

Peer Review Report Executive Summary

School Context

Sydenham Hillside Primary School is dual campus with the Hillside Campus situated twenty-seven kilometres north-west of the Melbourne CBD. The Sydenham Campus is located a further four kilometres west, in the Brimbank Melton local government area. Enrolments fluctuated throughout the four-year period of the strategic plan, but stabilised by 2016 with a total of 1,251 students, 780 at the Sydenham Campus and 557 at Hillside. Both sites provide a range of playground areas catering for different learning and play experiences. These include grassed ovals, synthetic turf playing areas and sail-covered adventure playground equipment and sandpits. Mature trees and gardens shelter numerous shaded seating areas positioned throughout playground areas. Modern buildings offer classrooms which are well resourced for literacy and numeracy learning, with the provision of reading and numeracy materials, laptops and desktop computers. Administration and staff amenities are incorporated into the main buildings and include the addition of meeting and conference areas. Each site is adjacent to either community or secondary school facilities which can be accessed for sporting, community and school events.

During the strategic planning period, the school had a teaching staff of 71.4 teachers with 5 Principal Class Officers and 3 Leading Teachers. There were 19.2 Education Support staff [ESS] working across the school in administrative roles or as Integration Aides, and the school employed an ICT technician. Three main areas [literacy, numeracy and 21st Century learning] provided a focus for the work of the strategic plan. Both campuses collaborated and shared resources. Leading teachers worked with Professional Learning Teams [PLTs] to provide coaching support to staff in each of these areas. PLT leaders supported this work at each year level, providing educational and administrative leadership to teams of teachers.

All teaching staff delivered a core curriculum with the addition of Physical Education, Visual Arts and Japanese provided for all year levels Foundation to year 6. A long-standing sister-school program linked with two schools in Japan and offered significant cultural and educational exchange opportunities for students. The Japanese oral language program had been extended to local feeder kindergartens and day-care facilities. The school also delivered a varied program of cultural activities through incursions and excursions. A science program was available in semester two for years 3 to 6 students. A range of intervention programs was provided, particularly for students requiring literacy and wellbeing support. Student leadership opportunities were developed through Junior School Council, School and House captains and involvement in peer mediation and student leadership conferences.

Sydenham Hillside Primary School parents and volunteers actively contributed to the culture of the school community. Volunteers organised fundraising and assisted with the development and maintenance of the external school environment. Parents were involved daily, giving assistance to classroom programs and to excursions and curriculum activities. Five key values underpinned the culture of the school. 'Respect', 'Responsibility', 'Integrity', 'Compassion', and 'Honesty' and these were promoted as cornerstones for the development of a cohesive and inclusive learning community.

Summary of the School's Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

Student Achievement

The School Strategic Plan [SSP] 2013-16 sought to improve student learning achievement in literacy, with a particular emphasis on numeracy for students in years three to six. Using the Australian/Victorian Essential Learning Standards [AusVELS] as the measure, the target for 100% of students [deemed capable] in Foundation to year 6 to show achievement at or above the expected level of achievement in reading and numeracy, was not achieved. However, the panel noted that by 2016 more than 90% of students had achieved this target. The target for more than 25% of Foundation to year 2 students to achieve above the expected level of achievement in reading was exceeded. For numeracy, the target to have 35% of year 2 students achieve above expected levels was not met whilst the year 3 target of 20% was met. NAPLAN data was used as a further measure to establish achievement of targets in reading and numeracy. Whilst targets for years 3 and 5 students in the top two bands for reading and number were fully met by 2016, the panel noted teacher judgements of student achievement were conservative when compared to NAPLAN. The numbers of students in the top two NAPLAN bands fluctuated throughout the strategic plan period in number, reading and writing but was similar to, or better than, similar schools.

Student Engagement and Wellbeing

The panel noted approaches were in place to support student wellbeing and engagement. The school sought to develop highly motivated, inspired and engaged students who were excited about learning and optimistic about their future. Targets were set to show improvement by 2016 on the Attitudes to School Survey, with the connectedness factor to increase to 4.65, learning confidence to 4.30, and stimulating learning to 4.50. The panel noted some decline in all three factors across the period of the strategic plan, and these targets were not achieved. A further target to improve the Parent Opinion Survey score on student safety to 4.65 by 2016 was exceeded [5.45]. The target to reduce student absence by an average of one day per year level each year was not achieved; however absence rates remained stable and equated with similar schools.

Student Pathways and transitions

Enrolments showed a steady increase of 62 students in the review period. Achievement of the goal to increase the number of students entering foundation from local kindergartens and Day Care and the target showing increased enrolments resulting from school tours and playgroup participation in transition programs, was not confirmed. Parent Opinion data showed 85% of parents were satisfied with the school overall. The transition factor fluctuated throughout the review period, and by 2016 was just below other similar school types. Established transition programs were in place with feeder secondary schools, and pre-schools. Focus group discussions with feeder school principals, staff and students confirmed the interactions and relationships established within the school between all partners, supported student transition through and beyond the school.