

## 2. Peer Review Report Summary

### Executive Summary

#### 2. 1 School Context

Sunbury West Primary School is located approximately 42 kilometres to the north of the Melbourne CBD. The school is situated within a residential area which is surrounded by open farming land. Sunbury West strives to empower independent learners with strong self-belief and connectedness to their school and community. The school motto is *Together we learn, Together we grow*. Effective partnerships and mutual respect are fostered with parents and the wider community. A feature at the school is the positive and engaging learning environment where social, emotional and educational excellence are valued.

There is a downward school enrolment trend that is consistent with forward population predictions. Enrolment is currently 274 students. Families are drawn from the local and surrounding area. The Student Family Occupation (SFO) index is 0.52 and has been relatively stable over the period and is close to the state average. The overall socio-economic index indicates a mid socio-economic school community where school achievement could be expected to be around state means. There are few families where English is an additional language (EAL). The school has a program for students with disabilities (PSD). In the next period the school will qualify for some equity funding to address any educational disadvantage.

The staffing profile includes a principal and assistant principal, 14 EFT teachers and a mix of part-time education support staff totalling 3.0 EFT. Most staff are experienced teachers with few graduate teachers. There are 12 classes supported by a skilled and committed teaching and support team. The school has created a professional learning community where teachers share practice and plan together to ensure each child is taught at their point of need.

The school delivers a comprehensive curriculum based on the Australian and Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS). Specialist classes are taught in Physical Education, Visual Arts and the Performing Arts. The school is currently exploring options to offer a language program in 2016. There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and developing each child's personal skills. An inquiry learning approach develops skills and knowledge in domains such as History, Science, Humanities, Civics and Citizenship and Technology. The school has adopted a mantra to guide learning, *I wonder, I explore, I understand*. Additional support has been targeted to classes when there are higher numbers (currently in the 3/4 area). The school values authentic real life learning and offers a range of excursions, camps, sports, concerts and initiatives such as skip-a-thons, gardening, environmental and health programs.

Strong partnerships are developed with the parent community and communication is enhanced through regular reporting, open night/afternoons, special events and celebrations of student learning. Also newsletters, Qkr and Tiqbiz apps and classroom blogs keep parents informed.

The school is highly successful in forming partnerships with the wider community and gaining grants for school projects for the benefit of students and their families. The school is working towards becoming a 'Healthy Together Hume School' and has been successful in gaining a grant for a fitness track. The school is a member of the Hume North and Sunbury Diggers Rest school networks where principal class meet for regular professional learning and development and achievement of common goals.

The School Council strategically allocates resources to achieve school goals and priorities. Learning is enhanced by providing stimulating internal and external spaces. The school has fostered a welcoming and vibrant learning community.

## 2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

The School Strategic Plan (2012-2015) sought to improve literacy and numeracy by building a strong professional learning community where students are challenged to be curious and excel. Targets were set for lifting the percentage of students achieving above the expected levels to 30% or greater for both teacher assessments against AusVELS standards and on NAPLAN. While the aspirational targets were not achieved for teacher assessments, the school has results that are within the middle band of 60% of schools. The percentage achieving above expected levels on NAPLAN was achieved for English measures with the exception of writing at year 5. Conversely the percentage excelling in writing at year 3 well exceeded the target. Targets were not achieved for numeracy although by year 5 the mean is close to the state. It is evident that there is an improvement trend in school means although, particularly at year 3, some are below the state.

Strong learning growth has been demonstrated for reading and more recently, also for spelling. Numeracy and writing learning growth and achieving greater numbers in the top bands are areas for continuous improvement. Greater focus on improving learning growth in Foundation (prep) to year 2 will also be a future focus.

The school has developed a strong professional learning community where there is a culture of sharing teaching and learning practice and collaborative teamwork. How teachers assess student progress has been refined and this now drives planning to ensure teaching is at each child's point of need. The school follows the teaching model of *Visible Learning* where students know the learning intention for each lesson and what they need to do to be successful. Teachers give students timely feedback linked to the success criteria.

Students regularly use technology to enhance learning and to record and report on their learning.

A combined student engagement and wellbeing goal was designed in the School Strategic Plan. The school aimed to *develop a student centred stimulating, learning environment, engaging all students in their learning*. Targets were set for variables on the Student Attitudes to School survey administered to year 5 and 6 students annually. An improvement trend is evident in the survey outcomes although teaching and learning targets were not achieved. Student safety is rated above the state while classroom behaviour and peer connectedness are rated positively by students but are below the state median. The school did not set a target to improve attendance and pleasingly the average days absent per student F-6 remains below the state.

Parent opinion surveys have rated school connectedness above the state but school climate factors and student behaviour are below the state. Parent forums held for the review process endorsed the school's programs and amenity of the learning environment. Student forums and reports from the student leaders to the review panel were highly positive about the inclusive and engaging environment for learning at Sunbury West Primary School.

The school has improved student engagement through inquiry learning and greater student voice across the school. There is an active Junior School Council and authentic roles for student leaders. There is a diverse specialist program and extra-curricular programs. A successful strategy during the period has been enhancing the internal and external learning environments to maximise learning outcomes. Internal spaces provide

flexible learning spaces suited to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and the external environment provides diverse learning and play opportunities.

Transition goals were also set in the strategic plan. Strong cooperation across school and preschool networks has strengthened transition pathways for students.

Improving student wellbeing is a focus at Sunbury West PS. The school environment is orderly and the school has embedded a whole school assertive discipline approach. Community partnerships and successful applications for grants have enhanced the school approach to wellbeing. The school is working towards accreditation as a Healthy Together Hume school and has developed, for example, a partnership with Sunbury Community Health. Successful programs include Kids Hope, where mentors work with individual students and Bounceback which focuses on building resilience. Mentoring programs include year 6 buddies for Foundation students and there is a peer support program for year 5 and the year 1/2 students which caters for student wellbeing and fostering leadership skills. Healthy living units are designed for each year level.

Productivity goals were not required in the strategic plan however School Council and the principal have been pro-active in ensuring sound resource management within a financial model that has been in deficit. This is evident in the improved amenity of learning environments, curriculum resources, fostering a professional learning community and community engagement.

## **2.2.2 Summary of the considerations for the next Strategic Plan**

The School Self-Evaluation and panel day discussions examined the school's performance and achievement and made suggestions for goal development and key improvement strategies in the four areas of student achievement, student engagement, student wellbeing and productivity.

### Student achievement

Data suggests that a clear focus on achieving expected learning growth or greater for students and increasing the numbers of students who excel in literacy and numeracy will be key to improving student performance. The panel recommended that the work of the professional learning teams be enhanced through shared planning time where teachers analyse student assessment data, plan curriculum that meets the needs of each students and share teaching and learning practice. The school will continue to build teaching skills through professional learning and coaching to ensure research-based teaching and learning practices are consistent across the school. Focus will be given to documenting sequential essential skills to guide planning.

Mathematics will be a priority followed by writing in years 3-6 and building strong core literacy and numeracy skills in F-2.

### Student engagement

The Student Attitudes to School survey data suggests that student engagement in learning, while positive, is an area for continuing improvement. A goal to focus on strengthening student voice in their learning and developing creative, curious and motivated learners is suggested. The mantra, *I wonder, I explore, I understand* is promoting student curiosity and further focus on critical and creative thinking and connecting to their community and globalised world is suggested. Promoting greater

opportunities for students to give and receive feedback, to set individual goals, to reflect, to evaluate and grow as independent learners will enable students to have greater voice in their learning and stimulate engagement. If students have a voice in their learning and staff have high expectations and design authentic, relevant and challenging tasks student engagement and curiosity will flourish.

#### Student wellbeing

Observations and student feedback suggest personal skills such as resilience, persistence and social skills are areas to build. The panel suggested a goal to build a positive learning community that encourages confident, healthy and resilient students. To support the goal strategies could include implementing a coherent health and wellbeing framework. The framework would link with current programs. KidsMatter is being implemented across local schools and a common Sunbury school strategy is suggested.

A further goal was suggested to build partnerships with parents, stakeholders, network schools and the community. Enhanced communication processes and building strategic partnerships to strengthen student wellbeing and parent and community engagement was suggested.

As the school enters a new strategic planning period it was considered important to re-evaluate the school vision and values. Values will guide interactions across the school community and a vision will underpin preparing our 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

#### Productivity

A goal was suggested to maximise school resources to enable successful implementation of school goals and priorities. If there is strong aligned focus on resourcing to achieve the goals of the strategic plan then 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and development of every student will be enhanced. Prioritising support for leadership development and targeted professional learning and coaching was suggested. Further priorities include master planning further amenity improvements, support for students and greater focus on digital learning.

### **2.2.3 Next steps**

Sunbury West Primary School is well positioned to enter a new and exciting period of sustained school improvement led by progressive leadership and committed staff in partnership with parents and the wider community. Building and growing the collaborative learning culture, documenting and embedding research-based whole school teaching and learning practices, implementing a holistic approach to student wellbeing and continuing sound resource management will ensure students thrive and achieve strong learning growth.