



ACT
Government
Education

Wanniassa Hills Primary School

Report of Review, 2020

Date of School Review: 15, 16 and 17 September 2020
Principal of Review School: John Manders

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

- Lead Reviewer: Ron Bamford, *ACER Senior School Improvement Consultant*
- ACT Review Team members:
 1. Jenny Priest, *Principal of Garran Primary School*
 2. Belinda Fenn, *Principal of Taylor Primary School*
 3. Emma Davidson, *Deputy Principal of Southern Cross Early Childhood School*

Report Date: 18 September 2020

Report of Review, 2020 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date: 29 October 2020

Foreword

2020 has been characterised by extreme weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic. ACT public schools, as community hubs, have been greatly impacted by these events. Despite this, they have continued to deliver high quality education to all students whilst also supporting their communities.

As noted further in this document, school improvement in the ACT is based on a five-year cycle. School Review (Review) considers the entire journey a school has undertaken during this period.

Impact of COVID-19 on School Review

Findings from Review are based on what external and local experts read, see and hear in a school. In preparing findings from Review consideration has been given to the rapid response ACT public schools undertook for the COVID-19 home learning period, and the impact this had on observed practices and processes.

Additionally, due to travel restrictions some Lead Reviewers from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) were unable to lead Reviews on the ground. In these cases streaming technologies, and the support of experienced ACT reviewers, enabled the review to continue. Careful attention was given to ensuring the Review methodology and findings were not compromised.

This Review had an on-the-ground Lead Reviewer from [ACER](#).

OR

This Review had a Remote Lead Reviewer from [ACER](#).

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 support annual implementation of a school's 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.

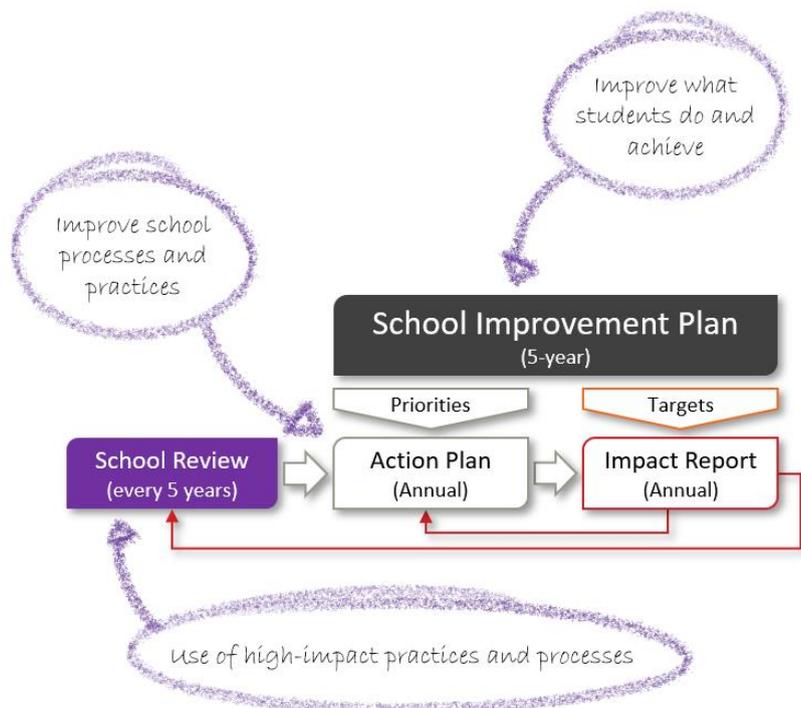
Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, 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 findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, as well as Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does Review sit within the 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. Additionally, schools are provided differentiated support and feedback by internal and external experts. School Review is one way that this differentiated feedback is provided and typically occurs at the end of the 5-year school improvement cycle.



What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

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

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

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 effectively implementing its 5-year School 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 *Wanniassa Hills Primary School System Map (2016)* describes the school's context for planning. The map includes statements of mission, vision, and values and an overview of the general student outcomes sought, holistic strategies to improve outcomes, available resources, and how improvement will be monitored. The map was developed in consultation with the community.
- *The Wanniassa Hills Primary School Strategic Plan 2015-2020* describes two priorities: a pedagogy that encapsulates high intellectual quality, a quality learning environment and significance for all students; and, a community engaged and focused in continuous improvement of instruction and learning. Outcomes to be achieved are general strategies for improvement. Key performance indicators within the plan describe the need for years 3 to 5 growth in NAPLAN reading and numeracy and, NAPLAN 3 and 5 reading and numeracy scores against ACT means.
- The *Annual Action Plan 2016* introduces a target of increasing the students in the top two bands of NAPLAN while decreasing the percentage of students in the bottom bands. The plan also introduces PIPS, PAT-M, PAT-R, and attainment of system targets.
- Teachers have a very good understanding of the key strategies. However, despite some whole-school analysis of data in staff meetings, teachers were unable to talk about whole-school improvement in terms of student outcomes or targets. There was strong evidence to suggest teachers are committed to further improving student outcomes across the school.
- Newsletters on the school website describe the improvement areas of Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) and a whole-of-school focus on differentiation. Parents interviewed were not able to recall the strategic agenda of the school apart from PBL.
- The 2019 Impact Report provides graphs of students in NAPLAN bands in mathematics and reading over time, with analysis focusing on the reported year rather than trend analysis. PAT data are presented for 2019. The school leadership team talked about progress over time. Annual School Board Reports provide data on the areas required by the ACT Education Directorate. The School Board members recalled the principal unpacking the Impact Report but still had little understanding of school attainment levels.
- The school has established teams of teachers to research evidenced-based strategies to meet the general outcomes. The school is now focusing on 'differentiation research' and 'high impact teaching strategies'. Team plans are aligned with strategic plan strategies rather than achieving growth in specific student outcomes. Teachers talked about their

pedagogical growth arising out of participation on school improvement teams.

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

- In 2017, the school leadership team formed an assessment improvement team whose role included developing an assessment schedule and related protocols.
- The *Wanniassa Hills Whole School Assessment Schedule 2020* describes the required assessments in areas such as PIPS, Letters and Sounds, PM Benchmark, PAT, Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA), and Writing Tasks.
- The school has the Grade Expert platform to support the storage and display of data, but this platform is no longer supported and therefore information is not readily available to teachers. Teachers, however, have access to individual student PAT data. The principal has a sound understanding of PIPS, PAT, and NAPLAN data. While these data have been discussed at staff meetings, teachers have little understanding of school levels or progression in mathematics and English. Some teachers talked about a need for more training in this area.
- A process called ‘class profile meetings’ has been established to examine data at the class level. There is an expectation that teachers meet as teams with their appropriate curriculum leader, and with the principal, to discuss data twice a year.
- Teachers talked about meeting with the principal or deputy principal with a focus on PAT data. Some teachers talked about using PAT data to moderate against grades in English and mathematics. Most teachers talked about using PAT data, together with classroom assessments, to group students.
- Junior primary teachers talked about using PM Benchmark, Letters and Sounds, and SENA as ongoing data sets to inform their teaching. Teachers in middle and upper primary talked about using classroom assessment as their main form of data to develop starting points for learning.
- University of NSW International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) testing is taking place to recognise academic excellence by assessing student ability to apply classroom learning using higher order skills.
- While school-level data are available on the school website and have been discussed at both P&C and School Board meetings, parents could not recall how well the school is performing.

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

- Wanniasa Hills Primary School's culture is characterised by warm and respectful relationships between all stakeholders. Students commented that "teachers encourage you," and "the work is at my level" and "there is choice in some of my learning". Staff commented that the school leadership team "is approachable and supportive". Parents commented that "they feel part of the school" and "front office staff are very welcoming".
- High levels of student engagement are evident in classrooms, and there are minimal obvious behavioural issues. Classroom spaces, hallways and shared learning areas create an attractive and stimulating environment. Teachers are using available spaces to enhance collaboration between staff and students. Displays of student learning are evident.
- The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program has been adopted by the school. Indoor and outdoor learning environments have visible displays outlining behaviour expectations. Student, staff and parents were all able to clearly articulate the behavioural expectations: be nice, be safe and be a learner. These behavioural expectations were created with students, teachers, and the community, and align with the school values of courage, commitment and collaboration. The school mascots, Wanda and Wally, are loved by students and used as reminders of learning behaviour expectations.
- Teaching staff have recently developed classroom hubs, as a web-based communication tool for families. These are also promoted through online platforms such as Google Classroom and the Seesaw app. School newsletters promote ways families can assist with writing and home reading. Parents felt well informed about the school and their child's learning. A few parents suggested a need to streamline these communication channels.
- Families are invited to set formal goals for their child's learning and are provided with information through the newsletter and in online platforms to monitor and support their child's learning.
- There is some evidence of the school promoting inclusivity of cultures, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. This includes celebrating key events and displaying artefacts across the school. The school is connecting with the community to further understand connections to country and culture. A Board member commented on a need for a celebration of all cultures.

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

- A referral process is in place for students requiring additional interventions. Teachers present student learning data such as PAT, PM reading, NAPLAN and PIPS data to the disability education contact officer to triage need. Teaching staff also discuss individual children at class profile meetings. There is an opportunity for further screening for gifted and talented students.
- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) were evident for students identified as 'gifted and talented', students with learning difficulties or disabilities, or those with identified behavioural needs. These plans are written and shared in consultation with all key stakeholders. These plans are monitored on a regular basis.
- The MultiLit suite of programs have been implemented across the school to support children who have been identified as requiring additional support in reading. This program is delivered by a trained educator.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) support students who have been identified as requiring additional assistance. The leadership team has made strategic decisions regarding the placement of LSAs. Their timetable is flexible to be responsive to student needs.
- Students identified as EAL/D receive support from a specialist teacher three times per week. This occurs as an in-class model. The school is also responsible for the Tuggeranong Primary Intensive English Centre (TPIEC).
- Funding was strategically allocated to resource the implementation of PBL. This included purchasing signage and the two large mascots.
- The school has engaged the services of the RedBox Design Group to establish a master plan for the outside learning environment. School and ACT Education Directorate funds are being used to resource these improvements.
- The review team observed that the upgraded classroom spaces provide flexible options for grouping students. The library has been refurbished to provide an enhanced learning space for classes to access.
- The school has developed an environment centre through the Stephanie Alexander initiative. This space is currently used by year 3 students and to develop community engagement.
- Staff talked about a substantial increase in quality literature in the library. This includes resource books which support the implementation of the reading and writing agenda.
- There has been a focus on providing technology in classrooms to support learning.

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

- The school has enacted a whole-school team planning process called 'working parties' to research and develop key improvement strategies. These teams have guided implementation of the strategies with all staff, and monitored the impact.
- In discussions with school leaders and through the functions of working parties there is a focus and commitment on improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics. These working parties have provided leadership opportunities for teachers.
- The leadership team has implemented 'lesson study' as an evidence-based observational approach. This involved several teachers and leaders observing teaching and learning in a classroom and then engaging in discussions using a standardised template about what worked and ways to improve. Some teachers made comment that they would prefer an alternative strategy and the school leadership team is looking at ways to provide effective feedback.
- School leaders and some staff talked about participating in annual professional discussions.
- Term planning is shared with a teacher from a different team at the beginning of the term. Feedback is provided to the teacher using the 'ladder of feedback' and this is then submitted to the principal for further discussion and feedback.
- The 'grad gossip' program is being implemented to support early career teachers. Mentors have been trained to provide targeted support for these teachers.
- Learning intentions and success criteria are an expectation across the school and were evident in planning documentation, classroom observations and in student work samples.
- Teachers and some leaders expressed a desire for more structure and an agenda to guide conversations amongst teachers in year level and team groups. This includes focused discussions on student learning data to guide planning.
- Senior leaders discussed the placement of interns across the school to provide a pathway for new educators. They also spoke about the strategic recruitment of specialist teachers.

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

- Recently there has been a focus on unpacking the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum for reporting requirements. Mapping of achievement standards is taking place to align the Cambridge International Education Framework for English and mathematics to the Australian Curriculum.
- Curriculum documents are stored in a central drive for all staff to access. The curriculum has year level and term planning with weekly plans that are responsive to student learning. The sequencing of planning is less obvious across the years.
- While some yearly overviews referenced general capabilities, this was not as visible in term or weekly plans. There is some evidence of incorporating the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures within the curriculum.
- There is evidence of curriculum adjustment for students through ILPs.
- Team leaders are focused on delivering the English and mathematics curriculum. The health and physical education curriculum are planned for, and delivered by, specialist teachers. There is some variation in the planning for other learning areas.
- Teachers spoke about planning either from a starting point of the Cambridge curriculum, whereas others described a process of using the achievement standards to drive their curriculum planning.
- There is evidence of writing moderation across the school. There are visible 'Writing Walls' in each classroom that use the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) writing samples to demonstrate what is expected in each grade level.
- The Early Years Learning Framework is driving curriculum delivery in the preschool. Planning documents reflected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. A variety of cultures were featured.

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

- Through interviews and school documents, it is evident that the school holds the belief that every teacher is expected to cater for students at different stages in their learning, while appreciating that they progress at different rates.
- School leaders are driving an agenda to use data to guide teachers to tailor teaching to meet student needs. The school collects a range of whole-of-school data sets including NAPLAN, PIPS, SENA, and PAT-M. Teachers meet with the leadership team to discuss class profiles using this testing and other classroom information to inform individual growth.
- PAT and regular classroom assessments support teachers in identifying and addressing gaps in learning as well as supporting flexible grouping of students, particularly in English and mathematics. Some students discussed their understanding of 'novice, practitioner and expert' and how they can transition between groups.
- A working group called 'differentiation and research' has recently been established, placing differentiation as a focus for the school.
- Parents and teachers collaboratively devise student goals each year in parent teacher interviews. Some students were able to talk about their own personalised learning goals.
- The review team observed additional goal setting between teachers and students in mathematics and English.
- The Writing Wall provides exemplars for staff and families to discuss student progress and achievement in writing.
- Students understand what they are learning with class learning intentions for key subjects being visible in classrooms.
- The school's response to intervention processes include the MultiLit suite to support student development in reading.
- Parents talked about online applications such as Seesaw and individual discussions as ways of providing them with enough knowledge of where their child is at in their learning and what they can do to support them.

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

- Teachers explore and discuss evidence-based teaching practices in staff meetings and working groups.
- An expected teaching approach for explicitly teaching numeracy has been documented to provide consistency of practice across the school.
- The Readers and Writers Workshop models are being implemented in classrooms.
- The school utilises a variety of professional learning opportunities to support teachers in developing effective pedagogical practices in the classroom including the 10 Essential Instructional Practices for Literacy. Guided thinking for Effective Spelling, Reading for Meaning, and The Writing Book are utilised as resources to guide planning.
- Opportunities for high performing students are provided through participation in STEM days, early years Tuggeranong enrichment days, Cambridge immersion days, and Erindale College workshops.
- A high impact teacher strategy working party has been established to investigate evidence-based practice in pedagogical approaches.
- The school is working to adopt evidence-based strategies with respect to learning intentions and success criteria.

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

- The school has external partnerships with community organisations to improve various aspects of schooling. These partnerships include:
 - > The Erindale cluster of schools to share expertise, resources and create a pathway for students.
 - > The Stephanie Alexander Garden Kitchen Foundation which details agreed student outcomes in environmental science and health. Monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of this program was not evidenced.
- There is a developing partnership with Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the school.
- The school has a youth worker who visits two days per week to provide a point of contact for families and to develop and strengthen community partnerships with families.

Commendations

- Positive and caring relationships are highly valued at Wanniasa Hills Primary School by students and parents. Parents appreciate how staff communicate learning through Seesaw, Google Classrooms, and the learning hubs.
- The school has collaboratively developed a school system map to drive school improvement with intention and focus on continual improvement. The school leadership team is committed to finding ways to improve through engagement and exploration of current research, as evidenced through the formation of professional working parties.
- There is a school-wide commitment to every student's success.
- Parents spoke highly of the welcoming nature of the front office staff.
- There are high expectations for all students. The implementation of the PBL Framework has had significant impact in enabling purposeful and successful learning. The 'tone' of the school reflects the strategies that are in place in all areas of the school to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful and inclusive. The school mascots 'Wally and Wanda' are a key aspect of the school's culture.
- Physical spaces have been enhanced across the school. Priority has been given to the library collection to support the Readers Workshop, and classroom environments to improve student learning outcomes for students. The Readers and Writers Workshop models are noticeable across the school.
- The 'Grad Gossip' initiative has allowed early career teachers to engage in professional conversations to deepen their understandings of how students learn.

Affirmations

- The school leadership team at Wanniasa Hills Primary School analyse and communicate PIPS, NAPLAN, and PAT data to drive school conversations about student attainment. Staff are using the conversations as starting points for planning.
- The school is developing observational processes based on research such as lesson study and continues to explore ways to support personal growth in teachers.
- Curriculum has become, and will continue to be, a focus for staff.
- The staff across the school are committed to continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
- Teachers demonstrate a willingness to understand the different needs of students in their care and are exploring strategies to better meet their needs.
- The school has developed a well-resourced environmental centre within the school.
- The leadership team is developing a partnership with Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to further support and celebrate diversity and culture.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop a Wanniasa Hills Primary School Improvement Plan 2021-2025 with the wider school community, that:
 - > is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning
 - > provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes
 - > incorporates explicit targets that are monitored over the life of the plan.
- Develop a data plan that incorporates a full range of school data (student achievement and wellbeing) that:
 - > clearly outlines the purpose of data at each level of the school as appropriate
 - > clarifies roles and responsibilities for leaders, teachers and students in their use of data
 - > specifies how software can be easily used to support data analysis and communication at all levels
 - > provides opportunities for increasing the data literacy of school leaders and teachers as appropriate.
- Collaboratively develop a whole-school professional learning plan that considers all modes of professional learning, especially opportunities within the school. This should include a consistent approach to observation, feedback, mentoring and coaching of staff.
- Continue to develop teacher understanding of the Australian Curriculum to allow further development of an explicit, coherent and sequenced plan for the delivery that incorporates all aspects of the curriculum including achievement standards, general capabilities, and cross-curriculum priorities.
- Continue to develop staff capacity to cater for individual learning needs by offering multiple ways for students to engage with and express their learning.
- Continue to refine and document common expectations of teaching and learning that are grounded in evidence-based research.
- Continue to develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent of the school.