

Peer Review Report

School Context

Location

Newham Primary School (NPS) is a rural school located in the shadow of Hanging Rock, ten minutes north east of Woodend. In 2010, through Rural Replacement Program funding, the school was rebuilt.

Demographics

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, enrolments have grown from 82 in 2012 to 119 in 2015 and the school's Student Family Occupation (SFO) index has fluctuated from 0.2413 in 2014 to .3105 in 2015, with the school's overall socio-economic profile consistently at the 'high' end. Using this measure, student outcomes should be higher than state mean. Many of the families at NPS are rural landholders and the school is surrounded by farmland. There is a strong focus on sustainability and a strong arts culture.

Community Links

NPS is committed to providing a caring, stimulating and supportive environment that embraces the local community. The school culture nurtures originality, creativity and imagination through the Arts and Literacy. A *Parents and Friends Group* is well established and effectively organizes fundraising and whole school activities. The school actively supports the wider community through its involvement in events such as local festivals. The Principal is a member of the *Newham Community Planning Group* which meets regularly to improve the quality of life for Newham residents including the school community. A shared facility, a multipurpose court, was completed in 2013 and is located within the school grounds. The *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program* was established at the end of 2013 and has strong support from parents and the community, both through volunteer and financial assistance. It provides students at years 4-6 and their families with the skills and knowledge to apply healthy eating principles and gain an appreciation of vegetable gardening.

Staffing

NPS has 9.94 equivalent fulltime staff: 1.0 Principal class; 6.05 teaching staff and 1.89 Education Support staff (ESS) employed to support small groups of students and students at risk.

Curriculum

There is a strong emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy with intervention and enhancement programs at all levels. A high value is placed on minimum disruption to daily two hour Literacy and one hour Numeracy sessions. Integrated Studies using the Inquiry Approach and digital technologies enhance learning. Other key learning areas - Science, Humanities, Music/Drama, Visual Art, French and Physical Education/Sport (including a Foundation Level Perceptual Motor Program), provide curriculum breadth. There are strong links with other local schools in sport, performing arts and the *Annual Billy Cart Derby* as well through a nationally funded '*Partnerships for Learning*' project with a Numeracy focus.

Extra-curricular programs include a weekly lunch time environmental group, weekly choir activities and three visiting instrumental music teachers, keyboard, guitar and drums and a tennis program. After school activities are provided over four nights per week through supervision from school staff and outside providers who deliver sporting and arts activities. These programs, in addition to Physical Education, health and integrated curriculum, contribute to the school's commitment to '*Healthy Together*', a Victoria Achievement Program initiative.

Science and Sustainability

Aligned to the school's focus on the environment, a Science teacher is employed to deliver a science and sustainability program which is integrated across the curriculum. The school has a strong partnership with Newham Landcare Group which facilitates the Water Watch program for year six students and supports the environmental program.

2.1. Executive Summary

Achievement

Strategic Plan targets relating to both NAPLAN and Teacher Judgements were met. There are more than 85% of students in the top three NAPLAN bands at both year 3 and 5, and results mostly exceed state mean over the life of the Strategic Plan. Reading results are particularly strong with significant numbers

of students demonstrating high relative growth between year 3 and 5. For example, in 2014, 57.1% of students demonstrated high growth compared to state mean of 25%. Using Teacher assessment against AUSVELS as a measure, in 2014, 80% of students scored 'C' or above and of those, 20% scored an 'A' or 'B'.

The panel discussed the impact of the *National Partnership for learning project*. Through this project there has been significant emphasis on building teacher capacity in the teaching of Mathematics. This has impacted in improving teacher practice through the implementation of a consistent Instructional framework focusing on clarity of Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, lesson pace and differentiated tasks based on student data. Staff confidence in using at least three data sources as evidence of student achievement, forms the evidence for a differentiated approach to planning for targeted teaching and learning. The project has translated to other curriculum areas through consistency in planning documentation and the implementation of the Instructional model across all classrooms. The impact of this work is evidenced by improved student outcomes such as NAPLAN results and Reading levels as well as improved consistency and confidence in teacher practice. This work is a continued focus for the next Strategic Plan, 2016-2019.

Although there are 1:1 digital devices used in years 4 to 6, a bank of laptops and some standalone computers, there is capacity to improve the seamless integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning across the school. This is a focus in the next Strategic plan.

In addition to community links, parents are actively involved and welcome in the school to assist with children's learning. The review panel discussed the importance of a conducive school-home partnership to improving student outcomes. For example, parents following up listening to their children read on a regular basis having a strong, positive impact on reading ability. The review panel discussed further enhancements to communication with parents regarding strategies to support their child at home in their learning as an area for further work.

Engagement

Targets relating to attendance and transition were not met. Attendance data indicated average days absent in 2014 at 14.34 days compared to state average of 14.22 days and the target of 12.20 days. NPS is proactive in using *Everyday Counts* strategies to promote the importance of attending school. As well, through the *Healthy Together* program, students have an appreciation of the importance of staying healthy so they actively engage with school. Further analysis of the attendance data attributes absences to nine students who have had 20 to 30 days due to minor illness or tiredness. (A further 11 students taking up to 50 days on extended holidays.) There is continued focus in working with students and families in promoting the importance of attending school.

Targets relating to Transition were not met, with the 2014 Parent Opinion Survey (POS) placing the Transition variable below the target. Strategies have been recently instigated to enhance transition practices into and out of the school and the impact of this should be reflected in the 2015 POS. Teachers are continually refining and improving the detail around student information transferred from one teacher to the next, as students transition through the school.

Wellbeing

Most variables in the Attitude to School survey are in the second and third quartiles and mostly above state mean. Strategic plan targets relating to student connectedness to school and their peers were achieved. The school values (*Respect, Honesty, Be your Best, Creativity, Community, Inclusion*) are part of NPS's positive behaviour approach. NPS is a calm and supportive environment, conducive to student learning. There are minimum behaviour issues, both in classrooms and the yard.

There are many programs in place at the school, providing a proactive approach to addressing each student's social, emotional and physical wellbeing. Examples include *Bounce back, Kidsmatter, Restorative Practices, Health promoting school* and *Bully stoppers*. The Engagement and Inclusion policy is the umbrella for wellbeing in the school. Further work in refining the policy and strategizing wellbeing programs, including Resilience and currency of the school values, is vital work.

Productivity

There was clear evidence of strategic decision-making and resource allocation during the review period. The Principal has worked with the School Council to ensure vigilance and planning for the future in finance, staffing and operational matters. The budget has been in surplus over the period of the Strategic plan, due to prudent financial management.

Increasing enrolments over the past four years has placed pressure on the leadership structure at NPS. More experienced staff have accountabilities and responsibilities in line with their classification which are

clearly articulated on documented role descriptions. There is continued need to support and build capacity of staff to complete their roles. The current meeting structure provides the framework for this to occur.

NPS is well placed, with resourcing and sound processes and procedures in place, to achieve the suggested goals and meet the suggested targets discussed during the Peer Review.

The Key Improvement Strategies the school should consider implementing in order to bring about the further improvement desired by school and confirmed by the panel are listed below:

Achievement

- Continue to build staff capacity to maintain high levels of professional growth and implement whole school purposeful teaching.
- Enhance staff confidence and capabilities in documenting and implementing directions (including infrastructure), curriculum and teaching strategies to enhance digital learning in the school.

Engagement

- Enhance the partnership between the school, students and parents with a shared language, expectations and processes relating to student outcomes.

Wellbeing

- Building of student resilience through implementation of school wide strategies.
- Develop student agency and self-regulation with a focus on personal learning.

Productivity

- Allocate resources to optimize student outcomes.