

School Independent Review Report

Prepared for

WILMOTT PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

**School Workforce Reform and School
Improvement Division**

**Department of Education & Early Childhood
Development**

2009

- **School Number** 5342
- **Principal** Evan Hughes
- **School Council President** Philip Nicholson
- **Type of Review** Continuous Improvement
- **School Reviewer** Keryn Mc Guinness
- **Date of Review Meeting at school** June 18
- **Date of this Report (final version)** July

1.0 Executive Summary

Willmott Park Primary School has established a strong internal capacity to take the school to the next stage of development. In a dynamic context – growing a school in an outer suburban growth corridor, building a professional workforce with a balance of new teachers, who need to be inculcated with values of the profession and the vision and goals of the school, and highly skilled experienced teachers and school leaders – the School Council and Principal can be justly proud of the school buildings and facilities, and the leadership team’s work in laying the foundations to deliver quality education outcomes for students.

The school environment is secure and orderly, resource management is outstanding, and professional leadership is strongly evident. Over the review period, a new leadership and management structure was created to deliver on what matters most – quality teaching and quality learning, high expectations and teacher efficacy. The review finds the school can be confident to ‘raise the bar’ and ‘take the challenge’ to deliver excellence. While some learning challenges for some students can be great, on average the school has the potential to achieve at higher levels.

To be strengthened in the next stage of school development is achieving greater consistency in effective teaching practice across the whole school, further embedding a culture and practice of high expectations for students and for staff, and building understanding and expertise in an evidence-based approach to school improvement where a range of evidence is used in a self confident, self-critical approach to drive improvement efforts. Within the context of the new leadership and management structure, the school may also need to support school teams to *build their knowledge of individual student’s progress, informed by data, to build a culture of systematically moving each student forward* [Review Panel]. Individual teachers may then be *better placed to engage in ongoing professional dialogue which focuses on what students can do, say and write and builds teacher’s knowledge of content and repertoire* [Review Panel].

In order to chart a course for the future, it is necessary to establish the current standard of school performance and improvements achieved over the past three/four years.

Student learning

The school generally met its improvement targets in teacher assessments, although less so at Years 5 and 6, but improvement is not strongly evident in external AIM/NAPLAN assessments where school average achievement was below the state average.

Performance is stronger in English than Mathematics, improved in Writing and Spelling to

match that indicated by the SFO band (i.e. against schools with a similar socio-economic profile) however, the challenge to increase performance in Numeracy/Mathematics remains significant (at the 10% statewide). The whole-school approaches in Spelling and Writing appear effective with the three-year Numeracy project yet to yield demonstrable improvement.

However, 2009 On Demand testing results presented at the review present a more positive picture – student achievement improved and may be in line with the state average. Also, it is encouraging that relatively large proportions of students at Year 3 achieved well above the national minimum standard, for example, at Year 3 above Band 4 in Writing (44%) Reading (37%) and Numeracy (26%) At Year 3, students from Language Backgrounds Other Than English on average performed well, at above the state benchmarks. External assessments do not indicate the Boys Education priority had a significant impact on average achievement.

Student engagement and wellbeing

This is an area of real strength for the school. The review finds the school is delivering on its goal to *support and assist students in the acquisition of social and academic skills to become capable, confident, responsible and creative learners*. School attendance is consistently in the Top 20% of schools statewide, senior surveyed students report very high satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment, and the school has established a safe and caring environment. Parents express very high overall satisfaction with the school. The electives and extra-curricular programs provide outstanding opportunities for students to develop their broader talents and interests, and personal and interpersonal skills and knowledge.

Student pathways and transitions

The school achieves at a high level in this area. The high and increased enrolments are testament to the positive reputation of the school and the excellence of the Hands On Learning program for prospective Prep student. The Quality Beginning Program for all grades each year is effective and a Grade 6 to 7 transition to secondary schooling program (Term 4 at the school) has been developed. The breadth of the curriculum – specialist programs in Science, Visual Arts, Music and Physical Education with specialist facilities – and the extra-curricular program are highly valued by parents and students, and the school achieves at the state level in some of its sport/physical education programs. To bridge the ‘digital divide’ – the school reports a relative low proportion of home have a computer with internet connection (30%) – priority is given to the Learning Technology program.

The Review Panel identified two transitions issues to be addressed, perhaps at the Network level. Firstly, the transfer of students from year-to-year within primary school, and the major transition point from Year 6 to Year 7. The school noted that many students do not access engaging activities, and is aware of the learning 'loss' for some students over the long summer break, and is keen to investigate the development of a 'Summer School' type program on site and available for not only WPPS students but other students in the network of local schools. The review strongly supports the proposal. Another area of future innovation is in the upper primary/lower secondary years. The Review Panel discussed a network project, involving the school and one of the main secondary college destinations (e.g. Mt Ridley College), to more closely monitor and support transition from Years 6 to 7. An exciting initiative may be the development of Years 5 to 8 (Middle Years) learning projects facilitated by online as well as on-site learning – better extension of students may be achieved, particularly in English, Mathematics and Science.

In the light of the overall analysis the reviewer suggests that the college consider the following goals:

For Student Learning:

- To improve student learning from Years 3 to 6.
- To improve student numeracy outcomes from Prep to Year 6.

For Pathways and Transitions

- To equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding for success in Year 6, taught systematically from Prep to Year 6.

For Wellbeing and Engagement

- Continue to assist students to acquire the personal, social and academic skills to be capable, confident, responsible and creative learners.

Key improvement strategies in order of priority:

1. Embed the new leadership structure to achieve a high level of student learning through teacher and whole-school effectiveness and consistency.
2. Provide quality evidence to enable continuous feedback and accountability (of students, teachers and leaders) for student learning progress (at the individual, class, team and college-levels).
3. Build student responsibility to self, school and broader community founded on productive relationships.

The further growth of a **performance and development culture** so that all teachers obtain regular feedback, constantly striving to improve their teaching to achieve enhanced student learning will support implementation of the above Key Improvement Strategies.