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Education

Turner School

Report of Review, 2021

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Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 19, 20, 21 and 22 April 2021
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National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report Date: 22 April 2021

Report of Review, 2021 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date: 03 May 2021

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.
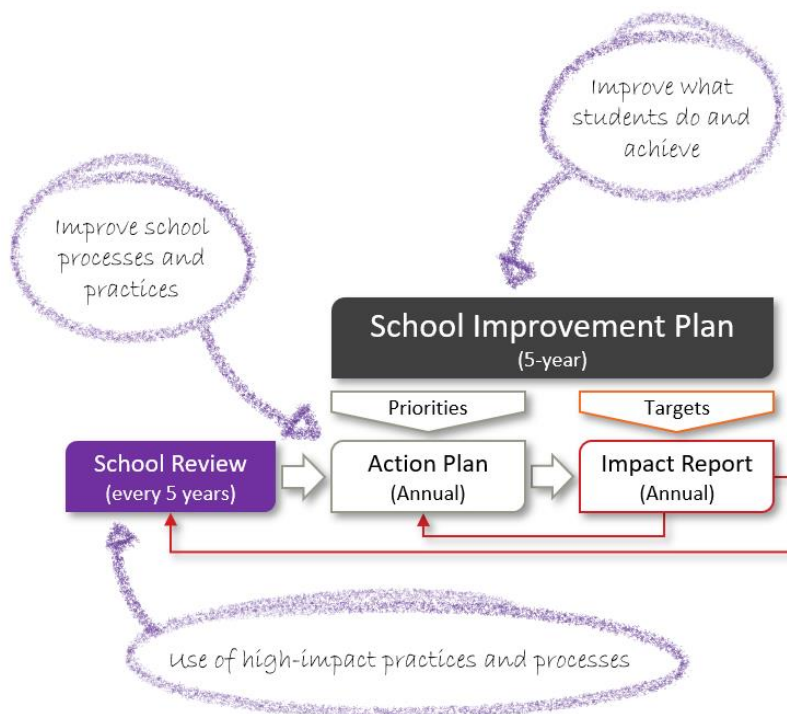
What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

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 Turner School Strategic Plan 2017-2021 has two broad key student outcomes: every student makes substantial growth in their learning each year; and students are confident and creative learners, equipped for a rapidly changing world. Each outcome is measured by a range of targets. The outcomes have been consistently actioned over the last five years.

- The school has developed graphic representations of both key student outcomes to provide a holistic view of the improvement agenda. In addition, the school has constructed a Turner School Theory of Action flow chart for each key student outcome that provides a narrative on how key strategic improvement strategies support the achievement of intended outcomes.

- Staff had a strong understanding of and commitment to the two key student outcomes and associated strategic improvement strategies. Some teachers expressed a need to narrow the improvement agenda.

- The Turner School Improvement Team operates on an opt in basis and currently has 27 members who meet twice a term on a formal review basis. The team runs as four action learning groups (Curriculum Alignment, Contemporary Pedagogies, Cultural Integrity and Preschool Quality Improvement). Each group is led by a classroom teacher and has access to a critical education partner outside the school who they meet with for feedback once a term. Action research conducted by each team is heavily influenced by evidenced-based research. Action learning groups include representatives from each year team to present findings and gather feedback. Each year team has an action goal related to the annual Action Plan.

- The Turner School Annual School Board Report 2019 conveys the required information to the school community including NAPLAN, BASE (formally Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)) and school survey data. The Turner School Impact Report 2020 provides information on the achievement of planned strategies and targets. Both reports are located on the school website.

- The School Board hosted a podcast to parents to explain the key strategy of personalised learning at Turner School.

- School leaders shared evidence of the analysis of longitudinal data to support school actions.

- Board members commented that information about the priorities is well distributed in newsletters, podcasts and on Facebook. Parents identified an opportunity for the school to further support their awareness of learning targets in the school agenda.

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 school has a strong data culture. All leaders and teachers talked about data being a fundamental aspect to both school and individual student improvement. Data discussions drive all aspects of the school.

- The school's assessment and monitoring schedule is updated annually and includes a variety of data types particularly in English and mathematics. The adoption of research on multiple sources of data has provided the school with a richer view of student achievement and wellbeing across the school.

- The Turner School Multiple Sources of Evidence - Teacher Data Framework outlines the expectations of teachers in assessment and data analysis to understand individual, class and year level attainment to determine starting points for learning. Each year group has a designated data lead teacher, in addition to the team leader, to support teachers to meet the expectations of the school.

- The Turner School Multiple Sources of Evidence - Leadership and School Improvement Data Framework describes the use of data to determine starting points for school improvement. Data lead teachers meet with the senior executive team each term to analyse data and collaboratively design focus for team action research.

- A PM Benchmark data wall has been established for all students for use in team discussions. Students exceeding the 30 Benchmark are monitored using literacy progressions in reading. Schedule for Early Number Assessment (SENA) student achievement is located on a spreadsheet.

- Teachers compile a 'white folder' for each student at the end of each year to communicate individual student data to the student's next teacher.

- In collaboration with teachers, an executive teacher is leading the development of an online portal for teacher information and data. The data is represented in both tables and graphs. The work is still in progress but will eventually provide improved access to data of student growth across the years.

- Teachers use a Disciplined Dialogue[1] approach in interrogating data.

- Teachers felt that collaborative discussions of student achievement, using multiple sources of data were valuable.

- School performance related to current strategic targets is available in the Impact Reports and Annual School Board Reports on the school website. Some parents choose to use 'My

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[1] The notion of 'disciplined dialogue' was proposed by MacBeath & Dempster in 2009. It was introduced to support the building of professional conversations with teachers about effective classroom teaching

School' and other websites to source their own information for national school comparison. Parents identified an opportunity to improve the communication regarding where this information can be accessed and what it means.

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

- Turner School's positive school culture is characterised by high expectations and a commitment to excellence. This shared vision was exuded by all stakeholders. The tone of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning.

- Students commented that "I have the best teachers," and "I love my school".

- The review team collected evidence that demonstrated a strong collegial culture with a focus on meeting student needs and achieving school goals. Staff commented to the review team on their appreciation of support from the leadership team and their colleagues. Some staff identified an opportunity to reduce workload pressures in order to further increase staff morale.

- The school has created a Social and Emotional Literacy (SEL) Officer position to investigate future possibilities for supporting the wellbeing of students and staff.

- The school promotes inclusive practices and a clear commitment to quality learning. All staff collaboratively work to support the individual needs of students.

- The school is implementing strategies to embed the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples. Displays, playground upgrades, collected artifacts and a shared focus of connecting to self, school and country were evident. This is supported by four key cultural questions developed to align the work of the school.

- Scheduled and formalised contact with parents is appreciated with learning journeys and parent teacher interviews being valued by families. Some parents requested that more regular and timely feedback regarding their child's progress, would enable them to support their child at home.

- The school promotes a culture of inquiry. Learning through inquiry was observed across the school with students having opportunities to construct their own learning and meanings through discovery and collaboration. The review team observed practices of teachers being inquirers who collaborate to maximise student learning.

- Parents and students valued the wide range of programs and opportunities that are in place to support student developmental needs and the current school focus on increasing opportunities for student voice.

- The leadership team has developed a flow chart to support student behaviour. The approach to managing behaviour at the school is underpinned by restorative practices and the school values.

- There are purposeful processes in place to minimise disruption and promote learning.

- The articulated values of support, cooperation, acceptance, respect, friendliness, and fun (SCARFF) have a ubiquitous presence throughout the school.

- Some members of the school community said there was an opportunity to challenge students further in their learning across the curriculum.

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 school has documented a tiered approach to support individual needs within the classroom. Personalised Learning Guidelines were developed in 2018 in consultation with the whole school community to meet the policy requirements for Disability Education, English as an Additional Language / Dialect (EAL/D) and Gifted and Talented. The processes in the guidelines reflect the highly diverse and inclusive nature of Turner School.

- An embedded model for Case Management[2] supports the identification of student wellbeing and learning needs and directs targeted resources. All staff can articulate the Case Management process, approaches, and supports at all levels of need. This includes the use of evidenced-based checklists and the use of Multiple Sources of Data that allows teachers to systemically identify student need before raising the issue for further consideration if required. The gifted and talented checklist for example was developed by a teacher who used research from their Master of Education program in gifted education.

- A dedicated leadership position coordinates school wide practices and programs to respond to additional needs. The student support team coordinates the Case Management approach.

- School leaders play a significant role in supporting teams including working collaboratively with staff within classrooms. Leaders have comprehensive across-school records of student need.

- Additional funding equivalent to 1.4 full time teachers has been allocated to support the Professional Learning Community (PLC) mentor program. This includes the allocation of 45 mins for each teacher each week to work with others to meet PLC goals.

- The school uses learning environments flexibly and determines use of spaces according to student needs. This includes the innovative use of indoor and outdoor spaces and teaching teams to support mainstream and small group students. Teachers are encouraged to be part of this planning process.

- Technology is available to support student learning in classrooms. Some teachers and students talked about the opportunity for increased access and further training to maximise learning.

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[2] The case management approach developed by Lyn Sharrett is used to put a spotlight on how all students are progressing.

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 places a high priority on building an expert teaching team with intentional processes documented to building collective knowledge and skills of all staff. The changing profile of staffing is met through an established Professional Learning Plan (PLP) involving multiple levels of development: induction, mentoring, coaching, PLCs and whole school capacity and expertise building.

- Induction processes are clearly defined, and an individualised approach determined through coaching conversations, supports new staff. The school has documented timelines to support induction. New staff have access to underlying research.

- The review team has evidenced examples of strategic recruitment.

- Every teacher is part of a PLC. PLCs respond to Multiple Sources of Data and are focussed on meeting and tracking the individual needs of students. PLCs reflect on learning growth and share expertise to build knowledge.

- Focussed learning walkthroughs and ghost walks occur with specific foci to support building expertise in the school's pedagogical framework.

- A whole school approach to mentoring and coaching is documented, with most staff engaging in coaching sessions to suit individual professional learning needs. Most teachers have had the opportunity to be formally coached for at least five weeks during the year where the inquiry is based on student achievement data.

- Some teachers are given opportunities to coach and mentor early career and new staff. These dedicated learning coaches support school leadership to build capacity within each team.

- All teachers engage in action research linked to the Turner Pedagogical Framework and set an action learning goal to explore high impact strategies for student learning. These Action Learning Teams (ALTs) are mentored by the principal and leadership team and use the Spiral of Inquiry[3] to guide research. Some teams use external critical friends to support these projects which are shared in an annual action learning fair.

- Teachers and leaders share their learning and expertise in forums, and conferences in and outside of the school. The school regularly hosts expert learning walks for schools across Australia and internationally. There are a number of staff who have been supported to continue their formal study in obtaining university master's degrees.

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[3] The Spiral of Inquiry proposed by Timperley, Halbert, and Kaser in 2014 suggests adopting a curiosity mindset to identify what is going on for learners and to develop some hunches about what is leading to the current situation, before deciding what to do about it.

- Staff meeting times on a weekly basis are dedicated to professional learning related to high impact strategies.

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 Australian Curriculum is implemented in all mainstream primary classrooms, with 'I can' statements used to make this learning explicit for students. The 'I can' statements are used across the school by most teachers to engage students as active participants in their learning. Students in year 5 and 6 in particular, use these 'I can' statements to set learning goals, track the progression of their knowledge while conferencing with their teacher, and planning next steps.

- The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and Victorian Curriculum are used in the Preschool and Small Group Classes respectively, with most teachers using goal setting and conferring to check and monitor progress.

- Curriculum planning occurs in teaching teams led by a school leader, while balancing the demands of each subject area.

- Small group and mainstream curricula are planned collaboratively by teaching teams. Small group teachers modify aspects of the curriculum as needed to meet the learning needs of their students.

- Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) have been collaboratively developed and reviewed.

- The established critical friendship provides a lens for deeper understanding of cultural integrity across the curriculum.

- The school-based Curriculum Framework document seeks to induct new staff and embed practice for existing educators. The implementation of the 2020 whole school curriculum planning, three tier framework including the literacy and numeracy progressions is a focus area of the school improvement curriculum action learning team.

- The school is further developing ways of highlighting the personal and social capability and the critical and creative thinking capability within the curriculum.

- in 2021, a school leader was allocated as Social Emotional Literacy (SEL) officer to look at ways to support teachers and student wellbeing.

- Extra curricula programs include volleyball, coding club, chess club, a community ukulele project, djembe (drumming) group, choirs, bands, sustainability, bike fixing, and garden maintenance clubs.

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
- There is a strong commitment from the leadership team to foster differentiated strategies in every classroom. The school developed personalised learning guidelines to provide a framework for all teachers to identify student progress, strengths, and weaknesses in order to personalise learning activities.

- Through multiple sources of data, all staff triangulate their understanding of student achievement to determine starting points for teaching.

- Student-directed learning is a strong focus across the school. School leaders encourage teachers to work with their students to set learning goals to monitor and track progress against learning progressions and learner assets, as well as be active participants in their learning. Teachers use this opportunity to conference with students about their learning.

- Students from kindergarten through to year 6 are well versed in the use of the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) taxonomy, to track progress against learning outcomes and achievement standards. Teachers have demonstrated ways in which this taxonomy is worked through in detail with students.

- Teachers utilise the workshop model to differentiate the curriculum, in the typical structure of 1/3 teacher directed instruction, followed by 2/3 independent and guided practice to support the embedding of content. Teachers use this time to work in a focused way and 'catch' individual student need.

- Student feedback about their learning is acknowledged by most teachers as a powerful way of acknowledging student agency and voice. This feedback is collated through learning experiences and ample conferencing opportunities.

- Passion projects allow students to explore and expand their learning in areas of interest.

- Reporting to parents occurs through end of semester reports, learning journeys, portfolios, and informal teacher/parent communications. Teachers and parents identified that there is an opportunity for more effective communication that is inclusive of all parents and engenders school-parent partnerships.

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 has collaboratively designed a comprehensive pedagogical framework to support the delivery of impactful teaching. School leaders collaboratively synthesise contemporary evidence-based research to frame school beliefs and design agreed key pedagogical practices. Teachers have been supported to understand and utilise practices within the Pedagogical Framework at their point of need.

- Staff, students, and parents were able to articulate Kath Murdoch's Learner Assets[4], implemented by the school improvement contemporary pedagogies PLC, to build students' beliefs in their own capacities to learn successfully. Students demonstrated understanding of SOLO Taxonomy which provides a model for levels of understanding of the complexity of tasks as students move through their learning. Parents valued the school focus on Learner Assets.

- Students and staff articulated the school's approach to co-constructed goals, with learning intentions and success criteria evident in classrooms. Students were able to engage deeply in conversations with the review team about their learning and next steps for success.

- Teachers and leaders are committed to the continuous improvement of their practice by engaging in action learning and research. All teachers and leaders give a high priority to continuous learning to understand contemporary and quality practice to maximise learning for students.

- All school leaders work shoulder to shoulder with staff to support the implementation of school pedagogical practices by modelling, evaluating, and supporting staff in acquiring and utilising the school approaches.

- PLCs are layered across the school to add depth to discussions and to strengthen the examination of practices and approaches in teaching.

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[4] Learning assets are resources that are used to deliver information for the purpose of training and development.

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 used strategic partnerships to support the school improvement agenda.

- The school has formed a partnership with Dr Harry Kanasa from Griffith University as a result of an analysis of school mathematics data, with particular reference to trend data in years 3 and 5. The aim of the partnership is to increase the number of students in the top two bands. As the partner in this project Dr Kanasa gains valuable research from the school. This work is still in progress. The annual Action Plans reference an annual evaluation of this partnership through progress in student mathematics attainment.

- Partnerships have been formed with other schools in a contemporary literacies research project with a focus on collaborating across schools to build practice in teaching, assessing, and increasing student agency to monitor growth related to the General Capabilities and 21st Century learning.

- The school has a partnership with Kath Murdoch to investigate inquiry practice. This partnership has a broader reach with partner schools to collaboratively build best practice.

- MurriMatters Consulting supports a school partnership in cultural integrity and works regularly with the school improvement team to collaborate in building cultural expertise.

- Pegasus Riding for the Disabled is supported by ongoing scholarships for riders offered by the Lions Club providing rich outcomes for students.

- The Parents and Citizen Association (P&C) and School and Student Cultural Integrity Garden Partnership further strengthens whole community learning related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and sustainability perspectives.

Commendations

- The school has developed a strong evidence based-research culture which is driving all aspects of school improvement. The Turner Pedagogical Framework is an exemplar of the alignment of the beliefs, research, and high impact practice.

- The school has communicated its improvement agenda in multiple ways and has actively sought to fully engage staff and parents. All members of the school community express a strong connection with the school and articulate their commitment to the improvement agenda.

- All staff are focussed on the growth of each and every child.

- All staff can articulate the data processes and systems, and regularly engage in data rich conversations to guide planning with a focus on collective ownership of all learners' data within the school. There is significant work in building the data literacy skills of teachers using dedicated Data Lead teachers and leadership in the purposeful design of PLCs and team focus.

- The school's SCARFF values underpin the positive culture of the school community.

- There is a strong collegial culture focussed on building an expert teaching team. Staff engage regularly in teaching and learning conversations and school leaders play an active role in working shoulder to shoulder with staff to develop a strong learning culture.

- The school has systematic processes to identify and capture student learning needs and adopts innovative ways to respond to those needs.

- There is a positive feel to the school with a strong ethos of inclusion.

- Students have a strong voice and ability to articulate their own learning.

- Staff value the support that leaders and colleagues provide in supporting students and developing professional practice through PLCs and a culture open to coaching.

Affirmations

- Turner School is using multiple sources of data to better understand individual student needs and is establishing electronic systems to make this data more accessible to teachers.

- There is ongoing research and planning in how physical spaces inside and outside of the classroom can be used to maximise student learning and engagement.

- The school is working to embrace and fully incorporate the General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities from the Australian Curriculum.

- Staff are continuing to explore connections beyond the school grounds to make links with critical friends and partner organisations to support existing and new school practices.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop a Turner 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 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. Continue to explore ways to use technology and design to maximise student learning and challenge students at their level.

- Continue to explore ways to further strengthen the parent-school partnership.