

Peer Review Report – 2017 Cycle

University Park Primary School South-Western Victoria Region

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1. Peer Review Report Executive Summary (published on school's website)

1.1 School Context

University Park Primary School (UPPS) is located in the suburb of St Albans South, approximately twenty kilometres west of Melbourne. The school was established in 1972 and provides a range of new and upgraded facilities that include classrooms with access to additional areas for small group work, music centre, gymnasium, a kitchen garden centre, science centre, parent room, canteen, library, and a visual arts room. The school grounds provide for active and passive play areas and there is a joint-use agreement with the Brimbank City Council for the use of the school oval as a community parkland.

Student enrolment numbers have increased over the review period from 199 in 2013 to 272 students in 2017. The school caters for students from Foundation (Prep) to Year 6, and the backgrounds of students reflect wide cultural diversity with a significant percentage of students from an English as an additional language (EAL) background. The main nationalities other than English are Vietnamese, Samoan, and Punjabi. Forty-four percent of students access education support.

The staffing profile consists of a principal and assistant principal, 20 teaching staff and 7 education support staff that assist students in their classes. There is also a part-time multi-cultural aide, business manager and office manager. The school has a wellbeing team that is focused on supporting students with special needs.

The curriculum is based on the Victorian Curriculum and there is a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy as well as the integration of the other subject areas. Specialist programs include a kitchen garden program, visual arts, physical education, Japanese and science and all students attend these classes. There is a focus on students requiring additional support as well as provision for enrichment in learning. Digital technologies are integrated into all curriculum areas and there is a mindfulness through physical activity and Better Buddies program that promote resilience and connectedness to peers and school.

Students are also provided with a range of additional learning opportunities with a camping and excursion program, swimming, sports such as Auskick, Jump Rope for Heart. There is also a student leadership team that promotes leadership development and decision-making and there are a number of school events and fundraisers that are led by students.

The school focused on continually building a home-school partnership by providing opportunities for students, parents and the community involvement throughout the review period. Activities include parent/carer information sessions, afternoon teas, working bees, kitchen garden volunteers, meet the teacher and parent/teacher interviews and discussions.

1.2 Summary of the School's Performance

1.2.1 Summary of the School's Performance against the previous Strategic Plan

The 2014 to 2017 school strategic plan (SSP) set out the goals and targets for student achievement, student engagement, student wellbeing and productivity.

Student achievement

The student learning goal of the last review period was to improve the learning growth and achievement of every student with a focus on literacy and numeracy. The review panel agreed that the goal was met in some areas and not in others. Student learning growth was strong in numeracy and above schools with similar characteristics by Year 5 in 2016. In reading, progress to Year 3 was not as strong but improved by Year 5 and outcomes were above similar schools in 2016. Writing improved by Year 3 over the period but was still below similar schools and growth was not strong between Year 3 and 5.

Strategies that enabled progress in numeracy included the engagement of a numeracy specialist and teachers were provided with consistent targeted professional learning and coaching that provided feedback on their practice. A numeracy curriculum, based on the Victorian Curriculum, was implemented across the school.

Student engagement

Over the strategic plan period the school sought to improve student engagement by building student voice in their learning, and the panel agreed that this was partially achieved. The target to improve teaching and learning in the student opinion survey was not achieved by 2016 although most factors were above state and regional means in 2016. In the 2017, all factors in the 'learner characteristics and disposition' domain were at or above 89% endorsement, with self-regulation and goal-setting at 94%.

The target for the average student attendance rates to be above 95% was achieved in Year 5 in 2016. All other year levels were at or above 90% in 2016. Relative to similar schools, the percentage of students with 20 or more absence days was better than those of schools with similar characteristics and the number of absence days over the review period (15 days compared to 17 days).

Student attendance was closely monitored by teams and a number of positive encouragement strategies were implemented. The 'Every Day Counts' approach was implemented and promoted as a whole school approach to student attendance.

Student wellbeing

The panel agreed that the goal and targets to enhance support for every student to thrive in a safe and stimulating learning environment was generally achieved over the period. The 2017 student data indicated that overall (Years 4, 5 and 6) the percentage of positive endorsement for school connectedness was 89% and sense of inclusion was 95%. Parent opinion data also improved.

Student wellbeing had been enabled through the building of a strong school culture and the curriculum encompassed social emotional learning approaches to develop self-management and awareness, empathy, social and problem solving skills and this was reflected in the integration of health and physical education in the curriculum. There were a number of initiatives that supported the positive development of student wellbeing and these included a breakfast club, sensory space, lunchtime activities, garden club, buddy activities and excursions, love of literacy and iPad program, cybersafety, incursions, excursions and a range of sports activities. There was also a consistent and whole-school approach to student management that incorporated the school values.

Productivity

The panel agreed that the goal to maximise the use of resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for students was achieved over the review period. Although there were no specific targets set for productivity, the panel agreed that strategic resource management that impacted positive student learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students was achieved.

1.2.2 Summary of main findings and considerations for the next Strategic Plan

Considerations for the next University Park Primary School Strategic Plan for improving student achievement, engagement and wellbeing were discussed by the panel. Suggestions were aligned to the Victorian Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

A goal to improve the learning growth and achievement of every student in literacy and numeracy with a particular focus on reading and writing, was suggested by the panel. It was suggested that the school continue to develop the school leadership, collaborative professional learning teams (PLT's), and the curriculum, instruction and assessment practices of every teacher. All agreed that if there are shared curriculum, instruction and assessment practices together with instructional leadership and collaborative teacher practices, then student learning outcomes will improve.

Opportunities for student leadership had been well developed over the review period and the panel agreed that students evaluating their own progress, self-regulating and taking responsibility for their own learning, was a future focus. A second goal proposed by the panel was to improve the engagement of every student by building student voice and agency in their learning. The panel suggested that building high expectations for all with a whole school approach to challenging goals and effective feedback for students and staff, and building the partnership with parents and the school community around supporting and improving student learning would impact positively on students. The panel agreed that by developing students' understanding of themselves as learners so that they act as partners in the learning process, supported by the development of student-friendly curriculum and associated assessment expectations, then positive school experiences, and student engagement and growth in learning will result.

The panel agreed that the school had developed a stimulating and safe learning environment that focused on student wellbeing and that the sound approach taken so far would continue into the next strategic period.