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

2.1 School Context

Bairnsdale Primary School is situated in the regional city of Bairnsdale, two hundred and seventy-nine kilometres from Melbourne in East Gippsland. The school was established in 1864 and has a history of strong community connections. A feature of the main building is the display of photos that celebrate the school's history and influence of the Koorie culture.

The buildings have a mix of heritage listed and contemporary rooms. Learning spaces include classrooms that can facilitate flexible learning environments and include a junior school complex and multipurpose hall. The grounds are extensive and feature hard courts, an oval, vegetable garden, Koorie garden and flower beds.

The school had an enrolment of 273 students in 2016. For the period of the strategic plan (2015–18), enrolment remained steady. Students are drawn from the local area and the surrounding farming community. There is a mix of student backgrounds, including 20% of students with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and a small percentage of students with non-English speaking background.

The school has a program for students with disabilities. The staffing profile of the school included an acting Principal, two Assistant Principals, a Leading Teacher (0.4) and 10.2 effective fulltime teachers (EFT). There was 6.7 EFT Education Support (ES) staff. These staff provided administration and student support. Leadership roles are assigned to strategic team leaders in literacy, numeracy and humanities.

The classes are structured into nine multi-age home groups and two straight foundation classes. The school offered specialist classes in physical education, visual arts and Japanese. Science and humanities were taught within classes. The school's curriculum is based on literacy, numeracy and engaging students in their learning using science, Information Communications Technology (ICT) and an inquiry approach. High expectations for behaviour were evident through the laminated charts and other resources clearly displayed across the school.

There are opportunities for parents to be kept informed of student achievement at parent teacher interviews and at three-way (student, parent and teacher) conferences. The school is supported by a fundraising committee.

1.2 Summary of the School's Performance

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

Performance was reported against the goals and targets set in the School Strategic Plan (2015–18).

Student achievement

The school had goals to improve their literacy and numeracy outcomes through a structured whole school approach and to have all students demonstrate improvement in their knowledge from the beginning of a unit of inquiry to the end. The school set targets to improve learning growth in NAPLAN in reading, writing and number and to have at least 95% of students achieve their learning goals as measured against AusVELS.

Achievement varied from 2015 to 2016 and no steady improvement trend was evident. When compared to schools with a similar enrolment profile, students at Bairnsdale had similar results to other students for assessments at or above the expected level in literacy and numeracy.

The target to improve learning growth measured by NAPLAN for students progressing from Year 3 to Year 5 was achieved for writing (2015–16). Improvement in learning gain was not achieved in reading or numeracy. The 2015 AusVELS assessments data showed very similar results to the 2014 data. The results indicated a spread of achievement of students assessed below the expected level of achievement and students achieved at or above expected levels.

The goal to have students demonstrate improvement in Units of Inquiry was not measured as the introduction of Inquiry Learning was not fully implemented in all classrooms.

Student engagement

The goal was for students to be connected to and accountable for their own learning. Targets were set to improve measures on the student survey completed by students in Years 5 and 6 annually to be at or above the state average. The teaching and learning measures from the student survey improved from 2014 to 2016 and were similar to or above the state average. Student opinion of stimulating learning was above the state average and learning confidence and student motivation were at the state average.

The target for parent perception of stimulating learning, student motivation and learning confidence to be equal to or better than parent opinion in 50% of schools across the state was not achieved. The parent survey results were below the state averages. The student absence target for improving attendance to be at or above state average of 14.66 was not met. Average absences per student Foundation to Year 6 increased from 20.43 days in 2015 to 23.69 days in 2015.

Student Wellbeing

The school had a combined goal for engagement and wellbeing. In the student survey, there was improvement in student perception of morale and distress. All student relationship and wellbeing factors from the survey outcomes varied from 2014 to 2016 and were below the state average. The student safety score improved from 2014 to 2015 but declined in 2016, to be well below the state average.

Productivity

The goal in the school's Annual Implementation Plan 2016 was to allocate resources to meet the learning needs of all students. The budgetary processes evident in 2016, reflected resource monitoring and allocation that matched the needs and priority areas. When interviewed, staff responded positively to the new directions and the processes that were introduced in 2016. The process for the purchase of resources was carefully monitored to ensure spending remained within budget.

2.2.2 Summary of the review findings against the Terms of Reference

1. **To what extent has the school been aligned with the Framework for improving student outcomes (FISO)? What evidence of implementation and impact is emerging?**

The school had analysed the extent of alignment against the FISO Continua for school improvement. The initiatives, building practice excellence, curriculum planning and assessment and building leadership teams were chosen for school focussed improvement.

Prior to 2016 some teachers met informally to discuss practice and share planning. The staff survey showed that 26% believed teacher collaboration was being successfully undertaken at the school. After the introduction of the FISO initiative, school planning teams met weekly and all teams met once per term to complete planners for the forthcoming term. Leadership expectations for the way teams work has resulted in common planning and sharing of teacher resources. In the 2016 staff survey, 66% of staff endorsed their approval of teacher collaboration.

During 2016, staff participated in professional learning to build capacity and introduce school-wide approaches to reading, numeracy and behaviour management, which were not previously occurring within the school on a regular basis. To improve the effectiveness of teacher curriculum documentation, templates for year, term and weekly planners were introduced to be used by all teachers.

With the implementation of FISO, leadership roles were increasingly linked to school priorities and a greater emphasis was placed on accountability around decision making.

2. **To what extent is there an agreed whole school curriculum and consistent research-based pedagogy and assessment processes driving practice in each classroom?**

In 2014, Inquiry Learning was identified as a strategy for teachers to promote students to take more responsibility for their learning. It was expected to be implemented as a whole school approach. This was not successful and lapsed. To address this in 2016, teachers were introduced to the Placemats curriculum planning tool and set guidelines for reading and numeracy instruction. The ongoing implementation was evident in planning documents but not consistently across all classrooms. Evidence of sequential skill development was not aligned across year level teams.

Thus, a pedagogical model was not in place to ensure high impact teaching strategies were consistently applied across the school. A variety of teaching strategies and assessment practices were observed in classrooms. Some learning outcomes had trended down over the period as a result.

VICTORIA State Government | Education and Training

Prior to 2016, teacher collaboration had depended on individual teachers seeking out other teachers to discuss practice. However, the introduction of a timetabled planning session for teacher teams and an expected format for meetings, opportunities for collaborative planning increased but were still not being utilised to a high level.

In the 2015 staff survey, collaborative responsibility and collective efficacy had declined to be below the state average. However, in 2016, with the shift to regular timetabled team planning, quarantined core teaching time and the expectation that all teachers use common approaches to reading and numeracy, the staff survey indicators of collaboration and curriculum planning improved.

3. To what extent do teachers use data to systematically track student progress and ensure planning enables teaching at each students' point of need?

Teachers used multiple sources of assessment data and there was some evidence in planning documents that teachers planned differentiated activities. Student learning data was not tracked regularly to plan for those students needing greater challenge or support in their learning. NAPLAN relative learning growth declined from 2014–16 for reading, numeracy and writing and this data was below the state average.

The variability in assessment practices impacted curriculum provision and seamless progressions for students from year level to year level. The use of assessment rubrics, student self-assessment and peer assessment were not consistent practice in teacher planning.

AusVELS teacher judgements showed yearly variation for cohorts indicating inconsistent judgements. The school had not put in place regular moderation or collaborative discussions of student data. There was little evidence of class and individual goal setting or an understanding of what steps are needed to take improve learning. Students took limited responsibility for their own learning.

An assessment schedule for all teachers to ensure regular monitoring of student progress, was not developed. The student assessment information did not consistently inform teacher planning and the school's Learning Management System was underutilised.

4. To what extent is there a shared understanding of high expectations across the school? Is there a shared commitment to and application towards high expectations by all?

High expectations for teaching and learning, teacher professionalism and student behaviour were clearly articulated and regularly reiterated by leadership and through the staff Performance and Development Process.

A culture of high expectations for achievement was not developed, which limited students' capacity to seek challenges in their learning. A professional climate of collective responsibility, trust and accountability had not been developed.

There were high expectations for behaviour and students completing work but high expectations for learning were not consistent schoolwide. Work, and especially homework, was not always corrected. Staff trust in colleagues and collective efficacy were the lowest endorsed factors on the 2016 staff survey. The level of collaborative planning and collective accountability for all students' outcomes increased but was not highly effective. A commitment to peer observations and coaching to support professional learning was not evident.

5. **To what extent are the teaching and learning and student management practices providing an engaging and an orderly learning environment?**

There was little evidence that students had agency in their own learning as tasks were teacher directed and individual student goals were not regularly set. Classroom observations and focus groups with students and staff indicated that there were limited opportunities for student agency in their learning. Purposes for learning and practices to promote student agency were lacking, resulting in student engagement not being maximised. The lack of efficient tracking of student learning growth, collection and analysis of data, led to limited planning and actual classroom practice of teaching at point of student need. This was evident from the trend down in high learning growth.

The school had an orderly environment for learning, with expectations clearly articulated for students, staff and parents using a school wide approach. A co-ordinated wellbeing approach with regular meetings to appraise support and progress for students and partnerships with agencies was also in place.

Students had opportunities to take on leadership roles and were role models for other students. However, the roles were mainly restricted to completing tasks rather than leadership responsibilities. There were opportunities for students to develop organisational and public speaking skills, although student impact on school policy and practice was minimal.

The school implemented a co-ordinated response for students experiencing wellbeing issues. The wellbeing of students was closely monitored and their families supported.

2.2.3 Key findings: areas for improvement

The following findings are listed in priority order:

- A culture marked by collaborative teams and instructional leadership had not been developed.

- A strong distributed leadership model that builds middle leadership capacity to implement the priorities of the annual implementation plan was not evident.

- There was no agreed, research-based pedagogical model to underpin consistent and explicit high impact teaching practice across the school.

- Curriculum planning and assessment practices were not consistent across the school.

- The extent to which students take responsibility for their learning was limited.

- Processes and practices to build teacher capacity, including peer observations and coaching to support professional learning, were not evident.

- Whole school processes to encourage parent involvement and to effectively communicate and engage parents in student learning had not been developed.

2.2.4 Next steps

Bairnsdale Primary School is prepared for the next stage of school improvement. While some issues and practices related to teacher collaboration and collective accountability remain a barrier to school improvement, the emphasis on building practice excellence has enabled the school to commence a strategic approach to embark on its next stage of improvement.

VICTORIA
State
Government

Education
and Training