent voice has increased each year of the plan. Both the staff and student targets were met. A significant result for the school in 2015 was the 44 percent point increase for the item 'student behaviour is well managed at the school'. This increased from 22 percent in 2014 to 66 percent in 2015.

In 2016, in relation to parent satisfaction, all targets were met with the exception of the item, 'I am satisfied this school has high expectations in all that it does'. There was significant growth in the items, 'teachers expect my child to do their best', 'my child feels safe at this school' and 'the school looks for ways to improve'. In relation to staff satisfaction all targets were met. All but two satisfaction items had 100 percent staff satisfaction. No targets were met for student satisfaction in 2016. The panel does note that 91 percent of students indicated that 'they like being at school' and 94 percent of students looked at ways they could improve.

Evidence cited

- Giralang Primary School Summative Report
- Annual School Board Reports 2013–16
- School Satisfaction Survey data 2013–16
- School Climate Survey data 2016
- PIPs data 2013–16
- NAPLAN data 2013–16
- My School website.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)

DOMAIN 1: An explicit improvement agenda

- *The school has developed an agenda for improvement in partnership with parents and the community and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings, school newsletters, parent–teacher meetings and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*
- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from research evidence, international experience and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*
- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student’s success, and staff of the school tell stories of significant student improvement.*

Comments and findings

- The Strategic Plan 2014–17 outlines four strategic priorities: improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy; achieve consistency in curriculum implementation and assessment throughout the school; provide an educational service for preschool students of a national quality standard; and strengthen meaningful avenues of communication and partnerships with staff, parents and carers to nurture a connected school community. These priorities remained consistent throughout the planning period. Targets were introduced in 2014. Targets and strategies, however, have changed over time. A focused agenda with targets and timelines is not apparent in the planning documents. The planned strategies over the four years are, in general, having an effect on student outcomes and staff are able to describe examples of individual student progress.
- The leadership team conducts a detailed analysis of student performance over the life of the plan through Excel data sheets, board reports, staff collaboration meetings and whole-staff meetings.
- Staff and board members are able to talk about the strategic agenda of the school. However, the agenda is not well understood by parent groups and students.
- School leadership uses research evidence in developing the evolving strategic agenda. In particular, staff have drawn on the University of Canberra, John Hattie, Kath Murdoch Consultancy, the University of Melbourne, Macquarrie University, ACER, Australian National University and numerous research papers in selecting effective improvement strategies.

DOMAIN 2: Analysis and discussion of data

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders view reliable and timely student data as essential to their effective leadership of the school. 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. The school can illustrate through case studies, meeting minutes and project plans how data have been used to identify priorities, take action and monitor progress.*

Comments and findings

- Specified executive team members have responsibility for analysing standardised/diagnostic academic testing data, welfare data and social-emotional goals through Individual Learning Plans. This analysis over time has led to specific actions.
- Staff members have access to a whole-school Excel spreadsheet and data sheets outlining individual student attainment, generated by standardised testing. In particular, the school uses Bee Spelling, PM (Progress with Meaning) Benchmarking, Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA), Middle Years Mental Computation (MYMC), PAT Reading, Mathematics, Science and Spelling, and ACER General Ability Tests (AGAT). Regular team collaboration meetings combine standardised testing/diagnostic data and class teacher data to inform classroom planning and the establishment of SMART goals.
- Meeting minutes document that whole-school data, including NAPLAN, national school survey data and PIPS, and are discussed at staff meetings to determine school level performance and areas for improvement each year. National school survey data is driving staff and parent communication strategies and surveys demonstrate communication has improved over the life of the plan.
- Staff have received training on analysing data using the disciplined dialogue approach and a member of the executive is responsible for providing training to new staff as they begin at the school.
- The school has a data plan; however, moderated teacher formative and summative assessment is not a predominant feature of the plan. Leadership is looking to raise staff awareness of the richness of classroom data.
- The school is expecting that the soon to be released ACT Directorate information system will assist in school and classroom data analysis in the future.

DOMAIN 3: A culture that promotes learning

- *High levels of trust are apparent across the school community*
- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems, and behaviour management takes up very little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully. 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.*
- *Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. There are agreed guidelines on such matters as greeting visitors, taking messages, and responding to queries promptly and respectfully.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*

Comments and findings

- Behaviour data demonstrates that there are only minor behavioural issues beyond those students with special needs.
- Survey data from parents, students and teachers rate the school very high on the items, 'teachers expect my child to do their best', 'my child feels safe at this school', and 'school looks for ways to improve'. This was verified by teacher, parent and student interviews.
- Class visits reveal high levels of student engagement across the school.
- Parents, in particular, report that the school is now a happy, safe, supportive, positive and inclusive school. Parents believe that there is a high level of trust in the school and this is reflected in enrolment patterns.
- Students reinforce teacher comments that the school values of cooperation, courtesy and caring are embedded in the language used in classroom interactions.
- Guidelines for staff–parent interactions are stated in the staff handbook.
- Google Communities are used to support the newsletter to communicate the learning to parents and are widely praised.
- Conversations reveal that clearer, regular communications are required about student learning intentions, individual learning goals, student achievement and how parents can assist learning.
- Teachers report that the use of mindfulness strategies is having a positive effect on students.
- Parents report that information sessions on homework, Google Apps, reading, writing, numeracy, cyber safety, mental computations and so on are very useful.

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

- Student learning needs are identified through multiple data sources and where needed, Individual Learning Plans are constructed and resourced.
- A learning support centre is resourced in a fully integrated model.
- Three intervention teachers and an English as an Additional Language or Dialect specialist support students with special needs.
- The leadership group has developed a strategic approach to appointing, training and deploying both teachers and learning support assistants to meet student needs.
- Staff and students say there is sufficient technology within the school.
- There is strategic thinking from the school's executive and board about how both internal and external spaces in the school are used. Further work is in progress, particularly with the growth in student population. Teachers have raised the potential to use the open learning design to work more as collaborative teams.
- Classroom furniture has been revitalised and further improvements are planned.
- Common release time is provided to teachers to support collaborative planning.
- Teachers feel supported in meeting the needs of individual students.

DOMAIN 5: An expert teaching team

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.*
- *The school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching. Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *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.*

Comments and findings

- The school has refined its whole-school meetings: administrative matters are now communicated in other ways, allowing the meetings to focus on professional learning. A schedule of professional learning activities is outlined.
- Executive staff provide ongoing feedback to teachers through learning walks. Opportunities to observe practice in other classrooms is facilitated by negotiated 'vacation' visits. Exemplary classroom practice is celebrated at whole-school staff meetings. All teachers report that they enjoy this professional experience.
- During the life of the plan, leadership has had a strong development agenda around developing an expert teaching team. Staff surveys over the period demonstrate a significant increase in staff collaboration and focus. There is no documented professional learning plan but aspects of the planning process were evident.
- New educators feel well supported in their personal growth by mentors and the executive team.
- There is an extensive induction process for staff new to the school.
- Permanent teachers participate in a professional development plan that assists them to improve their practice.
- The process for teacher collaboration meetings, to discuss student needs as a team, is in a formative stage and appreciated by all staff, although some teachers note a need to fine-tune these meetings.
- Executive staff model classroom practices to assist teacher development.
- Coaching is a relatively new improvement strategy in the school. There are opportunities to broaden coaching, by all and for all staff, to embed improved classroom practices.
- Most teachers take on leadership roles across the school from individual learning strategies, such as organising Book Week, to larger whole-school strategies such as KidsMatter.

DOMAIN 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers, and that the curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed, assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported. Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the range of students within each year level as well as those with disabilities and other particular needs.*
- *The school has a plan for curriculum delivery that includes 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. Literacy tends to be seen as the responsibility of English teachers, and numeracy as the responsibility of mathematics teachers.*

Comments and findings

- Agreed practices are outlined for programming, delivery of curriculum in many curriculum areas, homework, assessment and reporting. While the school does not have a documented whole-school curriculum delivery plan, the leadership group has been focused on curriculum and these agreed practices will inform the planning process.
- Year planners for each year group outline major concepts. A more detailed term overview is then the source for unit plans that has direct connections to the Australian Curriculum.
- For curriculum assurance, vertical and horizontal curriculum planning is scheduled but not yet in place.
- Incorporation of general capabilities or cross-curriculum priorities is not explicitly planned across the curriculum.
- Curriculum models, such as inquiry, are being trialled at the school in a few classrooms; however, a research-based whole-school direction is yet to be determined.
- Parents have expressed a need for a discussion on curriculum delivery through multi-aged grouping (split classes).
- The Science curriculum is linked to Primary Connections and has a scope and sequence statement. Design and Technology and Digital Technology curricula are delivered by a specialist teacher.
- Internal moderation on writing was noted in each team.
- The school is in the process of adopting the Australian Curriculum achievement standards as a focus for curriculum delivery. Teachers who have training in this area are optimistic that this focus will simplify curriculum planning, delivery and assessment.

DOMAIN 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

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

Comments and findings

- Gifted and talented opportunities are provided by the school through International Competitions and Assessments for Schools, the Mathematics Challenge for Young Australians, the da Vinci Decathlon and purposeful intervention by the executive team.
- There is a student support referral process for students with special educational needs. Individual Learning Plans and Personalised Learning Plans are used to specifically plan for students with identified needs and these are monitored regularly.
- Carol Tomlinson has provided staff professional learning on differentiation. This has been reinforced at whole-staff meetings and collaboration meetings. While differentiation does occur in the classroom, teachers also identify this as an area for improvement.
- Report cards, portfolios and Google Communities provide parents with student progress and ways for parents to assist in the learning process.
- Individual learning goals for reading, writing and mathematics are conferenced in every classroom with regular review processes.
- Four teachers recently attended a conference on differentiation using achievement standards. They were keen to present at a planned whole-staff meeting and saw that achievement standards will facilitate improved student differentiation at the school.

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, although the principal and other senior leaders may not themselves have clear positions on the kinds of teaching they wish to see occurring across the school.*
- *There is a particular focus on improved teaching methods in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and professional learning activities are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies in these areas.*
- *Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, high expectations of every student's learning, explicit teaching of skills and content, individualised attention as required, and timely feedback to guide student action are key elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

Comments and findings

- Staff workshops are held each week to discuss staff professional practice. Discussions predominantly use internal staff expertise but at times external speakers were employed.
- The Literacy Block by Read 4 Success has been a key improvement strategy over the last few years.
- There is a print-rich environment across the school.
- Further work in inquiry learning is planned for early in 2018. This workshop and a current trial in the school will inform school direction on this curriculum model and underlying pedagogical practices.
- The principal has attended learning walks in nearby primary schools to share professional practices. Findings have been discussed at staff meetings.
- The Directorate initiatives of Principals as Literacy Leaders in 2015 and Principals as numeracy Leaders in 2017 are being implemented in the school.
- Evidenced-based strategies derived from visible learning professional development in late 2016 are being implemented at the school. Learning intentions are discussed with students and success criteria are displayed in various ways.
- The school has a filtering process for all new initiatives through executive and whole-staff discussion.
- The school has a research based pedagogical framework. The application of the framework would be enhanced by a clear statement on agreed common teaching and learning strategies. This will support professional feedback and learning in the school.

DOMAIN 9: School-community partnerships

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.*
- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions, local businesses and/or community organisations. All partners have a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, the purposes of the partnership and clear objectives have been set, expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students.*
- *Attention has been given to communication and to the sharing of experiences within the partnership; however, there may be no formal plan for reviewing the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.*
- *There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended. However, there may be limited evidence of improved student outcomes as a result of partnership activities – possibly because there has been insufficient time for them to demonstrate an effect.*

Comments and findings

- Trainee teacher mathematics clinics at the University of Canberra provide students with additional learning opportunities in mathematics in years 2, 3 and 4.
- The Australian National University Centre for Photosynthesis works to develop student science outcomes.
- The Department of Health Fresh Tastes program is focused on student understanding in nutrition.
- Red Cross volunteers run the Good Start Breakfast Club in the school.
- The school has fostered a relationship with the Rats of Tobruk to reinforce history and school values.
- While all these partnerships lack documented partnership agreements, there is common understanding on how these partnerships will benefit students and this has been communicated via newsletters. The partnerships do not have any formal plan for review.
- While there are some strategic alliances, representatives from the school board believe there is an opportunity to further proactively seek wider community partnership to improve student outcomes.
- Transition programs are in place for home to pre-primary, pre-primary to kindergarten and year 6 to year 7. Parents with secondary school-aged children reported that the transition from primary to secondary was very effective.

National Safe Schools Framework: School Audit Tool

The staff team worked through the National Safe Schools audit in 2017. The reflections by staff were used by the leadership team to identify areas of strength and areas of development. Giralang Primary School was predominately 'always true' in areas of the tool. The three areas that had a percentage of 'mostly true' were:

- a supportive and connected school culture
- policies and procedures
- a focus on student wellbeing and student ownership.

Section E: Affirmations, commendations and recommendations

Affirmations

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

- Common release time has been provided to teachers to support collaborative planning. Collaboration meetings have allowed each team to meet regularly, to analyse class teacher data, in triangulation of standardised testing/diagnostic data. This informs classroom planning and establishes SMART goals to measure student growth.
- The school's communication strategy provides information to parents about learning that is occurring daily.
- The school's evolving strategy on student mindfulness is building student belief in their capacity to understand their own learning and how that relates to the world around them.
- The implementation of the KidsMatter program has had significant impact on staff culture, the physical environment and parent communications.
- Staff are refining their use of flexible learning spaces to better address the needs of individual learners.
- The school has processes to identify and respond to student needs through the allocation of learning support assistants to support the learning of all students.

Commendations

Giralang Primary School is commended for the following.

- The school improvement agenda is grounded by evidence elicited from research.
- There is a strong culture of mutual trust. Parents, in particular, believe that the school has become a happy, safe, supportive, positive and inclusive school.
- The school values of cooperation, courtesy and caring are embedded in all interactions between staff, parents and students.
- The school uses research to create an attractive, innovative and stimulating physical learning environment that supports and encourages learning.
- There is a print-rich environment across the school, which provides students a reference for learning.
- The school has enhanced a partnership with the Rats of Tobruk to provide deep learning opportunities for students and to reinforce the school values.

Recommendations

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

- Development and implementation of the new five-year strategic plan for the school should be undertaken within the context of the school vision; be expressed in terms of specific improvements sought in student performance; be aligned with national and/or system-wide improvement priorities; and include clear targets with accompanying timelines that are rigorously actioned.
- The school-home communication strategy could be broadened to provide information about where students are at with their learning and what parents might do to support their children's further learning.
- Continuing to use the open learning design may assist all students (including high-achieving students) to be appropriately engaged, challenged and extended.
- The school should continue to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching.
- Developing a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery will ensure consistent teaching and learning expectations and clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels.
- Staff should continue to work at understanding where students are at in their learning process, including current skills and knowledge and how they progress at different rates, to determine starting points for teaching.
- An explicit agreed statement on the kinds of teaching that are to be used across the school would support professional feedback and learning in the school
- The school should continue to actively seek ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with community organisations.
- The development of a professional learning plan would support the growth of all staff.

Section F: Record of school review process

The following people were members of the External Review Panel for Giralang Primary School conducted on 29–31 August 2017.

Name: Ron Bamford External Review Panel – Chair

Name: Greg Terrell External Review Panel – Principal Member
Bonython Primary School

I, Ron Bamford, 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: 09/11/2017

I, Belinda Love, as Principal of Giralang Primary School accept this Review Report on behalf of the school community.

Signature: 

Date: 09/11/2017