

2. Peer Review Report Executive Summary (published on school's website)

2.1 School Context

Chewton Primary School is located in the small town of Chewton, 117 kms north-west of Melbourne. The school was established in 1870 and draws enrolments from local towns and the wider Castlemaine district. The main building contains all classrooms, a library, a staff room and office space. A second building contains a multipurpose space, toilet block and meeting room. This building is also the 'Shelter in Place' space to be used should the school be impacted by a bushfire. A local playgroup and after school family day care also use this building.

The school is surrounded by bush land including a parcel of land outside the school fence line which is used for environmental activities and creative natural play. Other play areas include asphalt and artificial turf areas, an adventure playground, sandpits and passive play spaces. There is also a vegetable garden and orchard area.

Enrolments have increased significantly over the last few years from 26 in 2012 to the current enrolment of 74 students. The student family occupation (SFO) index was .6339 in 2014 and has declined to 0.4526 in 2017, which is below the state average of 0.5126.

The school has a small team of staff, which has remained stable over many years. The school operates four multi-age classrooms, with the principal providing intervention support across the school. Students are taught the Victorian Curriculum and two part-time teaching staff provide specialist programs in Art and Information Technology. Classroom teachers provide specialist programs in Music, Chinese/Mandarin and Personal Development. Interactive technology equipment is available in all classrooms, with senior students having a 1:1 chrome book program. Additional programs offered to students include Science, literacy support, student leadership, swimming, bike education, instrumental music, camps and excursions, district sporting activities, cluster math's days and small school cluster group days. Environmental education and sustainability are embedded in the curriculum through regular hands-on learning activities and inquiry learning. Student welfare and the school values are supported by the School Wide Positive Behaviours and KidsMatter programs.

The school has a high level of family and community involvement, with Friends of the Arts and Student Welfare teams involving both parents and staff. Parents are also active in volunteering for programs such as gardening, cooking, food foraging, art and classroom reading.

2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

Achievement

The 2014-17 Strategic Plan for Chewton Primary School set goals to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy and to increase learning growth for Year 3-6 students. Targets were set for all students to be at or above expected AusVELS in literacy and numeracy, to increase the number of students achieving high growth in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and more students showing medium to high growth in Years 3-6 in OnDemand results in reading and numeracy. All students with Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) were expected to reach their goals.

The panel agreed that at least 80 per cent of students were achieving at or above the expected AusVELS level in literacy and numeracy, except for Year 6 reading at 70 per cent. The review panel noted that an intervention program addressed the goals of all students with ILPs. NAPLAN results demonstrated an increase in the number of

students making high growth in all areas of NAPLAN. The OnDemand data was inconsistent with other reading and numeracy data for Years 3-6 and an accurate assessment of student growth against the target could not be made.

Engagement

Goals were set to build student motivation and connectedness to school and to ensure the curriculum engaged, supported and challenged students. The targets were to improve scores in the teaching and learning variables of the Student Attitudes to School Survey (ATSS), to improve scores in the parent and staff survey variables relating to student engagement and reduce student absences for unexplained or parent choice reasons. The target for the ATSS was met for Stimulating Learning and Teacher Effectiveness but was not met for Learning Confidence and Student Motivation. The target was not met for any variables relating to student engagement in the Parent Opinion Survey, but there had been steady improvement in Connectedness to Peers and Student Motivation. Absence data demonstrated that unexplained absences had not improved, but parent choice absences had declined.

Wellbeing

The goals were to develop and nurture resilient learners in a safe and supportive environment and implement and embed all components of the KidsMatter framework. The target was to improve scores relating to student wellbeing in the ATSS and Parent Opinion Survey. ATSS data demonstrated that although the target was not met there was improvement in Student Morale, Classroom Behaviour and Teacher Empathy. Similarly, the Parent Opinion Survey data improved in Student Safety but Classroom Behaviour scores had declined. The school had completed and implemented all the KidsMatter modules.

Productivity

A goal was to improve the allocation of resources to school priorities that supported student outcomes. The target was to improve scores for School Improvement in the Parent Opinion Survey and Collective Efficacy in the Staff Opinion Survey. There was a decline in the School Improvement variable from 2013-15 but an improvement in 2016. The Staff Opinion Survey had changed during the period of the strategic plan and data was not available or consistent for each year of the plan.

2.2.2 Summary of main findings and considerations for the next Strategic Plan

The panel agreed that the following items should be considered for the next Strategic Plan:

Continue to build teacher capacity to identify, implement and evaluate their use of high impact teaching strategies in all areas of the curriculum.

The review panel acknowledged that the initiative of building practice excellence was a focus for the next Strategic Plan because of the identified need to develop the leadership capacity of staff. As a small school, there was an embedded culture of working as a team and many improved teaching and learning strategies had been implemented throughout the school in the past few years, including differentiation in mathematics, explicit teaching strategies and a review of the spelling, writing and reading programs. The review panel agreed that staff were willing to attend professional learning to address the needs of the school but would benefit from building their capacity to lead change both within and beyond the Chewton school environment.

Refine the teaching practices in Literacy and Numeracy to improve student outcomes.

The shared view of the panel was that improved student learning outcomes would be maximised with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current curriculum in literacy and numeracy. Staff had built their knowledge and understanding of best practice in

reading and writing curriculum, and professional learning had occurred in numeracy but the panel agreed that a review of the mathematics curriculum would be beneficial. The panel noted that time was provided for teachers to meet, plan and moderate for writing, reading and numeracy tasks and there were agreed planning documents for writing, reading, mathematics and inquiry. The panel also discussed the use of data to determine improved student outcomes. Student achievement data was collated in various formats and the panel agreed NAPLAN data had been analysed but OnDemand and reading levels would have benefitted from more in-depth analysis of individual student responses to ascertain continued growth of students.

The panel agreed that the introduction of the Department of Education and Training (DET) Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and High Impact Teaching Strategies to address school priorities would support staff at CPS to refine their teaching practices to meet the individual needs of their students.

Ensure that the unique teaching and learning culture at Chewton Primary School is embedded across all classrooms and curriculum areas.

The review panel explored the unique culture at Chewton Primary School and agreed that the school actively sought parent and community views across a range of school and curriculum areas. Panel discussion focused on identifying the essential learner characteristics of students at CPS to ensure all student needs were being met. It was agreed that there needed to be a balance between explicit structures in Literacy and Numeracy and flexibility in the rest of the curriculum through thoughtful and planned response to community interests and needs, linked to the Victorian Curriculum. With this approach, parents and students would have ownership of the curriculum. The panel recommended that the specific learner characteristics of students at CPS should be defined and a consistent agreed teaching and learning approach be embedded throughout the school.