



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **Kingsford Smith School**

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 25, 26 and 27 June 2019  
Principal of Review School: Paul Branson

*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:

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***Report of Review, 2019*** prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate  
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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## Overview of the School Review process

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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.

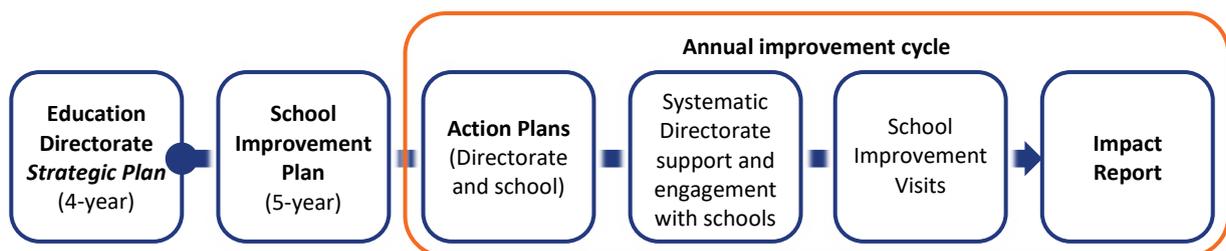
Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

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?

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### 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

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### 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

- Discussions with staff demonstrated that there is an obvious enthusiasm for change to improve learning outcomes for students. Staff, in particular, have embraced the strategic initiatives: individual action learning in literacy, Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL), the 10 Essential Literacy Practices<sup>1</sup>, formative assessment, 'Lead Without Title at KSS', and whole-school curriculum development.
- The *Kingsford Smith School Strategic Plan 2015-2020* lists four priorities: develop an expert teaching team with effective pedagogical practices; embed systematic curriculum delivery across the school; embed a culture of data analysis to inform teaching; and develop a culture that promotes learning for all through positive wellbeing and community partnerships. Each priority has two or three outcomes, only some of which are student centred. Most targets described for each priority are concerned with student achievement. In general, strategies deployed against each of the priorities over the life of the plan were based on quality educational research.
- In the *Kingsford Smith Impact Report 2018* the school tracks progress over the life of the plan in some targets, with some analysis against interventions.
- Annual School Board reports provide detail in Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) and NAPLAN (3,5,7 and 9). The School Board Chair felt sufficiently informed about the school's performance and strategies to address any areas of need.
- Key improvement strategies are listed in the current staff diary under the three priorities. School staff were able to recall key recent strategies but less able to talk about targets and how these have had an impact in the classroom. Staff were able to talk about some areas of student improvement in the life of the plan, particularly as a result of the Learning 'I Need to Know' (LINK) program and in the early childhood area.
- Plans and reports are placed on the school's website; however, parents were generally unaware of the school's strategic agenda.

## NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

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### 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 primary school assessment schedule preschool to year 5 (P-5) describes the beliefs and purpose of assessment and has a schedule for each year level.
- A kindergarten to year 5 (K-5) digital assessment tracker has been developed to map student achievement and progress in Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark, South Australian Spelling and PAT-M (maths).
- Staff expressed varying confidence in their use and analysis of data.
- PIPS data are used to measure growth in literacy and numeracy in kindergarten.
- NAPLAN data are used in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 to measure performance and growth. LINK intervention groups are formed on that basis.
- Phonics proficiency is tracked from kindergarten to year 3.
- The ACER General Ability Test is administered to all year 2 students to identify gifted and talented students.
- Junior school teachers are using the 'disciplined dialogue' process to analyse student data. A three-hour teacher planning session, known as ePACT<sup>2</sup>, occurs weekly at K-5 teacher group meetings. Collaboration, analysis of data and planning interventions occur at these meetings.
- The school has implemented writing rubrics to determine student skills across preschool to year 8. Benchmarks are set against the rubric and annotated writing samples accompany these.
- Middle school (years 6-8) teachers utilise 'Test of Word, Reading and Efficiency' in year 6 and have begun the use of PAT-M and PAT-R (reading).
- The Otis-Lennon School Ability Test is used to screen all year 7 students for a Targeted Support Plan or the WINGS (gifted and talented) program.
- The Junior HUB collects and collates wellbeing data from years 3-10. These data inform the content for the 'Social Emotional Learning' program which is specifically developed for the needs of individual year groups.
- Dylan Wiliam's formative assessment strategies are used in classes to inform student progress.
- The Mathspace online platform is used to track engagement and understanding in mathematics for children in years 6-10.

- Explicit communication exists between teachers and individual parents about supporting their child's reading in P-5.

## NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

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### 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

- Strong positive and caring relationships exist across the school community. Students acknowledge that “teachers never give up on you”, “they care” and “take time to learn about you”. Parents believe there is a “sense of community” and “relationships between teachers and kids is what matters”.
- Harmony Excellence Respect Optimism (HERO) is used as the basis of the school’s values. These are reported against in the school semester reports.
- PBL, initiated in 2017, has resulted in an identified set of expected behaviours and includes personal interactions between peers and the environment outside the classroom. The next stage, due for implementation later this year, will focus on expected behaviours within the building and classrooms.
- A behaviour matrix has been developed as part of PBL, and it outlines the expected behaviours: safe, respectful, learner. Responses to minor and major behaviours are taught in PBL lessons.
- A rewards system known as High Flyers has been implemented across the school in 2019.
- The Performance Improvement Learning Option Targeted training (PILOT) program, an early intervention for middle school students at risk of disengagement, has been developed and implemented.
- The Senior HUB is an integrated wellbeing team which supports students in years 6-10. The team triages and manages social and emotional needs. The team also coordinates the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program via extended homeroom time that occurs weekly. The team enlists community groups such as the Belconnen Community Services and Multicultural Youth Services to supplement student support.
- Students who qualify for the learning support program are included into multiple mainstream classes where their needs are supported through Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).
- The ‘landing’ in P-5, is used to support students to self-regulate and reengage in learning.
- Parents are welcomed into the school and participate in a variety of informal and targeted events such as information nights, learning journeys, student-led conferences, and parent/teacher interviews. Communication also continues using digital online platforms.
- Cultural integrity begins with a highly developed Koori preschool and progresses

throughout the school through a variety of clubs, celebration of significant events, an Indigenous garden, community Elder visits and through integration into units of work. While currently sporadic in nature, a refocusing and sharpening of this priority is underway.

## NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

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### 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 Senior HUB team (years 6-10) includes two coaching and engagement officers, an Indigenous education officer and a school psychologist, school health nurse, social worker and enrolment officer. The team tracks student wellbeing data and, as appropriate, tailors the homeroom SEL program to address identified needs. Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) are constructed for identified students. A learning and teaching support teacher in senior school provides in-class support for students with significant learning needs.
- The Junior HUB draws on the expertise of the Senior HUB, with a learning support teacher and learning support assistant (LSA) focused on supporting students with significant learning needs of students pre-primary to year 5.
- A process is in place for teachers to raise student performance issues with parents and the team leader before ILPs are constructed.
- Additional LSAs have been appointed to assist teachers with students with high needs.
- LINK lessons are based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and based on student performance data. The lessons provide additional time to teach core literacy and numeracy skills and provide extension opportunities. The JETS program for elite sports students and the WINGS program for gifted students are part of the LINK sessions.
- The school has implemented a 'launch pad' reading program in K-5 to assist students with identified reading difficulties.
- The PILOT intervention program has been implemented for students who require sustained interventions.
- A Koori preschool is available for three and four-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- A community preschool program for three-year-old students experiencing significant delays in their development has been established.
- An English as Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) teacher supports students who have a background in a language other than English.
- The school plans to develop a bicycle track in the near future. Outside areas such as a new fitness park are under consideration. Some students and staff talked about the need for more outdoor natural green spaces. Internally, the school has recently upgraded the walls that had significant wear. Spaces have been designed to allow more flexibility in the future.
- Students from years 3-10 have close to a 1:1 ratio of technology. Students in preschool to year 2 have access to iPads and Chromebooks.

## NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

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### 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 engage in learning walks and talks P-5, and lesson studies in years 6-10. These classroom observations provide feedback to teachers on their learning environment and teaching practice. Usually, an agreed focus is determined before the visit and is linked to their action learning.
- In 2018, an enhanced ePACT model was introduced to analyse and discuss student progress data and address student need. A 'disciplined dialogue' approach is used to guide these conversations and a Data Wall for reading and writing P-5, is a resulting artefact.
- There is a school-wide focus on formative assessment based on the work of Dylan Wiliam. School leaders engage in formative assessment observations focused on the teacher's identified strategy/strategies.
- Action learning is being undertaken by all staff across the school as a measure to achieve student learning goals. Coaching varies between teams but is predominantly focused on literacy.
- 'Leading without title at KSS' was introduced in 2018. This initiative is a framework to build a positive staff culture of leadership and ownership around a set of shared values and beliefs. Recently, teachers have been given the opportunity to observe other teachers in different sectors of the school with a focus on formative assessment strategies.
- There is a school expectation that teachers lead or contribute to committees aligned with the school's strategic agenda.
- Every teacher has a professional development plan that is aligned to the school's strategic priorities. Teachers meet with an executive staff member to review their progress against these priorities twice a year.
- The school provides opportunities for all staff to access external mentors. These identified mentors schedule two visits per term with their mentees.
- New educators and teachers (on contract) are assigned a school-based mentor and have a formal mentoring partnership agreement. There is a set of school-devised guidelines framing these agreements.
- The school generally deploys teachers across the school according to their area of expertise.
- The size and quality of recruitment fields has improved over time.

## NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

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### 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

- In 2018, the school engaged the ACT Education Directorate's curriculum team to deliver professional learning for all staff on unpacking the achievement standards.
- School staff have developed a K-10 documented continuum of learning for Kingsford Smith School aligned to the Australian Curriculum. This scope and sequence document encompass achievement standards and essential core content referred to as 'power standards'.
- This year, professional learning has been undertaken by all staff unpacking the General Capabilities.
- Teachers in K-5 use understanding by design planning templates for each subject area, including inquiry units. Planning is represented in varying forms in middle school and high school.
- A range of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments are designed and used by teachers across the school. Data are recorded on central spreadsheets that are used to create student progress reports.
- Moderation occurs across the year levels using school developed rubrics.
- There are ILPs, targeted learning plans, and personal development plans in place for students with identified needs. All support plans are written in consultation with students and their parents.
- The school has introduced LINK sessions from K-10 as a Tier 2 RTI strategy. From K-8, smaller group sessions are created, and these have an intensive focus on literacy or numeracy. Year 9 and 10 LINK sessions are focusing on the personal and social capabilities from the Australian Curriculum.
- The school is creating lessons using the PBL lesson planning tool to support the introduction of the school's PBL values.
- The school delivers hospitality and building construction as Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses for students in years 9 and 10.

## NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

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### 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 are a range of programs in the school where data are used to inform planning for the differentiated needs of groups of students. These include WINGS and PILOT.
- Data to inform grouping of students and planning for those groups' needs are accommodated through the LINK program. Groupings change, based on the formative data collected each week.
- Weekly ePACT meetings for each teaching team (P-5) have a strong focus on data analysis to inform planning, differentiation for groups of students and developing individual student learning goals. Through this process, teachers also demonstrated a deep strengths-based understanding of the whole child including their social, emotional and academic needs.
- Literacy rotations in the early years use 'Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark' data to group students and differentiate learning.
- Individual assessment is used to set and monitor learning goals for each student in writing, reading and mathematics across P-5. This is more prevalent in writing, with all students having their own writing goal.
- ILPs outline reasonable adjustments for students with a range of physical, social or emotional needs. Less evident was adjustments associated with maximising academic achievement.
- Personal development plans, focused on high expectations, are in the process of being developed for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- School-wide formative assessment strategies, introduced in 2017, demonstrate a commitment to systematically gathering evidence to gain feedback to inform differentiated teaching and learning.
- Students and parents strongly value relationships between staff and students to ensure a strong sense of care and belonging. Staff talked about using this as the foundation to create an increased focus on academic performance.
- Reports to parents outline areas of student strength and development and provide strategies to support student learning.

## NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

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### 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 articulated some pedagogical practices expected across the whole school.
- Senior leaders of the preschool and kindergarten team and the year 1 and 2 team, have clear positions on the kinds of teaching they wish to see occurring across their teams in literacy, and they are hands-on in driving improved teaching practices.
- Christine Topfer’s ‘10 Essential Literacy Practices’ were introduced to the early years teams in 2017. This has been maintained and additional professional learning for new staff has occurred.
- Dylan Wiliam’s approach to formative assessment commenced in 2017 and there is evidence of momentum across the school.
- Use of the Understanding By Design<sup>3</sup> framework is widespread in the primary school and fidelity to the process is strongest in the inquiry-based units of work.
- Coaching in mathematics arising from the Principals as Numeracy Leaders program is increasing consistency of explicit teaching of mathematical vocabulary across the primary years.
- Inclusive learning practices, supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classes, commenced in 2018.
- Action learning groups identify areas for consistent focus within (and sometimes across) year groups. An example is an emphasis in middle school and high school in paragraphing and punctuation.
- Student agency in learning is most clearly demonstrated through the passion projects in WINGS (gifted and talented), and learning goals in early childhood and primary settings.

## NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

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### 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

- The school has many partnerships to improve outcomes for students. These partnerships include:
  - > the Australian National University (ANU) Homework Club, which has been running at the school for a number of years and draws upon the expertise of ANU student ambassadors who give their time to assist middle and senior students with homework and assignments. The Homework Club also provides an opportunity for students to interact with ANU ambassadors studying across a wide variety of faculties.
  - > a Breakfast Club operates out of the school canteen every morning; Mondays are hosted by the school's P&C; St James Church in Holt hosts on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; and the Uniting Church, Kippax hosts on Fridays.
  - > there have been many opportunities provided to enhance learning partnerships between the school and parents by holding workshops on writing, reading and mathematics. The school is using a variety of online applications to communicate with parents in addition to more traditional conduits.
  - > a partnership with the Belconnen Community Services has seen a part time social worker located at the school
  - > the Ginninderra Rotary Club has assisted the school by providing leadership opportunities for students
  - > Menslink has assisted students managing depression through the 'Silence is Deadly' program
  - > registered training organisations (RTOs) have assisted students to gain work readiness qualifications, vocational education competencies and provided work experience opportunities in various careers.
- Partnerships have resulted in many extra programs and resources available to students. While this benefit has not been quantified there is a general belief that all the partnerships have had a positive effect.

## Commendations

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- Strong positive and caring relationships exist across the school community. Students acknowledge that “teachers never give up on you”, “they care” and “take time to learn about you”. Parents believe and say there is a “sense of community” and “relationships between teachers and kids is what matters”.
- There is strong willingness in staff across the school to improve practice to enhance student academic and wellbeing outcomes.
- The senior leadership team is commended for building strong relationships with staff, students and parents, and leading an improvement agenda that is raising staff collaboration and morale.
- There has been a deliberate and sustained focus on developing an inclusive culture throughout the school.
- The school has adopted a well understood RTI model based on data, and is driving school and classroom responses to students with identified needs.
- The ‘Leading Without Title at KSS’ initiative has contributed to a strengthening staff culture of leadership, coaching and mentoring. It has promoted the ethos of ‘one school’ by de-privatising practice across the different sectors of the school.
- The development of a documented continuum of learning (K-10), has ensured that curriculum remains the focus for teachers in planning and allows for a flexible delivery method.
- The whole-school commitment to the LINK program is starting to have a positive impact on the learning outcomes of students.
- There is a coherence of data analysis, planning and practice in the early years through the 10 Essential Literacy Practices and literacy rotations.
- The school has developed many partnerships that have provided additional support for students.

## Affirmations

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- Staff have used quality research evidence in the form of external mentors, conferences and successful practices at other schools to develop strategies to move the school forward.
- The school has appointed additional LSAs above normal staffing levels to meet the needs of identified students in the classrooms. Teachers noted that they are receiving significant support from the school executive.
- The school leadership team places a strong emphasis on classroom observations to provide feedback to teachers. This is a welcomed and accepted practice by all staff.
- Recruitment of expert teachers has resulted in strengthening a positive school culture.
- The introduction and evolution of the LINK sessions has supported students to achieve learning goals through regular, intensive small group lessons in literacy and numeracy from K-8. LINK sessions in years 9 and 10 are focusing on personal and social capabilities within

the Australian Curriculum.

- Teachers have designed tailored lessons to support the introduction of the PBL values for the school. This is in preparation for the official launch of PBL later in 2019.
- Weekly ePACT meetings (P-5) have a strong focus on data analysis to inform planning and differentiation for groups of students and form a strong foundation for individual differentiation and personalising the learning.
- The Koori preschool and the work of the Indigenous Education Officer provide a strong foundation for furthering cultural learning and inclusion.
- The investment in Dylan Wiliam's formative assessment strategy across the school has laid a foundation for increased focus and consistency of practice in the classroom.
- School staff collaborate with parents to support learning processes.
- The implementation of the PBL is building a positive school culture through greater consistency of practice and high expectations.
- SEL, through a dedicated time within the school timetable, has become an important developmental framework at all levels of the school.
- The JETS and WINGS programs are beginning to address the needs of gifted and talented students.

## Recommendations

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- Collaboratively develop and communicate a *Kingsford Smith School Strategic 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, incorporating explicit targets for student achievement. The plan should clearly articulate the evidence-based 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. Progress of this school improvement process should be shared with the school community.
- Create a school data plan that incorporates the full range of school data. Develop processes to broaden analysis of school data to include trends over time and performance of identified priority groups. Ensure that through analysing, summarising, displaying and communicating data, there is a common view of student progress and achievement across the school community to determine starting points for school improvement. Build leadership and staff confidence and data literacy skills.
- Continue to build a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour. This includes consolidating expectations on how students should behave and interact with each other.
- Continue to develop and refine the plan for curriculum delivery to ensure consistent teaching and learning expectations. The school should develop a whole-school focus on the implementation of the General Capabilities and cross curriculum priorities.
- Continue to develop the school's capacity to cater for individual needs by offering

multiple ways for students to engage with, and express, their learning. Continue to provide opportunities for staff collaboration to use student data to determine starting points for learning. Monitor learning and celebrate progress.

- Continue to develop evidence-based pedagogical practices to meet student need with the school leadership team articulating agreed core strategies that should be used coherently across the school.
- Continue to develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent. Ensure there is a clear understanding of the purpose of each partnership and objectives expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students. Each partnership should have a formal plan for roles, communication and reviewing planned outcomes.