

MEDIA RELEASE**31 May 2017****Performance information in ACT public schools**

ACT Auditor-General, Dr Maxine Cooper, today presented a performance audit report on **Performance information in ACT public schools** to the Speaker, for tabling in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Dr Cooper says 'ACT public schools are performing below similar schools in other jurisdictions despite expenditure on a per student basis for public schools being one of the highest in the country.'*

'Since 2014 reviews of ACT public schools have consistently identified shortcomings in their analysis of student performance information and their use of data to inform educational practice. These shortcomings indicate a systemic problem' said Dr Cooper.

The audit found that the Education Directorate has commenced initiatives to improve governance and administrative arrangements for the use of student performance information in schools. These include developing sound principles for school improvement, identifying better ways to manage and use student performance information and developing systems and tools to support student performance information collection and analysis.

Dr Cooper says 'there is a high level of variability in the use of student performance information and management information systems and a wide range of school-based assessment tools used across ACT public schools; for a small jurisdiction such as the ACT this is excessive'.

Under the ACT model of public education considerable autonomy and responsibility is given to schools.

'A better balance between school autonomy and consistency across schools in how performance information is analysed and used is needed' said Dr Cooper.

The Summary of the **Performance information in ACT public schools**, with audit conclusions, key findings and the seven recommendations is attached to this media release.

* The Education Directorate advised that expenditure is attributed to capital related expenditure (ACT building and equipment values per FTE student are the highest in the country) and high employee related expenditure (low student to teacher ratios, higher than average teacher salaries and grandfathered Commonwealth superannuation schemes and payroll tax).

Copies of the **Performance information in ACT public schools: Report No. 4/2017**, are available from the ACT Audit Office's website www.audit.act.gov.au . If you need assistance accessing the report please phone 6207 0833 or go to 11 Moore Street, Canberra City.

EXTRACT OF SUMMARY CHAPTER

Overall conclusion

ACT public schools are performing below similar schools in other jurisdictions despite expenditure on a per student basis for public schools being one of the highest in the country.* Since 2014 reviews of ACT public schools have consistently identified shortcomings in their analysis of student performance information and their use of data to inform educational practice. These shortcomings indicate a systemic problem.

In recognition of this problem the Education Directorate has commenced initiatives to improve governance and administrative arrangements for the use of student performance information in schools. These include developing sound principles for school improvement, identifying better ways to manage and use student performance information and developing systems and tools to support student performance information collection and analysis.

Under the ACT model of public education considerable autonomy and responsibility is given to schools. This appears to have resulted in a high level of variability in the use of student performance information and management information systems and a wide range of school-based assessment tools used across ACT Public Schools; for a small jurisdiction such as the ACT this is excessive. A better balance between school autonomy and consistency across schools in how performance information is analysed and used is needed.

(* The high expenditure is attributed to capital related expenditure (ACT building and equipment values per FTE student are the highest in the country) and high employee related expenditure (low student to teacher ratios, higher than average teacher salaries and grandfathered Commonwealth superannuation schemes and payroll tax)).

Chapter conclusions

ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE

The Education Directorate publicly reports ACT public schools' NAPLAN performance using mean NAPLAN scale scores, which represents performance at a point in time, and compares these results against the Australian average. On this basis ACT public schools tend to perform higher than the Australian average on most NAPLAN tests. However, this does not provide a full picture of the performance of ACT public schools, as it does not take account of the relatively higher socio-educational advantage of the ACT and it does not measure performance over time.

Students at ACT public schools generally have higher socio-educational advantages, as measured by the Index of Community and Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA). A comparison of ACT public schools with other Australian schools with similar ICSEA values shows that the majority of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results are lower than similar schools in Australia. Furthermore, a

comparison of ACT public school students' learning progress, as measured by comparing students' NAPLAN results across different years and cycles of assessment with expected measures of predicted growth, shows considerable variation in performance across ACT public schools.

Although the influences on, and reasons for, student performance may be varied, the effective use of student performance information is an important mechanism by which student (and school) performance can be improved.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

The Education Directorate has established sound governance arrangements for the assessment of student performance and the use of student performance information to inform students' teaching and learning and school improvement.

The Education Directorate has embraced the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) as a mechanism for driving school improvement and has reflected this in key policy documents. Key policy documents discuss the importance of evidence-based practice and an evaluative culture that includes an explicit improvement and analysis and discussion of performance information. All schools are subject to five-yearly strategic external reviews, whereby the schools' performance against the principles of the National School Improvement Tool is assessed. Schools' use of performance information is considered as part of these reviews, as is the schools' use of performance information to drive differentiated teaching and learning (i.e. tailored instruction) to students.

The Education Directorate has established strategic indicators based on mean NAPLAN scale scores and compares these with the Australian average. Most schools considered as part of the audit have developed performance measures and associated indicators based on growth in NAPLAN scores and report on these as part of their annual reporting process. This represents an attempt to better measure the performance of schools.

AVAILABILITY OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

A range of student performance information is collected to inform decision-makers at all levels, from teachers through to senior executives. Key performance information that is available includes NAPLAN data, PIPS data (for students in Kindergarten), A to E reporting and other school-specific student performance information.

By virtue of nationally-driven timeframes NAPLAN data is received up to four months after testing and its usefulness in informing teaching practices is limited, although it may be used in conjunction with other information to inform school improvement. A key issue for ACT public schools is comparatively low participation rates in some schools and for Year 9 testing generally, which may distort the accuracy of the ACT's NAPLAN results. The accuracy of A to E grading and reporting is also questionable, given that across schools there is significant variability in grading

and a lack of moderation of assessment results.

The Education Support Office has increased and improved its support for schools for the analysis and use of student performance information. Schools have access to the SMART tool (which facilitates analysis of NAPLAN scores) and the School Data Tool (which facilitates analysis of a range of demographic and student performance information). However, to date the School Data Tool has not been widely accessed by school-based staff. Recent upgrades to the School Data Tool in March 2017 have improved its useability and usefulness.

ANALYSIS AND USE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

It is evident that schools are using student performance information to inform differentiated teaching and learning approaches and targeted intervention for students. These approaches reflect the guidance and principles identified in the Education Directorate's policy documents. However, the extent to which schools achieve this varies considerably. ACT public schools have consistently identified variability in their skills and capabilities to use performance information to drive improved student outcomes and school improvement.

Annual external reviews of ACT public schools have consistently identified shortcomings in ACT public schools' analysis of student performance information and the use of this data to inform specific and tailored educational instruction. Improving the performance of schools in the targeted use of data needs special attention by the Education Directorate.

Key findings

ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE

Paragraph

As part of its 2015-16 Annual Report, the Education Directorate reported the Education Directorate's targets and actual results for mean NAPLAN achievement score for Reading for Year 5 and Year 9 public school students between 2013 and 2015. The Education Directorate reported the results of ACT public school students' performance against the Australian average and reported that ACT public schools' results between 2013 and 2015 consistently exceeded the Australian average. This reporting does not take account of socio-educational factors, which would provide greater information on the relative performance of ACT public schools.

2.9

As part of its 2015-16 Annual Report, the Education Directorate reported the Education Directorate's targets and actual results for mean NAPLAN achievement score for Numeracy for Year 5 and Year 9 public school students between 2013 and 2015. The Education Directorate reported the results of ACT public school students' performance against the Australian average and reported that ACT public schools' results between 2013 and 2015 almost always exceeded the Australian average (one exception was for Year 9 Numeracy in 2014). This reporting does not take

2.12

account of socio-educational factors, which would provide greater information on the relative performance of ACT public schools.

In 2016 ACT public schools' ICSEA values ranged from 742 to 1184, with an average of 1068. The lower value of 742 was an outlier, however, with the next lowest value being 924. The significant majority of ACT public schools had ICSEA values above the national average, which shows, on balance, that ACT public schools have high community socio-educational advantage. The comparatively high socio-educational advantage of ACT public schools needs to be taken into account when comparing ACT public schools' NAPLAN results with other states and territories. 2.18

A comparison of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results in 2015 with similar schools in Australia (based on their relative socio-educational advantage, as measured by their ICSEA value) shows that for all NAPLAN tests across all year levels the majority of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results are lower than similar schools in Australia. The analysis also shows that, for Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9 results across most tests the gap is more pronounced for ACT public schools with a lower ICSEA value than it is for ACT public schools with a higher ICSEA value. 2.22

A comparison of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results in 2016 with similar schools in Australia (based on their relative socio-educational advantage, as measured by their ICSEA value) shows that for all NAPLAN tests across all year levels the majority of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results are lower than similar schools in Australia. The analysis also shows that, for Year 9 results across all tests the gap is more pronounced for ACT public schools with a lower ICSEA value than it is for ACT public schools with a higher ICSEA value. 2.24

An analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 3 to Year 5 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain) between 2014 and 2016 shows that some schools have performed well, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has exceeded the predicted school gain, while other schools have performed poorly, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has not achieved the predicted school gain. 2.30

Analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 5 to Year 7 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain) between 2014 and 2016 is only available for a limited number of schools (eight), i.e. those schools that have a cohort of students moving between primary and high school. The analysis shows that between 2014 and 2016, for most of these schools the actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain across the three assessment areas (Reading, Writing and Numeracy). The results of this analysis are most pronounced in Numeracy, where it is apparent that between 2014 and 2016 only one school's actual 'school gain' exceeded the predicted school gain (this was 2.32

in 2015).

An analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 7 to Year 9 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain) between 2014 and 2016 shows that some schools have performed well, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has exceeded the predicted school gain, while other schools have performed poorly, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has not achieved the predicted school gain. 2.33

Analysis shows that, between 2014 and 2016, in the assessment areas of Writing and Numeracy for most ACT public schools, actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain. With respect to Reading however, the number of ACT public schools whose actual 'school gain' exceeded the predicted school gain in 2014 was 8 (rising to 11 in 2016), while the number of ACT public schools whose actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain in 2014 was 11 (falling to 8 in 2016). 2.34

A 2016 report commissioned by the Education Directorate from the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at Victoria University closely examined ACT public schools' educational performance, as measured by NAPLAN, with reference to socio-educational advantages. The *Government school performance in the ACT* report sought to compare ACT public schools with other state and territory schools, focusing on other state and territory 'government city schools' and removing other state and territory selective schools from comparison. The report found 'after taking account of intake and context differences, ACT government schools on average achieve negative results on every measure'. The Education Directorate advised that this analysis shows that ACT public schools have a comparatively less mean gain than other jurisdictions. 2.40

The report also identified that 'ACT schools have higher ICSEA values as a group' and that 'this equates to higher mean scores for NAPLAN compared to schools in other states and territories where the tails of performance reduce raw mean scores'. Accordingly 'the effect is to conceal the real levels of performance in the ACT which is lower than expected (predicted) based on the student population and weaker than schools serving similar populations in other states'. 2.41

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

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The *Education Act 2004* identifies school principals as having responsibility for 'educational outcomes for students at the school'. The responsibility of school principals is exercised within the overarching guidance and responsibility of the Director-General of the Education Directorate and the support provided by the Education Directorate's Education Support Office. 3.8

Principals are responsible for developing and implementing school strategies and programs to improve school performance and in so doing implement Directorate policies. The Education Support Office is responsible for overseeing 'Directorate policy management' and assisting with 'school policy management'. Although these shared responsibilities and accountabilities are articulated, there is flexibility in how they are practically implemented.

3.9

The Education Directorate's People, Practice and Performance Framework provides further guidance to Education Directorate staff on the roles and responsibilities of the Education Support Office, Directors, School Improvement, school principals (and other leaders) and teachers with respect to system improvement. With respect to the use of student performance information, the People, Practice and Performance Framework identifies that the Education Support Office has a clear responsibility to 'provide consistent data sets to schools', demonstrating a commitment to support schools' use and analysis of performance information.

3.15

The Education Directorate's Strategic Plan 2014-2017, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identifies a range of overarching objectives and supporting priorities and key strategies. Two key overarching objectives are to 'increase the number of high performing students' and 'reduce the number of students who are not achieving'. Each of these objectives is supported by two performance indicators, but there is no guidance on how the indicators are to be measured nor are there quantitative targets associated with the indicators.

3.29

In support of the Education Directorate's Strategic Plan 2014-2017, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation*, the Directorate has prepared the *Education Capital 2017* Action Plan. This plan identifies the importance of performance information for strategic management purposes and identifies a key activity with respect to Business Innovation and Improvement is to 'improve provision and strategic use of data to inform school performance' and 'implement new School Administration System'. This demonstrates the Education Directorate's intention to improving the provision of information to improve student outcomes.

3.32

The Education Directorate has identified a range of Strategic Objectives and associated Strategic Indicators (including quantitative targets) as part of the 2016-17 annual Budget process. Strategic Indicators (and associated quantitative targets) of relevance to student performance are based on mean NAPLAN scale scores. These scores do not present a full picture of the quality and effectiveness of educational support and teaching provided by the Education Directorate, nor do they facilitate an assessment of the Education Directorate's performance. Such scores do not recognise the value of developing measures associated with student progress, which provide more relevant information on the effectiveness of each school's activities in teaching the students.

3.43

Schools' Strategic Plans and Annual Action Plans reviewed by the Audit Office varied considerably in quality and detail. Some schools' Strategic Plans were very brief, consisting of one page with little or no explanation or supporting statements for the performance objectives or associated measures, while other schools' Strategic Plans were more comprehensive and articulated a range of objectives and associated performance measures. This shows that there is considerable variability in practice with respect to accountability mechanisms and oversight of school performance.

3.50

Schools' Strategic Plans varied considerably in their recognition and articulation of objectives and strategies in relation to student performance information and its use. Ten of the 16 schools' Strategic Plans articulated clear objectives or strategies for the use of performance information through their Strategic Plans, although the quality and extent to which this was done varied considerably in the Strategic Plans. This demonstrates considerable variability in schools' recognition of student performance information for the purpose of setting school objectives and strategies. The Education Directorate has advised that it has recognised this variability and that it has conducted National School Improvement Tool training master classes in strategic planning and reviews have been completed on 17 schools in 2016 and are planned to be completed for 20 schools in 2017.

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Schools' Annual Action Plans varied considerably in their recognition and articulation of objectives and strategies in relation to student performance information and its use. Of the total of 59 performance measures in relation to academic achievement identified across the 16 Annual Action Plans of the schools considered as part of the audit, 35 (59 per cent) were expressed as measures of growth in NAPLAN scale scores. The inclusion of performance measures based on growth in NAPLAN scale scores reflects an attempt by schools to better monitor students' progress and is in contrast to the Education Directorate's overarching Strategic Indicators, which are based on mean NAPLAN scale scores.

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The Education Directorate's People, Practice and Performance Framework was released in April 2016. It provides sound principles for the management and use of student performance information for school improvement. It identifies the importance of different data sets to assist schools to use evidence to support school improvement and the need for systems to collect and analyse school level data. The People, Practice and Performance framework also identifies the need to provide 'accurate, accessible and consistent information about students' achievement at school to their parents/carers'.

3.67

The Education Directorate's *Great Teaching by Design*, released in 2016, identifies the importance of evidence-based practice and an evaluative culture that includes an explicit improvement agenda and analysis and discussion of data. It describes

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better practices in areas such as responding to individual needs, use of explicit teaching approaches, embedding formative assessment, providing students with quality feedback, setting high expectations for student achievement and engaging students, but does not provide explicit guidance for embedding these key principles. The Education Directorate has advised that explicit guidance will be provided through ongoing school improvement activities.

The Education Directorate's *Great Teachers by Design*, released in 2016, identifies 'the importance of systematically collecting and analysing student outcome data to support instructional improvement in each school, differentiation in classrooms and improved student achievement'. It also identifies the importance of using 'multiple sources of evidence to profile students' learning, including information derived from system assessments, standardised tests, classroom-based rich assessment asks, individualised assessments, student self-assessments and attendance and behaviour data'. *Great Teachers by Design* does not articulate prescriptive statements, but provides better practice in areas such as collaboration, use of data and evidence, engagement in professional learning, engagement in research and seeking and responding to feedback and engagement of parents. 3.80

Twenty-four percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'the Directorate's guidance and training to schools about using assessment data to drive improvement is sufficient', while 52 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, forty-four percent of school Principals agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'guidance and support from the Directorate to help my school analyse student assessment data has been useful', while 30 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Strong and consistent feedback was received from school Principals that they would appreciate further professional learning or training in these areas. The Education Directorate has advised that it has developed a baseline assessment of need and that it intends to shortly release a Request for Quotation to the market for the delivery of professional learning services from August 2017. 3.90

School Principals have advised that they would appreciate further guidance and assistance from the Education Support Office with respect to the use and analysis of student performance information. School Principals have also advised that they do not have good access to assistance in data analysis and interpretation when required. While further guidance and support from the Education Support Office may assist School Principals, it may be that a more fundamental examination of the use and analysis of performance information is warranted, including whether some of this is better undertaken centrally by the Education Support Office which may be able to secure the services of specialists when needed. 3.94

The Education Directorate has implemented a rolling program of reviews, whereby every ACT public school is reviewed by an external panel every five years. The rolling program of review provides a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of 3.103

schools' performance in a number of areas, including schools' 'analysis and discussion of data' and its input into 'differentiated teaching and learning'.

AVAILABILITY OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

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Analysis of ACT public schools' participation rates in NAPLAN in 2015 shows: 4.10

- participation rates for ACT public schools were lower for all year levels than the participation rates for all ACT schools (public and private) and schools Australia-wide (public and private); and
- participation rates for ACT public schools in Year 9 (85.3 percent) were significantly lower than ACT public schools' participation rates in Year 7 (93.2 percent) and the Year 9 participation rate for schools Australia-wide (public and private) (91.6 percent).

In 2015 average Year 9 NAPLAN participation rates for ACT public schools' were 85.3 percent. This compares with 90.2 percent for ACT private schools and an Australian average of 91.6 percent for both public and private schools. Low participation may lead to lack of validity of NAPLAN results. 4.12

Seventy-seven percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'the NAPLAN data I receive are useful in supporting my school's decision making', while nine percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Ten percent of respondents disagreed. With respect to the usefulness of NAPLAN data in supporting decision-making at the classroom level the majority of Principals and teachers saw the value in NAPLAN, although it is noted that some did not. Concerns were raised about: 4.19

- the delay in receiving NAPLAN results (meaning it was more of a reflective tool for whole school planning than for day to day decisions); and
- the amount of effort needed by classroom teachers to analyse NAPLAN data (if they were not provided with administrative support). In some cases, the ability for teachers to undertake their own NAPLAN data analysis was limited as they did not have access to SMART. In some schools, there was no analysis of NAPLAN for classroom decisions, or it was limited to part of the school.

Eighty-two percent of Principals of schools where PIPS was used strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'the PIPS data I receive are useful in supporting my school's decision making', while five percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 12 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. With respect to the usefulness of PIPS data in supporting decision-making at the classroom level, feedback was received that PIPS is suitable and useful for assessing Kindergarten students' abilities at the start of the year, assessing growth during the year, and (for some schools) providing a baseline for Year 1 teachers to consider. 4.25

A to E reporting is a nationally mandated mechanism for reporting student progress 4.40

to parents and carers. Most school Principals and teachers interviewed as part of the audit did not find A to E reporting useful for making decisions regarding how to teach individual students and advised of concerns with respect to the reliability of A to E reporting data and its inconsistency between schools (and also within schools). Directors, School Improvement also advised of concerns with respect to the consistency of its application across schools. A February 2017 *Evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum through analysis of student Achievement Standards Draft v4* report identified that there was a significant difference in schools' A to E grades (as measured by the proportion of A and B grades) and the report noted that these results 'may be an accurate reflection of student performance against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards'. However, the report also identified that while there was a correlation between schools' NAPLAN results and A to E grades 'it was not a strong correlation and there were numerous outliers (schools that had significant differentials between their NAPLAN rankings and A-E grade distribution rankings)'. There is no Education Support Office-driven approach to moderating results across schools. The inconsistency in moderation across schools diminishes the value of A to E reporting as a mechanism for informing teaching practices and informing parents and carers.

Schools reported using a large number (around 38) of school-specific assessment tools to assess students, together with programs to assist them to improve. The most common tests were the Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) provided by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Six different PAT tests were used, as well as a total of 32 others. Ninety-four percent of respondents to the school Principal survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'school based assessment data are useful in supporting my school's decision making'. There is a high satisfaction rate with school-specific assessment tools that are within the discretion of schools to use and apply.

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School Principals overwhelmingly agreed with the statement 'school based assessment data are useful in supporting my school's decision making', with 47 percent strongly agreeing and 47 percent agreeing with the statement. The survey also identified a widespread use of commercial testing products, with six different PAT tests and 32 others reported as being used by school Principals. Decision-making associated with the use of commercial testing products resides very much with schools and school Principals, and at present there is very little advice from the Education Support Office on which tools to select for which purpose, which ones are considered to offer the best value for money and how best to employ the tools.

4.56

The ACT Education Directorate has provided schools with access to the School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) resource. SMART is an online comprehensive diagnostic tool, sourced from the New South Wales Department of Education, which provides school leaders and teachers with a

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resource to help better understand performance on NAPLAN literacy and numeracy measures. SMART goes beyond the data publicly available to the broader community on the My School website and provides ACT Education Directorate users with the ability to provide results at the school level and for individual students and use New South Wales results as a comparator. SMART is a useful resource to facilitate the production and reporting of student performance information at the individual and school level.

The School Data Tool was introduced in August 2015. It is a web-based tool that provides schools with comprehensive data in a range of categories including school context (e.g. enrolments); student engagement (e.g. student attendance, satisfaction survey results); and student performance, including A to E grades, and NAPLAN scores and participation rates. There has been low usage of the School Data Tool across ACT public schools to date and some negative feedback from schools regarding the usefulness and timeliness of data produced. A significant upgrade of the School Data Tool occurred in late March 2017 in which the 'look and feel' and the information that was capable of being generated from the tool was improved. The introduction of the 'School Snapshot' is expected to make information from the School Data Tool more accessible to users.

The Education Directorate is in the initial stages of implementing a new School Administration System that is 'designed to consolidate a variety of existing disparate Territory systems with a single centralised authoritative System for all students, staff and School activities'. The School Administration System is intended to fully replace, or in some instances integrate through manual processes, a range of management information systems that currently provide information in relation to student performance information. If implemented as planned, the School Administration System should provide a consistent and accessible source of student performance information for schools and Education Support Office personnel.

However, while the School Administration System is expected to provide a consistent and accessible source of student performance information in the future, it will still need to be supported by business intelligence (or business analysis) software that provides users with timely, relevant and user-friendly information and analysis on student performance, similar to what is being provided by SMART and the School Data Tool. At the time of audit fieldwork, how the School Administration System was to be supported by business intelligence (or business analysis) software was still being determined.

ANALYSIS AND USE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION Paragraph

Since at least 2014, external reviews of ACT public schools have consistently identified that ACT public schools' have underperformed with respect to National 5.22

School Improvement Tool Domain 2 (Analysis and discussion of data) and Domain 7 (Differentiated teaching and learning). Annual external school reviews have identified shortcomings in these key areas over a number of years and made recommendations for improvement.

With respect to Domain 2, the *ACT External System Review Report 2016* stated 'in the absence of a whole-school assessment strategy or a reliable central data storage system, the capacity of teaching staff to engage with and use a range of data is affected' and 'an area for improvement is the building of staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data'. With respect to Domain 7, the *ACT External System Review Report 2016* stated 'in schools where student learning and wellbeing data is systematically collected, analysed and made easily accessible, teachers can readily draw on data to monitor progress, strengths and weaknesses, make judgements about individual needs and personalise teaching and learning activities. Data was not always readily available for classroom teachers in some schools or not frequently accessed by teachers. Some teachers would benefit from professional learning to develop their capacity to routinely use data to inform their planning and personalise the learning'.

5.23

In order to supplement the Education Directorate-supplied SMART system and School Data Tool, schools have developed their own school-based systems for maintaining student performance information. Schools use a variety of systems, including commercial products and locally developed and designed databases. The use of multiple school-based systems for managing student performance information is inefficient and impairs the ability to generate consistent and comparable performance information across schools. The implementation of the School Administration System is expected to mitigate the risks of multiple and inefficient systems for managing student performance information.

5.34

Sixty-eight percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'My school has sufficient skilled staff, able to analyse student assessment data for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes', while 10 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed and 22 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. With respect to the capability of teaching staff, 56 percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'at the classroom level, teachers have sufficient skills to analyse student assessment data for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes', while 14 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed and 30 percent of respondents disagreed or strong disagreed. A number of responses were also received from school Principals highlighting the variability of skills and capabilities across the teaching faculty.

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An October 2015 report produced by KPMG for the Education Directorate identified that, for the purpose of identifying and measuring current gaps in capabilities, the ability to analyse data relating to student outcomes was an area of

5.48

need for professional development and learning. The October 2015 report advised that 'specific consideration should be given to training on data analysis and developing strategies to utilise data to support the implementation of the school curriculum to provide targeted support for students'. Such training would be expected to improve schools' capability to use student performance information to inform improvements to student teaching and learning and overall school improvement. The Education Directorate has advised that a public tender is 'due to be released shortly for a provider to design, pilot and evaluate a training and development program to support implementation of the Student Resource Allocation in ACT public schools' and that this is to be delivered 'under the National Partnership Agreement on Empowering Local Decision Making and is aligned to the KPMG report'.

School Principals overwhelmingly advised that school-specific assessment information is used primarily for the purpose of informing differentiated teaching and learning (i.e. tailored teaching and instruction) for school students (91 percent), followed by curriculum planning / delivery (71 percent) and strategic direction-setting for the school (63 percent). School-specific assessment information was also used for monitoring progress against the annual Action Plan (56 percent) and staff professional development (56 percent). This demonstrates the value that school principals place on school-based assessment processes to drive teaching practices. 5.57

School Principals advised that NAPLAN and PIPS data is used primarily for monitoring progress against the school's annual Action Plan (66 percent) and strategic direction-setting for the school (63 percent). They also identified the need for 'triangulation' of NAPLAN and PIPS data with other sources of information to inform decision-making. In contrast to the use of school-specific assessment data, only 56 percent of school Principals advised that NAPLAN and PIPS data was used to inform the development of differentiated teaching and learning for students. 5.62

Some examples of better practice were identified during the audit of schools' use of student performance information to inform differentiated teaching and learning for students and targeted intervention for students. These approaches reflect the guidance and principles associated with the Response to Intervention framework, which is identified in the Education Directorate's *Great Teaching by Design* document. The Response to Intervention framework recognises a scale of support and intervention for students, ranging from normal classroom teaching for Tier 1 students through to more one on one support with individualised instruction through plans for Tier 3 students. 5.79

STUDENT EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

Paragraph

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In 2016 ACT public schools' ICSEA values ranged from 742 to 1184, with an average of 1068. The lower value of 742 was an outlier, however, with the next lowest value being 924. The significant majority of ACT public schools had ICSEA values above the national average, which shows, on balance, that ACT public schools have high community socio-educational advantage. The comparatively high socio-educational advantage of ACT public schools needs to be taken into account when comparing ACT public schools' NAPLAN results with other states and territories.

A comparison of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results in 2015 with similar schools in Australia (based on their relative socio-educational advantage, as measured by their ICSEA value) shows that for all NAPLAN tests across all year levels the majority of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results are lower than similar schools in Australia. The analysis also shows that, for Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9 results across most tests the gap is more pronounced for ACT public schools with a lower ICSEA value than it is for ACT public schools with a higher ICSEA value.

A comparison of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results in 2016 with similar schools in Australia (based on their relative socio-educational advantage, as measured by their ICSEA value) shows that for all NAPLAN tests across all year levels the majority of ACT public schools' NAPLAN results are lower than similar schools in Australia. The analysis also shows that, for Year 9 results across all tests the gap is more pronounced for ACT public schools with a lower ICSEA value than it is for ACT public schools with a higher ICSEA value.

An analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 3 to Year 5 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain)

between 2014 and 2016 shows that some schools have performed well, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has exceeded the predicted school gain, while other schools have performed poorly, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has not achieved the predicted school gain.

Analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 5 to Year 7 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain) between 2014 and 2016 is only available for a limited number of schools (eight), i.e. those schools that have a cohort of students moving between primary and high school. The analysis shows that between 2014 and 2016, for most of these schools the actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain across the three assessment areas (Reading, Writing and Numeracy). The results of this analysis are most pronounced in Numeracy, where it is apparent that between 2014 and 2016 only one school's actual 'school gain' exceeded the predicted school gain (this was in 2015).

2.32

An analysis of ACT public schools' proportional gain for Year 7 to Year 9 NAPLAN results (i.e. the ratio of actual 'school gain' compared with predicted school gain) between 2014 and 2016 shows that some schools have performed well, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has exceeded the predicted school gain, while other schools have performed poorly, by achieving an actual 'school gain' that has not achieved the predicted school gain.

2.33

Analysis shows that, between 2014 and 2016, in the assessment areas of Writing and Numeracy for most ACT public schools, actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain. With respect to Reading however, the number of ACT public schools whose actual 'school gain' exceeded the predicted school gain in 2014 was 8 (rising to 11 in 2016), while the number of ACT public schools whose actual 'school gain' did not meet the predicted school gain in 2014 was 11 (falling to 8 in 2016).

2.34

A 2016 report commissioned by the Education Directorate from the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at Victoria University closely examined ACT public schools' educational performance, as measured by NAPLAN, with reference to socio-educational advantages. The *Government school performance in the ACT* report sought to compare ACT public schools with other state and territory schools, focusing on other state and territory 'government city schools' and removing other state and territory selective schools from comparison. The report found 'after taking account of intake and context differences, ACT government schools on average achieve negative results on every measure'. The Education Directorate advised that this analysis shows that ACT public schools have a comparatively less mean gain than other jurisdictions.

2.40

The report also identified that ‘ACT schools have higher ICSEA values as a group’ and that ‘this equates to higher mean scores for NAPLAN compared to schools in other states and territories where the tails of performance reduce raw mean scores’. Accordingly ‘the effect is to conceal the real levels of performance in the ACT which is lower than expected (predicted) based on the student population and weaker than schools serving similar populations in other states’.

2.41

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Paragraph

The *Education Act 2004* identifies school principals as having responsibility for ‘educational outcomes for students at the school’. The responsibility of school principals is exercised within the overarching guidance and responsibility of the Director-General of the Education Directorate and the support provided by the Education Directorate’s Education Support Office.

3.8

Principals are responsible for developing and implementing school strategies and programs to improve school performance and in so doing implement Directorate policies. The Education Support Office is responsible for overseeing ‘Directorate policy management’ and assisting with ‘school policy management’. Although these shared responsibilities and accountabilities are articulated, there is flexibility in how they are practically implemented.

3.9

The Education Directorate’s People, Practice and Performance Framework provides further guidance to Education Directorate staff on the roles and responsibilities of the Education Support Office, Directors, School Improvement, school principals (and other leaders) and teachers with respect to system improvement. With respect to the use of student performance information, the People, Practice and Performance Framework identifies that the Education Support Office has a clear responsibility to ‘provide consistent data sets to schools’, demonstrating a commitment to support schools’ use and analysis of performance information.

3.15

The Education Directorate’s Strategic Plan 2014-2017, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identifies a range of overarching objectives and supporting priorities and key strategies. Two key overarching objectives are to ‘increase the number of high performing students’ and ‘reduce the number of students who are not achieving’. Each of these objectives is supported by two performance indicators, but there is no guidance on how the indicators are to be measured nor are there quantitative targets associated with the indicators.

3.29

In support of the Education Directorate’s Strategic Plan 2014-2017, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation*, the Directorate has prepared the *Education Capital 2017* Action Plan. This plan identifies the importance of performance information for strategic management purposes and identifies a key activity with respect to

3.32

Business Innovation and Improvement is to ‘improve provision and strategic use of data to inform school performance’ and ‘implement new School Administration System’. This demonstrates the Education Directorate’s intention to improving the provision of information to improve student outcomes.

The Education Directorate has identified a range of Strategic Objectives and associated Strategic Indicators (including quantitative targets) as part of the 2016-17 annual Budget process. Strategic Indicators (and associated quantitative targets) of relevance to student performance are based on mean NAPLAN scale scores. These scores do not present a full picture of the quality and effectiveness of educational support and teaching provided by the Education Directorate, nor do they facilitate an assessment of the Education Directorate’s performance. Such scores do not recognise the value of developing measures associated with student progress, which provide more relevant information on the effectiveness of each school’s activities in teaching the students. 3.43

Schools’ Strategic Plans and Annual Action Plans reviewed by the Audit Office varied considerably in quality and detail. Some schools’ Strategic Plans were very brief, consisting of one page with little or no explanation or supporting statements for the performance objectives or associated measures, while other schools’ Strategic Plans were more comprehensive and articulated a range of objectives and associated performance measures. This shows that there is considerable variability in practice with respect to accountability mechanisms and oversight of school performance. 3.50

Schools’ Strategic Plans varied considerably in their recognition and articulation of objectives and strategies in relation to student performance information and its use. Ten of the 16 schools’ Strategic Plans articulated clear objectives or strategies for the use of performance information through their Strategic Plans, although the quality and extent to which this was done varied considerably in the Strategic Plans. This demonstrates considerable variability in schools’ recognition of student performance information for the purpose of setting school objectives and strategies. The Education Directorate has advised that it has recognised this variability and that it has conducted National School Improvement Tool training master classes in strategic planning and reviews have been completed on 17 schools in 2016 and are planned to be completed for 20 schools in 2017. 3.55

Schools’ Annual Action Plans varied considerably in their recognition and articulation of objectives and strategies in relation to student performance information and its use. Of the total of 59 performance measures in relation to academic achievement identified across the 16 Annual Action Plans of the schools considered as part of the audit, 35 (59 per cent) were expressed as measures of growth in NAPLAN scale scores. The inclusion of performance measures based on growth in NAPLAN scale scores reflects an attempt by schools to better monitor 3.60

students' progress and is in contrast to the Education Directorate's overarching Strategic Indicators, which are based on mean NAPLAN scale scores.

The Education Directorate's People, Practice and Performance Framework was released in April 2016. It provides sound principles for the management and use of student performance information for school improvement. It identifies the importance of different data sets to assist schools to use evidence to support school improvement and the need for systems to collect and analyse school level data. The People, Practice and Performance framework also identifies the need to provide 'accurate, accessible and consistent information about students' achievement at school to their parents/carers'. 3.67

The Education Directorate's *Great Teaching by Design*, released in 2016, identifies the importance of evidence-based practice and an evaluative culture that includes an explicit improvement agenda and analysis and discussion of data. It describes better practices in areas such as responding to individual needs, use of explicit teaching approaches, embedding formative assessment, providing students with quality feedback, setting high expectations for student achievement and engaging students, but does not provide explicit guidance for embedding these key principles. The Education Directorate has advised that explicit guidance will be provided through ongoing school improvement activities. 3.73

The Education Directorate's *Great Teachers by Design*, released in 2016, identifies 'the importance of systematically collecting and analysing student outcome data to support instructional improvement in each school, differentiation in classrooms and improved student achievement'. It also identifies the importance of using 'multiple sources of evidence to profile students' learning, including information derived from system assessments, standardised tests, classroom-based rich assessment asks, individualised assessments, student self-assessments and attendance and behaviour data'. *Great Teachers by Design* does not articulate prescriptive statements, but provides better practice in areas such as collaboration, use of data and evidence, engagement in professional learning, engagement in research and seeking and responding to feedback and engagement of parents. 3.80

Twenty-four percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'the Directorate's guidance and training to schools about using assessment data to drive improvement is sufficient', while 52 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, forty-four percent of school Principals agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'guidance and support from the Directorate to help my school analyse student assessment data has been useful', while 30 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Strong and consistent feedback was received from school Principals that they would appreciate further professional learning or training in these areas. The Education Directorate has advised that it has developed a baseline assessment of need and that it intends to shortly release a Request for Quotation to the market 3.90

for the delivery of professional learning services from August 2017.

School Principals have advised that they would appreciate further guidance and assistance from the Education Support Office with respect to the use and analysis of student performance information. School Principals have also advised that they do not have good access to assistance in data analysis and interpretation when required. While further guidance and support from the Education Support Office may assist School Principals, it may be that a more fundamental examination of the use and analysis of performance information is warranted, including whether some of this is better undertaken centrally by the Education Support Office which may be able to secure the services of specialists when needed.

3.94

The Education Directorate has implemented a rolling program of reviews, whereby every ACT public school is reviewed by an external panel every five years. The rolling program of review provides a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of schools' performance in a number of areas, including schools' 'analysis and discussion of data' and its input into 'differentiated teaching and learning'.

3.103

AVAILABILITY OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Paragraph

Analysis of ACT public schools' participation rates in NAPLAN in 2015 shows:

4.10

- participation rates for ACT public schools were lower for all year levels than the participation rates for all ACT schools (public and private) and schools Australia-wide (public and private); and
- participation rates for ACT public schools in Year 9 (85.3 percent) were significantly lower than ACT public schools' participation rates in Year 7 (93.2 percent) and the Year 9 participation rate for schools Australia-wide (public and private) (91.6 percent).

In 2015 average Year 9 NAPLAN participation rates for ACT public schools' were 85.3 percent. This compares with 90.2 percent for ACT private schools and an Australian average of 91.6 percent for both public and private schools. Low participation may lead to lack of validity of NAPLAN results.

4.12

Seventy-seven percent of school Principals agreed with the statement 'the NAPLAN data I receive are useful in supporting my school's decision making', while nine percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Ten percent of respondents disagreed. With respect to the usefulness of NAPLAN data in supporting decision-making at the classroom level the majority of Principals and teachers saw the value in NAPLAN, although it is noted that some did not. Concerns were raised about:

4.19

- the delay in receiving NAPLAN results (meaning it was more of a reflective tool for whole school planning than for day to day decisions); and
- the amount of effort needed by classroom teachers to analyse NAPLAN

data (if they were not provided with administrative support). In some cases, the ability for teachers to undertake their own NAPLAN data analysis was limited as they did not have access to SMART. In some schools, there was no analysis of NAPLAN for classroom decisions, or it was limited to part of the school.

Eighty-two percent of Principals of schools where PIPS was used strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'the PIPS data I receive are useful in supporting my school's decision making', while five percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 12 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. With respect to the usefulness of PIPS data in supporting decision-making at the classroom level, feedback was received that PIPS is suitable and useful for assessing Kindergarten students' abilities at the start of the year, assessing growth during the year, and (for some schools) providing a baseline for Year 1 teachers to consider. 4.25

A to E reporting is a nationally mandated mechanism for reporting student progress to parents and carers. Most school Principals and teachers interviewed as part of the audit did not find A to E reporting useful for making decisions regarding how to teach individual students and advised of concerns with respect to the reliability of A to E reporting data and its inconsistency between schools (and also within schools). Directors, School Improvement also advised of concerns with respect to the consistency of its application across schools. A February 2017 *Evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum through analysis of student Achievement Standards Draft v4* report identified that there was a significant difference in schools' A to E grades (as measured by the proportion of A and B grades) and the report noted that these results 'may be an accurate reflection of student performance against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards'. However, the report also identified that while there was a correlation between schools' NAPLAN results and A to E grades 'it was not a strong correlation and there were numerous outliers (schools that had significant differentials between their NAPLAN rankings and A-E grade distribution rankings)'. There is no Education Support Office-driven approach to moderating results across schools. The inconsistency in moderation across schools diminishes the value of A to E reporting as a mechanism for informing teaching practices and informing parents and carers. 4.40

Schools reported using a large number (around 38) of school-specific assessment tools to assess students, together with programs to assist them to improve. The most common tests were the Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) provided by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Six different PAT tests were used, as well as a total of 32 others. Ninety-four percent of respondents to the school Principal survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'school based assessment data are useful in supporting my school's decision making'. There is a high satisfaction rate with school-specific assessment tools that are within the discretion of schools to use and apply. 4.47

School Principals overwhelmingly agreed with the statement ‘school based assessment data are useful in supporting my school’s decision making’, with 47 percent strongly agreeing and 47 percent agreeing with the statement. The survey also identified a widespread use of commercial testing products, with six different PAT tests and 32 others reported as being used by school Principals. Decision-making associated with the use of commercial testing products resides very much with schools and school Principals, and at present there is very little advice from the Education Support Office on which tools to select for which purpose, which ones are considered to offer the best value for money and how best to employ the tools.

4.56

The ACT Education Directorate has provided schools with access to the School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) resource. SMART is an online comprehensive diagnostic tool, sourced from the New South Wales Department of Education, which provides school leaders and teachers with a resource to help better understand performance on NAPLAN literacy and numeracy measures. SMART goes beyond the data publicly available to the broader community on the My School website and provides ACT Education Directorate users with the ability to provide results at the school level and for individual students and use New South Wales results as a comparator. SMART is a useful resource to facilitate the production and reporting of student performance information at the individual and school level.

4.70

The School Data Tool was introduced in August 2015. It is a web-based tool that provides schools with comprehensive data in a range of categories including school context (e.g. enrolments); student engagement (e.g. student attendance, satisfaction survey results); and student performance, including A to E grades, and NAPLAN scores and participation rates. There has been low usage of the School Data Tool across ACT public schools to date and some negative feedback from schools regarding the usefulness and timeliness of data produced. A significant upgrade of the School Data Tool occurred in late March 2017 in which the ‘look and feel’ and the information that was capable of being generated from the tool was improved. The introduction of the ‘School Snapshot’ is expected to make information from the School Data Tool more accessible to users.

4.78

The Education Directorate is in the initial stages of implementing a new School Administration System that is ‘designed to consolidate a variety of existing disparate Territory systems with a single centralised authoritative System for all students, staff and School activities’. The School Administration System is intended to fully replace, or in some instances integrate through manual processes, a range of management information systems that currently provide information in relation to student performance information. If implemented as planned, the School Administration System should provide a consistent and accessible source of

4.84

student performance information for schools and Education Support Office personnel.

However, while the School Administration System is expected to provide a consistent and accessible source of student performance information in the future, it will still need to be supported by business intelligence (or business analysis) software that provides users with timely, relevant and user-friendly information and analysis on student performance, similar to what is being provided by SMART and the School Data Tool. At the time of audit fieldwork, how the School Administration System was to be supported by business intelligence (or business analysis) software was still being determined.

4.85

ANALYSIS AND USE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Paragraph

Since at least 2014, external reviews of ACT public schools have consistently identified that ACT public schools' have underperformed with respect to National School Improvement Tool Domain 2 (Analysis and discussion of data) and Domain 7 (Differentiated teaching and learning). Annual external school reviews have identified shortcomings in these key areas over a number of years and made recommendations for improvement.

5.22

With respect to Domain 2, the *ACT External System Review Report 2016* stated 'in the absence of a whole-school assessment strategy or a reliable central data storage system, the capacity of teaching staff to engage with and use a range of data is affected' and 'an area for improvement is the building of staff skills in the analysis, interpretation and use of classroom data'. With respect to Domain 7, the *ACT External System Review Report 2016* stated 'in schools where student learning and wellbeing data is systematically collected, analysed and made easily accessible, teachers can readily draw on data to monitor progress, strengths and weaknesses, make judgements about individual needs and personalise teaching and learning activities. Data was not always readily available for classroom teachers in some schools or not frequently accessed by teachers. Some teachers would benefit from professional learning to develop their capacity to routinely use data to inform their planning and personalise the learning'.

5.23

In order to supplement the Education Directorate-supplied SMART system and School Data Tool, schools have developed their own school-based systems for maintaining student performance information. Schools use a variety of systems, including commercial products and locally developed and designed databases. The use of multiple school-based systems for managing student performance information is inefficient and impairs the ability to generate consistent and comparable performance information across schools. The implementation of the School Administration System is expected to mitigate the risks of multiple and inefficient systems for managing student performance information.

5.34

Sixty-eight percent of school Principals agreed with the statement ‘My school has sufficient skilled staff, able to analyse student assessment data for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes’, while 10 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed and 22 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. With respect to the capability of teaching staff, 56 percent of school Principals agreed with the statement ‘at the classroom level, teachers have sufficient skills to analyse student assessment data for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes’, while 14 percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed and 30 percent of respondents disagreed or strong disagreed. A number of responses were also received from school Principals highlighting the variability of skills and capabilities across the teaching faculty.

5.43

An October 2015 report produced by KPMG for the Education Directorate identified that, for the purpose of identifying and measuring current gaps in capabilities, the ability to analyse data relating to student outcomes was an area of need for professional development and learning. The October 2015 report advised that ‘specific consideration should be given to training on data analysis and developing strategies to utilise data to support the implementation of the school curriculum to provide targeted support for students’. Such training would be expected to improve schools’ capability to use student performance information to inform improvements to student teaching and learning and overall school improvement. The Education Directorate has advised that a public tender is ‘due to be released shortly for a provider to design, pilot and evaluate a training and development program to support implementation of the Student Resource Allocation in ACT public schools’ and that this is to be delivered ‘under the National Partnership Agreement on Empowering Local Decision Making and is aligned to the KPMG report’.

5.48

School Principals overwhelmingly advised that school-specific assessment information is used primarily for the purpose of informing differentiated teaching and learning (i.e. tailored teaching and instruction) for school students (91 percent), followed by curriculum planning / delivery (71 percent) and strategic direction-setting for the school (63 percent). School-specific assessment information was also used for monitoring progress against the annual Action Plan (56 percent) and staff professional development (56 percent). This demonstrates the value that school principals place on school-based assessment processes to drive teaching practices.

5.57

School Principals advised that NAPLAN and PIPS data is used primarily for monitoring progress against the school’s annual Action Plan (66 percent) and strategic direction-setting for the school (63 percent). They also identified the need for ‘triangulation’ of NAPLAN and PIPS data with other sources of information to inform decision-making. In contrast to the use of school-specific assessment data,

5.62

only 56 percent of school Principals advised that NAPLAN and PIPS data was used to inform the development of differentiated teaching and learning for students.

Some examples of better practice were identified during the audit of schools' use of student performance information to inform differentiated teaching and learning for students and targeted intervention for students. These approaches reflect the guidance and principles associated with the Response to Intervention framework, which is identified in the Education Directorate's *Great Teaching by Design* document. The Response to Intervention framework recognises a scale of support and intervention for students, ranging from normal classroom teaching for Tier 1 students through to more one on one support with individualised instruction through plans for Tier 3 students.

5.79

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

The Education Directorate should provide guidance on how performance indicators in its Strategic Planning cycle 2018-2020 are to be measured as well as associated quantitative targets associated with the indicators.

RECOMMENDATION 2 EDUCATION DIRECTORATE NAPLAN INDICATORS

The Education Directorate should develop new Strategic Indicators which are based on measuring student progress over time.

RECOMMENDATION 3 SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANS AND ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

The Education Directorate should improve the quality and comprehensiveness of schools' Strategic Plans and Annual Action Plans by requiring:

- a) explicit objectives and strategies in relation to student performance information and its use in driving school improvement; and
- b) performance measures based on students' educational progress.

RECOMMENDATION 4 GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

The Education Directorate should examine what may be the appropriate level of support for school Principals with respect to the use of student performance information to drive school improvement and determine how this is to be provided. This should recognise the balance between school autonomy and accountability and central oversight and support from the Education Support Office.

RECOMMENDATION 5 NAPLAN PARTICIPATION RATES

The Education Directorate should develop strategies to address the low participation rates in NAPLAN testing in some ACT public schools, specifically with respect to Year 9 participation.

RECOMMENDATION 6 A TO E REPORTING

The Education Directorate should implement a standards-based moderation process across schools and school networks in order to achieve consistency in A to E grading and reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 7 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR USE AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The Education Directorate should develop a comprehensive professional learning program for school Principals and teachers on the use of student performance information and how it can be used to inform differentiated teaching and learning to students and overall school improvement.

Education Directorate response:

The Education Directorate appreciates the efforts of the ACT Auditor-General and her team in acknowledging and recognising the extensive measures and mechanisms that the Directorate has implemented and will continue to implement to make improvements to student educational outcomes in ACT public schools.

It is important to note that over the past few years, national and international assessments of student achievement in Australia have shown little improvement, and in some areas have declined, despite an overall per student increase in expenditure. The ACT is not immune from this trend. Even though we remain a high achieving system our key focus is on student gain across years of schooling. The Education Directorate is investing in the better use of data by teachers, school leaders and as a system.

The ACT Government has recently launched its Future of Education Strategy and has invited the community to comment on how we can further improve our education system overall.