

Peer Review Report Summary

2. 1 School Context

Coolaroo South Primary School is located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. In 2013 the school undertook a merger with local school, Dallas North Primary School. Both school communities combined to reside on the Coolaroo South site and to operate as Coolaroo South Primary School number 5554.

The current enrolment is 279 students in the Primary School and 36 students in the Kindergarten. Enrolment has varied considerably in the last 3 years due to the transience in the community. The school's enrolment draws students from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The current SFO is 0.86. The school's enrolments fluctuate due to the intake of new arrival and refugee families as well as children from the Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre.

The school has undergone extensive refurbishments to classrooms and school grounds and currently houses 15 classrooms, 2 fully operational Kindergarten rooms, extensive play areas and sporting fields. Physical resources also include a gymnasium/multipurpose room, art room, family centre, library and an Out of School Hours Care room.

Coolaroo South Primary School is a KidsMatter school and uses this framework to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all students, staff and community members. The school's philosophy is based around creating a positive community, creating emotionally resilient students and working with families and carers - all equally important in supporting the learning of each and every child.

Apart from Literacy, Numeracy and Inquiry, the school provides programs in Physical Education, The Arts, Science, Languages (Arabic and Italian), cultural programs in Turkish, Assyrian and Samoan as well as Music. In 2015, the Kindergarten provided a four year old program for 36 students. Three year old programs have operated in previous years.

The school's staffing profile consists of Principal, Assistant Principal, 2.4 Leading Teachers, 13 classroom teachers, 4 specialist teachers (The Arts, Physical Education and Science), Business Manager, Office Manager, two community liaison staff and seven educational support staff.

The school actively promotes home-school partnership and parents are supported and encouraged to participate in the many programs offered by the school. The programs are aimed at building confidence and knowledge for parents so that they can assist their children in the learning process.

Priorities have included: providing leadership opportunities for staff and enhancing leadership capacity, provision of teaching and learning programs to improve student outcomes, targeted professional learning for staff, enhanced role clarification, the establishment of operational processes, and improved student engagement and attitude to learning. The development of Professional Learning Teams (PLT) along with the development of Whole School Frameworks in English, Mathematics and Behaviour Management has enabled a coordinated approach to teaching and learning. Additionally the development of non-negotiable protocols

for teacher pedagogy and practice in reading, writing and Mathematics has contributed to greater consistency in the delivery of teaching and learning programs. Furthermore coaching has been provided to the staff in both numeracy and literacy.

2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

Coolaroo South Primary School developed a school strategic plan in 2010 that set a number of goals for the school to achieve in three main areas: improving individual learning outcomes for students in English and Mathematics; improving student wellbeing and improving the levels of student attendance at school.

The School has developed positive relationships with families. The establishment of a Community Hub and engagement of family liaison personnel who speak Arabic, Assyrian and Turkish supports the inclusion of a range of family cultures at the school. Programs are in place that support families including playgroup, mother-child English classes, craft classes, computer and iPad training.

75% of the students in the school have English as an additional language (EAL). The assessed levels of English across the school are lower than the average levels of other government schools due to the large proportion of EAL students. The school provides a wide range of teaching programs and support for students in developing levels of English and this has led to strong growth in the achievement levels in all areas of English language. This growth is especially evident in the improvement of writing skills that have been well supported and celebrated with the successful running of the annual writers festival.

The students' levels of numeracy are generally below the state average, and the learning gain from year 3 to year 5 is below average.

There is a wide range of specialist classes in the arts, physical education, science and music. There is evidence of creativity in the school with displays of high-quality student artwork and creative use of space where the coloured tiles of graduating year six students from each year are displayed.

The levels of student wellbeing and engagement are high. In response to the Attitude to School Survey, students indicated high levels of positivity of feeling safe at school, and being connected to the school and to their teachers. Staff at the school create positive relationships with the students in dealing with issues while using the positive Restorative Practice process. Other programs at the school that are very effective in improving student well-being and engagement include the work of a play specialist, toast time breakfast program, minecraft club, Learning for Living program, Physical Literacy program and the kitchen garden program.

There has been some improvement in the rates of attendance of students but there are still some concerns that some students are absent from school for a large number of days and also many students are still arriving late after the first teaching session has commenced.

The transition program organised for the preschool children, from the school kindergarten and other neighbouring kindergartens and child care centres, before they begin their Prep year is well organised and ensures a positive start to the school life for those students.

School parents affirm that the program has ensured that the transition of the preschool children into Foundation year is extremely smooth as children settle into school routines quickly.

2.2.2 Summary of the considerations for the next Strategic Plan

The school has developed a vital Community Hub to promote parent engagement at the school. The Hub is highly regarded by the community as it responds to a variety of needs of the parents including the provision of services in languages other than English. The expansion of the Hub with extra staffing allocation could further support a number of initiatives that the school is undertaking that rely on parent engagement such as improving student attendance.

The parents who are engaged in activities at school have expressed positive regard for The school has developed a vital Community Hub to promote parent engage the school and are engaged in the learning processes of their children. Parents have indicated that attending school to view student performances and presentations of completed projects is an effective way of attracting parents to school. A program of regular individual, class and whole school presentations should the developed throughout the year to encourage more parents to attend. The occasions of parents attending school activities should be used as a vehicle to promote important expectations of the school such as high levels of student attendance.

Teacher perceptions indicate that there is a lack of consistency of teaching practice across the school and as a result student achievement is not at expected levels. The leadership could implement a process involving the whole learning community to develop a current school vision and values statement that represents current education philosophy and is understood and adhered to by all staff so that the statement of preferred teaching pedagogy leads to consistent teaching practices and processes.

The school documentation Prep to Year 6 (Whole school frameworks in Literacy and Numeracy) will require further refinement to ensure consistent teaching and learning practices. To promote consistent practice the panel recommends that one learning area be a focus for 2016 to develop a model of practice for staff to begin the process of working together with common goals and using common processes. Reading or Inquiry Learning were suggested as potential first phase projects.

The use of student achievement data has been problematic and staff are not confident in the application of a range of data to inform their practice. A program of professional learning for teachers should be continued in the application of a variety of data that will direct the content of the learning programs more specifically to the point of need for all individuals. The tracking of transient students is an expressed issue for staff.

Staff have indicated they require more confidence that they can provide accurate and useful information to assess the progress of EAL students and to inform curriculum planning for these students. A program of professional development to support staff to consistently implement an effective process for the accurate assessment of growth in EAL student learning is needed.

Teachers expressed that they have not had sufficient feedback to inform improvements in their teaching practice. A program of teacher observation and feedback would assist in supporting teachers to reflect on their own practice and to engage in discussion with others that will promote improved consistency of teaching across the school.

Attendance data indicates that high levels of student absence remain an issue despite a major focus and efforts made by the school to improve attendance rates. A whole school approach to improving attendance and punctual arrival at the start of the school day could be implemented with a whole school program such as "It's not okay to be away". The importance of high levels of student attendance to raising levels of academic achievement should be reinforced in a wide range of methods including student mantras, written, phone and digital communications with parents and high impact visuals around the school.

Staff have indicated that student motivation and engagement in their learning could be improved. Setting regularly reviewed individual learning goals for all students will support improved engagement and outcomes. A program of professional learning for teachers in the setting of aspirational goals collaboratively with students and the implementation of a consistent process for monitoring the achievement of set goals and the timely formulation of new goals would support this.

Levels of student engagement are impacted at the school by high levels of incidents of past trauma. The new strategic plan should include enhancement of the consistent implementation of KidsMatter and associated professional learning for staff with further investigation into the potential implementation of the DET Building Resilience Model.

2.2.3 Next steps

There is a strong leadership team comprising members who are passionate about education and the school, are highly capable and who are working collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for the students. The leadership team is open to try new ideas and to assessing the success of the implementation of new strategies. There is a committed staff group who are all willing to engage in professional learning and to support the leadership team and its directions.