



ACT
Government

Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2013

for

MARIBYRNONG PRIMARY SCHOOL



Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for **Maribyrnong Primary School** conducted on August 20th and August 21st 2013.

Name: Louise Owens

School: North Ainslie Primary School

Name: Jason Holmes

School: Harrison School

Name: Matthew Garton

School: St. Benedict's Primary School

As chair of the panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external validation process.

Name: **Louise Owens**

Signature: _____



Date: _____

14/10/2013

As principal of **Maribyrnong Primary School** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: **Jennifer Howard**

Signature: _____



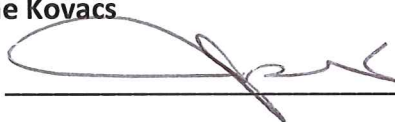
Date: _____

10.10.2013

As co-director of Quality Learning Australia, external validators for the conduct of validation process in ACT public schools, I concur that the panel acted within the guidelines set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

Name: **Jane Kovacs**

Signature: _____



Date: _____

14/10/2013

Section A: School context

Maribyrnong Primary School is a preschool to year six school situated in northern Canberra with an average enrolment of 245 students over the duration of the school's most recent four year strategic plan. The school is culturally diverse, drawing enrolments primarily from Kaleen and Bruce. The core values of the school are Inclusivity, Respect, Collaboration, Innovation, Communication, Relevance and Relationships. The school's vision statement is 'to be recognised as a leader in educational excellence through sharing the responsibility for quality education and lifelong learning'. The school endeavours to achieve this vision by providing quality education in a safe, supportive and positive learning environment and working in close partnership with the wider community.

The school environment is open plan, allowing for flexible working spaces, with interactive whiteboards and information technology in every teaching area. Every child's talents are fostered and nurtured through the implementation of a wide variety of programs (including science, art and dance) and range of pedagogical practices. The school operates a Learning Support Unit with eight students and, since February 2012, has also taken on the operation of an Early Childhood Intervention Unit (ECIU). It also provides mainstream inclusion support for ten students with special needs.

In 2013 the school experienced an increase of 19 enrolments from previous years, attributed to the introduction of the ECIU and the suburb of Bruce being added to the Priority Placement Area. In 2013, the number of students who identified as having English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) also increased to 62, including a number of international fee paying students and two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. There has been a moderate incline in the school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value from 1095 to 1123, indicating families in the Maribyrnong school community have a high capacity to support their children's learning.

Over the last two years Maribyrnong's executive team has changed dramatically, acquiring a new principal, deputy principal, school executive officer and business manager. The new leadership team has worked consistently to build trust and develop strong community partnerships since this change. Similarly there have been changes to the staff profile with a number of new educators and additional learning support staff joining the school. This has required a focus on targeted coaching and mentoring programs. Professional development has been a growth area, with the number of teaching staff with postgraduate qualifications increasing from 5 percent to 20 percent.

Several capital works projects have been undertaken at the school since 2008, resulting in the introduction of sustainable practices and the upgrade or refurbishment of most areas within the physical environment to enhance quality learning across the curriculum. The school has actively engaged the community in each of these projects. Future investments will be targeted towards upgrading the preschool environment. The school has experienced some unexpected financial challenges in recent years but has overcome these through effective budgeting and by accessing a number of grants to continue planned initiatives, including a grant for writing Australian Curriculum units of work and two grants through disability education to enhance the gross motor equipment available for all students and the purchase of five iPads to support an early bird reading program through technology.

Section B: School performance

The panel congratulates Maribyrnong Primary School on its performance over the past four years. The school has made some outstanding achievements across a number of areas of the curriculum. The panel was impressed by the deliberate and well considered actions the school has taken as a learning community to ensure that it is on track to consistently achieve excellence in all areas of the curriculum.

The panel was also impressed by the school's stakeholder perception data which demonstrates consistently high satisfaction rates amongst all three groups: parents and carers, staff and students. Satisfaction rates for the former two groups have remained significantly higher than the ACT mean since 2009.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data, when triangulated with additional school based data, demonstrates a clear upwards trend in all areas of literacy at Maribyrnong. The school's greatest performance results have been consistently demonstrated in reading. Year three students in 2012 performed particularly well in NAPLAN reading assessments, achieving 22 points above the ACT average mean score. Year five students performed even more remarkably, achieving 23.5 points above. School based "PM Benchmark" and "Probe" assessment data strongly supports these results, indicating that the percentage of students reading at or above grade level has increased significantly since 2010. Seventy five percent of year six students were assessed as at or above grade level for reading in 2012 as opposed to 52 percent in 2011. Similarly 83 percent of kindergarten students were assessed as at or above grade level (66 percent in 2010). Furthermore, Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment results indicate that kindergarten students at Maribyrnong have consistently made greater progress in reading than other students across the ACT over the past four years.

Changes in the NAPLAN writing task in 2011 make comparison difficult in this area. However the school should be congratulated on the following successes in 2012: year five students performed 12 points above the ACT average mean score for writing; year three students performed 18 points above the ACT mean score for spelling; and both years three and five achieved results above the ACT mean score for grammar and punctuation. The panel concurs with the school that writing and spelling remain areas of future focus and that it's "challenge now is to capitalise on and stabilise improvements, regardless of cohort ability, to ensure all students achieve success" (*Maribyrnong Summative Evaluation Report 2013*).

Maribyrnong Primary School has also experienced success in students' numeracy outcomes. The panel noted, when examining NAPLAN data, that year three performance in mathematics in 2012 was 11 points above the ACT mean score, and year five performance has been consistently higher than the ACT mean score since 2009. Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment results indicate that kindergarten students at Maribyrnong have consistently made similar progress in mathematics when compared with other students across the ACT over the past four years. In 2012 the school achieved an outstanding result, with every kindergarten student making at or above expected progress in mathematics.

Each year the school staff complete the school self-evaluation matrix as part of the annual review process. Staff input is used to rate how the school is performing within each domain of school improvement. Feedback has become more informed as staff experience in relation to accountability and transparency processes have improved. Areas for improvement continue to be student outcomes with a particular focus on quality school wide pedagogical practice,

engaging students to take responsibility for their own learning, encouraging students to have a say in school governance and personalised and differentiated learning.

Evidence cited and its validation

- PIPS Data 2009-2012
- NAPLAN Data Detailed Analysis 2009 – 2012
- NAPLAN Data Mean Scores Overview 2009 – 2012
- School Satisfaction Data 2009 – 2012
- Enrolment Data 2008 – 2013
- School Self Evaluation Matrix 2010, 2011, 2012
- Staff Handbook 2013
- Maribyrnong Primary School Student Management Policy.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

School improvement at Maribyrnong is underpinned by the “Plan Do Study Act” action research cycle. Improvement theories have been implemented over the past four years to address the School Plan, with identified target areas being drawn from the 2008 external validation process. In 2010 the School Plan was reviewed in line with changes in Directorate and national directions. Revised priorities were set for the period of 2010 to 2013.

The school’s priority areas since 2010 have been to improve student literacy outcomes by achieving greater consistency in the teaching and assessment of writing, spelling and reading; to establish a French language program for years three to six; to align school based curriculum with the Australian Curriculum; to develop a tracking system for academic and social data with increased reliability to inform practice and policy; to strengthen school network relations through the implementation of the network strategic plan; to improve opportunities for students to practice leadership qualities; and to amalgamate the preschool Parents Association and the school Parents and Citizens (P&C) committee. Additionally, in 2012, two preschool priorities were added in line with the National Quality Standards to address Quality Area One (*Educational Program and Practice*) and Quality Area Two (*Health and Safety and Physical Environment*).

The validation panel was impressed by Maribyrnong’s efforts to facilitate the shared ownership of school improvement by the school community. *Pedagogy Circles* have been a powerful innovation at Maribyrnong, becoming the school’s key enabler of teacher collaboration to drive improved practice across all curriculum areas. Each *Pedagogy Circle* collects and analyses whole school data, providing feedback to all stakeholders and then suggesting changes to practice based on research and results. Their work informs the writing of the Annual School Board Report and the operational priorities for the following year.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Maribyrnong Primary School Plan 2009 – 2012
- Maribyrnong Primary School Plan 2010 – 2013

- Annual School Board Reports 2009 - 2012
- Annual Operating Plan.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 2: Improvement actions

Priority Area 1

Greater consistency in the teaching and assessment of writing

Maribyrnong Primary School's first priority was to improve the writing outcomes for all students in the school, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The school identified seven targets for improvement.

The validation panel is of the opinion that Maribyrnong Primary School achieved a considerable amount of positive change during the life of the most recent strategic plan. A writing pedagogy circle was established in 2011 to develop an action plan which would support the achievement of this first priority. The plan involved ensuring all teachers had access to relevant professional development, targeted coaching and appropriate resources to ensure consistency of teaching and learning programs and assessment regimes. The outcome for teachers has been the development of a common language and consistent teaching and assessment practices across the school. Teaching staff have attended professional learning in the Australian Curriculum and "Writer's Notebook", and engaged in moderation tasks with counterpart schools in the Belconnen Network. Clear guidelines have been established by the Pedagogy Circle to ensure that teaching and assessment practices continue to be consistently implemented. Growth in student performance in the eight social writing purposes is regularly assessed, using the Belconnen Criterion Referenced Tool (CRT). Assessment information is used to monitor student progress and the effectiveness of the teaching programs.

Teachers indicate that they have observed an increase in student engagement as well as in both the quality and quantity of written work. NAPLAN writing results suggest that the school has some way to go before the full impact of its programs can be clearly demonstrated. Growth is most noticeable in the female student cohorts, particularly when analysing the results for grammar and punctuation, where year three girls scored significantly higher than for the Territory (+36.8 points) and year five girls scored 15.1 points higher. In 2012 year five boys also scored 22 points higher than the ACT mean score. The validation panel sighted a range of other quantitative data which indicates that student writing outcomes have improved from 2011, with an additional 2 percent of all students achieving at or above grade level in school based assessments at the end of 2012. The school met its target of more than 85 percent of students scoring at or above grade level in years four and six. Growth was clearly evident in the year one cohort, with an increase of 17 percent of students performing at or above grade level in comparison to their achievement in kindergarten, and 32 percent more year four students performing at or above grade level than in year three. Current CRT assessment data also demonstrates that all students have improved in both the authorial and sectorial aspects of writing in 2013.

This remains a challenge for the future: to ensure that the great success which has been observed in some student cohorts at Maribyrnong is transferred to every classroom for improved student outcomes for all students.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Emerging Writers Tool 2013
- Criterion Reference Tools for: Writing to Describe; Writing to Entertain – Poetry, Prose; Writing to Explain; Writing to Inquire; Writing to Instruct; Writing to Persuade; Writing to Recount; Writing to Socialise
- CRTs with highlighted achievement standards
- Writing to Inquire Pre Assessment Results from year 1/2 Class
- Writing to Inquire Lesson Plan matched to CRT for year 1/2 Class
- CRT Tracking Sheet End Term 1 Example year 1/2 Class
- Annual School Board Reports 2009 - 2012
- Interviews (Pedagogy Circle Chairs).

Priority Area 2

Greater consistency in the teaching and assessment of spelling across the school

Maribyrnong Primary School's second priority was to improve the spelling outcomes for all students in the school, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The school identified seven targets for improvement.

To develop greater consistency in the teaching and learning of spelling, the school has implemented the "BEE Spelling" program, collaboratively developing shared understandings and processes which are now clearly documented in a school guide. The guide outlines the planning, explicit teaching, assessment and reporting practices from kindergarten to year six. Initial implementation was led by a school coordinator and the move to a pedagogy circle to monitor student achievement and sustain consistent practices, since 2011, has assisted the program to become well embedded in each classroom. The program implementation has been further supported by professional development and the alignment between professional pathways goals and the priority. In 2013 the school has utilised collegial support strategies such as coaching and lesson observation to help refine the quality of instruction in the classroom. All teachers at Maribyrnong now consistently deliver an explicit school designed spelling program, track and monitor student progress and apply targeted intervention and extension as required.

Teacher observations indicate that students have developed a wider repertoire of strategies and more confidence with spelling. School based data sets, including "BEE Spelling" Inventory results and end of year report data, support these observations, showing an improvement for most students. Tracking of student achievement in "BEE Spelling" occurs regularly. It provides several years of data enabling the school to monitor its progress towards the target of 95 percent of students annually achieving three points of growth on their Spelling Inventories. The data to date shows that the school is beginning to achieve this target more often each year with an increasing number of students reaching the highest level in year six. In 2012 the school met its target in kindergarten (95 percent), year one (100 percent) and year two (96 percent).

In comparing school based data with NAPLAN results, more data is required to confirm the current upward trend of achievement in spelling. The high results in the year three 2012 NAPLAN results would suggest that the BEE Spelling program is beginning to have a positive long term effect on student achievement. It is expected that future NAPLAN results will confirm this.

Evidence cited and its validation

- BEE Spelling Super Inventories 2013 A – D
- BEE Spelling Guide
- BEE Spelling Inventory (completed sample)
- Annual School Board Reports 2009 – 2012
- Annual Operating Plans 2010 – 2012
- Photographs and displays of IWB and other BEE Spelling resources
- BEE Spelling Implementation Map
- Teacher Feedback for BEE Spelling Lesson Observation
- Interview with Spelling Pedagogy Circle Chair.

Priority Area 3

Greater consistency in the teaching and assessment of reading across the school

Maribyrnong Primary School's third priority was to improve the reading outcomes for all students in the school, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

To develop greater consistency of practice the school has created a guide explaining how to teach reading at Maribyrnong. The guide includes shared understandings and agreed processes, including the use of guided, reciprocal and cooperative reading across the school. In 2011, a reading pedagogy circle was established to source assessment tools and a range of guided reading materials suitable to support all abilities. The "PROBE" assessment tool was purchased to support the assessment of students in middle and upper primary and supplement the "PM Benchmark" process. The information obtained from both assessment tools supports targeted intervention and appropriate grouping of students in reading programs. Additional professional development, including peer mentoring and coaching supports teacher practice. This has led to greater consistency across the school with 100 percent of staff indicating that they use the reading guide and associated programs in their classrooms. Teacher observations also indicate greater student engagement in reading and increased understanding of literal and inferential ideas within texts.

One of the school's reading targets was to achieve 85 percent of students working at or above grade level. The panel noted that there has been a steady upwards trend towards meeting this target since 2010, evidenced in "PM Benchmark" and "PROBE" assessment data. Strong results were achieved in 2012 in years one and four, where student performance met the school's target of 85 percent, with kindergarten and year six close behind (83 percent).

NAPLAN and PIPS results have provided a triangulation of data which supports the panel's conclusion that there has been continuous and substantial improvement in student reading outcomes at Maribyrnong. In 2012 Maribyrnong met the school's NAPLAN targets, exceeding the Territory mean score for both boys and girls by 23.6 points in year three and 23.5 points in year five. The 2012 PIPS results also revealed that 86 percent of kindergarten students made at or above expected progress in reading.

These results indicate that the current school programs and practices are effectively improving student outcomes in reading and should be sustained, with continued close monitoring of

student performance and teacher practice to ensure consistency and quality instruction within each classroom.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Reading Guide
- Reading data 2012 (Kindergarten)
- Probe Reading data 2012 years five and six
- Annual School Board Reports 2009 - 2012
- Lesson Feedback Sample (Guided Reading)
- PIPS Data 2009-2012
- Panel Lesson Observation (Reciprocal Reading Extension Class).

Priority Area 4

The establishment of a French language program for students in year three to six

The outcome to establish a French language program aligned to the ACT Curriculum scope and sequence for French has been achieved during this improvement cycle. The evidence shows that the implementation process has been consultative of and supported by parents and teachers.

Implementation has involved:

- years three to six in one hour of French language instruction per week (45 minutes provided by a teacher of French and 15 minutes reinforcement by the classroom teacher)
- kindergarten to year two receiving 45 minutes of French language instruction each week; and
- the introduction of the AIM immersion program.

Evidence shows that this has been sustained since 2010. Student achievement evidence demonstrates that, since implementation of the program, up to 95 percent of students have been able to speak French at grade level each year, well surpassing the target of 60 percent.

The school's target of 100 percent of year three to six teachers being confident to consolidate and reinforce the French program is yet to be achieved and the school recognises that this is due to the skills of the students now surpassing that of the classroom teacher. The initial strategies identified to develop classroom teachers' capacity to support the program, including the provision of classroom sets of resources and weekly staff discussions, supported teacher confidence in early implementation and the school is currently exploring alternative support mechanisms.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Annual Operating Plans 2010 & 2011 (highlighting implementation process)
- Second Language Parent Survey results 2010
- Staff survey template 2010
- Release Timetable term four 2012
- Sample Student Report Semester One, 2013.

Priority Area 5

Alignment of school based curriculum with the Australian Curriculum including embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives across the curriculum

This priority area was identified in 2011 for action as a part of the cycle of improvement. Evidence shows that the school has made significant progress towards achieving their intended outcome to embed the Australian Curriculum across all teaching and learning.

School Annual Operating Plans identify that this began with the provision of opportunities and support for teaching staff to become familiar with and incorporate the Australian Curriculum in English. This was developed further through the school's celebrated work as a Lead School in English and the production of several English units of work reviewed by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Directorate. Evidence also shows that the Australian Curriculum in English can be found embedded in assessment tools matched to the achievement standards and in the student reports to parents. The panel validates that the school has achieved its target for teaching programs to reflect the Australian Curriculum in English.

It is evident that, during 2013, the implementation of the Australian Curriculum (AC) has continued to extend beyond English into mathematics. The development of a mathematics assessment tool based on the AC has assisted in matching identified student need to content delivered. The school and the panel have identified the need to continue to refine this tool to provide data which will inform the teaching programs.

The school has a long history of developing engaging integrated units of inquiry. Staff have worked collaboratively to re-shape the previously existing units of inquiry around four curriculum organisers that connect the content of the AC in history, science, geography (draft) and arts (draft) into meaningful programs of work. The school and the panel both acknowledge that this is a work in progress as additional areas of the AC are released. The school has been inspired by the thorough planning documentation developed as a Lead School in English to create similar documentation for integrated inquiry units. This documentation incorporates a backward design planning process that aligns the learning intentions, curriculum content, assessment and teaching and learning activities.

Whilst the Australian Science Curriculum is embedded in the integrated units of inquiry, the science specialist primarily utilises the Primary Connections Science program to ensure the delivery of all essential curriculum content. The school has moved towards achieving its target of ensuring that teacher programs reflect the school curriculum documents in science. The resourcing of science, especially through the employment of a specialist science teacher, has had a significant impact on the achievements of students, evidenced in their successful placing and awards in several local and national competitions. Furthermore the school's specialist science teacher has been recognised in several ways, winning ACT Science Teacher of the Year in 2012 and being shortlisted for Australian Science Teacher of the Year. She has also been shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Science Teacher of the Year Award in 2013 and the school is eagerly awaiting the results.

The school's achievements are to be celebrated for this priority. The panel recommends continuing to document the alignment of school based curriculum with the Australian Curriculum.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Sample student report, Semester 1, 2013
- School Plan 2010 – 2013
- Annual Operating Plan 2011
- Interviews with teachers and students
- Integrated unit plans in year 3/4
- Visual presentations in the school.

Priority Area 6

The development of a tracking system for academic and social data

The expected outcome to improve the tracking of student academic progress has been achieved with great success at Maribyrnong. Targets were set for 2013 as follows: that 100 percent of teaching staff would use a school based data tracking tool to monitor student progress in writing, spelling, reading and bullying; and that all reviews of school policies and procedures would be informed by data.

The school's first action was to develop a Maribyrnong Assessment Schedule detailing when and what data was to be collected at the whole school level so as to facilitate the comparison of consistent data sets over time. GradeXpert was introduced in 2011. This generated a basis for rigorous discussions around student achievement and evaluation of programs. In 2012 Maribyrnong moved to a school developed tracking system to readily enable staff access to key information. Team meetings are used throughout the term to enter student achievement data and moderate and review results. Every teacher participates in a pedagogy circle, analysing the data in one of the targeted areas (spelling, reading, writing, and mathematics) and reporting the results back to the school. This in turn drives professional conversations and the next step in the improvement process. It is clear to the validation panel that the assessment schedule and tracking system are used consistently by all teachers to record and monitor student's academic progress in spelling, reading, writing, and mathematics. It is also evident that the teachers are committed to the formative and summative use of appropriate and useful assessment data to inform programs and design student interventions.

Maribyrnong recognises that the data it has collected over time has been informative at both the whole school level for the purposes of tracking performance and completing accountability requirements. It has also impacted on policies, procedures and classroom practices. The ongoing challenge will be to ensure that the data is also used to support students' personal learning goals.

To date the tracking system has not been extended to record social data, although the school does monitor student behaviour and engagement through other means, for example the "Rest and Reflection Room" records and classroom behaviour books. The school intends streamlining the social data tracking process in the future.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Maribyrnong Primary School Assessment Schedule
- "BEE Spelling" Tracking Sheets
- CRT Writing to Persuade year six tracking two

- Reading data 2012 (kindergarten)
- “Probe” reading data 2012 years five and six
- Maths tracking tool
- Vacation Template
- Student Wellbeing Survey
- Analysis of 2011 Student Wellbeing Surveys
- Team Meeting Schedule
- Sample class timetable with ability groups
- Reflection Room records
- Classroom behaviour records.

Priority Area 7

To strengthen network relations through the implementation of the network strategic plan and implementation of the Quality Teaching model

The intended outcomes for this priority focused on increasing instructional leadership capacity and increasing communication and collaboration throughout Belconnen network schools to share expertise and practices. Targets for these outcomes included developing a network culture of peer coaching, providing and accessing network professional learning and improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes identified by individual schools.

Maribyrnong has presented largely qualitative data as evidence to support their achievements in relation to this priority. Evidence in relation to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes is presented in priorities one to three of this report.

The panel saw evidence of the Maribyrnong executive staff being active in the development of the Belconnen Network Strategic Plan that facilitated increased sharing and collaboration through regular network meetings where school practices and results are discussed. These discussions have led to the identification of schools achieving excellent results and visits to these schools to share strategies, processes and pedagogies. Broader network involvement has allowed exposure of all Maribyrnong staff to different operational models resulting in the adoption of the Criterion Reference Tool for writing assessment and a coaching platform for executive to utilise as a common basis for instructional leadership. The implementation of this has recently been supported by the introduction of a structure called Vacation time (*Visit a Classroom and Talk It over Nicely*) where teachers can visit another self nominated classroom within the school to observe and discuss practice with their colleagues.

The panel believes the evidence presented shows the strengthening of relations across the Belconnen Network that is having a positive impact on the practices of the schools.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Belconnen Network Strategic Plan
- Coaching Timetables (Executive Teacher; Literacy and Numeracy Coach)
- CRT Writing Moderation Session 2 and Session 3
- Coordination of Moderation Sessions for 2013

- Team Meeting Schedule with participation in Belconnen Moderation Session
- Release Timetable 2012
- Vacation Template
- Coaching Records
- Interviews with executive teachers, Literacy and Numeracy Coach, Pedagogy Circle chairs and students.

Priority Area 8

Improved opportunities for students to practice leadership qualities

The expected outcomes for this priority focused on increasing the capacity of students as leaders, increasing student participation in school activities, having students more involved in decision making and providing greater student voice in curriculum choices. Targets for these outcomes included maintenance of or improvement in student satisfaction data related to student voice in learning, decision making and involvement in school activities.

Through investigating qualitative and quantitative evidence the panel found that student input is being sought and acted on in relation to school administration and learning. Adoption of a Charter for the Student Representative Council (SRC) along with the creation of a procedural document for running meetings has provided the SRC with improved guidance and greater focus. A result of this was the development of a Leadership Continuum that articulated the leadership opportunities available to all students throughout their time at Maribyrnong Primary School. Quantitative data from school satisfaction surveys indicates an upwards trend in student perceptions around participation in decision making and engagement in learning, with the school significantly exceeding its targets in these areas.

The panel found that the school's initial implementation of the Australian Curriculum, coupled with a model of inquiry learning, has allowed greater flexibility in learning opportunities for students that enhances opportunities for student voice and negotiation. This included an audit of curriculum organisers by the SRC that identified the desire to build on existing visual and performing arts programs to include the use of musical instruments. The SRC suggested and successfully established an Arts Day where students have the opportunity to participate in a range of learning experiences across the day, culminating in a sharing assembly.

The panel was also impressed by the opportunities for student voice that are provided in the school's reciprocal reading program and the specialist science program.

The panel recommends that the school focus on further provision of opportunities for building student voice across all areas of the curriculum and school community.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Charter for SRCs
- SRC Meeting Guide
- Student Leadership Opportunities Reflection 2012
- Newspaper Article "HeartKids"
- Student School Satisfaction Survey results
- Interviews (Literacy and Numeracy Coach; kindergarten, year five and six students).

Priority Area 9

Amalgamation of the preschool parents association and the school P&C committee

The expected outcome for this priority was the establishment of a unified Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) which would represent the school from preschool to year six. Targets included unifying the P&C by the end of 2010 and the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding for the amalgamation by the end of term one, 2010.

Through assessing the structure of the Preschool Parents Association and the Maribyrnong Primary School Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) the school found that the preschool parent body and the school parent body wanted to work as one group to support the learning of all students preschool to year six.

In planning a course of action to facilitate this, the school identified that liaison between all stakeholders was crucial so as to ensure transparency and open and honest communication throughout the process. Advice from the Directorate included identification of a school executive to attend all preschool parent meetings during 2009 and 2010 and liaise with parents and staff to facilitate ongoing communication. Throughout the process the school principal familiarised herself with the required legal documentation to facilitate the merge and met with all key stakeholders from the community and the Directorate to discuss the amalgamation and ensure the correct procedures were followed.

Results of the amalgamation include parent representatives from preschool to year six attending P&C meetings and being involved in a range of school wide activities. The school has also noted a rise in enrolments from the preschool to kindergarten from 24 in 2012 to 32 in 2013.

The panel sighted evidence that supported the achievement of the outcome in February 2010.

Evidence cited and its validation

- P&C Minutes February 18 2010
- P&C Minutes May 13 2010
- Proposed Amalgamation Model from ETD
- Interview with Maribyrnong Executive.

Priority Area 10

Quality Area One Educational Program and Practice

The school's target relating to achieving National Quality Accreditation is yet to be achieved as the preschool was not selected for assessment during the reporting period. However, the school has addressed a number of specific key actions as determined by the 2012 and 2013 Annual Operating Plans.

The school has strived to achieve consistency in the preschool's written programs, and to ensure that they are underpinned by the Early Years Learning Framework and reflect home/school connections and the cultural uniqueness of families. The school has also striven to develop consistent assessment and reporting practices that reflect the requirements of the National Quality Standard.

The validation panel acknowledges the thoroughness with which the school has identified the preschool unit's strengths and areas for development using the National Quality Standards

(NQS) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). From 2011, teachers and school leaders attended system professional learning to develop and embed their understanding of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Considerable work then focussed on transferring this knowledge into practice, ensuring the preschool has quality, contemporary early childhood practices in place. Weekly preschool team meetings and system sharing have enabled professional conversations to facilitate the implementation of the National Quality Framework and embedding of the Early Years Learning Framework. Evidence of the inclusion of the EYLF within the preschool program and the focus on individual student development is clearly visible in teachers' programming and a wide variety of reporting mechanisms. It is also evident that family involvement has been prioritised, achieved through a range of effective strategies including beginning of year interviews, reflection books and curriculum documentation which not only informs parents but invites their contributions.

As recognised by the school, this priority is ongoing as the school moves towards NQS accreditation.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Annual School Board Reports 2009 - 2012
- Preschool Quality Improvement Plans
- Maribyrnong School Annual Operating Plans 2012, 2013
- Preschool Handbook
- Lesson Plan Examples
- Preschool Report Example
- Learning Stories
- Intentional teaching record Term 1 Week 3 2013
- Learning Environment Term 1 Week 3
- "Belonging, Being, Becoming" 2013
- Photographic evidence (completed student interview, anecdotal records).

Priority Area 11

Quality Area Two Health and Safety and Physical Environment

The school's priority was to ensure that a safe environment is maintained for students, staff and families, which reflects all components of the Early Years Learning Framework and meets 100 percent of the requirements of the National Quality Standards.

Children's health and safety was a key focus in 2012 at Maribyrnong. Preschool educators worked closely with the children, families and other support agencies to identify effective ways to cater for the specific health needs of the children in their care. Systems and procedures were reviewed to ensure compliancy and consistency across both preschool groups, and to support the well-being of children. For example procedures have been introduced around rest times, toileting, and hygiene. The preschool and Early Childhood Intervention Unit educators have also established procedures to support all students to participate in lockdown drills and fire evacuation practices. The Preschool Handbook has been updated to outline the procedures and

policy the school follows in relation to health and wellbeing and is available in both hard copy and on the school website for parents and carers.

The school has made a number of physical improvements throughout the preschool environment and has embedded sustainable education in daily practice through the introduction of a vegetable garden. Children have recently been invited to give feedback about the outdoor learning space and its design. Maribyrnong's community partnership with Kaleen's Men's Shed has been of great benefit to the school, enabling working bees to completely paint the preschool interior. Their Artist in Residence Program was also used to recreate a preschool mural.

The school's Outdoor Learning Space Action Plan will continue to be a priority in the coming years.

Evidence cited and its validation

- Quality Improvement Plan
- Request for Maintenance 2012
- Preschool Handbook
- Preschool Outdoor Learning Environment Plan 2012.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 3: Reflection

The validation panel considers that Maribyrnong Primary School is constantly reflecting on its performance in delivering quality learning outcomes for students. The "Plan, Do, Study, Act" improvement cycle is very much part of the school culture and is embedded in teacher practice and planning documents.

The school leadership team have identified five critical success factors for future improvement:

- a reflective executive team with passion and vision, who can inspire those around them to commit to change and the establishment of high expectations for all students
- the importance of increasing the effective use of data to inform classroom practice
- the need to develop specific 'guides' to support consistent practices across the school, expanding on the areas of reading, writing, spelling and mathematics into all areas of the curriculum. The school acknowledges that this will ensure the focus on continuous improvement is sustained, assisting the school to embed new initiatives long term and reduce the potential impact of barriers such as staff mobility.
- the importance of building teacher capacity through deliberate and rigorous coaching programs and quality feedback. The school's current model of coaching is "in its infancy" (*Maribyrnong Summative Evaluation Report 2013*, page 71). The leadership team has identified that there is a need for the coaching focus to be on differentiation of the curriculum, and the setting of individual learning goals in collaboration with students, clear learning intentions and quality success criteria
- the process of target setting. The school has reflected on the setting of targets, recognising that they need to be "challenging and aspirational as well as realistic" (*Maribyrnong Summative Evaluation Report 2013*, page 71). The panel concurs with this reflection, having noted that several of the targets related to literacy in the school's

strategic plan (2010-2013) were difficult to achieve across all year levels in the allocated timeframe. The panel also reflected that setting fewer priorities and associated targets might be more achievable, given the complexity of day to day school operation and the need to sustain existing successes alongside new priorities.

The validation panel concurs with the school's evaluation of the effectiveness of its key improvement strategies in literacy: namely that there is evidence of improvement specific to particular student cohorts suggesting current programs and interventions should be maintained. The panel acknowledges that, given the relatively new strategies and initiatives being implemented, data should continue to be collected over the next two years to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the changes that have been made.

The school has demonstrated a clear awareness of the barriers that impeded its progress in the improvement cycle, explaining them to the panel throughout its summative report and in professional conversations with the panel members.

Evidence cited and its validation

- School Summative Evaluation Report 2013 for Maribyrnong Primary School.

Section D: Commendations and recommendations

The validation panel commends Maribyrnong Primary School on outstanding achievements across a number of priorities. The panel would like to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment of all staff to the creation and maintenance of a quality school environment which supports student needs; academically, socially and emotionally.

Commendations

The panel makes the following commendations to Maribyrnong Primary School:

- the School Executive's strategic and targeted approach towards continuous improvement through a rigorous and transparent evidence based cycle. The panel was impressed by the shared authority and ownership of school priorities by all staff through the development of pedagogy circles and the use of the PDSA school improvement tool. The transparency of the school improvement process allowed all staff to have an understanding of system priorities and how they were operationalised.
- the instructional leadership model provided by the School Executive to build staff capacity and establish consistent school practices and the development of a shared language. The panel noted effective practices including pedagogy circles, growth coaching, in class coaching, and peer coaching.
- the staff commitment to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes; with outstanding improvements in reading. The needs of students are being identified more readily as greater use is made of data through a case management approach. These students can then be targeted for additional support or extension. Differentiated learning is facilitated by the use of individualised learning intentions. The panel observed consistent school practices and targeted professional learning, including the commitment of time, funds and planning. This has helped to build staff capacity to engender improved student outcomes in literacy.

- the clear articulation and documentation of all systems and processes to ensure continued and sustainable improvement. This is supported by effective leadership modeling.
- the development of a consistent approach to preschool programs, assessment and reporting practices in line with the Early Years Learning Framework based on the thorough analysis of school strengths and areas for improvement.

The validation panel also commends Maribyrnong Primary School on the thorough way in which the school has self-evaluated its progress over the life of the School Plan.

Recommendations

The panel makes the following recommendations to Maribyrnong Primary School:

- The school embeds the principles of Assessment for Learning to further improve student outcomes and engagement. These principles encompass learning intentions, quality success criteria and the cycle of feedback between stakeholders.
- The school expands the model of evidence based practice to other learning areas. The school has strongly demonstrated this nexus between student learning experiences, data interrogation and teacher programming to support school improvement in the area of literacy.
- The school builds on and identifies the alignment of Australian Curriculum content within all learning areas.
- The school investigates further ways to build student voice across all facets of the curriculum and school improvement.