2. 1 School Context

Armadale Primary School, located in the inner eastern suburb of Armadale, in the City of Stonnington, nine kilometres from Melbourne CBD, is one of the oldest schools in Victoria. Opened for instruction on 4 September 1884 in an imposing heritage listed Victorian building situated in Densham Road, a the two storey infant building was added in 1901. More recent facility enhancements include: a new double storey building was built to cater for our growing number of students and modern Danish play equipment was installed to stimulate creative play and interaction. Parent community support enabled significant upgrade to our external facilities (e.g., shade sails, synthetic grass spaces across the school to facilitate passive and creative play, the establishment of vegetable gardens; planting of trees and plants to further green the school). Outdoor spaces are actively used as learning spaces.

APS has a mix of multi-age and single age classes to support the developmental growth of all students and enhance the connectedness of all students across the school. The school is committed to ensuring that student-teacher ratios are kept to a minimum, particularly from Prep -2. Students are placed in mixed ability groups across and within classes. This approach acknowledges that learning is a developmental process through which students proceed in different styles and rates. Curriculum provides equal access and participation for the range of individual differences in the school to ensure maximum outcomes. Specialist curriculum classes P-6 comprises LOTE Italian, Heath and Physical Education, Information and Curriculum Technology, Visual Arts and Performing Arts.

Students participate in Choirs, Glee Club, Chess and Art Clubs, whole school swimming, Camps and excursions, House athletics and Swimming Carnivals; Inter school sports and Gala Days, School Productions and Art shows. Italian Day and the Book week parade are highlights of the school calendar every year. Students are also afforded opportunities to participate in clubs through the OOSHIC program and instrumental music and orchestral music have all been provided to our students through external teachers.

Armadale Primary School offers 370 students educational provision; demand for
enrolments has grown steady over the past four years. The majority of students attend from socially and economically advantaged families within our neighbourhood zone (Student Family Occupation index has remained relatively stable over the four years at 0.15, (State Mean was 0.5143). The school has an overall staff of 31, 28 equivalent full time staff, including two Principal class, 21 teachers and seven Educational Support Staff.

During this current strategic plan, there has been significant change in our leadership structure with the appointment of a new Principal, Assistant Principal, and Leading Teacher (LT) with the specific responsibility of leading pedagogy and curriculum across the school. A new leadership team (Principal, Assistant Principal, and Leading Teacher, Pedagogy and Curriculum) has focused on providing an well –balanced curriculum that develops the whole child across all domains of development – Social/ emotional; cognitive; physical and spiritual. Building the capacity of teachers through collaborative sharing of best practice pedagogy is a particular focus. The school is expected to offer a number of Graduate employment positions in the near future.

Other notable features of the school include:

- Underpinning the school’s program is a philosophy, which is committed to educating the whole child.
- recognised for its 5 star sustainability practices and conservation programs
- a diverse range of enrichment and extracurricular activities
- acquisition of iPads for our preps and netbooks across the school at nearly a 1:1 ratio.

### 2.2 Summary of the School’s Performance

#### 2.2.1 The School’s Performance against the Previous Strategic Plan

Armadale Primary School provides a well-balanced curriculum that develops the whole child across all domains of development – social/emotional; cognitive; physical and spiritual.

School performance is consistently above the state average in literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN Years 3 and 5). When measured against schools nationally, APS is well above the average in Numeracy, Reading (Year 3), Grammar and Punctuation (Year 5) and Writing (Year 5). From 2011 to 2015 student learning growth from Years 3 to 5 was very strong with a large percentage of students making high gain (well above the state benchmark of 25%). For example, in
Writing (40-50%), Grammar and Punctuation (around 40%) and Numeracy (30-40%) Numeracy results very strong across the school. Targeted improvement in Writing, and extending student achievement above the expected level was achieved in part. Year 3 Writing improvement targets were met (NAPLAN mean score 430, percentage of students achieving at Bands 5 & 6 was 60% on 2015, exceeding the target of 55%). However, Year 5 Writing improvement targets were not met. More students achieve at higher than expected levels according to teacher assessments, mostly strongly in Number.

The factors supporting the school’s efforts to improve student learning, and school achievement include the use of contemporary targeted teaching and learning practices which better engage students, greater consistency and quality in teaching through the introduction of a whole school approaches to planning, leadership development, professional learning, and action teams for improvement. Teachers regularly on their work practice through the Performance Development processes and with the support of expert school leaders and external consultants. The school is undergoing significant change in professional practice and improvement in student outcomes. Continuing to implement these changes is supported so that more broadly based school excellence in performance and learning growth is achieved.

Consistently strong and improved performance in student engagement as measured by student and parent survey results has been achieved. All student engagement targets set for 2015 were exceeded. In each survey area APS achieved significantly above the region and the state benchmarks. The strength of student engagement is also evident is very high and improved student attendance and attentiveness in class. Average student absences per day dropped to 10.9 in 2014 (state benchmark 14.3 days) and student perceptions of classroom behaviour as reported in SATS ranked the school at the 85th percentile statewide. The factors supporting the school’s efforts to improve student engagement include: the shift from teacher centred to student-centred teaching and learning, whole school curriculum planning using an inquiry framework to give voice to students strengths and interests, introduction of investigations and Educational Research Projects which develop independence, thinking skills, and authentic learning, successful specialist programs (Italian, the Arts).
The Panel is impressed by the consistently strong performance and improvement achieved in student wellbeing as measured by student and parent survey results. All wellbeing targets have been achieved, and at performance level well above the state and region benchmarks. It is strongly evident APS has a safe, nurturing and inclusive culture. Both staff and students enjoy a safe learning environment where there is zero-tolerance to bullying, exclusion and discrimination. There is a culture of high expectations of students to act with respect and to keep each other safe. Staff prioritizes social and emotional learning, and use explicit teaching and modelling through circle time, classroom meetings and a restorative approach to conflict management to sustain the positive learning environment.

The school has effectively managed its resources to implement key strategies aimed at achieving its goals and targets. A new principal with expert professional knowledge and breath of experience primary, secondary and tertiary sectors has been appointed, and the new leadership team, team structures and whole-school leadership are focused on continuous improvement informed by evidence. Facilities and grounds have been enhanced e.g., Redevelopment of external spaces; creation of passive and active play areas; and open classrooms and team teaching evident in flexible teaching spaces improving student connectedness across classes. The commitment of staff is greatly valued as is parent participation in school activities and their significant fund raising success.

2.2.2 Summary of the considerations for the next Strategic Plan

Against a profile of improved performance, and demonstrated excellence in many key areas, Armadale Primary School seeks to extend its profile of excellence. Known as a student-centred school, where each child and family are known, valued and supported, where curriculum is designed to meet each child’s developmental needs – socially/emotionally; cognitively; physically and spiritually – the school is keen to strengthen its profile of academic excellence. To build on the progress to date, the school may consider the following priorities for the next Strategic Plan.

Priority – Excellence in Teaching and Learning: Build practice excellence

- Work in teams to agree on the consistent adoption of instructional models and assessment.
- Master the use of evidence-based learning improvement strategies
- Develop expertise across different feedback modes.
Priority – Excellence in Teaching and Learning: *Curriculum planning and assessment*

- Develop expertise in diagnosis and setting goals.
- Use multiple sources of assessment data and other feedback – including feedback from students, parents/carers, others teachers and school leaders – to evaluate student progress and the impact of teaching.
- Use evidence-based professional learning programs that support high performance and increase data literacy and understanding of how to measure impact of teaching programs and effective professional learning programs.

**Priority – Professional Leadership: Building Leadership Teams**

- Build knowledge and capacity to lead change to enhance school climate and professional learning culture.
- Develop the capabilities of leading teachers and instructional leaders to strengthen their expertise in proven coaching and feedback methods.

In each of the priority areas listed above, it is advised the school identify actions to strength the child/parent/school partnership to improve learning.

**2.2.3 Next steps**

Armadale Primary School is a nurturing and dynamic learning community developing engaged, creative and reflective students. Many of the features of school excellence are evident. Guided by expert educational leadership, the school is very well placed to embed a learning culture of excellence for all – in learning and teaching, in partnership with parents, and focussed on the whole child.