Peer Review Report

Northcote Primary School

North Western Victoria Region

School number:	1401
Principal:	Kerrie Williams
School Council President:	Ian Taylor
Review Company:	National Curriculum Services
Accredited School Reviewer:	Jan Volkman
Peers:	Cheryl Bondeson Principal Preston West Primary School Karen Anthonsen Principal Reservoir East Primary School
Date of Review Meeting:	13 August 2014

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Executive Summary

Northcote Primary School's core purpose is clear – *'to help children to become literate and numerate and prepare them for life.'* That the school and the adults within it act on the accompanying belief *that every child can learn; that where you start does not matter - it's where you end up that counts* is also clearly evident from the review process, School Self Evaluation (SSE) and the panel meeting discussions. The Northcote Primary School (NPS) community has much to celebrate about its achievements during 2010 through 2013. Sustained improvement in student learning from existing high levels is evident over that period, along with high levels of student engagement and wellbeing. The review panel's opinion, informed by a broad range of evidence, is that Northcote Primary School is a very effective school.

The school has embarked on a rigorous program of using evidence to differentiate content and instruction. This has involved building teachers' capacity in data literacy and expanding the concept of inquiry learning as a disposition. With regard to student learning, National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data reveal strong comparative performance. The school is consistently performing at the level that might be predicted given student background characteristics. The NAPLAN mean score indicators also provide clear evidence of improved student learning. The 2013 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy means were stronger than the 2010-2013 four-year average of the means. There is clear evidence that the school adds considerable value to student learning, The mean growth in NAPLAN scores for NPS students who were assessed in Year 3 in 2011 and again in Year 5 in 2013 reveal the school's results for Reading, Writing and Numeracy exceeded the state mean.

Student Attitudes to School Survey engagement and wellbeing measures provide ample evidence of very high levels of student cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement. Survey measures of engagement have consistently been higher than those for similar schools and well into the top 10% of all schools. In 2013, the average attendance rate for classes was 93% which represents about 14 absent days per FTE student, and is similar to the state average. The school provides individualised learning plans for students on extended holiday, and acknowledges attendance is an area to continue to work on.

There is no doubt that the strong performance indicators are the result of the evidence-based strategies implemented during the review period. These are comprehensively described in the Self Evaluation and include strategies related to the previous Northern Metropolitan Region's Powerful Learning and Achievement Improvement Zone (AiZ) actions. Strong, clear distributed leadership deliberately focused on establishing a school-wide framework for teaching practice and building teacher capacity to consistently implement the strategies. The panel suggested that enabling students to understand their own performance data that informs personalised goal setting, and providing feedback to teachers could be further investigated.

There has continued to be a poor response to the formal collection of parent opinion data. Parent participation, however, is high; there is a strong, supportive parent community. Regular class newsletters communicate to parents the learning intentions and include ways parents can support their child's learning at home. Investigating ways in which parent expertise can be utilised more in the classroom has been identified as an area worth exploring.

The school's core values of creativity, respect and community underpin a school environment and atmosphere where safety, caring attitudes, quality respectful relationships, consultative decision-making and high educational standards are encouraged. All staff members are congratulated on their respective roles and contributions to the improvements. The panel wanted to acknowledge the school's achievements, its leadership, teachers, parents and students, and the benefits that will accrue from current directions.

Panel discussion was rigorous and focused on how to embed the very good practices that have been introduced. The review Terms of Reference point clearly to areas that the school will focus on in the medium term.

The panel endorsed the future focus areas identified by the school in the SSE and suggested the Key Improvement Strategies the school should consider implementing to bring about the further improvement desired by school:

Student Achievement

- Continue to build a consistent whole school approach to learning and teaching based on core teaching protocols (Theories of Action - Curiosity and Powerful Learning, NMR School Improvement Strategy).
- Continue emphases on developing a whole school spelling approach and continue to refine the school's teaching practice in Reading, Writing and Numeracy.
- Continue to develop differentiation of curriculum and assessment with the aim of ensuring that all students make the expected growth.
- Improve data collection storage (SPA or other relevant program) and embed team analysis of student learning data and use of evidence as a means of monitoring and targeting the specific learning needs of all students.
- Record curriculum documentation in paper and electronic form in a flexible format to allow for continuous improvement based on feedback from students, teachers and parents
- Provide strong support for staff professional learning which focuses on improved teaching practice, consistency of practice and the sharing of best practice through teacher observation including a realignment of the current peer observation process to one that builds on the existing collaborative environment and sharpens the focus of discussion.

Student Engagement

- Continue to ensure smooth, seamless, and effective transition for, students moving from kindergarten to school, early years to middle years, and primary school to secondary school.
- Build on existing communication strategies to parents/carers and continue to engage them in their child's learning.
- Continue to attend to and emphasise the importance of student attendance levels**.**

Student Wellbeing

- Continue weekly sessions in building social and resilience skills through programs such as the Bounce Back Program (Dr Helen McGrath) and the implementation of the developmental approach to classroom behaviour (Associate Professor Ramon Lewis).
- Continue to provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment which fosters engagement in learning and develops students' social competencies, resilience and sense of wellbeing and a positive self-image.

Productivity

- Offer more authentic opportunities for students to provide feedback on their learning to teachers in line with the 'Teacher Theories of Action' and Hattie's research.
- Continue to provide opportunities for professional learning to build the capacity of all staff.
- Establish processes for feedback: staff to staff; staff to Leadership; students to staff; parents to staff; staff to parents
- Continue to allocate resources to ICT as the school moves towards increased use of mobile devices.
- Investigate ways to maximize engagement and expertise in the community, and amongst parents in student learning.

Context

Northcote Primary School is located in the inner northern suburb of Northcote. The school was first established in 1874 and retains the original Victorian and later Edwardian brick buildings. The school's population is a diverse mix of nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds with the overall socio-economic profile rating in the high range.

The Self Evaluation makes it clear that the school is committed to its purpose '*We are here to help children to become literate and numerate and prepare them for life.*' The school's core values of creativity, respect and community underpin a school environment and atmosphere where safety, caring attitudes, quality respectful relationships, consultative decision-making and high educational standards are expected.

Student enrolments have risen, from 233 in 2008 to 328 in 2014, representing a 30% increase. The school is anticipating an enrolment for 2015 to be 350. Currently, there is an even gender balance. In 2014 there were 14 classes comprising three Foundation classes (Prep), four Year 1/2, four Year 3 / 4, and three Year 5 / 6.

The staff are a mix of experienced and newer teachers and support staff that are highly committed and enjoy being part of the vibrant community. This school has equivalent full time staff comprising: 2 Principal class; 16.2 full time equivalent teaching staff; and 2.3 education support staff.

An important contextual factor that potentially influences a school's performance is the background of its students. The school SFO has remained fairly constant since 2010. The SFO for 2014 is 0.23. This places the school into the highest socio-economic profile grouping for government schools, representing relative high levels of educational advantage. This profile means that expectations for Northcote Primary School student outcomes are high. The proportion of students with English as an additional language (23%) is in the mid-high range. The proportion of indigenous students is 1%.

The school has had a major refurbishment over the last few years, converting traditional classrooms into more flexible, learning spaces. The refurbishment has provided the environment to transform the teaching and learning practices in the school. The pedagogical focus is to provide an inclusive teaching and learning program, with teachers working collaboratively to best meet the needs of all students. Students are not locked into one classroom area, they work across buildings as part of a collaborative team.

The school promotes the all-round personal development and self-esteem of each student. The engagement and wellbeing approach is based on the following principles: the right to learn, the right to be respected, and the right to be safe. Students are taught about responsibilities—personal responsibility (I do the right thing), and communal responsibility. All students have weekly sessions in building social and resilience skills through the Bounce Back Program (Dr Helen McGrath), the implementation of the developmental approach to classroom behaviour (Associate Professor Ramon Lewis). A wide range of extra- curricular activities are also offered including music, camps and sport.

ICT combining Windows and Apple platforms, laptops, PCs, iPads, digital cameras, the internet and intranet formed an integral part of the daily curriculum delivery and support with wireless connectivity. The School Council supported the updating of Information Technology in the school by allocating parent raised funds to the IT budget. This has included the purchase of additional Interactive Whiteboards over the past two years.

The school's improvement focus continues to align with the previous Northern Metropolitan Region's Achievement Improvement Zone project. The school's participation led to a sharpened focus on supporting improvement and consistency in teaching practices throughout the school. The school achieved this through the use of evidenced based (data driven) approaches and a strong focus on research based, best practice.

The School Self Evaluation highlights the importance the school places on strong partnerships with parents 'based on respect and recognition of a shared responsibility for the education of the students'. Parental and community input is welcomed by the school and seen as an important influence on achieving the best outcomes possible for students.

Terms of Reference

Aim / purpose

How do we lift the bar from where we are to the next level?

1.   Consistent Whole School Instructional Models

What is a good process to establish how effectively and thoroughly we are implementing the Theories of Action from Powerful Learning and Curiosity?

2.   Data

How can we enhance our current collection and use of student data to inform teaching and learning?

3.   Pedagogy and Peer Observation

What are some of the ways that we can enhance our Peer Observation processes through alignment with the new Performance and Development model that will suit the context of this school?

4.   Parent Engagement

How do we best encourage Parent Engagement?

Methodology

The school's leadership team has overseen a thorough process to develop a comprehensive, focused Self Evaluation. The school's methodology, described in the Self Evaluation, has included extensive consultations with School Council, staff, parents and student leaders. The process has been a productive opportunity for the school community to reflect on achievements and areas for improvement.

Review meeting agenda

9.00-9.10   Introduction Jan Volkman

9.10-11.00   Analysis – Student Learning, Engagement, Wellbeing and Productivity at Northcote PS

11.00-11.30   Recess Break

11.30- 1.30   Analysis – Student Learning, Engagement, Wellbeing and Productivity at Northcote PS

1.30-2.30   Lunch

2.30-3.30   Strategic Plan Development

3.40-4.00   Staff debrief Jan Volkman

Review meeting participants

Kerrie Williams   Principal Northcote Primary School

Ian Taylor   School Council President Northcote Primary School

Karen Rush   Assistant Principal Northcote Primary School

Margaret Barrett   Member Leadership Team Northcote Primary School

Ross Bennie   Member Leadership Team Northcote Primary School

Niki Skoullos	Member Leadership Team Northcote Primary School
Linda Batten	Member Leadership Team Northcote Primary School
Cheryl Bondeson	Peer Reviewer Principal Preston West Primary School
Karen Anthonsen	Peer Reviewer Principal Reservoir East Primary School
Jan Volkman	Accredited Reviewer

Evaluation of Performance

Outcome	Panel view of school performance	Panel Recommendations for improvement
Achievement: Achievement refers to both the absolute levels of learning attainment and growth in student learning that schools strive to support. While recognising that literacy and numeracy are essential foundations for students' success, achievement outcomes encompass a broader view of learning, spanning the full range of curriculum domains, as well as students' co-curricular achievements.	The panel endorsed the school's performance as described in its comprehensive Self Evaluation. The value-adding patterns revealed in data was reinforced through various other documents, panel discussion and additional anecdotal evidence. Strong absolute, comparative, relative gain and improvement trend patterns are revealed in the school student learning literacy and numeracy performance indicators. NAPLAN data reveal: Year 3 NAPLAN results for 2013 in Reading and Numeracy have improved from the 2012 results with Reading average score moving into Band 6 and Numeracy average score above Band 5. The NAPLAN Year 3, 4-year average results for Reading are well above the State median and outside the middle 60% of Victorian Government schools. The NAPLAN Year 3, 4-year average results for Numeracy are above the State median and just on the outer edge of the middle 60% of Victorian Government schools. On school comparison measures, Year 3's performed at similar levels to other government schools taking	The panel endorsed the focus areas identified in the School Self Evaluation as the basis for the new SSP. These have been identified as a result of a comprehensive and in-depth reflection on the recent past and the intentions for the future. The panel suggested the following be considered for inclusion in the new School Strategic Plan. **Goal** All Northcote Primary School students will be literate, numerate and curious learners **Targets** For each student to achieve at least one year's growth in learning (as measured by AusVELS) during each school year. **Key Improvement Strategies** **Key Improvement Strategies :** • Continue to build a consistent whole school approach to learning and teaching based on core teaching protocols (Theories of Action - Curiosity and Powerful Learning, NMR School Improvement Strategy). • Continue emphases on developing a whole school

into account background characteristics.

Year 5 NAPLAN average score achieved results for 2013, in Reading are well above the State median, moving out of that scale towards Band 8. In Numeracy, the results are also well above the State median and moving towards Band 8.

The Year 5 NAPLAN 4-year average 2010-2013 results in Reading are well above State median and in Numeracy, above the State median.

On school comparison measures, Year 5's performed at higher levels in Reading and **a** similar level in Numeracy compared to other government schools taking into account student background characteristics.

The NAPLAN Relative Growth Year 3 – Year 5 student outcomes in the domains of Reading; Numeracy; Writing; Spelling; Grammar and Punctuation demonstrate that nearly all of the 2013 Year 5 student's growth (progress) results are either in the middle 50% (Medium) or in the top 25% (categorized as High). Very few students (less than 10% have not made sufficient progress from year 3 to year 5.

 Teacher Assessment Data reveal:

The teacher assessment data from AusVELS 2013 shows a very high percentage of students in years Prep to 6 above the standards expected. This incorporates results in all subjects including English and Maths.

At Years 3 and 5, Teacher Judgment in English and Mathematics appears to be consistent with the levels

spelling approach and continue to refine the school's teaching practice in Reading, Writing and Numeracy.

- Continue to develop differentiation of curriculum and assessment with the aim of ensuring that all students make the expected growth.
- Improve data collection storage (SPA or other relevant program) and embed team analysis of student learning data and use of evidence as a means of monitoring and targeting the specific learning needs of all students.
- Record curriculum documentation in paper and electronic form in a flexible format to allow for continuous improvement based on feedback from students, teachers and parents
- Provide strong support for staff professional learning which focuses on improved teaching practice, consistency of practice and the sharing of best practice through teacher observation including a realignment of the current peer observation process to one that builds on the existing collaborative environment and sharpens the focus of discussion.

	reflected in NAPLAN.	
	The panel acknowledged the development and consistent implementation of the school's Instructional Models emphasizing collaborative planning and team teaching contributed to improved student performance.	
Engagement: Engagement refers to the extent to which students feel connected to and engaged in their learning and with the broader school community. Engagement spans students' motivation to learn, as well as their active involvement in learning. Engagement also refers to students engagement as they make critical transitions through school and beyond into further education and work.	The average student absence rate in 2013 has continued to improve since 2011. Whilst the attendance rate remains relatively high right across the school in terms of absolute percentage, averaging in the 90% - 94% range from Prep to year 6, they are similar to other government schools with similar background characteristics. Student responses in the Student Attitudes to School Survey for years 5 and 6, are at a higher level on school comparison measures. In the Teaching and Learning category, students in years 5 & 6 rate aspects of learning such as learning confidence; school connectedness; stimulating learning; student motivation; teacher effectiveness; and teacher empathy very highly and all above State averages. The 2013 Student connectedness to school survey result was higher than the 4 year average. The panel discussed the implementation of an effective, comprehensive transition program enabling students' to move from kindergarten to school, early years to middle years, and primary school to secondary school with confidence.	The panel suggested the following be considered for inclusion in the new School Strategic Plan. **Goal** To develop students who are motivated, engaged, resilient and contribute to the wellbeing of others **Targets** The SSP to establish targets based on results from the appropriate measures in the 2014 student Attitudes to School Survey. In addition the school will continue its own survey of student perceptions. **Key Improvement Strategies** The panel discussed the focus areas identified in the Self Evaluation and suggested the following: • Continue to ensure smooth, seamless, and effective transition for, students moving from kindergarten to school, early years to middle years, and primary school to secondary school. • Build on existing communication strategies to parents/carers and continue to engage them in their child's learning.

Wellbeing:		
Students' health, safety and wellbeing are essential to learning and development. An inclusive, safe, orderly and stimulating environment for learning is critical to achieving and sustaining students' positive learning experiences.	Strong levels of student wellbeing are evident in data, with the 2010-2013 average scores for wellbeing on the Attitudes to School Survey higher than schools with similar background characteristics. In the Student Attitude to School Statewide survey, years 5 and 6 students rate aspects of their student relationships such as: Classroom behaviour; connectedness to peers; and student safety, well above State averages. In the Wellbeing category, year 5 and 6 students rate their level of distress at school as low and their student morale as very high, again, well above State average ratings. The 2013 Student Perception of Safety school survey result was higher than the 4 year average. As was the case for the engagement outcome, observations and data obtained from school designed surveys, provided sound evidence of a safe, orderly and stimulating learning environment. The school reports that the high levels of student wellbeing can be attributed to the whole community working towards common goals in an environment which encourages co-operation and the sharing of responsibilities in the education process.	The panel suggested the following be considered for inclusion in the new School Strategic Plan. **Goal** To develop students who accept communal responsibility **Key Improvement Strategies** • Continue to attend to and emphasise the importance of student attendance • Continue weekly sessions in building social and resilience skills through programs such as the Bounce Back Program (Dr Helen McGrath) and the implementation of the developmental approach to classroom behaviour (Associate Professor Ramon Lewis). • Continue to provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment which fosters engagement in learning and develops students' social competencies, resilience and sense of wellbeing and a positive self-image. • Offer more authentic opportunities for students to provide feedback on their learning to teachers in line with the 'Teacher Theories of Action' and Hattie's research. • Inform parents of ways they can contribute to school life and continue to encourage parent engagement.
Productivity: Productivity refers to the effective allocation and use of resources, supported by evidence and adapted to the unique contexts of each school. Successful productivity outcomes exist when a school uses its resources – people, time, space, funding, facilities,	The panel's view of productivity performance was very positive. The success of the school over the last four years has been in some measure due to the effective allocation of resources: - The strategic Plan (2010-2013) was implemented with clearly defined action plans and appropriately	**Goal** To ensure consistency and alignment of all aspects of school operations and resource allocation that result in sustained improvement in student learning and well being

community expertise, professional learning, class structures, timetables, individual learning plans and facilities – to the best possible effect and in the best possible combination to support improved student outcomes and achieve its goals and targets.

resourced
- An effective distributed leadership structure, with high performing Professional Learning Teams.
- Reorganization of the timetable enabled numeracy to be moved into morning sessions alongside the provision allocation of 6 hours dedicated Numeracy time.
- Audit of resources and appropriate purchases aligned resources to identified needs.
- Processes (e.g., systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs informed resource reallocation.
- Learning spaces reconfigured to enable team teaching, and development of learning communities
- School Council reviewed its existing sub-committee structure and established an Education sub-committee.
- Resources from the school budget to purchase additional computers, laptops, iPad and associated IT equipment and infrastructure.

The panel suggested that further refinement in the area of utilizing parental expertise in the classroom should be investigated

Key Improvement Strategies
- Continue to provide opportunities for professional learning to build the capacity of all staff.
- Establish processes for feedback: staff to staff; staff to Leadership; students to staff; parents to staff; staff to parents.
- Continue to allocate resources to ICT as the school moves towards increased use of mobile devices.
- Investigate ways to maximize expertise and engagement in the community, and amongst parents in student learning.

Registration Requirements: Summary Statement

Northcote Primary School

Signature of Reviewer: Date: 15 /08 /2014

Name of Reviewer: Jan Volkman

Registration requirements to be met by all Government schools	Is the registration requirement met?		
SCHOOL GOVERNANCE			
• Democratic principles *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
• Structure *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
• Philosophy (eg. - SSP, AIP) • Statement of school philosophy • Explanation of how philosophy is enacted	Yes ☒		No ☐
• Not-for-profit status *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
ENROLMENT			
• Student enrolment policy **(Specialist and Specific Purpose***[see below]** schools ONLY)**	Yes ☐ N/A ☒		No ☐
• Student enrolment numbers *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
• Register of enrolments *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
CURRICULUM AND STUDENT LEARNING			
• Time allocation per learning area (eg. Timetable) • Explanation of how and when curriculum and teaching practice will be reviewed (eg. - SSP, AIP, Curriculum Committee minutes, staff Professional Development) • Outline of how the school will deliver its curriculum (eg. Scope and sequence) • A whole school curriculum plan (eg. Scope and sequence) • Documented strategy to improve student learning outcomes (eg. - SSP, AIP)	Yes ☒		No ☐
• Monitoring and reporting on students' performance *Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*			
STUDENT WELFARE			
Student welfare • Student Welfare policy and procedures • Bullying and Harassment policy and procedures	Yes ☒		No ☐
Student safety • On-site supervision policy and procedures • Excursion policy and procedures • Camps policy and procedures • Ensuring safety and welfare of students with external providers policy and procedures	Yes ☒		No ☐
Student care • Care arrangements for ill students • Distribution of medication policy and procedures • Anaphylaxis management policy and procedures • Register of staff trained in first aid • Record of student medical condition and management	Yes ☒		No ☐
Additional evidence • Mandatory reporting policy and procedures	Yes ☒		No ☐

• Accidents and incidents register • First aid policy and procedures • Internet policy and procedures • Critical incident plan • Emergency management plan • An outline on how the school communicates policies and procedures on the care, safety and welfare of students to the school community • Emergency bushfire management		

DISCIPLINE

• Behaviour management policy and procedures (including procedural fairness and an explicit statement prohibiting corporal punishment) • An outline of how the school communicates these policies and procedures to the school community	Yes	☒	No	☐

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

• Attendance monitoring	*Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*
• Attendance register	*Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*

STAFF EMPLOYMENT

Teachers' requirements • Register of all teachers with name, VIT registration number and category	Yes	☒	No	☐
Compliance with Working with Children Act 2005 • Procedures to ensure that all required staff have *Working with children check* • A *Working with children check* register • Procedures to maintain the *Working with children check* register	Yes	☒	No	☐

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

• Buildings, facilities and grounds	*Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*
• Educational facilities	*Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Information about school performance	*Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department*
• Registration of an additional year level or campus	*Applicable only when required*
• Changing a school type or location	*Applicable only when required*

If you require support regarding the minimum standards:

- email school.reorganisation@edumail.vic.gov.au, or

- telephone the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on 9947 1854, or

- contact your Senior Advisor.

If you would like examples of further evidence to supply please see: VRQA registration requirements for Victorian Government Schools.

* The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) has registered the following schools as Specific Purpose schools:

- Austin Hospital School
- Avenues Education
- Blackburn English Language School
- Collingwood English Language School
- Croydon Community School
- Distance Education Centre Victoria
- John Monash Science School
- Kensington Community High School
- Lynall Hall Community School
- Noble Park English Language School

- Sovereign Hill School
- Sydney Road Community School
- The Alpine School
- Travancore School
- Victorian School of Languages
- Western English Language School