2. Priority review report summary (to be published on school's website)

Executive Summary

2.1 School Context

Croydon Community School is a government, co-educational, specialist secondary school located in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne that supports students requiring an alternative setting.

Currently there are approximately 110 students enrolled. This is the maximum enrolment level that can be accommodated. The school does not advertise or actively seek enrolments. It is usual for a waiting list to exist throughout the year, sometimes growing to more than 40 young people. The school has traditionally enrolled more boys than girls with the ratio varying from 70:30 to 60:40.

Students travel from a wide geographical area to attend the school and they are more likely to commence after the beginning of Year 7 than by direct transition from primary school. Approximately 25% of the student cohort have a diagnosed disability and receive funding under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).

Staff resources at Croydon Community School in 2015 consist of two Principal class members, supported by one Leading Teacher, 10 Teachers and 14 Education Support (ES) staff.

The Big Picture Education model and its 12 Distinguishers form the framework for the school's philosophy, structures and operations. Relevance, Relationships and Rigour are central tenets of this philosophy. Class sizes are relatively small (up to 17 students) and students are largely organised into Year level classes or advisory groups. Student learning is personalised, based on the interests and goals of each student and set out in individualised learning plans. The learning programs are mapped against the standards set in the Australian Curriculum/Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS) curriculum. The majority of learning is timetabled in the advisory sessions with some specialist sessions such as Mathematics and Art provided.

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is the senior program offered to all students as the base for their studies. Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) studies are available to students through distance education, enrolment in local schools or at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) but their results do not appear as part of the school's data.

The school provides all students with a laptop. Students are involved in a diverse range of activities that enhance their learning, engagement and wellbeing including volunteering, community work, fundraising, community-based programs and excursions.

Every year, some students commence a Year 13 program to support a successful transition into further training or employment. These students usually exit before completing the year to enter the workforce or to move onto further training.

The school is a platinum Beacon Foundation school and has expanded the basic Beacon model into a fully integrated program of work preparation from Years 7 to 12, but with a greater emphasis at Years 9 to 12.

The school manages a range of other alternative programs on behalf of the North Eastern Victoria Region (NEVR). This includes a Farm School in Woori Yallock, a Capacity Building team based in Wheelers Hill and a second campus in Bayswater called OPTIONS@Bayswater. The focus of this review did not include a review of these programs or sites.

2.2 Summary of the School's Performance

2.2.1 The School's Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

Since 2012, Croydon Community School has achieved some of its goals and targets while others were not achieved. The School Self Evaluation (SSE), prepared for the review, provided a thorough assessment of what the school achieved and the aspects of the goals and targets set that have as yet not been achieved.

Student achievement

In the 2012-2015 School Strategic Plan (SSP), the student learning goal aimed to improve Literacy and Numeracy outcomes with the central target being that it is expected that there would be, for each student, one year's academic improvement for one year of participation in the program.

While this target was not achieved in relation to the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the AusVELS teacher judgements data, the school provided evidence through other data sets (the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, KTEA, and On Demand data) of some improvements in Literacy and Numeracy outcomes. The KTEA data collected by the school showed that, on average, one year's growth had been achieved in Reading and there had been an improving trend for Numeracy but as yet the target had not been reached. Writing achievement had not shown any improvement and is well below expectations.

While progress was made related to the target of embedding four of the Big Picture Education Distinguishers, this target was not achieved.

Student engagement and wellbeing

While not all aspects of the targets for Student Engagement and Wellbeing were achieved, the school made significant progress over the review period in improving student engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

There was continuous improvement in student opinion of Student Safety on the Student Attitudes to School Survey (ATS Survey) with this variable moving from below State and Regional mean levels to above State and Regional mean levels in 2015. Targeted improvement on the survey related to Learning Confidence, Motivation and Connectedness to Peers was not achieved with Confidence and Motivation remaining around the same level and Connectedness to Peers trending down.

Student attendance targets were met.

Changes occurred in the Staff Opinion Survey (SO Survey) which meant it was not possible to assess the achievement of the target related to student behaviour. However, the Staff Opinion results in 2014 and 2015 showed opinion related to the School Climate was above State means, indicating positive improvements have been achieved in relation to staff opinion.

While progress has been made related to the target of embedding four of the Big Picture Education Distinguishers, this target was not achieved.

Student pathways and transitions

Retention targets were not met.

Even though the school implemented a large range of strategies and actions to achieve the target of all students exiting to further education, training or career prospective employment, the school did not achieved this target.

While progress has been made related to the target of embedding four of the Big Picture Education Distinguishers, this target was not achieved.

2.2.2 Summary of the review findings against the Terms of Reference

1. To what extent does the current curriculum, planning processes and school structure allow the teachers within the school to adequately differentiate their teaching for all students within their classrooms?

The Big Picture Education program requires every student to co-construct with their teacher a personalised learning plan and so there is a level of differentiation in learning across all classrooms.

However, while some mapping of these plans has occurred against the AusVELS curriculum, the curriculum is yet to be sufficiently documented to ensure guaranteed coverage of the standards, especially in relation to English and Mathematics. Half of the teachers interviewed indicated that they were unsure of how to map the curriculum and that they had not developed deep understandings of the AusVELS standards and learning continuum. Quality evidence against the AusVELS standards has not been consistently used to improve individual student outcomes.

Teachers indicated that they largely planned curriculum, teaching and learning individually rather than in teams. This hindered the implementation of more common, agreed and consistent approaches.

The school has not established common agreements of what effective teaching looks like (an agreed instructional model) in order to tailor teaching practices to meet the needs of all students. This lack of deep understanding of how to differentiate and tailor teaching practices to fit the individual student profiles has inhibited the school's capacity to cater adequately for the personalised learning needs of all students.

2. To what degree does the school use student assessment information and whole school data to monitor and track student progress and inform improved outcomes for every student?

The exhibitions process enhanced learner accountability and the quality of feedback for students in relation to their learning.

There has been increased attention paid to the collection of data and evidence over the review period and leaders systematically used data to monitor and analyse the school's progress against its goals and targets.

Whilst student learning data was collected and a database has been developed, varying levels of data literacy and understandings of how to use data and evidence-based approaches to differentiate and to inform purposeful teaching and learning across classrooms has meant that data has not been used consistently and effectively to monitor individual student learning growth.

While the professional learning program included a focus on developing understandings of the role of assessment, including authentic assessment and formative assessment, and moderation in improving student learning, understandings of these principles and practices are still in the formative stages and are yet to be fully embedded.

3. To what degree has the school been successful in promoting high expectations for all learners?

Leaders and teachers reported that work to strengthen a number of Big Picture processes including the development of personalised learning plans, the exhibition presentations and Town Hall meetings successfully raised expectations related to learner behaviour and accountability over the review period.

Evidence collected through an examination of opinion data, interviews with staff and classroom visits indicated that high expectations and collective efficacy are not principles that are as yet universally and consistently accepted by all teachers. A lack of academic emphasis in every classroom; deep understandings of curriculum standards, the learning continuum and effective transitions and pathways; purposeful teaching and challenge have impacted on the school's capacity to set appropriate expectations for all students.

4. To what extent does the school provide a safe and supportive environment that optimises student learning opportunities and builds their resilience?

Evidence collected through the examination of school documentation and opinion data; interviews with leaders, staff, students, parents and carers; and attendance at an exhibition presentation and Town Hall session indicated that the efforts around the embedding of a number of the Big Picture Distinguishers has improved student engagement and wellbeing, increased student voice and levels of resilience and provided a safer and more supportive environment. Based on the Big Picture Distinguishers, clear and explicit vision and values for behaviour, engagement and wellbeing processes have been documented and consistently implemented.

Feedback provided through the SSE and interviews indicated that the school is now a far more focused educational setting and has become a safer place for students to learn with ATS Survey student opinion of Safety consistently improving over the review period. As progress has been made in strengthening the implementation of the Big Picture distinguishers, safety levels have increased and student attendance levels have improved.

Class observations and reports from leaders and teachers indicated students are now in classrooms and working more effectively. Leaders and teachers reported that there is now far less time spent when students are out of classrooms for behavioural or emotional reasons.

5. To what extent does the school provide students with learning pathways that increase social and academic success as they progress through the school and beyond to further education or training or employment?

The school has aimed to provide learning pathways that increase social and academic success as students' progress through the school and beyond to further education and employment.

The school has built strong relationships and partnerships with parents and community to increase social and academic success. Students are involved in a range of authentic programs including volunteering, fundraising for the community, work experience programs, mock interviews, shadow days, excursions and community-based programs.

However, incomplete adoption of the Big Education Model Distinguishers such as the Learning through Internships and a lack of agreed approaches to curriculum and pedagogy have been factors that have held the school back in providing learning pathways that increase academic success for every student as they progress through and beyond the school.

This is evidenced by the fact that more students have enrolled at the Foundation VCAL level rather than the expected Intermediate level when entering Year 11. This has indicated that learning pathways for a number of students have not secured academic success because these students are not reaching expected standards by Year 11. This has a detrimental effect on students making successful transitions to further education or training or employment.

2.2.3 Key Findings

The key findings of this Priority Review are that:

- The Big Picture Education Distinguishers are not fully embedded across the school. This has meant that the vision for achievement, engagement, wellbeing, transitions and pathways has not been consistently and fully implemented across all aspects of the school's operations.

- The school does not have:

    o   At Years 7 to 10, a documented, guaranteed and viable curriculum that is consistently implemented across the school.

    o   All teachers demonstrating a deep understanding of the content and intent of the AusVELS curriculum.

    o   An agreed and fully implemented instructional model.

    o   Full understanding by all staff of the role of assessment, moderation and data literacy in improving student outcomes.

- High expectations and collective efficacy have not, so far, been beliefs that have guided the work of all staff across the organisation.

- A comprehensive professional learning program is not in place to build staff capacity.

2.2.4 Next Steps

The Principal and staff are committed to securing the best possible outcomes for all the students enrolled at the school. The school is in a position to build on the achievements of the past four years and develop a plan to address areas for improvement that have been identified in this review.