Peer Review Report Summary for Weeden Heights PS

Executive Summary

2. 1 School Context

Located in the City of Whitehorse, Weeden Heights Primary School has a current enrolment of 156 students. The school prides itself on its excellent facilities, which are well maintained and provide a stimulating environment for staff and students. The school boasts an award winning Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden, French Language, Physical Education, Performing and Visual Arts and specialist Science and Sustainability programs. In addition students enjoy attractive contemporary learning areas and a spacious parkland environment. Other extra Curricula programs provided are Student Leadership and Buddies Programs, public speaking competitions, Library and ICT clubs, Sports clinics, Maths Olympiad and Tournament of the Minds. Classroom learning is supported by wireless access including student laptops, iPads and interactive whiteboards. The school is keen to continue to build infrastructure in relation to computer technology as a powerful tool for contemporary learning.

The School Strategic Plan goals were to improve student learning outcomes in both Literacy and Numeracy and therefore some innovative program have been introduced to build teacher capacity and support student learning. Staff professional learning has focused on the implementation of Café Reading, Strategic Spelling, and Writers Notebooks. The implementation of inquiry learning over the past two years has seen the development of student voice, questioning, thinking and research skills. Extension and enrichment programs are also provided to challenge students and enhance their talents. Specialised learning programs assist all students to become confident, critical thinkers and learners. These engaging and challenging programs equip students with essential life-long skills to be successful learners in the 21st century.

The school’s workforce is a combination of skilled and dedicated teaching staff, supported by education support staff who add a wide range of skills and interests to the programs and activities offered in the classrooms and outdoor facilities.

As a You Can Do It and Restorative Practices school, a significant commitment has been made to support the wellbeing of all community members by building a positive school community, explicitly teaching a broad social emotional curriculum while working closely with parents and families. The aim is to develop the ‘whole child’ and to give students a high sense of respect, self-confidence and an appreciation that learning is a lifelong process. Staff are positive role models for students and provide a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for all students. Student wellbeing (social, emotional, physical, behavioural and creative) is also developed through the school’s approach to teaching social skills and promotion of school values.

Weeden Heights provides an extensive transition program including a comprehensive pre-school to foundation program, Bright Beginnings, which ensures that Foundation students are ready to begin learning when they arrive at school. Strong connections with a range of local secondary schools have also been established.

Weeden Heights PS is a dynamic, nurturing and vibrant learning community with a focussed commitment on providing exemplary programs. The school has many parent and community volunteers who are committed to supporting classroom and extra curricula programs throughout the school. The School Council is highly supportive of the school’s teaching and learning priorities and ensures policies and program budgets are aligned with implementation strategies.
2.2 Summary of the School’s Performance

2.2.1 The School’s Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

Weeden Heights Primary School achieved much over the period of the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the development of outstanding student wellbeing programs and practices. The school is now keen to develop a stronger focus on Teaching and Learning over the next four years.

A decline in enrolment has seen the school embark on a program of transformation. Student wellbeing has always been a feature of the school and other significant areas are in the process of improvement. Staff have embraced the renewal of their practice, the development of AusVELS compliant curriculum, strategically planned and staged professional learning and their increased empowerment. In addition, improvements to buildings and grounds have been welcomed by all members of the school community.

Overall the school’s performance over the past four years in both Literacy and Numeracy has been strong – continually exceeding the State mean. Across the school, teacher assessments (F-6) show that around 95% students achieved at, or above, the expected level in all aspects of Literacy and Numeracy. The school’s performance in NAPLAN at year 3 is stronger than at year 5, with year 3 outcomes well above State levels. In fact year 3 NAPLAN shows improvement gains in all areas. Year 5 data has fluctuated somewhat over the period of the strategic plan, with performance just above State levels in Literacy, but well above State levels in Numeracy. Growth between years 3 and 5 in Literacy and Numeracy exceeded the State mean – and the proportion of students achieving Medium to High Relative Learning Gain in NAPLAN averaged 87% in 2015 (well above the state Benchmark of 75%).

High levels of student wellbeing and engagement in learning are described in the 2015 student surveys where all variables ranked at, or above, the 80th percentile. This view was reinforced during a school tour when the panel was able to observe students highly motivated and engaged in their learning. Staff surveys were equally positive with all variables relating to School Climate, Professional Learning and Teaching and Learning exceeding the 80th percentile – well above the State mean. The school is concerned, however, that the Parent survey data is not as strong. Whereas in 2010 most variables registered around the 75th percentile, from 2011 to 2014 most variables have registered under the 25th percentile (below the State mean). Effectively engaging parents as partners in their child’s education will be a key focus in the next period.

The key factors which have supported Weeden Heights’ school improvement are many. The most significant are the quality of school leadership, staff professional development, skilled and well-resourced change management, flexibly managed resources, including staff, the quality of intervention and support programs, and the rich range of co-curricular activities. Through the self-evaluation report, the school has identified some important strategies for improved outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy over the next four years.

Over the next strategic planning period, Weeden Heights Primary School will continue to create a vibrant learning environment where students are motivated and independent learners and where optimism, engagement and challenge are a feature in every classroom.

2.2.2 Summary of the considerations for the next Strategic Plan

The most significant improvement strategies to deliver on this vision will be to:

Focus on learning outcomes and growth in student learning in Literacy and Numeracy

- Develop a clear whole school vision for contemporary pedagogy, focusing on individualised, personalised and differentiated learning
- Develop guaranteed and viable curriculum where scope and sequence documents are aligned with the new Victorian Curriculum
- Develop a Professional Learning plan which is strategically planned, staged and actively implemented in classrooms and which features peer and expert coaching, observation and feedback (linked to PDP)
- In Literacy embed CAFÉ Reading, explore the use of VCOP/Big Write, Writers Notebook, 9+1 - with a major focus on Strategic Spelling
• In Numeracy explore topic based Maths assessment
• Ensure the integrated use of ICT within lessons for authentic learning by further developing ICT infrastructure, establishing tools to track staff and student efficacy and completing e-Smart accreditation
• Develop school wide collegiate teaching – with pre and post testing, differentiated grouping of students and shared assessment strategies, where individual student growth is tracked and collegiately shared.
• Develop instructional leadership capacities of Curriculum and Team leaders
  - Continue to utilise School teams as the primary units of change with in the school
  - Introduce an efficient web-based environment for the management, tracking and reporting of data in all key areas in order to accurately measure the achievement levels, and growth, of all students.
• Continue to develop the capacity of staff to use data to inform all aspect of teaching and learning from school wide, cohort and individual student perspectives.
• Develop induction programs for new staff
• Establish effective assessment and reporting processes by:
  - Locating an effective assessment tracker to accurately monitor achievement levels and growth
  - Developing staff capacity to use data to drive learning especially in moderating outcomes.
  - Refining the assessment schedule to enable better analysis of student data

**Develop student Voice and Choice so that students are reflexive and reflective thinkers who have high expectations of themselves as learners.**
• Develop effective engagement and empowerment practices with a focus on Clear Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, Teacher Feedback and Student Goal Setting
• Continue to cater for a range of student interests and learning styles - The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden caters to the needs and interests of a wide range of students
• Continue effective transition programs such as the Bright Beginnings program, for students coming into, through and from the school and ensure that there is strong communication around individual learners and their needs

**Provide a safe and stimulating learning environment for all students.**
• Review and develop student wellbeing policies, values and behaviour management programs.
• Promote the School Values program – Link to student rewards program and continue the Bucket Filling approach used in Junior School
• Expand Social Skills program: Reference Restorative Practices, YCDI and AusVELS General Capabilities. Include units on resilience, peer pressure, positive choices, bullying and conflict resolution
• As ICT develops eLearning team to develop cyber safety via e-smart program. Continue to inform parents in the area of cyber safety
• Provide induction process for staff in relation to whole school programs such as Restorative Practices
• Introduce Mindfulness and Meditation programs
• Investigate efficient and effective data base to improve the school’s tracking of student wellbeing, attendance, additional assistance and program support data
• Continue effective transition programs such as the Bright Beginnings program, for students coming into, through and from the school and ensure that there is strong communication around individual learners and their needs

**Effectively engage parents as partners in their child’s education**
• Inform parents about the role that they play in their child’s education,
• Continue open communication with parents to inform and promote school programs and new pedagogical approaches.
• Continue to survey parents to monitor effectiveness of communication and staff approachability.
• Investigate communication apps such as Tiqbiz and Skoolbag

**Create ideas to market the school in the community**
• Monitor and develop the effectiveness of the pre-school Transition program
- Promote the school as a school of ‘academic excellence’
- Showcase outstanding extracurricular programs such as *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden* program

**Effectively allocate and use resources to support the school’s goals and priorities.**

- Develop an ICT Master plan - ‘best practice’ infrastructure providing student and staff access to state of the art ICT resources, and supporting teachers’ capacity to fully utilise the potential of integrating ICT learning tools into all areas of learning and teaching.
- Ensure that P&D plans align with the school’s strategic direction of the school with the strategic direction

### 2.2.3 Next steps

In conclusion, the review finds Weeden Heights Primary School is very well placed to pursue and achieve its goal to create a vibrant learning environment in which students become lifelong learners who value themselves and others in their school and broader community. The school fosters high quality leadership, reflects on its work and thrives on challenge, values and empowers its staff and children, focuses on outcomes and is determined to maximize success for students in its community. The school’s motto, *Futures are Bright* would seem an apt introduction to the next period.