



ACT
Government
Education

Southern Cross Early Childhood School

Review Report Summary, 2018

This page left intentionally blank.

Overview of the school review process

Approximately a quarter of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. The reviews are an important part of how the Directorate supports and monitors school improvement. Reviews provide schools with quality and independent feedback, tailored to the school's context. Each school is reviewed at least every five years, providing valuable opportunities for self-reflection, planning and improvement.

Reviews are undertaken by experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT), a nationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices. Each review team generally consists of two to three reviewers, however, the number of reviewers and length of review depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of the school.

Reviewers closely consider each school's performance data and speak with a wide range of staff, students, parents and community members to get an accurate picture of the school. Following the review, the school receives a comprehensive report. The report outlines the key findings and recommended improvement strategies to maximise student outcomes. The report concludes with a set of commendations, affirmations and recommendations to assist in future planning and to support school-wide improvement planning.

The following summary contains the commendations, affirmations and recommendations from the review report.

Commendations

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

Affirmations

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

Recommendations

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

Commendations

Southern Cross Early Childhood School is commended for the following.

- Southern Cross Early Childhood School has built a strong and sustained partnership with Anglicare, the childcare provider on site. There is an obvious high level of trust between the parties who work closely together on a daily basis. This alliance enables a seamless program of care, education and transition for students and their families from birth to year two. Through co-location arrangements, regular communication, and the sharing of resources for mutual benefit, both parties can enhance the opportunities for all children.
- Southern Cross Early Childhood School is commended for its decision to establish a community co-ordinator position. This has supported the school in implementing a very broad range of strategies that strengthens the partnership between home and school. Strong connections to a broad range of community organisations and government services ensure that individual support is provided for families when needed. An array of parenting programs, information sessions, effective communication strategies and community events supports parents/carers in partnering in authentic and meaningful ways with their children's education.
- The school Board and staff of the school are united and committed to the core objective of supporting the learning and wellbeing of every child. The Board and principal work in close partnership actioning the school's strategic plan.
- The school is commended for the 'stay and play' playgroup program. This results in families with infants connecting with the school and each other. This program also supports parents to develop their children's gross/fine motor skills, social and emotional learning, literacy and numeracy learning from an early age.
- Southern Cross Early Childhood School promotes and maintains a welcoming, calm, supportive and highly inclusive environment. All students, staff and families are very proud of the school and there are high levels of trust across all stakeholder groups.
- The principal and all school staff are held in high esteem by families and community partners.
- The school prioritises student wellbeing. This is evident in a school-wide approach to social and emotional learning and the support mechanisms in place.
- Southern Cross Early Childhood School demonstrates leading practice in responding to student needs. Comprehensive processes for the early identification of student need and subsequent strategic resourcing are in place to maximise every child's potential.
-
- The school improvement agenda is grounded in evidence from research. The leadership team ensure that teaching practice is underpinned by leading and contemporary research.
- The school is to be commended for its commitment to the provision of professional learning for all staff. The school Board actively supports teacher access to professional learning by privileging this in the budget.
- The Outside Learning Environment Masterplan is evidence of the school's commitment to providing engaging learning areas for students and families in alignment with the play-based curriculum delivery model. In partnership with the Board, several components of the existing masterplan have been completed.
- The school has reviewed and is updating its Reconciliation Action Plan. A leading committee is in place to ensure that cultural integrity remains a priority and is represented in curriculum planning, school gatherings and through artefacts, symbols and rituals.

Affirmations

The Review Team offers the following affirmations for Southern Cross Early Childhood School.

- The school has recently introduced 'data diamonds' as a strategy for monitoring and discussing student progress data. Potential now exists to further develop systematic ways of collecting and analysing student progress data to further enhance this new initiative.
- The leadership team conduct learning walks to observe teacher practice. Targeted feedback is provided and focusses on the 10 Essential Literacy Practices. Most recently, classroom teachers have joined team leaders to participate in learning walks.
- Team leaders lead weekly professional learning team meetings with classroom teachers. These meetings allow for moderation of assessment tasks, reflection on student progress data, the sharing of practice and team planning.
- Southern Cross Early Childhood School has introduced a whole-of-school approach to literacy underpinned by the Essential Framework for Early Literacy. Potential now exists for the school to embed this framework.
- There is a school-wide commitment to intentional play-based learning. Daily investigations allow students to access learning in their own ways and at their own pace. The leadership team intends to strengthen inquiry-based learning, drawing on experts in this field. This will support the enhancement of skills development particularly in the General Capabilities.
- Lunchtime clubs offer students a wide range of co-curricular activities based on student interest. This initiative is another feature of the school's commitment to providing rich and diverse learning experiences.

Recommendations

The Review Team recommends Southern Cross Early Childhood School pays attention to the following opportunities for school improvement during the next planning cycle.

- Develop an explicit school improvement agenda for the next planning cycle which includes specific improvements in student learning and wellbeing to be achieved. These improvements should be well defined, time bound and measurable. Continue to work closely with the school community to develop a shared ownership of the improvement agenda. Develop clear targets, supporting teachers in taking responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve these.
- Continue to explore which data sets will best inform the school about student learning and wellbeing outcomes. Consider how data sets can be stored centrally to provide ease of access and how software can be used to disaggregate data sets and support deeper analyses. Support teachers in routinely using objective data on student achievement to identify and respond to individual needs.
- Continue to identify the pedagogical practices that are expected in all classrooms and draw these together in a way that supports teachers in clearly understanding what is expected of them. Build the capability of teachers in implementing these practices by providing opportunities for regular sharing of practice through modelling, classroom observations, feedback, mentoring and coaching.

- Continue to support teachers in planning the curriculum to ensure a strong alignment between the overall curriculum plan, classroom teaching and the regular assessment and reporting of student progress. Ensure that a high priority is given to the progressive development of students' deep understandings of concepts, principles and big ideas within learning areas, as well as the development of the General Capabilities across the school.