EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT 2015

for

DUFFY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction: Overview of the Review process

As part of the Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory are required to participate in a review process every four years. This document captures the findings of the panel during this review process.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation and validation, the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges: in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

The external panel conducted the review over three days. It involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the National School Improvement Tool. This informed the panel's commendations and recommendations for the school to consider in its next cycle for school improvement.

Section A: School context

Duffy Primary School caters for learning across preschool to year 6 and includes two Autism Units for students in the South Weston network. The school has a current enrolment of 387 and its Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) includes the suburbs of Duffy, Holder, Rivett and Weston. The percentage of students from an English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background was 15 percent in 2011 and dropped across the four years to 7 percent in 2014.

Duffy Primary School services a community with an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) background as at 2014 of 1085, which is above the median of 1000.

The school completed its last validation in 2010. The panel at this time noted a strong sense of pride throughout the school, along with a solid foundation in community collaboration and partnerships. The panel also acknowledged the school had clear expectations of teaching approaches in literacy and numeracy and other curriculum areas. Recommendations within the 2010 external report were included in the new School Plan, including:

- further developing the school wide assessment tools that allow all staff to track student progress over time

- undertake data gathering and policy review activities that facilitate the development of a student wellbeing program

- further develop the integration of learning technologies into teaching and learning programs.

The panel found that that some priorities from this validation report were evident in the 2011-15 School Plan however many of the strategies did not align within subsequent Annual Operating Plans (AOPs).

Duffy Primary School is a community school with a diverse population and active parental involvement. The board chair in 2014, acknowledged every member of the school community contributes to bringing the school's values of respect, responsibility and inclusivity to life. Across the five years the support and involvement of parents has been acknowledged with volunteer support exceeding 400 hours per annum.

The school has experienced visible and significant changes within the last five years including:

- Increase in enrolments from 309 in 2011 across consecutive years to 392 in 2014. In February 2015 the school's enrolment had dropped to 365, but has since increased to 387 due to an influx of Defence Force families.

- the celebration of the school's 40 year anniversary in 2013

- transformational capital works including the new Scrivener Building

- a complete turnover of the entire school leadership team (in the latter two years).

These changes, especially the changes in leadership, impacted on the school's cohesive implementation of the directions within their School Plan.

Duffy Primary School was due to complete their end of cycle review in 2014. The Directorate made the decision to extend this to 2015 to meet competing demands and expectations within the school and its community. The appointment of a new principal, deputy principal and executive team at the start of 2015, has positioned the school well, with the panel noting the team has established a strong focus on renewing the school's journey of improvement and has established a cohesive school staff with a common moral purpose to drive this change.

Section B: School performance

As previously mentioned the panel noted while across four years there was an increase in enrolments from 2011 to 2014, a decrease was evident in at the start of 2015. Anecdotal evidence from staff and parents indicate that this was directly related to the instability of school leadership and the negative perceptions of the community. This was also reflected in school satisfaction data.

The School's National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results have varied, when compared to students from 'similar schools', as measured by ICSEA value. While the school's results are close to similar schools since 2011 the results varied more in 2012 and 2014.

In 2012, the year 3 writing and spelling results were below 'similar schools'. This pattern continued for year 3 with the grammar and punctuation results also being below similar schools.

In 2012, the year 5 reading and spelling results were below 'similar schools' while the writing, grammar and punctuation and numeracy results were substantially below. In 2014 reading, writing and grammar and punctuation results were again below that of similar schools.

In reading, the gain score of students in year 5, who sat the assessments in year 3 at the school, was below that of students from the same starting point from 2011 to 2013. In 2014 the year 5 gain scores were slightly above, but not significantly so.

In writing, the gain score since 2011 has been similar to students from the same starting point and 'similar schools'.

In numeracy, for two consecutive cohorts (2009-11 and 2010-12) the school's gain score was significantly below when compared to students from the same starting point, was below for the 2011-2013 cohort but was similar to the 2012-2014 group.

In respect of the school's achievement against targets set by the Directorate, the mean scores across reading writing and numeracy for years 3 and 5 have been consistently within the target

range when considering the confidence intervals. Directorate targets are based on a four year average and include a four point loading for improvement.

The kindergarten assessment data, as measured through Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) identifies that since 2010 there was a steady increase in the percentage of students achieving expected progress from their baseline assessment to the end of the year up to 2012 for reading and 2013 for maths. The 2014 results identified the greatest percentage of students not achieving expected progress occurred in reading and the third lowest in numeracy since 2010. The school leadership team has acknowledged the need to strengthen the early childhood programs, both preschool and kindergarten, and are using coaching as a key strategy along with the strategic allocation of required resources.

The panel found little evidence of other forms of data being collected, tracked and/or utilised to inform teaching and learning, at a whole school level; however, individual teams have collected some data at a classroom level, including Performance Maintenance Benchmarks (PM Benchmarks). There is an opportunity for the school to develop the systematic collection and analysis of key data to inform practice and track growth of students regularly.

The panel reviewed both longitudinal system data and school stakeholder perception data. With respect to the system data, the parent and student survey questions changed across the time frame of this review cycle.

At the commencement of the cycle in 2011, parent results were more than 10 percentage points above the system in ten of the seventeen items. Parent satisfaction up to 2012 was generally the same as that of other parents in ACT public primary schools across the majority of items. Parent satisfaction has declined since 2011 with the latest results (2014) showing eight of the nineteen items more than 10 percentage points below that of other primary schools.

Student satisfaction results were also comparable to that of other primary schools across the majority of items in 2011. In relation to students perceptions of having opportunities to have a say in decision-making and access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) equipment the school's results exceeded that of other P-6 school students. The panel noted a decline in student satisfaction since 2012 with the school's results being below that of other students in ACT public primary schools in all items.

The greatest concerns expressed by parents and students in the 2014 survey included the management of student behaviour, feeling safe at the school, and taking students opinions seriously. Parent satisfaction has also declined across the four years related to the value the school placed on community partnerships.

Staff perception was at a high in 2011 with 90 percent of teaching staff expressing satisfaction across twenty-one of the thirty-seven items, to an extremely high degree. The panel noted across a majority of items by 2014 the satisfaction also declined. While 100 percent of teachers expressed their enjoyment of teaching only seventy-six percent were satisfied with their work at this school. Other areas of decline in satisfaction related to support in relation to student management and effective communication.

Following interviews with teachers, administrative staff, parents and students, during the validation visit, the panel noted that all stakeholders have indicated a significant change in their perception and satisfaction levels this year and add that the school has a very positive vibe.

The school currently uses limited tools to collect school policy and process data. There is no formal data plan. Process data is important in order for the school to determine how effectively

the school's processes and practices are supporting teaching and learning. The panel sighted system data including culture audits, student engagement and the school self-evaluation matrix assessment and recommends that the school use this next planning phase as an opportunity to establish procedures to collect and analyse other possible data sets.

Evidence cited and its validation

The panel viewed and analysed across the five years of this review process a variety of different data sets including:

- My School Website
- Annual School Board reports 2011-2014
- System satisfaction data.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority Areas

In its School Plan (2010 – 2014), Duffy Primary School identified three priorities it has sustained for the life of this planning cycle:

1. Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students
2. Strengthen whole school student wellbeing program
3. Embed learning technologies.

These priorities related closely to the recommendations within the school's 2010 Validation Report.

The panel noted the there was variance in the school's approach to its implementation process. In the first year, 2011, it was clearly evident to the panel the strategies being implemented within each priority; however, in 2012 and 2013 this was not clear. Due to this fact, the school was unable to identify key indicators of success which would allow them to effectively evaluate the effectiveness of their approach and make changes accordingly.

Across the cycle of the School Plan the panel also noted an inconsistency in the targets used to measure the school's effectiveness in achieving their priorities.

Achievements

Strategic Priority 1: Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students

The performance measures articulated in the School Plan included:

- the proportion of students achieve PM benchmarks
- pre and post testing data shows percentage of student gains made in all writing genres
- Salisbury and South Australian spelling tests show proportion of student's growth
- NAPLAN data showing proportion of students in proficient band or above
- Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) testing shows proportion of students meeting school benchmarks
- the Use of coding process to give feedback shows proportion of teachers' engagement with Quality Teaching model (QTm).

Due to the fact that targets were not established each year and/or data was not collected, it was difficult for the panel to ascertain whether or not improvement had occurred across the four years.

Through analysis of the My School website and Directorate targets the panel noted variance in success in relation to NAPLAN. In mathematics and in reading, student gain for 2011-13 cohort was below when compared to similar schools and also for students with the same starting scores. The 2012-14 cohort growth was slightly above students with the same starting scores in both reading and mathematics, but below schools with similar students.

Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen whole school student wellbeing program

The performance measures articulated in the School Plan included:

- a bullying inventory shows decrease in incidents
- student and parent satisfaction data shows yearly increase in percentage indicators above system average
- students surveys measure increase in student engagement.

As with Strategic Priority 1, targets were not consistently set over the life of the plan, therefore it was difficult for the panel to ascertain whether or not improvement had occurred across the four years. Various strategies were initiated in order to address this priority including revised behaviour management procedures, lunchtime clubs, peer support team, the 'Gotcha' program, Friendly Schools Plus, circle time and team teach. The panel noted these initiatives have not always been consistently implemented and it was therefore difficult to directly attribute any improvements in data to any particular strategy.

Analysis of the satisfaction data indicated a decline in student's perception of feeling safe at school from 82 percent in 2012 to 51 percent in 2014. Student perception of behaviour being managed well at the school also declined from 78 percent in 2011 to 35 percent in 2014. However, school climate data from 2014 is far more positive, as were the senior students when interviewed personally by the panel. Students right across the school appear happy and indicated (verbally) they do feel safe at the school. Panel visits to the playgrounds at recess and lunch breaks validated their testimonies.

Parent satisfaction data also shows a significant decline over the life of the plan. Their overall satisfaction with the school declined from 88 percent in 2012 to 79 percent in 2014 and when asked if the school takes parents opinions seriously, satisfaction rates declined to just 59 percent in 2014. As with student perceptions of the school, the panel confirmed the parent sentiment through interviews with key stakeholders, and noted that there is a completely different feeling amongst the parent community at this point in time. Parents are fully supportive of the staff and especially of the leadership team, indicating levels of trust not evident in previous years.

The current leadership team is aware of the imperative to continue to improve school culture, student wellbeing and parent engagement and is already working towards this outcome, with significant changes already noticed and felt by all stakeholders. This should remain a clear focus for the future.

Strategic Priority 3: Embed learning technologies

Once again, there were no targets set against this priority, over all four years. The only data collected was in 2012, where it was reported a 50 percent increase in the use of learning technologies, and also in proficiency levels for students using ICT competencies along with an

increase in the amount of digitally produced products; however, no clear data was provided to substantiate this claim.

Anecdotal evidence and classroom observations indicated that students (particularly senior students) have developed strong skills using MacBook and associated programs. The panel recommends that this priority remain a focus into future planning and that data be collected to show evidence of effectiveness for strategies used.

Reflections

The panel recommends the school carefully consider and select a few well-chosen performance measures for each priority area against which targets are set each year. The panel also recommends all key improvement strategies be individually and regularly evaluated for their effectiveness in producing improved student outcomes. Consider exactly what data will best allow teachers to plan for improvement, more effectively. This will mean a coherent data collection plan is developed and implemented with all staff understanding their role in the process and individuals assigned to oversee the implementation of the data plan.

Evidence cited and its validation

School Plan 2010-2014

Annual Operating Plans 2011-2015

Annual Board Reports 2011-2014

Stakeholder satisfaction data

NAPLAN data.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

National School Improvement Tool

Duffy Primary School staff worked in teams across grades to undertake a review of school practice in line with the National School Improvement Tool during term 2 2015. Responses were collated and discussed at a whole staff meeting before consensus was agreed upon.

In validating the school's journey against the National School Improvement Tool the panel noted the following in relation to **Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda**

- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement, but limited attention has been given to specifying detail or to developing a school-wide approach.*

- *Targets for improvement are not specific.*

- *The school leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. This is reflected in an eagerness to learn from evidence and from other schools that have achieved significant improvements.*

- *There is evidence of a school-wide commitment to every student's success.*

Three priorities remained constant through the life of the plan. The current leadership team is well aware of the need to drive a strong improvement agenda for the school that is developed in partnership with staff, students and parents. The school is encouraged to set clear targets with accompanying timelines which are rigorously actioned by all staff.

Within **Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data**, the panel verified the following:

- *There is either no annual data collection plan for the school or the plan is being implemented in a minimalist fashion.*

- *Tests (e.g. commercially available reading tests) may be used by some teachers, but generally are not used as part of a whole-school assessment strategy.*

- *Software may be used for the analysis of school results, but analyses generally don't extend to studies of improvement or growth.*

- *School data are presented to staff in meetings but presentations tend to be for 'information' rather than a trigger for in-depth discussions of teaching practices and school processes.*

The panel was provided with some evidence of NAPLAN, PIPS and school benchmark reading data. There is evidence to show the school has collected some data in relation to student's literacy and numeracy results and that some analysis is carried out within teaching teams. The panel recommends this approach be continued and expanded to involve whole staff as the school builds its skills in systematic collection and analysis of data. The current leadership team recognises the importance of equipping staff with data literacy skills to assist this process.

Within **Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning** the panel verified the following:

- *Classrooms are generally orderly, although some more so than others.*

- *The school effectively implements its policies, for example, by ensuring that disruptive behaviour, bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly.*

- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, student and parents interact and in the language they use in both formal and informal settings.*

- *Most parents take an obvious interest in their children's learning. Engagement is primarily through regularly scheduled parent-teacher interviews*

- *Staff morale is generally high.*

The current 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. The new leadership team has given a high priority to building and maintaining positive relationships between staff, student and parents. Students are able to articulate the three school values and how they impact on the learning environment. Satisfaction data from staff during the life of plan has declined in the area of overall satisfaction with their work. Satisfaction data from both parents and students has indicated that behaviour management and students feeling safe at school are areas for future focus.

Within **Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources** the panel verified the following:

- *The principal and other school leaders have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the school and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.*

- *The school has developed processes (e.g. systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs, although there may not always be good school records of student achievement and progress.*

- *School leaders encourage teachers to address individual learning needs in classrooms but there are very few agreed school-wide strategies for doing this.*

- *There are very few school-wide programs or policies designed to address the learning needs of particular student groups (e.g. gifted students, students with disabilities, students for whom English is a second language).*

- *Physical learning spaces are used creatively and technology is accessible to the majority of staff and students.*

Interviews with the Business and Facilities Manager and staff provided the panel with evidence that the school works to channel resources effectively to best meet the learning needs of students. Substantial budget commitments have been made to improve the quality and quantity of reading resources for students during 2015.

Within **Domain 5: An expert teaching team** the panel verified the following:

- *The school undertakes professional learning activities, although these may not always focus on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning and there may not be a coherent documented learning plan.*

- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues, although there may not be any formal mentoring or coaching arrangements in place.*

- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*

- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*

Over the life of the plan Duffy Primary School has undertaken a variety of professional learning opportunities for staff, including Principals as Literacy Leaders (PALLS), First Steps Writing, Restorative Practices and challenge-based learning using information technology. The panel recommends the school looks closely to align future professional learning with the School Plan. The panel concurs with the school's assessment that formal staff coaching and mentoring programs need to be more widely implemented in order to build staff capacity.

Within **Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery** the panel verified the following:

- *The school has a documented plan for curriculum delivery that includes year level and term plans, but the progression of learning from year to year is not always obvious and the relationship between the pieces of the plan (the year, term and unit plans) would benefit from further clarification.*

- *School leaders talk about embedding fundamental cross-curricular skills such as literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking within all subjects, but there is little evidence that school-wide strategies are in place to drive a consistent approach.*

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

The school is aware of the need to develop a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery to ensure consistent teaching and learning across year levels. This plan needs to be vertically aligned and mapped to Australian Curriculum achievement standards and descriptors. Whilst team planning documents do exist across the school, they vary in format, effectiveness and detail. Consensus should be reached (by all staff) on the criteria for a quality planning document which can then be shared across the school, with all documents stored centrally for future years.

Within **Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning** the panel verified the following:

- *School leaders are committed to success for all.*

- *Some use is made of assessment instruments to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and starting points for teaching, but this appears to be at the initiative of individual teachers, rather than a school-wide expectation.*

- *Some use is made of differentiated teaching (eg differentiated groups in early primary years) but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.*

- *Regular assessment of student learning are undertaken, but these often are summative and disconnected, rather than exploring long term progress in students' knowledge, skills and understandings over time.*

- *Reports to parents show progress over time and include suggestions for ways in which parents can support their children's learning.*

In classroom visits the panel saw some evidence of differentiation within literacy and numeracy learning. The current leadership team is committed to encouraging and supporting teachers to closely monitor the progress of individual students and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need. A journey to implement a Response to Intervention model (RTI) has begun this year and should continue to be a future focus. The panel was shown Individual Learning Plans for students in the Autism Unit and how goals and these plans are monitored and tracked each term.

Within **Domain 8 Effective pedagogical practices** the panel verified the following:

- *School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school and expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways of doing this.*

- *School leaders take a close interest in the school's literacy and numeracy results.*

- *There is some clarity about what students are expected to learn but a lack of balance in teaching methods (e.g. over-reliance on whole group teaching or very little explicit teaching).*

The current leadership team has begun examining pedagogical practices in classrooms in order to understand how teachers are teaching. The panel saw evidence of the school's commitment to a whole school focus on the teaching of reading. The panel recommends that a whole-school interrogation of current programs occurs to begin discussions around best practice and effective teaching strategies.

Within **Domain 9 School-Community Partnerships** the panel verified the following:

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with the community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.*

- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as community organisations.*

- *Attention has been given to communication and the sharing of experiences within the partnership; however, there may be no formal plan for the reviewing of the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.*

Duffy Primary School actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and well-being by partnering with community organisations. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs. The panel acknowledges that the next step is to formally plan for these partnerships, and to evaluate their effectiveness and impact on student outcomes.

National Safe Schools Audit Tool

The leadership team reviewed and considered the National Safe Schools Framework. After robust conversation consensus was reached.

According to this tool, the key strengths determined as a result of the reflection were:

- Leadership commitment to a safe school
- Supportive and connected school culture
- Partnerships with families and community.

According to this tool, areas for improvement determined as a result of the reflection were:

- Professional learning
- Positive behaviour management
- Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum.

The panel concurs that consistency of practice in regards to positive behaviour management be an area for future focus at Duffy Primary School.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

Duffy Primary School is commended for the following.

1. **The camaraderie and resilience of staff.** The panel congratulates Duffy Primary staff on the collegial relationships they have developed over time. This has provided support networks, friendships and ongoing professionalism during what has been a challenging period of time for the community.

2. **Strong relationships with students and families.** The panel noted the strong connections Duffy staff members have made with complex needs of families in the community. The school community has gone above and beyond what may have otherwise been expected of them, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of these families. The public education excellence award for which the school was nominated is testimony to the school's commitment to students and families.

3. **Extra-curricular programs to engage and connect students to the school.** The panel was impressed with the range of extra and co-curricular programs and activities the school provides for their students. These include, but are not limited to the breakfast club, drumming, Tournament of the Minds, netball teams for weekend competitions and the stunning environment centre.

Recommendations

The panel recommends Duffy Primary School pays attention to the following opportunities for improvement during the next planning cycle:

1. **Refine and strengthen the drive towards an explicit and detailed improvement agenda.** The panel recognises and congratulates the new school leadership team for the passion and drive they have demonstrated over the past 7 months and recommend the team continues the work it has begun in driving a relevant and meaningful improvement agenda. The panel acknowledges the leadership team is aware that the improvement agenda must be grounded in evidence from research and expressed in terms of improvements in measureable student outcomes. It is recommended that the improvement plan is developed in conjunction with the whole school community and in close collaboration with the school's business manager, to ensure an optimistic commitment to the plan by all stakeholders.

2. **Develop a strong culture of analysis, discussion and action on data.** The panel recommends that Duffy Primary School develop a systematic approach to collect, collate, access, analyse, discuss and apply data. This will allow the school to identify gaps in student learning, to monitor improvement over time and to monitor growth across the years of school. This will require further development of data literacy skills through targeted professional learning. The in-depth interrogation of data will identify areas for further improvement, both in terms of achievement and wellbeing and allow teachers to meaningfully differentiate in the classroom.

3. **Create a coherent, sequenced curriculum plan.** The panel recommends the school develop a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery from kindergarten to year 6 for all curriculum areas, addressing both general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities. This will ensure consistent teaching and learning expectations and provide a clear reference for monitoring learning across year levels. It is suggested that careful attention is given to the vertical alignment of the curriculum so that there is continuity and progression of learning.

4. **Systematically identify and address the learning needs of individual students.** The panel recommends that a high priority is given to creating processes to use data to plan for and effectively differentiate across the school. This will ensure that individual student learning needs are being identified and addressed, including high-achieving students. The school is encouraged to continue to develop the Response to Intervention (RTI) model already being explored at the school.

5. **Strengthen the focus on culture that promotes learning.** The panel acknowledges the work of the current leadership team in re-building a school culture that is safe, tolerant and inclusive for all stakeholders. Student well-being, safety and engagement will need to be a future focus for Duffy Primary School in order to shift perceptions and continue to develop a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school. Further developing strategies to engage parents as partners in their child's learning will also support a culture that promotes learning.

Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Duffy Primary School conducted on 10-12 August, 2015.

Name: Lana Read   School: Macgregor Primary School

Name: Felicity Levett   School: Mount Rogers Primary

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

Name: Lana Read

Signature: _____*Lana Read*_____   Date: 12 August 2015

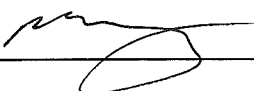
As principal of **Duffy Primary School** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Cindie Deeker

Signature: _____*CDeeker*_____   Date: ___3-9-2015___

As co-director of Quality Learning Australasia, external lead 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: Michael King

Signature: _____   Date: ___3.9.15___