Arawang Primary School

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 04, 05 and 06 June 2019
Principal of Review School: Jennifer Page

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:
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Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review are considered alongside system and school level student achievement, perception and demographic data as the evidence base for development of the school's next 5-year School Improvement Plan.

Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, parents and community members.

Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school communities.

The *Report of Review* includes detailed Review Team findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, and Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does School Review sit within the broader school improvement cycle?
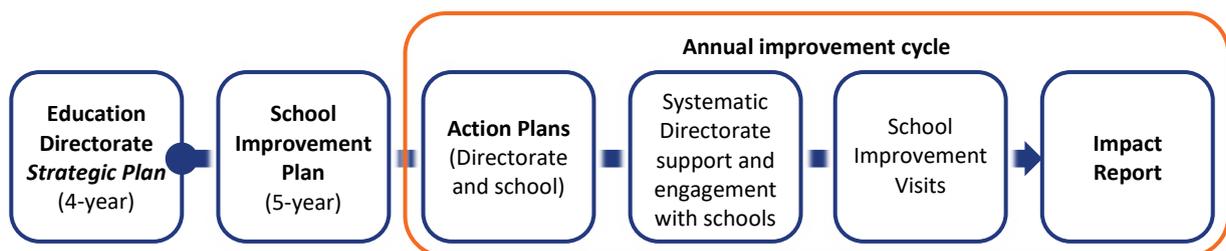
ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. School Improvement Visits (SIVs – which include School Review) provide differentiated support and feedback to schools through varying levels of in-school immersion. SIVs progress in relation to a school's needs and improvement cycle, with School Review typically occurring at the end of this cycle.

What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations
The commendations highlight positive actions the school has taken over its last improvement cycle. Typically these actions are either complete, or embedded in school practice.

Affirmations
The affirmations verify specific actions being undertaken by the school that are impacting positively on school improvement. These actions are typically either not yet complete and/or not yet embedded.

Recommendations
The recommendations provide the school with evidence-based advice regarding high-value areas for future school improvement efforts. Drawn from the NSIT, recommendations are key to the school developing a sharp and narrow improvement plan.

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor
The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Findings
- The *Arawang Primary School 2015-2018 School Plan* has two broad strategic priorities: improve student learning outcomes in all year groups preschool-year 6 in literacy, numeracy and science; and embed a culture in the school that promotes learning. Targets are not specific in the school plan, rather they are specified in Annual Action Plans (AAPs) with a consistent focus on the two priority areas. This agenda for improvement was endorsed by the School Board.

- AAP reports describe the progress towards targets and the success of implemented strategies.

- Annual School Board reports are available on the school website and give general information on school achievement data from Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), NAPLAN, and school satisfaction surveys. 'Principal Reports' to the School Board outline school achievement in more detail with school analysis and required actions.

- Newsletters and the school website communicate priorities, strategies and school achievement. Parents interviewed were able to describe the priorities, however they were not aware of the targets. Parents conveyed their appreciation (and apprehension) of teachers taking on a significant change agenda over the last four years.

- Most teachers were able to list the school priorities. Progress towards achieving targets over time was less understood.

- Analysis of available data on student achievement has improved over the life of the plan. Recently the school hired an external consultant to help in the analysis process for the new plan. Analysis of data for social inclusion priority groups is still to happen.

- It is evident that all school staff are united in their commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers expressed in many ways that they feel empowered to make appropriate changes to improve student performance.

- The school uses a number of 'critical friends' who help teachers understand school improvement research in several areas of the school. Teachers and the leadership team described instances where they were encouraged to experience internal and external quality professional learning.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor
A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/ regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Findings
- The school is developing a plan for the systematic collection and use of a range of student achievement and wellbeing data. The current plan, focused on classroom data, states a belief that teaching and learning should be driven by the collection, analysis and discussion of 'small' data.

- Teachers talked about using PIPS, the Bee Spelling program, Soundwaves and Spelling Inventory for spelling; PM Benchmark for reading; and Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA), and Middle Years Mental Computations (MYMC) for mathematics. These data sets complement quality classroom assessments. The use of data varied across the school and learning areas.

- This year, teachers in each year level have been given time each week to collectively examine available data and discuss the implications for curriculum planning. Some teachers have expressed a need for more training and/or access to other data to support their teaching.

- The school uses PIPS, NAPLAN, PM Benchmark, satisfaction surveys and the student wellbeing survey to monitor school-wide student progress. An external consultant was used to analyse the data in the preparation of the new strategic plan, and school leaders have specific responsibilities to analyse and share data.

- Time has been set aside in staff meetings to discuss whole-school data.

NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

Domain descriptor
The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.

Findings
- During interviews with staff, students and community members, the review team consistently heard that the school was welcoming, open, respectful, inclusive and caring. There is a happy optimistic feel to the school. There was a strong sense of community and belonging, and the school is viewed as a school of choice.

- The school began implementing the Positive Behaviours for Learning strategy from 2016 to provide a consistent and positive approach to behaviour learning and management. The review team observed that classrooms are calm and productive, and interruptions to teaching time are kept to a minimum. 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. Playground and external environment behaviour expectations are visible and used by staff and students.

- All staff demonstrated a commitment to every child's success and students are given many opportunities. One student said that "they get to do a lot of different things and in a lot of different ways". This was endorsed by other students interviewed.

- A student parliament is a feature of student voice to enhance student leadership opportunities.

- Arawang Primary School has been recognised for its sustainability program. Students take an active leadership role in this program.

- During the life of the plan there has been a significant and deliberate strategy to build staff culture. Staff surveys and comments demonstrate that staff morale is now high.

- The school environment is used to enhance learning and other opportunities.

- The school celebrates Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with strong family partnerships.

- Parents said that they were actively engaged in their child's learning and given many opportunities to be involved.

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor
The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

Findings
- The school follows the Directorate process for identifying and managing students with identified needs. Student data are used to target teaching resources for students receiving EAL/D and literacy support.

- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) are in place for identified students.

- Support for EAL/D and learning assistance is provided in small group models with trained professionals. Professional learning in literacy and numeracy support strategies is also provided to staff with 'critical friends' working in classrooms.

- Extension mathematics groups have been scheduled for highly able students.

- The business manager works as part of the executive team to strategically allocate resources. The school budget is targeted to meeting staff and student needs.

- Professional learning communities (PLCs) have been resourced within the school day for teachers to plan together.

- The school's internal and external environments have been enhanced significantly using school, Directorate and external strategic funding during the life of the plan.

- NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee) assembly, and National Reconciliation Week assembly are celebrated. Targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is a feature of the school. The school is developing a new reconciliation action plan.

- As part of the cultural integrity initiative the school is working in partnership with the community to design and build an 'Indigenous garden'.

- Chromebooks have been made available to all students in years 3-6. iPads and some Chromebooks are available to students in preschool-year 2.

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor
The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

Findings
- School leaders place a very high priority on professional learning as a strategy for school improvement. There has been a strategic intent to provide opportunities and promote staff collaboration in teaching and learning. The review team noted in discussions with staff that there is a growing school-wide, self-reflective culture.

- It is evident that teachers have been encouraged and provided with opportunities to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.

- The principal has strategically attracted, selected, retained and developed quality teaching and non-teaching staff. There are many pockets of expertise in the school to complement classroom teaching.

- PLCs were originally organised into literacy, numeracy and science. Recently PLCs have been realigned in year-group teams focusing on planning, professional learning and student achievement.

- Peer mentoring has been introduced using the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) teacher standards. Mentoring involves classroom observation, feedback and goal setting.

- A coaching model has been introduced using the GROWTH[1] coaching model. Several leaders and teachers have received training as GROWTH coaches.

- School leaders lead and model professional learning in classrooms.

- 'Critical friends' with particular expertise in teaching and learning have been employed to work with teachers in the areas of English and mathematics.

- Professional learning is aligned to school priorities and is a feature of the whole-school staff meetings and PLCs.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.

Findings

- The school has worked intensively to develop consistency in curriculum planning across the school. In each year level there are examples of year, term and/or semester planners for teachers to develop short-term planning documents with a consistent template. The plans provide links to the achievement standards, content descriptors, general capabilities and cross curriculum perspectives. However, work is still in progress to define the interrelation of these aspects and how they are delivered in the classroom.

- The school leadership team has clear curriculum expectations, and staff are refining delivery practices.

- Staff are engaged in discussions within PLCs with a focus on improving student learning outcomes and wellbeing.

- There is evidence of flexible curriculum delivery within the school.

- Staff have been actively engaged in professional learning to improve curriculum planning with a focus in 2019 on the general capabilities.

- A range of information communication technologies are used to support learning across the school.

- Students with identified needs have an ILP to augment the curriculum. These plans are monitored on a regular basis.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor
The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

Findings
- There is an expectation by the leadership team that individual needs of all students are met. Staff interviewed demonstrated a firm commitment to differentiate the learning experience of students. Students interviewed spoke of being offered different strategies or approaches to promote their understanding. One student stated: "I didn't quite get it and as I'm a visual learner the teacher gave me a model to help me understand it."

- Reading groups in the junior school are determined by PM benchmarks reading levels.

- Processes and procedures have been clearly articulated to encourage the consistent delivery of PM benchmarks and other signature school-based assessment strategies.

- Students have learning goals in English and mathematics which are conferenced daily, weekly or each term. Staff monitor student progress and use this information to adjust the teaching and learning program for students.

- The role of teachers within PLCs is to share and develop assessment strategies and use these strategies to plan for individual student learning.

- The school is proactive in its approach to raising student performance, with a strong focus on students with identified additional needs.

- Tailored interventions have been implemented to cater for highly capable students in mathematics and writing.

- Most parents interviewed believed that their children were engaged and happy to learn at school.

- Most parents interviewed believed that their children were being challenged in their learning. Some parents expressed a desire that their child be further challenged to reach their potential.

- There are excellent practices in differentiation evident in the school. Teachers, however, expressed a need for further professional learning.

- Semester and end-of-year student reports demonstrate achievement. This reporting is complemented by three-way conferencing, student portfolios and parent-teacher informal contact to provide information about progress over time and how parents can support their child at home.

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor
The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

Findings
- The school leadership team has a deliberate strategy to provide consistency in research-based pedagogy across the school. Agreed practices in English and mathematics are now documented. Staff are actively working towards more consistent practices across year levels.

- School leaders spend time working with teachers and providing feedback to improve effective teaching strategies.

- The leadership team and many staff seek, and keep abreast of, current research on effective teaching practices.

- Early career educators felt well supported and were actively engaged in coaching and mentoring processes.

- Feedback to students varied across the school.

- Sound Waves has been introduced across the school with the deliberate intent of improving student achievement and performance in spelling.

- Stepping Stones is used across the school to guide the curriculum implementation of mathematics.

- Learning intentions and success criteria are being used as a recent strategy in classrooms.

- 'Critical friends' have informed quality teaching practices in reading, writing, mathematics and spelling.

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.

Findings

- Arawang Primary School has developed school partnerships to improve learning outcomes for all students. Most partnerships have been strategically formed with student outcomes in mind, however, the student outcomes have not been formally stated. Performance measures or review processes need to be developed.

- It was clear to the review team that the school has a wide range of partnerships that have had a significant positive impact on the school. Examples of these partnerships include, but are not limited to:

  > enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives through collaboration with community through Indigenous painting of light poles on the Waramanga oval in conjunction with the ACT's Sport and Recreation program

  > engaging subject/sporting experts to support the school e.g., Scientists in Schools, Australian Sports Commission taster programs

  > providing authentic learning and social /emotional development for children P-6 through partnerships with Mirinjani Retirement Village, ACT Volunteers, Arawang market day and Gold learning unit.

- Parents and community members are encouraged to participate in the learning process, and it was estimated that at least 20 volunteers were in the school on any day to support learning. Activities included: 'parents as teachers', authors and guest speakers, parent classroom representatives, the Salvation Army Breakfast Club, Landcare groups, and Rise & Grind coffee. The school regularly holds morning teas to honour the many community members who contribute to the school.

- The University of Canberra professional experience partnership provides in-context mentoring to preservice teachers while providing extra support to students. Arawang Primary School has hosted school-based clinics by preservice teachers, offering student groups specialist instruction in science, mathematics and arts. The partnership gave school teachers university training in areas such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. This professional learning is aligned with the school's strategic need for staff training to complement the launch of its Indigenous garden.

Commendations

- Parents, staff and the leadership team are committed to every student's success at Arawang Primary School.

- There is a happy, optimistic feel in the school and a strong sense of pride and belonging. Parents said, "There is a strong sense of care and a strong sense of school community."

- The school's physical environment has been significantly enhanced with a view to improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

- The leadership team and staff have worked strategically and deliberately to support students in their learning, with a particular focus on those with identified learning needs.

- The leadership team is establishing a productive coaching and mentoring program within the school to build teacher capability and practice.

- During the life of the strategic plan there has been a purposeful commitment in developing teacher self-reflective learning culture across the school.

- The staff demonstrate empowerment to enact change and take risks.

- There is a strong focus on attracting and attaining quality resources and support for teachers in the learning areas of English and mathematics to enhance teacher knowledge and practice. This has been strongly evidenced through the school's use of 'critical friends' who are experts in their chosen fields.

- The school has developed many positive partnerships to support both the physical appearance of the school and the educational opportunities available to students.

- Students are provided with a range of opportunities that enhance their educational experience at school. The school kitchen garden, sustainability, café and music programs were commonly referenced during interviews as outstanding programs.

- Induction processes effectively support new educators and those new to the school.

Affirmations

- The Arawang Primary School leadership team has had an ongoing focus on its priorities and targets over the life of the plan.

- School leaders place a very high priority on professional learning as a strategy for school improvement.

- Teachers have been given time to discuss student achievement data in professional learning communities. Staff are planning together, learning together, building trust and developing a self-reflective culture. There is a growing collegiate culture in the school.

- There are many areas of expertise throughout the school and community that will continue to provide a solid foundation for improvement.

- Teachers take on many leadership roles outside the classroom.

- The school has a commitment to constantly enhance curriculum delivery.

- Teachers are exploring the use of data to support differentiating the curriculum for their students.
- Teachers are committed to further developing Visible Learning as a strategy for learning and teaching.
- Positive Behaviours for Learning is having the desired impact of helping students understand and choose appropriate behaviours.
- The school has a strong commitment towards developing cultural integrity.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop an Arawang Primary School Plan 2020-2024 that is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes, by incorporating explicit targets for student achievement that are well communicated to the school community. The plan should clearly articulate the measures and strategies for improvement in a timeline that acknowledges capacity for change. Progress towards targets should be monitored and initiatives and programs systematically evaluated for their effectiveness in producing the desired improvements in student learning and performance.

- Further develop the school's data plan to incorporate the full range of school data. Develop processes to broaden analysis of school data to include trends over time, and ensure that through summarising, displaying, and communicating, there is a common view of student progress and achievement across the school community. Build leadership and staff data literacy skills. Develop further opportunities for staff collaboration in the use of student data (including their current knowledge, skills, learning difficulties and misunderstandings) to determine starting points for learning. Further consideration should be paid toward professional dialogue around differentiation using a variety of pedagogical practices. Develop strategies to respond to and celebrate differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and cater for individual differences.

- Continue to refine a plan for curriculum delivery that identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements. The curriculum delivery plan should reflect a shared vision for the school and provide a context for delivering the Australian Curriculum with a particular focus on the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.

- Continue to develop a clear position on the kinds of teaching that should be common across the school or in sections of the school.