



ACT
Government
Education

Bonython Primary School

Report of Review, 2021

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Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 03, 04, 05 and 06 May 2021

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National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report Date: 06 May 2021

Report of Review, 2021 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review 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.

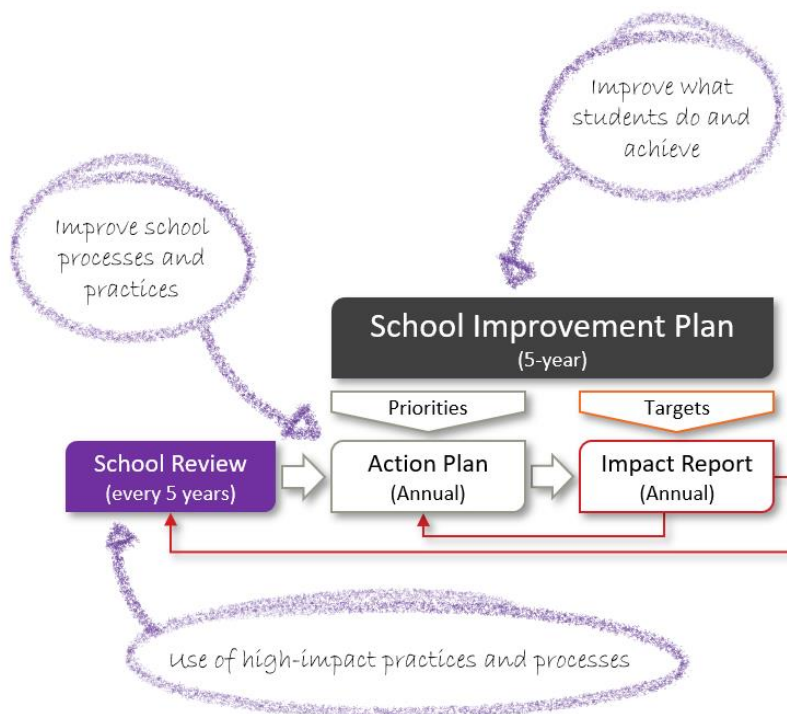
Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school 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 Bonython Primary School Strategic Plan 2017-2021 has three broad strategic priorities. Priority one (embed the strategies of formative assessment to improve student learning outcomes) has broad NAPLAN, ACER Progressive Achievement Test in Mathematics (PAT-M) and Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (now referred to as BASE) targets. Priority two (build, develop and sustain an inquiry mindset in students) has outcome targets of student understanding and enjoyment of learning, and feeling motivated and successful. Priority three (increase agency of key stakeholders in our community) has student outcome targets relating to satisfaction and engagement in learning.
- The school's graduate profile was built in collaboration with the school community to support a common vision on the purpose of schooling at Bonython Primary School. Parents interviewed strongly confirmed their understanding and appreciation of the school's strategic direction and showed limited concern about targets or academic results of the school.
- Annual Action Plans (AP) over the planning period have maintained a focus on the three priorities although a focus on targets was less obvious. Annual Action Plans/Impact Reports provide a trend analysis of the strategic plan targets over time. Annual School Board Reports provide the standard ACT Education Directorate requirements for reporting. Annual Action Plans/Impact Reports, Annual School Board Reports and the Strategic Plan are available on the school's website. The strategic agenda is shared in newsletters, the Principal's Vlog, the school's Facebook page and SeeSaw.
- In interviews, school leaders spoke about reviewing action plans in each semester leadership conference, and end of term and weekly meetings. This was supported by action plan tracking documents that provide written commentary on school progress. There is evidence that the school's analysis of data gave rise to a priority on writing in the later parts of the plan.
- Improvement agenda and progress is shared at Parents & Citizens (P&C) and Board meetings.
- Board and P&C representatives and staff interviewed had a strong ownership of the strategic agenda of the school and exhibited a strong commitment for ongoing improvement of each and every student.
- The school's improvement agenda is based on considerable evidence-based research. The school explored exemplary practice of several schools in the area of inquiry learning. It also uses an education consultant as a critical friend in the adoption of the 10 cultural markers of an inquiry school. These markers are used to measure progress in developing a culture of inquiry.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The Bonython Primary School Brief: Effective Use of the Multiple Sources of Data document describes the school's principles and practice on data collection and analysis. The associated Bonython Primary School Data Plan describes the various data sources and tools, the timeline for collection, responsibilities, and a description of the type of analysis required. The school uses research on multiple sources of data to categorise its data collection tools.
- As part of the school's data procedures a data team has been formed with the role of supporting teachers. The team has the responsibility of analysing key data sets and summarising and displaying the data for teacher use. For example, the school data team completed an analysis of writing samples and shared recommendations.
- Cohort planning teams are given 90 minutes each week for collaborative planning. This includes sharing formative assessment data to inform planning and monitor progress of student learning.
- Venn diagrams are used to analyse reading, writing and mathematics data (PM Benchmarks, Probe levels, writing samples, Middle Years Mental Computation assessment) into at level, above level and below level. These data are used for reporting A-E as well as informing planning.
- Teachers are given two hours per term to analyse individual student data from key data sets recorded in the data tracker.
- ACER PAT-M and PAT-R data is recorded on a spreadsheet and is used to analyse growth across the years. Staff talked about the opportunity to receive further training in data literacy to support more effective use of PAT as a formative assessment tool.
- Wellbeing data such as behaviour incidents is recorded through Sentral, including responses and parent contacts. The data team check and analyse this data on a regular basis.
- In general, the school community has been more engaged in the strategic agenda of the school than the school performance data.
- In discussions with the leadership teamwork is underway to expand the collection and analysis of school data particularly in reference to learning assets (Kath Murdoch 2016).
- School leaders articulate that the data team is currently working to expand the collection and analysis of school data, particularly in reference to learning assets.

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

- The school community places a high level of trust in the leadership's direction of the school and strongly support the school vision.
- Staff, students and parents/carers share a strong sense of belonging. This was reflected in genuine and caring relationships across the school. Parents spoke about using SeeSaw posts to enable conversations with their children about learning at home and felt that they are partners in learning.
- The GIDES (Grit, Integrity, Diversity, Empathy, Self-Management) values and learning assets are strongly evident across the school. There is a shared language of inquiry that all staff, students, and parents use and are familiar with describing learning across preschool to year 6. Students eagerly share their love for learning.
- The Bonython Brief: Approach to promoting positive behaviours for learning document, outlines the school's approach and practices for providing a safe and positive environment.
- Learning spaces, displays and artefacts have been carefully curated. Classrooms reflect the whole school focus on inquiry learning where student voice is privileged and valued.
- High levels of engagement were observed across the school however, some students indicated their learning needs could be further challenged.
- There are opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. This can be encouraged through shared inquiries, opportunities for upper primary children to lead playground initiatives including the loose parts program. A Buddies program is in place across some classes. The student led inquiry to redefine school house groups is a strong example of student voice and leadership.
- Student behaviour is well managed. Staff work together to problem solve and provide collegial support in responding to the needs of learners. The GIDES values provide clear expectations, and the school is working towards responding with consistency when challenges arise. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), who are now referred to as learning coaches, provide integral support for learner needs across the school.
- Cultural artifacts are visible across the school. A mural on a wall by Eddie Longford tells the Bonython Primary School story and place in country. An art exhibition, 'Acknowledgement of Country' is an event that the community is proud to celebrate. There are several co-curated displays and artifacts across the school that showcase the school's commitment to cultural integrity. Staff as well as parents/carers demonstrated awareness of the importance of cultural integrity.

- The school views parents and families as an integral part of the school community. Parents articulate their value for the whole school focus on inquiry learning, learning dispositions and GIDES values.

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The Bonython Primary School Brief: Embracing Diversity for Equity and Inclusive practices document, outlines the school's practices to support student need that are aligned to a Response to Intervention (RTI) model.
- The main process of identification of students with special needs is teacher referral. Teachers make referrals using their own observations which are verified by diagnostic testing. The school is exploring further opportunities to enhance the identification processes including examining priority groups within the school.
- The school's Disability Education Contact Officer (DECO) works with a teacher who is a trained counsellor, and the school psychologist to consider student need and apply for additional resourcing and provide supports as appropriate.
- The school leadership team has gained additional funding and allocated school funds to employ LSAs to support students who are not part of the inclusion support program. LSAs are supported by designated school coaches and classroom teachers to run small group 'focus' activities for students. Where appropriate, additional time has been allocated for selected teachers to provide small group support as part of the school's tier two strategy.
- English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) students are supported by an EAL/D teacher who provides an individual and small group withdrawal program. The teacher provides some in-class support.
- One LSU-A (Learning Support Unit-Autism) and one LSU (Learning Support Unit) caters for the needs of 14 children with a diagnosed disability. Both units are staffed with teachers and LSAs experienced in supporting students with complex learning needs.
- School furniture has been provided to support inquiry learning. All teachers are provided with funding to further support the curation of learning spaces to promote flexible learning.
- The outside spaces such as adjacent to the learning support units have been recently upgraded. Students are working with school staff to plan for upgrades to other external spaces.
- The school has a learning technologies coordinator who aims to raise teacher skills and understanding to maximise learning. Teachers and students stated that technology is adequately resourced in the school.
- The school has aligned release so that cohort teams can meet for planning for at least 90 minutes per week during school time. All teachers appreciated this resourcing decision.
- The school has aligned considerable funding to the strategic plan including the cost of critical friends to the school.

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 Bonython Primary School Brief: Building an expert teaching team document, provides a comprehensive outline of the school's beliefs and practices around professional learning. This is supported by the Bonython Brief: Feedback document, that outlines types of professional feedback and responsibilities.
- All staff in the school, including leaders, teachers, support staff, administration staff and the Building Service Officer (BSO) are involved in educator inquiries. Each staff member develops an inquiry question to explore over the year. Staff celebrate their inquiry at the end of the year. The educator inquiry model assists all staff to understand and participate in inquiry learning. Staff commented on how this learning helped them to understand the inquiry approach in the school and put them 'into the shoes' of the students.
- Leadership development through the Bonython Aspiring Leaders Initiative (BALI) in 2020 sought to position all teachers as leaders of learning. In 2021, staff pursued leadership inquiries alongside their educator inquiries.
- The school actively recruits staff with an inquiry mindset. Comprehensive induction processes designed to "inspire not tire" support new staff to the school in understanding the school's inquiry approach.
- A comprehensive Professional Learning Plan has been developed to address 'O Week' induction processes, meeting structures and systems, professional learning, and personalised learning priorities. The plan links professional learning to the school's action plan.
- All teachers meet for 90 minutes each week for collaborative planning with their team leader. This time is central to the collaborative strategy of the school and is supported by the school leadership.
- Professional success and staff achievements are celebrated within the school and have been acknowledged through national and local recognition.
- Teacher feedback occurs in a number of ways including classroom observations, co-teaching partner feedback, leadership walkthroughs and room shares.
- Designated coaches work with teachers and support staff (Learning Coaches) focusing on literacy, classroom structures, differentiation, and adjustments for students with additional needs. Coaches check in with the leadership team twice a term.
- A roles and responsibility document outlines the extensive opportunities for leadership in the school.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The Bonython Primary School Brief: Systematic curriculum delivery document describes the school expectations in curriculum planning.
- Bonython Primary School's curriculum map has a focus on 'our natural world', 'our physical world', 'our social world' and 'our personal world'. Planning for curriculum delivery is based on Kate Murdoch's inquiry cycle. The inquiry cycle was evident in classrooms across the school and all educators were able to explain the shared and personal inquiries they were teaching in their settings.
- A split screen approach is used to plan curriculum with a focus on both conceptual understanding alongside capabilities and skills for learning, known as the learning assets. The understanding and language of the learning assets (researchers, thinkers, collaborators, self-managers, communicators) was consistently used by educators, students, and parents across the school. The learning assets are tracked to the Australian Curriculum.
- The preschool to year 6 inquiry tracker demonstrates alignment with the Australian Curriculum over time. Teachers can demonstrate a deep understanding of curriculum and how it is delivered through inquiry learning. The school leadership team has identified a need to document a conceptual curriculum framework.
- Inquiry planning demonstrates direct references to Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and Sustainability cross-curriculum priorities. Specialist teachers provide teaching and learning programs in visual arts, science, cultural inquiry (Aboriginal cultures and language) and digital technologies.
- Cohort planning meeting minutes demonstrate the school's focus on assessment and moderation of student learning.

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

- Teachers and leaders recognise that all students are at different stages of learning. Teaching practices across the school reflect the belief that all students are capable of learning and supports are in place for all students. Assessment is part of the language of teaching and learning across the school to support differentiation.
- Inquiry learning is viewed by all staff as an effective pedagogical practice to differentiate learning for all students. Staff clearly articulate their belief that inquiry learning harnesses student's choice and voice.
- Intervention programs across the school take the form of focus groups where students are grouped based on ability for targeted intervention. LSAs support focus group and individualised interventions. Many teachers use team teaching as a strategy to cater for the individual learning needs of students through targeted small group and individualised instruction and conferencing.
- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) document the reasonable adjustments that are made to meet the needs of identified students. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) goals are set in collaboration with families and shared with all stakeholders. ILPs are working documents and communication procedures are in place to ensure all staff and parents/carers are kept abreast of student achievements of goals. LSAs are integral to ILP processes and are provided with timely and specific information regarding the needs of students.
- The school is utilising the expertise within LSUs across the school to support inclusion. Programs are responsive to the individual needs of learners with structure, routine, and appropriate adjustments to learning key to the success of the program.
- The school's focus on inquiry learning is designed to support personalised learning. Some classrooms have established processes for students to set learning goals.
- Google Suite, Facebook and SeeSaw are used to communicate learning. Parents/carers articulate their value for these platforms and support conversations at home regarding learning. In some classes, students are given further voice and agency through what they post to SeeSaw.

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school leadership team is driving a strong pedagogy of inquiry learning that permeates through the whole school.
- The Bonython Primary School Brief: Effective pedagogical practices document, outlines the school expression of Kath Murdoch's 10 cultural markers for an inquiry school. The school's partnership with Kath Murdoch involves in-class and whole school support and feedback. Teachers talked about their appreciation for this partnership and the expertise of their leadership team in supporting the development of their pedagogical practices.
- All staff use the educator inquiry process within the school to further their understanding of the inquiry learning model.
- The school is in the early phases of implementing the 6 traits of writing and 10 Essential Literacy Instructional Practices in preschool to year 2 classrooms. Inquiry is used as the main driver for pedagogical approaches in literacy and numeracy and evidence of research-based approaches to teaching reading and writing were observable across most classrooms.
- Students across all year levels engage in shared and personal inquiries. These are visible across the school through play, discovery time, exploration time and iTime.
- Providing students with choice and voice in learning is promoted in the school and the flexible learning model being introduced in the year 5-6 team is promoting student agency.
- Split screening is evident across all classrooms outlining learning intention, learning assets and success criteria. Floor books and classroom displays are used as tools to document learning and are actively used by students. Students reported that they receive timely and specific feedback on their learning.

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

- Bonython Primary School has developed several strategic partnerships to support student learning. While school leaders were able to convey their understanding of the student outcomes to be achieved, they acknowledged that for each partnership further work was required to clarify the student outcomes and develop processes to measure the achievement of these outcomes. Some of these partnerships are described below.
- Bonython Primary School is a member of the University of Canberra Affiliated Schools Program. The partnership has an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that indirectly promotes student outcomes. The MOU has a review process. The partnership supports the training of preservice teachers, the opportunity for students to be supported by university tutorial groups, the ability for Bonython Primary School teachers to undertake further university study and to support teachers as researchers. The teachers as researchers facet of this partnership is currently examining student self-regulation with a particular reference to the classroom setting.
- The school has a developing partnership with the Museum of Australian Democracy with an aim to develop student voice and agency which is a key component of the school's improvement agenda. The school is supported by the expertise of the museum staff by co-designing student leadership conferences. The museum in turn is building a bank of learning resources.
- All teachers are actively using SeeSaw as a way of strengthening its partnership with parents. Across the school staff demonstrate student learning over time with some classroom posts talking about learning intentions. While the school has not specifically outlined the parent role in this partnership, all parents interviewed knew that the posts were a prompt for rich conversations with their children and felt empowered by the information provided by the school.
- The school is embarking on a partnership with Arizona University on re-imagining education. The partnership will allow the school to look at the research and hear from other schools on a similar journey, while offering an opportunity for the school to celebrate progress so far.

Commendations

- All staff are focused on individual achievement and there is a whole school commitment to the success of individual learners from preschool to year 6.
- There exists a high level of trust through the community.
- The graduate profile has been a successful strategy in aligning the community around a shared vision.
- Staff, parents/carers, and students feel a strong sense of belonging and are proud of their school.
- The documented school Professional Learning Plan is exemplary. Leadership places a high priority on the professional learning of staff, learning alongside them and supporting all staff to engage in further study.
- The professional achievements of staff are acknowledged and celebrated.
- All staff are actively involved in educator inquiries that are widely appreciated.
- The students believe they have a strong voice in how and what they learn. This is a school where students love to learn.
- The Learning Support Units are recognised as exemplary practice across the community
- All staff are conscious of and work from an understanding of individual learner needs and use formative assessment to plan for learning.
- Curation of physical spaces both indoor and outdoor through student led inquiries, has raised the student voice in their school.
- Staff inquiries have supported the development of attractive and effective teaching and learning spaces.
- Teachers use the time allocated to collaboratively plan for curriculum delivery based on student needs and interests to harness curiosity.

Affirmations

- Bonython Primary School has a plan for data collection and a data team to support teachers in the analysis of data for planning.
- There are structures and processes for identifying and supporting students with additional needs.
- Learning Support Assistants are supported to become learning coaches through professional learning, coaching and the educator inquiry process.
- The language of the learning assets is well understood and expressed by teachers, students, and parents/carers.
- The inquiry process is allowing all students to grow in their own way and at their own pace.
- Learning intentions and success criteria are used extensively across the school to support student understanding of their learning.

- The school has strategically developed partnerships to support student outcomes.
- The parents view SeeSaw as an important tool to know about their child's learning and to support conversations about learning at home.
- The school is working to authentically incorporate cultural integrity.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop a Bonython Primary School Strategic Plan 2022-2026 that is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes, by incorporating explicit targets for student achievement that are well communicated to the school community.
- Continue to develop the school's annual data plan to incorporate the full range of academic and wellbeing data, particularly data to support school understanding of student achievement of learning assets.
- Continue to build leadership and staff data literacy skills.
- Continue to support teacher understanding and skills to use technology to maximise learning.
- Continue to develop a conceptual curriculum framework with a strong focus on the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- Continue to develop staff capacity to cater for individual learning needs by offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression.
- Develop a consistent approach to goal setting as a way of raising expectations of learning for all students.
- Continue to refine and develop partnerships to support the strategic intent of the school.