School Planning

The panel was impressed with Westerway Primary School’s planning. The Strategic Plan is closely aligned to the DOE’s Strategic Plan and clearly and succinctly outlines the school’s foci and directions. It is well supported by the Operational Plans which detail the goals, activity, timeline and resourcing attached to the key focus areas. Targets have been set based on existing data and the panel acknowledges the difficulties associated in setting targets in some areas because of the small number of students at the school and in particular the small number of students in some year levels.

Staff, parents and the community are working together to improve the educational outcomes and life opportunities of students. The School Association’s involvement in the planning and review cycles has been evident and is strongly encouraged.

The panel found solid evidence attesting to realising the school’s vision of "A community of learners that support one another through positive relationships." It was very clear that the school’s focus is on supporting the learning of all students through building relationships; and through identifying and focussing on meeting their needs. The panel was presented with evidence confirming planning is guiding the development of consistent whole school approaches to the teaching of Spelling and Reading Comprehension; and that numeracy programs are informed across the school by Dr Siemon’s ‘Big Ideas in Number’.

Planning supports a personalised approach to teaching and learning. The panel was impressed with the planning of teachers which uses data to inform programs and approaches to teaching children with varying learning needs and across 3 or 4 year composites in some cases. Staff were clear that differentiation is an area of focus and that a differentiated approach enables the learning needs of all students to be met. Differentiating according to student need is an important lens overseeing planning and one that the panel would encourage the school to continue to focus on.

The panel was presented with evidence supporting the alignment between planning, identified school priorities and resource allocation. Tightening this alignment has been a focus of the principal in partnership with the SBM.

The panel was impressed with the leadership of the school in encouraging and empowering staff and community involvement in the planning processes. The importance of continuing to build the capacity of stakeholder groups at a small school with only 1 senior staff member cannot be underestimated. While all staff are involved in the planning process there is scope to give some staff more responsibility for the development and monitoring of some aspect of planning.

Developing and implementing the ‘Respectful Schools, Respectful Behaviour Policy’ has been a major focus area over 2015 involving extensive consultation with all stakeholder groups. It was clear to the panel that the relationship based approach stemming from this policy is having a positive impact on the culture of the school and the engagement of the students.
Areas identified where the school is doing well

During the site visit the panel observed a warm, welcoming, purposeful and calm atmosphere across the school. It was evident that all staff, regardless of role were there for the students, were caring, supportive and believed in the potential of all students. Students in turn articulated that teachers and all staff had high expectations and went out of their way to provide support and enable them to achieve.

All stakeholders spoke positively about the leadership of the principal. Evidence was repeatedly presented to the panel from all stakeholders endorsing the school’s leadership, emphasising that there were high expectations both around student achievement, teacher quality and community engagement.

Communication is seen to be a strength of the school. Staff commented that a range of communication channels ensure everyone is informed and has a voice. Parents appreciate the school’s proactive approach to keeping them informed and are all more than comfortable in talking with all school staff.

Through analysis of data and documentation provided, conversations with teachers, other staff and parents and through classroom observations it was apparent to the panel that across the school there is a focus on providing and promoting an inclusive and safe environment where all students can succeed. The importance of providing differentiated approaches and supports is well understood by all staff. The panel observed differentiated approaches during the site visit and was impressed with the ability of students to articulate the purpose of learning intentions. All stakeholders were clear that teachers provide differentiated programs in order to maximise both support and achievement for students.

The school’s size and the multi grade composites provide many opportunities for cross age relationships. The nature of these was overwhelmingly endorsed as a positive feature of the school. All stakeholders commented on the family nature of the school. Parents and students noted that teachers and all staff are caring and have high expectations for all students.

Staff value the opportunities to plan, share and moderate collaboratively with other Derwent Valley schools. Continuing to provide and build on these opportunities provides a means to continue to develop the professional growth of a small teaching group who are in some cases the sole teachers of year groups.

The number of people volunteering their time in capacities ranging from specialist teachers to the provision of additional student support and general support to the school was considered by the panel to be a highlight. It was clear that people volunteer because they are valued by the whole school community and because they can make a difference. The culture of volunteerism is an absolute strength of the school.

In analysing NAPLAN data the very small cohorts result in it being difficult to extrapolate any meaningful trends. Using in-house tracking measures and formative assessment to monitor student progress would seem to be the most effective means of monitoring progress and informing subsequent teaching practices and the panel was impressed with the moves towards understanding and use of formative assessment strategies.

There has been an increase over recent years of the number of kindergarten students achieving all KDC markers – an important trend supported both by the LiL program, support structures and a high expectations culture.

The panel was presented with evidence from a range of stakeholders, who whilst acknowledging it took time, endorsed the success of the amalgamation with Maydena Primary at the beginning of 2013. Members of the Maydena community commented on the range of opportunities the amalgamation has provided for both students and community members.

Students articulated that Westerway Primary lays a sound foundation for their future. Students and parents commented about the importance of successfully completing secondary school and in aspiring to complete Year 12.
Possible areas for future consideration
Westerway is a focussed, active and cohesive school which is well led. It is focussed on student achievement within the framework of an inclusive school.

The school’s Strategic and Operational Plans reflect and are aligned with Learners First and DOE polices and expectations. The panel felt that that the school is clearly focussing on building a high expectations culture within an inclusive and safe environment.

Building staff capacity was a focus of the Review. The panel was convinced that the staff are cohesive, collaborative and have common understandings; that all readily support each other and rise to any challenge presented. The panel suggests that in order to further build staff capacity consideration is given to teachers being given responsibility for assuming some leadership responsibility for driving some of the key Operational Plans and priority areas; for example Literacy and Numeracy through both the planning and professional learning processes and activities. The school is ideally placed to give staff more leadership responsibilities given the collective will and desire to continue to work collaboratively in the pursuit of improving the life opportunities and learning outcomes of the students.

General
The Panel drew on a range of planning documents and data sets, conversations with the principal, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, volunteers and students, and observations across the school in drawing its conclusions.

The panel was impressed by the positivity of Westerway Primary School. The commitment of all members of the school community to working collaboratively in the interests of students was apparent at every turn. Everyone is welcome and everyone is valued at Westerway Primary. The principal, staff, volunteers and community can be very proud of the educational opportunities they are providing to the students at Westerway Primary School.

Review Panel

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Greg Phair</td>
<td>14 August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Glenys McKay</td>
<td>14 August 2015</td>
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Attachments: (if necessary the panel may attach any data or information pertinent to this report)