

Strategic Improvement Plan 2021-2024

Merewether High School 8510



School vision and context

School vision statement

Merewether High School aspires to be a leader of academic success in the Hunter Region. We are committed to our pillars of integrity, diversity and excellence whilst educating and nurturing high potential and gifted students to develop a passion for lifelong learning. Our vision is to ensure the positive development of the whole student, balancing academic success with empathy, resilience, resourcefulness, critical and creative thinking, responsible leadership and service to society.

School context

Merewether High School is an academically selective school located in Newcastle. It has a high profile and is acknowledged for achieving excellence. Merewether High School provides an inspirational model of public education that nurtures the academic, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of all students. The school's core values of integrity, diversity and excellence underpin a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is focused on high expectations for student academic achievement.

In 2021, 1085 students enrolled from a wide geographical area, including 16 Aboriginal students. In partnership with the Muloobinbah Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, the school supports Aboriginal students to achieve success in the HSC whilst connecting with their cultural identity. An active and supportive parent body engage in parent learning groups and collaboratively lead our P&C, canteen and Duke of Edinburgh program. The school has built a strong community committed to excellence, diversity and the fostering of individual talents.

Merewether High School's 93 highly skilled, experienced and dedicated staff members provide quality teaching and learning experiences with an emphasis on, and understanding of, strategies that challenge, develop high potential and meet the needs of gifted students. Staff encourage students to be innovative, confident and independent learners who possess strong ethical values and a highly developed social conscience.

The school has high expectations of all students, consistent with each student's ability and the belief that everyone can achieve their personal best. Our students thrive in an atmosphere which provides a range of talent development opportunities. These include co-curricular learning experiences, strong enrichment opportunities, programs for students with high potential, passions in sport and creative and performing arts, leadership and school and community service.

Extensive student leadership opportunities promote a positive school culture and a philosophy of social justice which is evidenced by a highly effective and visible prefect body and student representative council. A number of significant partnerships with our community enhance student outcomes across all domains of giftedness. This includes active links with Australian and overseas universities, staff leading the NSW Department of Education Arts Units' Hunter Wind Ensemble and Hunter Singers, and a range of international co-curricular excursions.

A comprehensive situational analysis has been conducted which led to the development of the 2021-2024 Strategic Improvement Plan, both of which involved genuine consultation with students, staff, parents and the local AECG. Through our situational analysis, we have identified the need to use data driven practices and evidence based strategies to facilitate talent development for all students.

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Purpose

In achieving school excellence we ensure our students demonstrate growth in their learning through explicit, challenging and evidence based teaching practices. Teachers will actively engage with student data to inform and adapt teaching to ensure students maximise their educational potential.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2022

Increase the percentage of students achieving in the top 2 HSC performance bands from the baseline of 74.2% to the lower bound target of 79.6% or above.

Increase the percentage of students achieving in the top 3 HSC performance bands from the baseline of 94.4% to the target lower of 95.4% or above.

Increase the percentage of students achieving in the top 2 performance bands in NAPLAN Numeracy from the baseline of 95.8% to the target lower of 97% or above.

Increase the percentage of students achieving in the top 2 performance bands in NAPLAN Reading from the baseline of 87.1% to the lower bound target of 90.1% or above.

Target year: 2023

Increase the percentage of students achieving expected growth in Numeracy from the baseline of 64.1% to the lower bound target of 69.1% or above.

Increase the percentage of students achieving expected growth in Reading from the baseline target of 61.1% to the lower bound target of 66.1% or better.

Initiatives

Highly effective and innovative teaching practices

Students are engaged in explicit, challenging and high order learning experiences to optimise the learning culture and transform high potential into high performance.

- Utilise assessment and two-way feedback to gather information about a student's understanding, advance their learning and verify the impact of teacher practice.
- Explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy to students of all levels of achievement, in all subject areas.
- Review and adjust teaching and learning programs to incorporate evidence of differentiation.
- Develop and embed formative and summative assessment strategies to monitor student progress.
- Utilise the Independent Learning Centre and tutors to enable focused and independent review of class concepts and learning content.
- Engage learning and support staff to enhance student learning.

Data driven practices

Student assessment data is regularly accessed and evaluated across faculties and within class and student groups to identify student achievement and growth and inform future teaching and learning.

- Establish a framework to ensure there is an embedded process for school wide internal and external data collection.
- Develop the capabilities of staff to engage with data and analyse student performance measures through assessment practices to enhance impact and achieve system-negotiated targets.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

Teachers collaborate to implement evidence based practices and teaching and learning programs that enhance growth and achievement and facilitate talent development for all high potential and gifted students.

Teaching and learning programs are dynamic, showing evidence of revision based on feedback of teaching practices, consistent and reliable student assessment and continuous tracking of student progress and achievement.

All teachers analyse, interpret and extrapolate data and collaboratively use this to inform planning, identify interventions and modify teaching practice to ensure all students are engaged in a challenging and enriched classroom experience.

Achievement of HSC and NAPLAN improvement measures.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

In measuring the impact of data analysis and implementing explicit evidence based teaching practices, we will utilise the following data sources:

- HCS, NAPLAN and Scout
- external assessments
- student work samples and learning plans
- student focus groups
- School Excellence Framework.

To determine the extent to which our purpose has been achieved, a deep analysis of the data will guide future school planning to provide ongoing improvement to maximise student learning outcomes.

Strategic Direction 2: Professional practice

Purpose

All staff engage in professional practice to embed a positive learning culture in which professional growth and collaboration continuously improves the quality of learning, teaching and leading.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

4 teachers achieve at highly accomplished or lead accreditation.

Teachers report high levels of support and development thorough professional learning to meet individual goals.

All staff have completed the Mini Certificate of Gifted Education and participated in high potential and gifted education professional learning.

Target year: 2024

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) student data has shown annual improvements in engagement.

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) staff data has shown annual improvements in the impact of professional learning.

Initiatives

High impact professional learning

All staff engage in high impact professional learning opportunities that fosters a culture of high expectations and drives continual improvement in teacher practice and whole school improvement.

- Establish collaborative support for teacher performance, development, cross faculty collaboration and evidence based programs and lessons.
- Evaluate professional learning activities to identify and systematically promote and implement the most effective strategies to improve teaching and learning.
- Deliver capacity development programs for leadership teams to build capabilities and collective pedagogical practice.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to establish collaborative relationships with other schools and engage in current research.
- Engage in professional learning of evidence based literacy and numeracy strategies and high potential and gifted education.

High potential and gifted education

Student learning is underpinned by quality teaching that supports high potential and gifted students to achieve their personal best.

- Establish a high potential and gifted education team to lead whole school implementation.
- Embed teaching practice informed by current research.
- Evaluate differentiation in teaching and learning programs.
- Establish reciprocal relationships with other high performing and selective high schools.
- Facilitate a culture of continuous development in teachers' content knowledge and subject expertise.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

The school has high performing teaching staff as measured against the Australian Professional Teaching Standards, whose capacities are continually built to ensure every student experiences high quality teaching.

All staff demonstrate personal responsibility for maintaining and developing their professional standards.

The leadership team has participated in capacity development programs and implements principles of evaluative thinking, continually monitors the impact of programs and approaches used by all teachers, and improves practice as required.

Teaching and learning programs reflect effective evidence based teaching methods that optimise learning progress for high potential and gifted students.

Teachers collaborate with staff from other schools to share and embed good practice.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

The impact of staff engaging in professional learning targeted at improving outcomes for high potential and gifted students will be measured through the following data sources:

- TTFM
- PL evaluations
- staff and student surveys
- classroom observations and feedback

Deep analysis of the data will guide future professional learning to ensure professional growth and collaboration continuously improves the quality of learning, teaching and leading.

Strategic Direction 3: Student and staff wellbeing

Purpose

Staff nurture, enhance and develop the individual talents of students so that they are supported to achieve excellence in all aspects of school life. Staff are valued and supported for their unique contributions by the school community.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2022

Increase the proportion of students attending school greater than 90% of the time from the baseline of 88% to the lower bound system negotiated target of 94.2% or above.

Increase percentage of students who report positive outcomes in their sense of belonging, expectations for success and advocacy at school from the baseline of 74.2% to the lower bound target of 76% or above.

Target year: 2024

School Excellence Framework elements of caring for students and a planned approach to wellbeing are validated at excelling.

Tell Them From Me (TTFM) staff data has shown annual improvements in regards to professional support and staff wellbeing.

Initiatives

Student wellbeing

Embed a whole school approach to student wellbeing and engagement where there is a collective responsibility for student learning and success. Create a safe, supportive environment where students are known, valued and cared for.

- Review student wellbeing data and create school based procedures aligned with the Wellbeing Framework for Schools.
- Investigate and implement a whole school approach to wellbeing and attendance that improves engagement and learning.
- Students participate in Tell Them From Me survey.
- Establish a Head Teacher Teaching and Learning Wellbeing.
- Embed processes to enhance core values, recognise positive contributions to school culture and promote students' connectedness.
- Enhance and celebrate the cultural backgrounds and diversity of all students.

Staff wellbeing

Positive, respectful and inclusive relationships are evident and widespread within the school community and promote optimal conditions for learning, teaching and leading.

- Review and implement wellbeing resources to further develop a range of strategies to enhance staff wellbeing.
- Establish a positive school culture where respectful relationships and accessing individual support is valued.
- Adopt inclusive and collaborative practices for staff meetings and professional learning.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

The school has implemented evidence based whole school practices which resulted in measurable improvements in wellbeing, attendance and engagement to support learning.

The school is organised so that all students have regular opportunities to meet with an identified staff member who can provide advice, support and assistance to help students fulfil their potential.

School attendance and Tell Them From Me data demonstrates reportable positive trends which reflect improved student and staff wellbeing.

Positive, respectful relationships are evident and widespread among students and staff and promote wellbeing to ensure optimum conditions for teaching and learning across the whole school.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

The impact of implementing whole school student and staff wellbeing processes will be measured using the following data sources:

- Sentral wellbeing entries
- student and staff surveys
- TTFM and People Matters surveys
- attendance rates

Rigorous analysis of the data to determine the impact of the whole school approach to wellbeing will guide both ongoing implementation, as well as future school planning, to ensure continuous improvement in student and staff wellbeing and enhance excellence in all aspects of school life.