School Review Report for
Mill Park Primary School
Northern Metropolitan Region

School Improvement Division
Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

National Curriculum Services

School number: 5160
Principal Lu Alessi
School Council President Paula Gilby
Type of Review Continuous Improvement
School Reviewer Helen Goode/Claire Bolster
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1. Executive Summary

Mill Park Primary school is moving towards becoming a dynamic learning environment. In 2007, a new Principal, who had been a long serving member of staff, was appointed. Since then a new leadership structure has been created, there have been significant structural changes and expectations of staff and students have been lifted. There has also been a change in the staff profile with the appointment of a number of graduates and strong dynamic teachers capable of driving change complementing expert teachers.

The school is welcoming, attractive and very well resourced. There are excellent examples of students’ work, particularly art work, on display in the foyer and corridors and excellent learning facilities. Class groupings are designed to enhance student learning. The review confirmed strategies that over the three year review period 2007 - 2009, the combined achievement results of Mill Park’s Prep – Year 6 students showed that most performed at or above the appropriate VELS progression points in English and Mathematics, although generally performance in the English domains was stronger than that in Maths and there was variation between year levels.

While there was consistent value adding in terms of cohort growth in the P-2 Assessment of Reading, achievement was consistently below the state mean and SFO expected percentile range. By contrast, the English Online Interview assessments in 2009 indicated that all years (P-2) were performing above the expected Student Family Occupation (SFO) range.

Teacher Judgement data in English domains was on a par with the state mean, but was generally lower than the SFO expected percentile range. Trends in achievement in Prep – Year 4 have remained consistent although there was a slight downward trend at the Years 5 and 6 levels. The school identified that Years 4-6 were areas where they believe further improvement is needed.

Mill Park’s results in English external assessments, AIM and NAPLAN, were generally consistent with the state mean over the two year period with the school’s Year 3 results increasing at a slightly higher rate. In comparison to the SFO expected percentile range, Year 3 results moved from below the expected range in 2008 to within the expected range in 2009, however at Year 5 over the same period, the results shifted from within to just below the expected range.

Over this review period, results in Teacher Judgements in Number against the VELS indicated the school achieving at or just below the state mean in all year levels. While results had not been within the SFO expected percentile range, there was a trend up in 2008 with Prep, and Years 2, 3, and 6 all within this range. The school acknowledges that over the period of this review, there has been a greater emphasis on Literacy than on Numeracy and this is reflected in the results. Year 3 AIM data for Number showed a downward trend between 2004 and 2007, being .3 below the state mean in 2007 and not within the SFO expected range. NAPLAN data in both 2008 and 2009 remained just below the state mean but within the SFO expected range.
Year 5 AIM data generally showed a trend upwards and remained within the SFO expected range until 2007 when results fell not only outside the expected range but below the state mean. 2008 showed improvement and the hope is that this will continue.

Student well being is an area of concern to the school, particularly given the poor results in the Student Opinion surveys. A number of initiatives have been put into place, including student leaders and student action teams. This has been identified as a priority area in the new Strategic Plan and it is anticipated that further opportunities for student feedback, the full implementation of the e² Instructional Model and continued rigour in teaching and learning practices will result in significant improvement in the student opinion.

Transition at Mill Park has been an area of strength with effective programs ensuring the smooth transition of students from kindergarten to Prep and from Year 6 to Year 7. There has been a concerted effort to examine transition processes through the school to ensure minimal disruption to student engagement and learning.

The school believes that they are now moving towards ‘having the right people on the bus in the right seats’. The new Strategic Plan will focus on strategies to continue to improve student learning outcomes through increased engagement and connectedness of students supported by teachers who have a greater understanding of different learning styles and the capacity to differentiate learning.

2. Methodology

Methodology for the Continuous Improvement Review included a pre visit to the school and phone and email contact with Rob Brooks, the RNL. On the pre-visit, on April 16, the reviewers had the opportunity to meet with the Principal and the Leadership Team and to discuss where the school was at in terms of its achievements and challenges. This meeting also provided important background information to the school and a context through which the data could be examined. The reviewers were provided with an extensive tour of the school and school facilities, including all classrooms. Documentation was prepared for both reviewers. This included the School Self Evaluation, the School Level Report and 2009 Intake Adjusted Charts, the Strategic Plan (2007-2010), the 2009 Annual Implementation Plan, Student Absence Data summary 2007-2009, summary of Whole School Discipline data 1999-2009, Attitudes to School Student Survey data 2009, 2009 Opinion Survey Summary, detailed Parent and Staff Opinion Survey data, and a sample copy of the school newsletter.

The school website provided additional data including the 2008 Annual Report to the School Community.

**Review Day April 28, 2010**

In attendance were:

Lu Alessi Principal
3. School Context

Mill Park Primary School is located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, approximately 25 kilometres from the CBD. It was established in 1980 and was the original school in Mill Park. The current enrolment (2009) is 425 students. The enrolment figure has remained consistent over the period since the last review.

The school services a culturally diverse community who are drawn from a wide geographic area. The key reasons for this are that the school enjoys a good reputation within the wider community and it is geographically convenient for some parents' work, for example, a number of parents of students work at the nearby RMIT University Bundoora campus. Whilst there are more than 60 cultural groups represented in the school community, there is no dominant culture. The demographics have changed over the years and the area is now a high rental area with up to 15% of students transitioning in and out of the school. Approximately 1/3 of the student families are in receipt of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Currently there are three Koori students enrolled and in 2010, 14 on the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD). Any new arrival students are supported with links to the Thomastown PS Language Centre.

The school is subdivided into three sub-schools: Years P-2; 3 & 4; and 5 & 6. Classes are organised in year levels structures but grouped so that team teaching is readily facilitated. There are currently 28 teaching staff, two office staff and eight support staff. (SSE p.5). The school provides a number of specialist programs including LOTE (German), Music, Visual Arts and Physical Education. Reading support is provided through a ‘Back to Basics’ program P-2 and ‘Corrective Reading’ 3-6. A withdrawal room has been made available for these programs. In addition to SSG’s, Education Support Groups (ESG’s) are provided for students whose social behaviour is viewed as below acceptable levels. Generally, the staff is experienced: the staff profile has been heavily weighted in the Expert category but this has now been balanced with six graduates being employed.

The school was originally designed as a Core Plus school. Significant work has gone into beautifying the school which now presents very attractively. A buildings and maintenance person
supports the upkeep. The facilities of the school are excellent. That being said, the school is currently in the throes of undertaking a major building project which will see the last of the demountable classrooms removed from the site.

The school is very well resourced. Oral language stations have been set up in the P-2 learning area; each learning area or Professional Learning Team has a colour photocopier, interactive tablets and at least eight computers. There are also laptops available for student use. The library has been refurbished into a Learning Resource area with a teacher resource room attached. All resources are being reorganised and filed in a newly installed compactus. A large multi purpose room serves as an assembly area; an indoor PE facility and a venue for Performing Arts. A Music room is attached as is a parent community meeting room.

The majority of students exiting Mill Park Primary at the end of Year 6 move to Mill Park Secondary College. Some move to other secondary colleges with a small number exiting to private schools.

An active, supportive School Council is in place with sub-committees operating in Buildings and Grounds, Finance, Marketing, Healthy Eating, Education, Fundraising, and Out of School Hours care. There is also a Parent Helper program in place.
4. Evaluation of Performance

Student Learning

What student outcomes was the school trying to achieve?

In its last Strategic Plan of 2007 - 2009, Mill Park Primary School had two identified Goals and three associated Targets. Together, the Goals and Targets emphasised improving student learning outcomes through the provision of a curriculum that met students’ needs.

Goals:
- To improve learning outcomes and provide all students with the opportunity to reach their learning potential.
- To provide a comprehensive, sequential curriculum within the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) framework that caters for the students’ individual needs.

Targets:
- Students will perform at or above appropriate VELS progression points in English and Mathematics.
- With a strong focus on Writing, students will perform at or above appropriate VELS progression points.
- AIM value added measures from Year 3 to Year 5 will indicate that each cohort is improving by .25 or better of a VELS progression point in English and Mathematics.

What student outcomes did the school achieve?

Over the three year review period 2007 - 2009, the combined achievement results of Mill Park’s Prep – Year 6 students showed that most performed at or above the appropriate VELS progression points in English and Mathematics. As reflected in one of the school’s targets, there was also evidence of gradual improvement in achievement in all dimensions (Measurement, Chance & Data was constant) – and most notably in Writing and Number - in Writing in 2007, 10% of the combined student cohort was awarded A or B against the VELS and in 2009, this increased to 21%; in Number in 2007, 14% of the combined student cohort was awarded A or B against the VELS and in 2009, this increased to 21%.

The school’s combined results for Reading suggest higher percentages of students were achieving more highly than they were in the other Domains. The percentage of students performing below expected VELS progression points decreased in all Domains. Mill Park is to be commended for supporting the students to achieve these results.

Analysis of the VELS data at each year level and data obtained from other sources provides additional information to assist the school reflect on the students’ achievement and prepare its next Strategic Plan.
In Writing, Teacher Judgements against the VELS data indicates the Year 4 trend increased markedly with 69% in 2007 being assessed as at or above the expected standard and 90% in 2009 being assessed as at or above the expected standard. Similarly, the Prep trend data indicated that in 2007, 10% of the students were assessed as above the expected standard and in 2009, this figure increased to 47%. The 2007 Year 4 cohort also made significant improvement over the three years such that when in Year 6 in 2009, 84% of this group were assessed as at or above the expected standard. Over the three years, the Year 5 and 6 data on the other hand, indicates a slight downturn in the percentage of students achieving expected standards. Generally Mill Park’s results are consistent with the state mean over the three years. In relation to the SFO expected percentile range, Mill Park’s 2008 results were within the range (except for Years 4 and 5) - unlike 2007, when the school’s data was below the expected range at all year levels.

Overall, the results suggest the school has gone some considerable way toward achieving its targets in relation to English and Mathematics and the Writing Domain in particular.

In comparison to Reading however, over time, the percentage of students in Years 4 – 6 achieving D and E in Writing was higher than for Reading.

**Reading**

In 2009, Prep – Year 2 students achieved strong results in the new English Online Interview assessment (designed to replace the Assessment of Reading P-2), indicating 72% of Prep students and 52% of Year 2 students reading at between 12 and 24 months or more above the expected level. Overall results at Prep to Year 2 were above the state mean and were particularly positive in relation to the Student Family Occupation index (SFO) expected percentile range. At Year 1 however, approximately 20% of students (12) performed between 6-12 months below the expected level of achievement.

The Assessment of Reading P-2 data prior to 2009 indicates the percentage of students in Years 1 and 2 achieving 90% - 100% accuracy increased over time, with 90% Year 2 students achieving the expected Level 20. The percentage of students achieving 50% or below accuracy decreased to levels that were consistent with or lower than the state mean. While there was consistent value adding in terms of cohort growth, achievement was consistently below the state mean and SFO expected percentile range.

Teacher Judgement against the VELS data indicates student achievement was generally consistent over time with approximately 20% of students achieving A or B. Trends in achievement in Prep – Year 4 remained consistent although there was a slight downward trend at the Years 5 and 6 levels. The data was on a par with the state mean, but was generally lower than the SFO expected percentile range, except for Year 6 in 2007-2008 and Years 1-3 in 2008 where it was within the expected range. (No SFO percentile range data was available for 2009.)

Year 3 NAPLAN data of 2008 and 2009 indicates the percentage of students achieving the highest Bands (5 and 6) increased from 34% to 53%. As well, the percentage of students achieving below
the National Minimum Standard decreased from 24% to 8%. At Year 5, 28% of students achieved in the highest Bands (7 and 8), with 21% in 2008 and 18% in 2009 achieving below the National Minimum Standard. Mill Park’s results were generally consistent with the state means over the two year period with the school’s Year 3 results increasing at a slightly higher rate. In comparison to the SFO expected percentile range, Year 3 results moved from below the expected range in 2008 to within the expected range in 2009, however at Year 5 over the same period, the results shifted from within to just below the expected range.

Mill Park’s Year 3 NAPLAN data shows a more positive trend than the AIM data used prior to 2008, where results indicate a slight downward trend over the three years prior to 2008, as well as being below the state mean and the SFO expected percentile range. The Year 5 AIM data on the other hand was similar or slightly higher than the state mean and within the SFO expected percentile range.

Writing

In 2009, as with Reading, Prep students achieved strong results in the English Online Interview indicating 74% were achieving levels at between 12 and 24 or more months above the expected level. Mill Park’s mean VELS score in Prep was 2.24 – significantly higher than the state VELS mean of 1.36.

Year 3 NAPLAN data of 2008 and 2009 were consistent over the time. Achievement was consistent with the state mean and within the SFO expected percentile range. However at Year 5, the trend was downwards. In 2009, Mill Park’s results were significantly below the state mean and below the SFO expected percentile range.

Speaking and Listening

In 2009, Prep students achieved stronger results than Years 1 and 2 students in the English Online Interview. Prep and Year 1 results were consistent with state means and within the SFO expected percentile range, unlike the Year 2 results which showed 31% of students at levels of 6-12 months or below.

Teacher Judgement against the VELS data indicates consistency over time with a large percentage of the total student group (approximately 85%) achieving the expected level of C. This result is higher than for Reading and for Writing. In comparison to Reading and Writing, over time, the percentage of students across the school achieving D and E was lower. There was an improvement from 2007; in 2008 achievement scores were within the SFO expected percentile range except for Years 4 and 5.

Mathematics

The school acknowledges that over the period of this review, there has been a greater emphasis on Literacy than on Numeracy and this is reflected in the results.
Number

Over this review period, results in Teacher Judgements in Number against the VELS indicated the school achieving at or just below the state mean in all year levels. However in 2007, only Year 6 was within the SFO expected percentile range. In 2008 there was a trend up with Prep, and Years 2, 3, and 6 all within this range. The percentage of students assessed at D trended down in both Year 4 and Year 5; cohort data also showed a slight improvement.

Year 3 AIM data for Number showed a downward trend between 2004 and 2007, being .3 below the state mean in 2007. Results were not within the SFO expected range. NAPLAN data in both 2008 and 2009 remained just below the state mean but within the SFO expected range. 36% of students were in Bands 5 and 6.

Year 5 AIM data generally showed a trend upwards and remained within the SFO expected range until 2007 when results fell not only outside the expected range but below the state mean. NAPLAN data in 2008 was below state mean but just within the SFO expected level. 2008 results were stronger: the school mean was just below the state mean but 32% of students were assessed at Bands 7 or 8. The percentage at Bands 4 and 5 increased and at Band 6 decreased showing a significantly greater spread of results than was evidenced in the Teacher Judgements data.

Measurement, Chance and Data

In terms of measuring the school mean against the SFO percentile range, results in Teacher Judgements in Measurement, Chance and Data improved from 2007-2008 to be within the range in Prep and Years 2,3, and 6. Results from Years Prep to 3 trended up to be at or above the state mean. There was improvement noted in Years 4 and 5 in 2008 in that the mean moved closer to the state mean and to being within the expected range. In comparison to Number, the percentage of students assessed at A in any year level was considerably less.

Why did the school achieve / not achieve improved student outcomes?

The Effective Schools Model provides a framework for identifying the factors that supported Mill Park’s achievements over the review period.

Professional leadership

The Principal was appointed to the position at the commencement of the 2007 and has established a strong leadership team that includes two non-teaching Leading Teachers responsible for Prep – Year 3 and Years 4-6 respectively. There are also four leaders of the professional learning teams (PLT). These teams are organised as Prep; Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. The leadership team has a shared vision and a clearly articulated focus on student learning. The team has high expectations of all members of the school community and acknowledges the challenges of managing change. Transparency of practice is important in the
leadership at Mill Park. There is an open invitation to Leadership team meetings and School Improvement meetings; agendas are open and minutes are posted on the intranet.

The Principal Class members and Leading Teachers maintain ongoing support for all staff, regularly observing their practice and coaching when required. The school has also established effective relationships with a range of external support agencies, such as Uniting Care’s Kildonnan program, the Austin Hospital’s CASEA program, a speech pathologist and psychologists to build the staff’s capacity to support students who require additional assistance.

**Focus on teaching and learning**

The school has had a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning of all staff and all students. To support this, over the review period, the principal has strategically deployed the school’s resources. For example, the Leading Teachers lead curriculum and professional development across the junior, middle and senior school. They engage in frequent learning walks to ascertain the learning needs of both staff and students. Staff are organised into PLTs and teaching partnerships to support their professional learning and program planning, share responsibility for supporting students, moderate their student assessments and monitor student progress. Data has been used to drive change, for example, poor data in Assessment of Reading (in 2008 only 57.8% of students were assessed at reading with 90-100% accuracy) challenged the Leadership team to make changes both in staffing and in practice. The school acknowledges that there is an ongoing need to work on comparing various data sets, for example comparing NAPLAN results with teacher judgements. Teacher judgements are often ‘safe’ and as a result high achievers are not always acknowledged or catered for. The introduction of the Education Support Program (ESG) is one way that the school hopes to address this imbalance.

The school has begun working with the e5 Instructional Model by unpacking the capabilities and using the language in documentation, particularly in PDP’s to identify best practice.

Structured programs that support literacy at all year levels: Corrective Reading, reading comprehension (Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies - CARS) and spelling (Rigby Spelling) have been implemented as well as oral language stations in the Prep – year 3 area.

**Accountability**

The school has established a rigorous system of accountability by which student and staff performance can be evaluated. Student data is regularly collected through a range of mandatory and optional assessment instruments (such as On Demand Testing). The data is analysed by PLTs and during PDP discussions to identify, support and monitor under-achieving students and plan professional learning activities for staff. Staff will now be required to bring data as evidence of their students’ learning and achievements, not just anecdotal information. The Principal has demonstrated that she is prepared to challenge inappropriate practice. To some degree this is demonstrated in the Staff Opinion survey where the Appraisal and Recognition variable has trended down although the Professional Learning Variable has trended up.
The profile of data has been raised, the Leadership team acknowledging that there had been a degree of data ‘illiteracy’. This has been overcome and teachers are now ‘owning’ student data and moderation at PLT’s enables different teachers to lead with their own work samples. PLTs and the school leadership team have monitored student progress at each year level and for each student. Outcomes of these analyses have led to decisions being made to regroup students at all year levels into straight grades (from composite grades), staff identifying students at risk and subsequently implementing appropriate actions (including students participating in a Corrective Reading literacy support program) and staff being reallocated to teach at different year levels.

**Purposeful teaching**

Extensive data analyses by the staff and the leadership team has led to: more strategic professional learning for all staff; more focussed teaching for the Prep – 2 students; a stronger emphasis on supporting the Year 4 students to make the transition from the early years to the middle years of their primary schooling; and more meaningful learning activities for all students.

There has also been improved and more consistent teaching practice. More positive attitudes about the use of data are expressed by staff and there are better quality teacher moderation sessions.

**How effectively did the school manage its resources to support improved student outcomes?**

The school is proud of the fact that money is used wisely. Resourcing is generous but always focussed on supporting student learning. Examples of how resources have been used include:

- The appointment of two Leading Teachers without specific classroom responsibility
- The establishment of an oral language centre in the Prep – Year 3 area
- All school data on a data base
- The leasing of banks of computers, laptops and interactive whiteboards and tablets so that hardware can be kept up to date
- The employment of a .6 technical support person in addition to DEECD support.
- The use of the e-Potential survey to identify the learning needs of teachers; the introduction of ‘techy brekky’s’ to support teacher confidence with the use of technology in their teaching
What can the school do in the future to continue to improve?

The Leadership of the school has a clear vision of where they want student learning to be and this is commended. There has been significant improvement in practices, particularly in the use of data for learning and teacher professional learning and this is beginning to be reflected in results. In the school's self evaluation, the school acknowledged their commitment to the Northern Region’s improvement strategy as detailed in the Powerful Learning document. The actions they have planned to support student achievement are endorsed by the reviewers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Key Improvement Strategies</th>
<th>Suggested actions (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 To improve student learning outcomes for all students from Prep to Year 6 in English and Mathematics.</td>
<td>By 2014, to increase the percentage of students achieving above the expected levels in Teacher Judgements by 5 percentage points each year.</td>
<td>Build the capacity of teachers through the development of an agreed school wide pedagogy based on the e² Instructional Model.</td>
<td>Using on line assessment tools for moderation. Maintain oral language centre Use data to monitor the progress of individual students. Continue to moderate in all domains both within PLT's and across P-6. Continue the ESG program with an emphasis on extending the high achieving students. Implement a whole school sequential spelling and grammar programs to further develop our writing results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All students to demonstrate growth of one year in all dimensions of English and Mathematics.</td>
<td>Reduce the number of students who are achieving below expected levels in English and Maths. NAPLAN: Year 3 to be at or above the state mean in Literacy and Numeracy ; Year 5 to match the state mean.</td>
<td>Establish collective accountability for the assessment and monitoring of progress of individual students, cohorts of students, and the school as a whole. Develop processes and protocols to support the transition of students, particularly from the early years to the middle years.</td>
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Student Engagement and Wellbeing

What student outcomes was the school trying to achieve?

Mill Park’s goals and targets in this improvement area reflect the school’s belief in the strong connection between student engagement, wellbeing and attendance, and student achievement.

Goals:

1. To provide experiences for students that develop a strong sense of belonging, leadership qualities, resilience, enjoyment of school and self motivation to learn.

2. To develop in students a sense of values, such as sensitivity, integrity and responsibility that supports them to form strong and positive relationships and to become active members of the community.

Targets:

- Scores for the Attitudes to School Survey will be at or above the 75th percentile of schools across the state.

- Using 2005 levels as a benchmark, there will be a downward trend over the long term in the number of discipline incidents on the school’s tracking system.

Student absence mean to be below the 2005 mean.

What student outcomes did the school achieve?

The value the school placed on student engagement and wellbeing was reflected in the Learning Confidence data from the Teaching & Learning section of the Attitudes to School Survey. This data indicated the Years 5 and 6 students overall, had a positive perception of their ability as learners – and were in fact ranked in the top quartile for the state. In this particular area, the school met its target of being at or above the 75th percentile (the highest) of schools across the state. The school’s next two highest rankings in the Attitudes to School Survey (School Connectedness and Student Motivation) were also in the Teaching & Learning area, although they were in the 2nd quartile. Over the three years, these data trended upwards and together, they suggest the students felt a connection to school and were motivated to learn and achieve. These data also reflected the consistently positive responses from parents to the Parent Opinion Survey. Student Safety, Social Skills, Student Motivation and School Connectedness in this survey were all in the top quartile.

However, most of the other data from the Attitudes to School Survey indicated that over the review period, the students did not have the positive perceptions about their wellbeing, their relationships with other students or with their teachers. Most of the scores were in the 1st percentile (the lowest)
for the state. In addition, data relating to Teaching and Learning: Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Empathy and Stimulating Learning trended downward from 2007.

Other notable trends in the Attitudes to School Survey results for attention are: girls’ scores were in the 1st percentile and were lower than those for boys - except for School Connectedness, Learning Confidence and Connectedness to Peers; and Year 5 students’ scores were all lower than those for the Year 6 students.

Data from the Staff Opinion Survey also reflects some of the student attitudes data. The survey scores for Student Orientation, Student Motivation and Learning Environment were in the 2nd percentile for the state. Discussion with the leadership team indicated a possible correlation between student achievement (particularly in Years 3 – 5) and students’ capacity to engage with their learning. It is noted however, that these data do not reflect the parent survey data which was overall, very positive.

Over the review period, the school continued to maintain a detailed discipline incidents tracking system which since 1999, has provided information to assist the school plan and implement appropriate strategies to support student learning. The target relating to discipline was met, as since 2005, there has been a downward trend in the number of incidents reported on the tracking system (96 in 2005 compared to 67 in 2009). There is a notable exception of 165 reports in 2007 however. The Parent Opinion Survey results suggest parents are very positive about how student behaviour is managed at Mill Park, as a number of behaviour-related factors were ranked in the highest quartile: Behaviour Management, General Satisfaction with the school climate and Classroom Behaviour. The Staff Opinion Survey results relating to student behaviour reflect the same results showing a trend upwards since 2007 in Student Misbehaviour and Classroom Misbehaviour.

Student absence across Prep – Year 6 over the review period increased slightly. The average number of days absent increased for students in Years 1, 2, 3 and 5, but decreased for Preps, Years 4 and 6. Overall, the school's absence rate was slightly higher than the state mean, and was at or above the absence rate for schools with a similar cohort of students.

Over the period of the strategic plan there has been a drop in Parent Opinion data. This was evident in 2008 which was the second year of the new leadership team. Initially there was a negative reaction to some of the changes and challenges to parent behaviour. A strong increase in parent opinion was recorded in the 2009 survey with all variables being above the state mean. The school also noted that complaints against teachers had also diminished.

Why did the school achieve / not achieve improved student outcomes?

The school has a strong commitment to placing the child at the centre of learning and has put in place a range of initiatives and strategically directed its resources toward improving student engagement and wellbeing. The school leadership team is concerned that the Attitudes to School Survey data does not necessarily reflect students' real attitudes, but was perhaps the result of the
way the survey had been administered in successive years. It was noted at the Panel meeting that PoLT component mapping are conducted twice a year and responses to these are very positive.

DEECD’s Effective Schools Model provides a useful reference to reflect on the school’s achievements in student engagement and wellbeing. For example:

**Stimulating and Secure Learning Environment**

The leadership team has clearly articulated its focus on creating a stimulating and secure learning environment to staff and parents, and it is evident in the School Self-Evaluation Report, the school’s Strategic Plan and other school documents provided to the reviewers. The school sees its greatest achievements are consistency and commitment. There are clear expectations of behaviour, clearly communicated and modelled. A number of initiatives are in place to support student engagement and wellbeing. These include: a restorative practices approach to student management that emphasises students’ rights and responsibilities; the Bounce Back Values/Resilience program; a buddy program involving Prep and Year 6 students; a student council and student community action teams that undertake community projects. Student Action Teams and community action are an outcome of Teacher Professional Leave (TPL) program which involved six senior school teachers. The community action program, which involves students being involved in a project of their choice two hours a week for one and one half terms, provides another opportunity for student voice, especially as feedback is sought at the end of each program. There has also been an attempt to get funding from local businesses.

The school has recently introduced student leaders, ie school captains. These two students take an active role in assembly, attend School Council once a semester, contribute to appropriate school policies and to the ‘Kids Share’ section of the newsletter. The role of staff and student leaders as role models for students is seen as important.

A Homework club has been established for students who were never getting homework done. There has also been a change in the approach to homework with a change in focus on developing social skills and work tasks related to classroom work ie a link between class work and homework rather than just homework sheets.

Staff across the school are establishing consistent processes to support classroom management. Staff meet regularly to discuss classroom management and develop strategies for dealing with disruptive behaviours. They are vigilant in following up on issues. Bullying and other student wellbeing matters are discussed with parents. The school maintains a zero tolerance approach. Discipline policies are determined collaboratively and administered consistently. The discipline incident tracking system provides useful information to guide discussion by staff and the School Council.

Support is provided through outside agencies, for example, on site professional psychologists and a school funded speech pathologist, financial support for children from disadvantaged families to
attend camps (through Kildonnan) and participation in the CASEA program through the Austin Hospital.

Staff and students have also had the opportunity to complete a mental health assessment, the results of which were very high.

Shared Vision and Goals
The school leadership team, PLT leaders and School Council have worked to establish a clear and shared understanding of their goals. A consistent approach to behaviour with clear expectations and consequences, a focus on rights and responsibilities and the use of school values for guidance and reflection has resulted in more staff are taking responsibility for dealing with student behaviour issues and putting in place initiatives to support students who require additional support. Steps are taken to ensure that the curriculum, teaching and learning and professional learning arrangements are consistent with the school's vision and goals. The professional learning that staff undertake is targeted to their needs. The low results of the Staff Opinion Survey in the areas of Individual Stress, School Distress and Excessive Work Demands suggest staff have been challenged by the implementation of new initiatives and the expectations of the school leadership team – formed since 2007.

Accountability
The school is closely monitoring its data to assess correlations between engagement of particular student cohorts and their learning outcomes. Communication with parents in relation to wellbeing and attendance issues is regular, instant and conducted via a range of methods that include use of technology. The Principal and Assistant Principal are on yard duty each morning as one means of gauging parent satisfaction and gaining feedback. Results of the Parent Opinion Survey suggest parents value these initiatives.

The Leadership team understands the importance of celebrating success and intends to expand its current strategies to address Student Morale, Student Distress and Student Safety – which scored within the 1st quartile of the Student Attitude to School Survey. This is of concern to the school, partly because it does not correlate with other data, for example, PoLT component mapping is conducted twice a year for teachers and students including specialist teachers. Data is examined and the Leading Teachers give individual teachers feedback then support them in setting goals. This year two Leading Teachers have conducted the survey as part of the Language program. This is an attempt to ascertain whether language or comprehension is a factor in the poor results.

The Leadership team monitors the effectiveness of the school’s student engagement strategies to assess their effectiveness eg; the Bounce Back Values/Resilience program, which tended to be conducted by CRTs and used as a ‘time-filler’ rather than a program with a regular place within the curriculum.
How effectively did the school manage its resources to support the achievement of improved student outcomes?

The school is proud of the fact that money is used wisely. Resourcing is generous but always focussed on supporting student learning.

- Interactive tablets have been installed to improve student engagement.
- Staff are provided with generous allocations of time to facilitate shared planning, assessment and moderation.
- Strategic use of funding and time to support teacher professional development/learning (PD).
- PD is targeted at particular teachers based on the needs of their students.
- The school is proactive in seeking assistance to build teacher capacity from experts external to the school – either private or provided by DEECD, for example psychologists and speech therapists.
- Education Support Groups (ESG’s) have been established to support students identified as performing socially or behaviourally below expectations.

What can the school do in the future to continue to improve?

It is important that the school continues to consolidate the important improvements made to the learning environment. Sustained effort is required to raise student outcomes in all dimensions of the Attitudes to School survey. The key improvement strategies recommended are to implement programs, processes and practices to continue to reduce student absences and to provide a learning environment capable of sustaining enhanced engagement and well being outcomes for students.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>1 To improve student engagement in all aspects of their learning.</td>
<td>All variables related to Teaching and Learning on the Students Attitudes to School Survey to 4.5 or above.</td>
<td>Build teacher capacity to implement a rigorous approach to teaching and classroom management that supports an engaging and challenging learning environment.</td>
<td>Continue efforts to provide stimulating and engaging learning opportunities. Gather P – 6 opinion data from other sources (e.g. PoLT surveys). Continue to build staff competencies to implement ‘Catch up’/Circle Time, Bounce Back. Plan and implement additional activities to further build community support and to engage parents in the life of the school – continue to develop student and</td>
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Parent Forums

| 2 To improve student attendance. | By 2014, reduce the average student absence P-6 by 2 days. | Promote improved levels of attendance through the implementation of strategies and programs that target levels of absence and late arrivals through the Ultranet. | Report absence data in year levels. Maintain current actions of SMS to parents, awards, reporting on newsletters and reports |

**Student Pathways and Transitions**

**What student outcomes was the school trying to achieve?**

Mill Park’s goals and targets in this area reflect its focus on the child at the centre of learning. Together with the goals and targets for the other learning outcomes areas, they provided the school with clear direction about where to direct their energies to improve student learning outcomes over the review period.

**Goals:**

1. To improve programs, support and advice to students to assist them in developing their own life and learning pathways.

2. To continue to provide experiences for students that enhance readiness and enthusiasm to take on the next step in their learning, including beginning school, and moving between sub-schools or into secondary college, in a resilient, confident and enthusiastic way.

**Targets:**

- There will be congruence between the percentage of students reaching 90% accuracy on text levels at the end of Year 2 and the AIM Reading mean subsequently achieved by the same group of students in Year 3

- By 2009 students will be able to develop individual learning plans, self reflection, record keeping and digital portfolios.

**What student outcomes did the school achieve?**

The leadership team understands the importance of effective transition on the learning outcomes for all students as they move from pre-school to Prep, Year 6 to secondary school and as they move through the school from Years Prep to 6.

The school acknowledged that transition at both ends of the school is producing good outcomes for students. A survey of parents of new Preps, conducted by the Marketing Committee of the
Council, suggested that parents were very happy with the program. Staff and parents are pleased with the way the Prep students settle in and with the transition of the Year 6 students to a wide range of secondary schools at the end of the year. A number of activities are in place to support Year 6-7 transition, a process which includes Year 5.

The school’s targets in this area were partly met. Student achievement data drawn from the Assessment of Reading P-2 suggested that in comparison to other schools with a similar student demographic, the Prep to Year 2 students’ data reflects improvement by each cohort over time and particularly from 2007 to 2008. However, the Reading achievement target for Year 2 students in 2006 moving into Year 3 in 2007 was not met. In 2005, the Year 1 cohort’s results in 2005 were within the range expected of schools with a similar student demographic, whereas the results for the same cohort in 2007 were below the expected range. Teacher Judgement against the VELS data for English and Mathematics also showed a downward trend in achievement from Year 3 to 4.

As planned by the school, students had opportunities to develop their own learning goals, a range of assessment instruments were used to monitor student progress and the use of digital portfolios became more prevalent.

The Parent Opinion Survey results indicate parents are generally happy with transition, scoring above the state median and in the 3rd quartile over the review period.

The leadership team is of the opinion that transition for the Years 3, 4 and 5 students is not as expected. These students’ achievements plateaued or trended downward over the review period, suggesting that many did not make the transition to the next year level – with its associated learning challenges - as well as they could have. The staff are aware that some students in these year levels showed a general lack of self management and responsibility for their own learning. There appeared to be a mismatch between student and staff expectations in these areas (as evidenced for example by school yard misbehaviour, students unwilling to engage in class). There is also a marked contrast in the Year 5 Attitudes to School Survey results, particularly in relation to Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Empathy and Stimulating Learning, suggesting these students were dissatisfied by the teaching and learning experiences they had.

**Why did the school achieve / not achieve improved student outcomes?**

Mill Park is endeavouring to reflect the Effective Schools Model in supporting student transition and pathways at all year levels. For example, the school is clear about establishing and maintaining high expectations of all learners. At the commencement of each year, time is taken with students to discuss learning goals, behaviour and rights and responsibilities about learning.

There is also regular communication with parents about these expectations. The leadership team is very clear about setting high, but realistic expectations of all students and communicating this belief to the school community. Parents have continued to support the staff in maintaining high expectations.
In terms of **professional leadership**, the principal has developed a strong sense of her role as one of influencing and supporting the staff to achieve the school’s goals. The principal keeps abreast of what is happening in classrooms, she monitors student progress as they move up the school and she is proactive and responsive to the students’ learning needs and the staff professional learning needs. To improve the quality of student transition and pathways through the school over the review period, the principal shared responsibility with staff for curriculum decision-making, professional learning, communication with pre-school and secondary school providers, and resource allocation. The PLT leaders in particular, have increasingly had a critical role in these areas. Each year level now gets a planning day each term.

Mill Park has had a well established transition program for children moving into Prep from kindergarten. The school organises a six-week orientation program for pre-Prep children and has a range of communications with parents and kindergarten teachers. Activities include kinder students coming in to do Literacy and Numeracy activities and in Term 4, all enrolled students coming to school for two hours every Friday. As a consequence, there is no staggered start at the beginning of the year. The school believes the current program has students ready to learn. Online testing is done by a retired teacher in the first few days of school and the school reports that this is working well. The Prep students also have a Grade 6 buddy appointed on the first day of school. The program is very professional with students applying to be buddies and then signing an agreement. An annual family picnic for families of new students has been held in February each year and has been greatly appreciated by those who attended.

The school also works at ensuring the transition of Grade 6 students to secondary school is smooth and presents few challenges. Mill Park students have opportunities to participate in activities at the local secondary school such as debating, science programs and a performing arts concert. Transition reports are completed for each student, the school conducts a formal Graduation ceremony and in Term 1, the previous Grade 6 students return for an afternoon tea and discussion about life at secondary school. There is an opportunity here to extend this so that the students also have the opportunity to address the current Year 6’s. PSD students moving to secondary school have an extended transition program that includes dual enrolment for Semester Two. The leadership team reports that this works well for those students.

Student digital portfolios is a celebration of their learning. These are recorded on CD at end of year with Years 5 and 6 now doing theirs on Wiki space page. It is envisaged that these will be developed further and that the CD will become a learning journey of their days at Mill Park.

In 2009, intra school transition processes changed. Transition between year levels within the school is now supported by team building activities, and activities to help students become familiar with their new teachers, set learning goals and clarify expectations about their rights and responsibilities. Common understandings have been developed for what is expected at each year level. Staff acknowledge there are transition issues for students in Years 3, 4 and 5. To address this, clubs have been introduced to better engage students, revised staffing arrangements have
ensured there is a mix of experience to support students and classes have been reorganised into age levels. It is too early to measure the impact but some positive responses have been noted: parent complaints have lessened ‘dramatically’ and behaviour issues have lessened.

The school has also encouraged parent involvement in programs to support students with additional needs, understanding the importance of staff partnership with parents in the education process....eg CASEA program run by the Austin Hospital.

How effectively did the school manage its resources to support improved student outcomes?

The school believes they manage their resources wisely to support student learning.

For example:

- The Leading Teachers are not assigned to a particular class.

- The Leadership team acknowledge more energy went into transition at either end of the school – with positive outcomes for students.

- The Leadership team recognises, however, that more effort and more strategic use of resources needs to go into the Years 3, 4 and 5 levels.

- Planning time for teams is allocated generously with each year level getting a full day each term; back to back planning time is provided for teaching partners and for PLT’s.

- One of the Leading Teachers has responsibility for mentoring and coaching new teachers.

- Changes were made to staffing allocations and student groupings to better address student learning needs and student engagement at different year levels.

- There is increasing use of technology to support communication between the school and the wider community and to build teacher, student and parent knowledge about student progress (eg through use of digital portfolios)

What can the school do in the future to continue to improve?

The school has enjoyed a very strong relationship with the local kindergarten but changes in staff there is seen as a challenge to the school’s previous good relations with the Kindergarten – the Leadership team is aware of this and is reviewing how best to establish effective communications. With a number of new and young staff at the school, it is acknowledged that induction processes may need to be reviewed. New processes would also include a review of induction for teachers moving into different year levels and positions within the school, including leadership positions.
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<td>1. To improve the transition of students at key points in their schooling, and particularly those entering the school.</td>
<td>By 2014, the mean score for the Transitions variable in the Parent Opinion Survey will continue to trend up.</td>
<td>Review the school processes and programs for preparation of students moving from pre-school to school, from year to year, transferring into the school, and moving from primary to secondary settings.</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for ex students to meet with current Year 6’s. Review transition processes within the school. Seek to establish strong working relationships with the local kindergarten.</td>
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<td>Build teacher capacity to implement a rigorous approach to teaching and classroom management that supports an engaging and challenging learning environment.</td>
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