

Strategic Improvement Plan 2023-2026

Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School 8111



School vision and context

School vision statement

The purpose of Farrer MAHS is to produce thoughtful, skilful, educated and caring young men capable of confident, responsible participation in society. Farrer MAHS is committed to promoting and developing the potential in every boy, in preparation for a fulfilling and active role as a citizen in a challenging world.

Staff at Farrer MAHS value academic achievement, engagement and communication as key aspects of student development. To achieve excellence, staff are dedicated to the practice of continuous improvement, evidence-based teaching strategies and extra-curricular activities to create stimulating and effective learning experiences for every student.

School context

Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School has established an enviable reputation as a centre of excellence in academics, agriculture, welfare, and sporting programs. Catering to the education of both day and boarding students, Farrer MAHS is the sole government provider of boys' education in a regional setting, and the only boys' agricultural school in Australia. The school is set on 191 hectares of prime agricultural land, 10 kilometres from Tamworth.

Farrer MAHS has 610 students enrolled: 310 boarders and 300 day boys, of which 12% identify as having an Aboriginal background.

The school's staffing entitlement in 2022 was 52 (FTE) teaching staff and 12.8 (FTE) non-teaching staff. The school also employs 60 Hostel staff who work in the boarding section of the school. The above entitlement staff includes Head Teacher Information and Digital Technologies and Instructional Leader positions which are funded through Socioeconomic background equity loading.

Farrer MAHS is committed to a holistic, integrated approach to develop a culture of academic success, providing a broad curriculum with an emphasis on whole school programs to encourage continuous enjoyment in life-long learning. Agriculture is a central focus, providing opportunities for problem solving and practical education that flow on to all aspects of the school. The school has fostered strong relationships with local business and industry and enjoys outstanding post-school destination outcomes for students.

A comprehensive situational analysis has been conducted which led to the development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Improvement Plan. This analysis included genuine consultation with students, staff, non-teaching staff and the PT&F.

Using our situational analysis we have identified a consistent thread of low student achievement in writing, which is inconsistent with improved NAPLAN results in reading and numeracy. A specific focus on improving academic writing would better equip students to handle the challenges of senior schooling and the HSC, which require a capacity to write analytically, evaluatively and reflectively.

Additionally, the school is committed to developing effective and innovative classroom practice, increasing student ownership to build a culture of resilience and aspiration, with significantly increased levels of student academic engagement. Staff are engaged with initiatives such as the Academic Writing Initiative, Formative Assessment, Quality Teaching Rounds, improving learning environments and integrating technology to support the craft and engagement of their teaching delivery.

There is a focus on how to best use data to inform classroom practice, differentiation of activities and targeted delivery of Literacy and Numeracy strategies. Each faculty is committed to extending and enriching student learning to complement the school's established reputation as a leader in supporting Well-being, Agriculture and extra-curricula fields.

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Purpose

Our purpose is to ensure students grow in their learning through explicit, consistent and evidence-based teaching. All students will add value to their learning from Year 7 to Year 12.

To build an environment that develops boys into men, meeting their academic potential, who are creative, collaborative, resilient, confident, socially just and work ready.

Improvement measures

Improved reading outcomes

There is a whole school focus on demonstrating growth in reading to improve the achievement levels of all students.

Achieve by year: 2024

- Student cohorts in 2024 demonstrate improved reading scores compared to 2023 and 2022 cohorts

Improved numeracy outcomes

There is a whole school focus on demonstrating growth in numeracy to improve the achievement levels of all students.

Achieve by year: 2024

- Student cohorts in 2024 demonstrate improved numeracy scores compared to 2023 and 2022 cohorts.

Improved reading outcomes

There is a whole school focus on demonstrating growth in reading to improve the achievement levels of all students.

Achieve by year: 2024

Increase in the percentage of Aboriginal students demonstrating improvement in reading to be above the

Initiatives

Quality Teaching of Inclusive Curriculum

The Quality Teaching of Inclusive Curriculum initiative aims to enhance classroom practice with a specific focus on literacy and numeracy. Additionally, this initiative will expand staff knowledge, skills, and understanding in incorporating Aboriginal Culture and Histories as a cross-curriculum priority, and support Aboriginal students to achieve better learning and social outcomes. The initiative will include the following:

- Embed formative data collection to improve explicit teaching practice. Literacy and numeracy practice is informed by research and sharing of ideas during PL and information sessions.
- Establish collaborative support for teacher performance development (Quality Teaching Rounds), cross-faculty collaborations and evidence-based programs and lessons.
- Regular faculty evaluations and support to develop teacher best practice and procedure.
- Whole school adoption of Literacy and Numeracy strategies using Super 6 Reading and Super 6 Numeracy for Stage 4 students to address identified weaknesses.
- Collection of student data to support Learning Support Personal Learning Plans and targeted teaching interventions.
- Analyse NAPLAN, HSC and minimum standard data to identify literacy and numeracy target areas.
- Review and improve the use of formative data sources, such as Progressive Achievement Testing (PAT), monitoring and reflecting on teaching effectiveness.
- Use current research, including Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation's *What Works Best*, to develop teacher knowledge and expertise.
- All staff will collaborate to establish a culture of high expectations for every student.
- Investigate the possibility of implementing 'mindsets' to influence future directions in managing and

Success criteria for this strategic direction

By the end of 2024, the following will be evident at Farrer MAHS:

- Teaching and learning programs are dynamic, showing evidence of revisions based on feedback on teaching practices, consistent and reliable student assessment and the integrated use of technology, such as iPads and the Google Suite.
- The school analyses student progress and achievement data using both internal and external assessments, such as NAPLAN and SCOUT. Teachers respond to trends in student achievement and effectively address identified deficits, such as Inferential Comprehension and Multi-Step Problems, using embedded Super 6 literacy and numeracy strategies.
- All teachers understand and explicitly teach literacy and numeracy to students at all levels of achievement, in all subject areas, with success that can be measured by improved student progress and value-add data.
- Teachers collaborate in teams to share curriculum knowledge, internal assessment data, feedback and other information about student progress and achievement which meet the learning needs of all students. Our teachers will reflectively adapt their practice using targeted professional learning and use of internal and external student assessment data to inform teaching.
- Learning Support co-ordinates effectively with Teaching Staff to support student learning with classroom assistance, Personal Learning Plans and diagnostic interventions. Learning Support delivers an integral component of whole school approaches to differentiation, literacy and numeracy programs.
- The school identifies expected growth for each student. Students are achieving higher than expected growth on internal school progress and achievement data.
- School data demonstrates that student progress and achievement is greater than students at statistically similar schools on external measures. This is consistent with high levels of student progress and

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Improvement measures

state average in Check-in Assessment for Year 9 in 2024.

Improved numeracy outcomes

There is a whole school focus on demonstrating growth in numeracy to improve the achievement levels of all students.

Achieve by year: 2024

Increase in the percentage of Aboriginal students demonstrating improvement in numeracy to be above the state average in Check-in Assessment for Year 9 in 2024.

Initiatives

evolving the school colour level system, OPALs and staff behavioural interventions.

- Collaborate to develop student friendly metalanguage and guidelines delivering high expectations to all students, which may be aligned to the OPAL system and include self-assessment.
- Targeted reading and study skills programs will promote student literacy, self-assessment and autonomy.
- HSC professional learning program (such as the *HSC Strategy PL*) will be promoted for Stage 6 teachers to increase expertise and confidence in specialised fields.
- Staff will participate in Premiers' Priority Professional Learning with a specific focus on Aboriginal Culture and History and Teaching Resources.
- Aboriginal performance targets will be backward mapped and enabled with tailored support
- Internal tuition programs, such as COVID Intensive Learning Support programs (COVID ILSP) and Homework Centre, will support targeted Aboriginal students.
- Experts will be consulted to highlight the role of curriculum innovation in raising the profile of Aboriginal Education across Key Learning Areas, with a particular focus on Agriculture. Supporting students while maintaining their cultural identity is a priority.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

achievement mapped using internal data.

- Progress and achievement of Aboriginal students within the school is equivalent to or greater than the progress and achievement of all students in the school. The school actively promotes curriculum innovations and is regarded as a leader in the field of Aboriginal Education.
- Aboriginal students feel valued in the Farrer school community, while maintaining their cultural identity.
- The school develops best practice approaches to reading and study skills and this positively impacts student performance in every stage of learning.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Question: What has been the impact of using consistent, explicit teaching PL and strategies, on student performance? Do teachers collaborate to evaluate, reflect on and adapt assessment practice? Is teaching and learning differentiated to accommodate Aboriginal students?

Data: External student performance measures (NAPLAN/HSC), internal student performance measures (PAT, internal assessment, reports), teaching programs, classroom observations, student work samples, PL feedback

Analysis: Analyse the data regularly to determine the extent to which the purpose has been achieved and report the findings to executive and whole staff.

Implications: Close analysis of the data will inform implementation and future directions.

Strategic Direction 2: Maintaining and Elevating Student Engagement

Purpose

Our purpose is to maintain excellent levels of student spirit and belonging to the school, while increasing levels of classroom engagement to 'commitment beyond compliance', from Year 7 to Year 12.

Improvement measures

Wellbeing

Achieve by year: 2026

71.99% of students reporting a positive sense of Wellbeing according to the agreed system target as measured by Tell Them from Me (TTFM)

Achieve by year: 2026

75% of students from Years 7-12 will report feeling interested, motivated and appropriately challenged by classroom activities *Tell them From Me* data (TTFM).

Achieve by year: 2026

Students reporting being subjected to bullying will occur at or below NSW state averages according to *Tell Them From Me* data (TTFM) and and show qualitative improvement according to internal student survey data.

Attendance

There is a whole school focus on improving attendance to strengthen student sense of belonging, engagement and outcomes.

Achieve by year: 2027

The attendance rate for the school is increased from 89.63% in 2023 to 90.33 by 2027.

Initiatives

Creating a Learning Culture through Nurturing Positive Connections

The Creating a Learning Culture through Nurturing Positive Connections initiative will focus on maintaining excellent levels of student emotional and behavioural engagement, to further strengthen student wellbeing and career opportunities. It will also prioritise high quality assessment with the integration of technology to support and enrich student learning and improve academic engagement for every student at Farrer MAHS, including::

- Staff will provide a rich range of extra-curricular activities to ensure all students experience the opportunity to excel in academic, sporting, cultural and careers contexts from Year 7 to Year 12.
- A specific initiation program for Year 9 students will increase student engagement and promote self-esteem and a time of greatest disengagement and vulnerability.
- High levels of student well-being will be further enhanced with targeted student wellbeing programs across year groups, including camps and excursions.
- The school will pro-actively and decisively address bullying.
- The careers program will further establish industry links for post-secondary employment opportunities. Also, tertiary links for post-secondary schooling, including VET studies, will be explored and expanded to cater for individual student needs.
- Improve links to industry and education providers (such as Australian Defence Force, University of New England and Newcastle University) giving students greater post-school opportunities.
- Focus on Agricultural careers within the local, interstate and national markets, with a specific emphasis on the Agricultural Careers Expo (every 2nd year).
- Increase support for Stage 5 students in meeting family and work needs for school leavers.
- Enhance lesson content and delivery for Stage 5/6

Success criteria for this strategic direction

By the end of 2024, Farrer MAHS will build a culture of belonging and aspiration to enable high levels of emotional and cognitive engagement.

This will be evidenced by:

- Mature, responsible students demonstrating increased responsibility at the end of Stage 5.
- Expert teacher talk and metalanguage around formative assessment research and best practice.
- Quality assessment tasks are developed, scheduled and used consistently across the whole school to help promote student learning and engagement, monitor student learning progress, and identify skill gaps for improvement and areas for extension.
- Classroom practice and documentation reflecting expertise in assessment *as, of and for* learning.
- Student commitment to learning from Years 7-12.
- High levels of collective teacher efficacy and collaboration.
- Careers operation offering enrichment and opportunities to students from Year 7-12 characterized by clear and effective communication.
- A school culture of open classrooms and collaboration.
- Students visibly interested and engaged in classroom learning as they progress from Year 7 to Year 12, demonstrating 'commitment beyond compliance' to their learning.
- A positive shift in Year 9 attitudes and engagement.
- Teacher / Student Walk-through observations will indicate increasing levels of cognitive engagement and improved lesson design as students progress from Year 7 to Year 12.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions: Has the formative assessment PL increased

Strategic Direction 2: Maintaining and Elevating Student Engagement

Initiatives

- Careers, to expand post-school options and knowledge for students, including excursions and workplace visits.
- Maintain and improve Stage 5 work experience program.
- Students will feel challenged by rich classroom activities reflecting a balance of assessment as, of and for learning and the successful integration of technology.
- Effective integration of technology Technology 4 Learning iPads and the Google Suite in operational classroom contexts.
- Teachers will differentiate learning so as to make curriculum content accessible to every learner.
- Teachers will receive Professional Learning in differentiation to support students from all learning backgrounds and with diverse needs.
- Develop a system of continuous reporting to promote student self-reflection and parental input into student engagement and growth.
- Formulate and implement a calibrated independent reading, study skills and homework initiative.
- Clear and effective scheduling of assessment tasks for Years 7-12.
- Continuation of Formative assessment PL, to include Peer Assessment, with regular reviewing and revision of established formative assessment practice, such as Learning Intentions and Success Criteria, Effective Questioning, Feedback and Peer Assessment.
- Timely return of tasks with effective feedback.
- Consistent and clear use of assessment templates according to agreed policy.
- Backward mapping of rich assessment tasks, including the use of Project-Based-Learning and Guided Enquiry so as to integrate assessment As, *For and Of* learning.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

teacher's knowledge and abilities regarding effective teaching strategies? What has been the impact of formative assessment on activating student voice? Have all staff and faculties engaged in formative assessment? Have school wide practices been developed to support the implementation of the program? Has the Rite Journey shifted student attitudes and engagement in Year 9?

Data: Teaching programs, classroom observations, student work samples, coaching records, staff / student surveys, pre and post teacher assessment of Rite Journey. TTFM survey data.

Analysis: Analyse the identified engagement data (internal surveys, Tell Them From Me, OPALs) to determine the extent to which the purpose has been achieved.

Implications: Rigorous analysis of data will inform ongoing implementation and support future school planning, ensuring sustained growth in student cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement.

Strategic Direction 3: Improving Academic Writing

Purpose

Our purpose is to build staff expertise as teachers of academic writing and to support student academic writing with improved feedback. The school will promote academic writing as an essential skill for life.

Improvement measures

Pathways

There is a focus on positive transitions into meaningful post school pathways.

Achieve by year: 2027

An increase of 5 % in the proportion of students' HSC results in the top three achievement bands in 2027 compared to 2023 and 2022.

Initiatives

Strategic Enrichment of Academic Writing

The Strategic Enrichment of Academic Writing Initiative will train teachers across Key Learning Areas to provide improved feedback to students so as to improve their academic writing, from spoken to written, using 6 specific strategies. Furthermore, it will build upon the established use of the ALARM (A Learning and Responding Matrix) as a meta-cognitive tool and a taxonomy for learning. This will be supported by explicit and differentiated learning programs, Elective Professional Learning, consistent teacher judgement sessions, staff surveys and collaboration across faculties, ensuring a whole school, calibrated approach. Important aspects of this initiative will be:

- Structured school-based accredited Professional Learning (10 hours) supported by regular elective sessions delivering a whole-school strategic writing initiative.
- Diagnosing student scripts using NAPLAN writing criteria to target teaching strategies to shift student texts along the mode continuum.
- Whole-school promotion of the Super 6 Writing strategies as an important strategy in building school community and student awareness and confidence.
- Supporting students with 'feedback friends' to ensure ongoing support in Stage 6.
- Aligning ALARM with the Super 6 Writing strategies, to establish the two initiatives as complementary and interactive means to improve academic writing.
- Promoting ALARM with students and wider school community as a system of learning 'anything about life' that is used at the school to develop critical and evaluative thinking.
- Furthering Professional Learning in ALARM to develop staff expertise (ALARM 2.0).

Success criteria for this strategic direction

By the end of 2024 teachers will have an increased confidence and expertise in guiding learning and giving effective feedback to students to improve their academic writing. This will be evidenced by:

- Students will value writing as a skill for life.
- Shift in classroom practice to place more emphasis on both teaching and feedback using the Super 6 Writing strategies on the grammar aspects of student scripts
- Student understanding of Super 6 Writing strategies develops, using teacher and peer feedback to self-edit and self-evaluate shifts in academic writing
- Teachers are confident and proficient in the use of the Super 6 Writing strategies to lead Professional Learning, provide support to peers and engage in collaborative (across Key Learning Areas) consistent teacher judgement sessions.
- Clear and effective integration of ALARM, Super 6 Writing, technology and formative assessment processes
- Staff knowledge, understanding and application of the NAPLAN marking criteria when diagnosing student scripts.
- Whole school (including student and parent) awareness of the Super 6 Writing strategy and the features of academic writing.
- Measurable growth in student academic writing samples from Stage 4 to Stage 6.
- An improvement in HSC performance in extended writing questions, as evidenced by consideration of the Results Analysis Package.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions: Has Stage 4 student writing improved? Is the school community broadly aware of this initiative? Are the teachers trained to provide expert feedback on writing? Are we making an impact with Stage 6 students?

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Data: Teacher surveys, script analysis - samples and feedback, SCOUT analysis to the item level, Teacher Self-Audit on current Writing Practices, Student focus groups, HSC results.

Analysis: Collaborative analysis of pre and post work samples, NAPLAN/HSC data with regular reports back to staff at whole school meetings, Tues News etc, RAP analysis of extended writing across Key Learning Areas.

Implications: The most significant challenge will be exporting strategies across KLAs and building staff expertise and confidence across the school. Data will guide implementation of the strategies into later stages of learning. It will be especially important that Stage 6 students develop an awareness of the strategies to improve their academic writing.