MEDIA RELEASE

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NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

HIGH-GAIN SCHOOLS CAN HELP DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

National Catholic Education Commission acting executive director Danielle Cronin says the identification of schools where students have experienced significant improvement in literacy and numeracy can help support teachers and students in other schools.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) today released updated information on Australian schools, including details on schools where year 3 students have made significant progress by year 5, or year 7 students by the time they reach year 9.

The analysis examines groups of students as they move through school and assesses their results on NAPLAN testing.

“We need to remember that NAPLAN is a snapshot in time, and a narrow measure of the teaching and learning that is taking place in schools across Australia,” Ms Cronin said.

“But for students in their formative educational years, NAPLAN is the best nationally consistent tool we currently have to assess their progress in the foundational areas of literacy and numeracy.”

Ms Cronin said the almost 400 schools ACARA identified as experiencing high gain are in the Catholic, government and independent sectors, in all states and territories and in all geographical contexts.

“Great things are happening across the country in terms of seeking – and achieving – improvement in student outcomes, and that success should be celebrated,” she said.

Ms Cronin said while there was deep concern expressed last year about Australian students’ performance on international standardised testing, the high-gain schools show that there are local examples of how to support student progress.

“There can be a temptation to consider how educational improvements in other countries can be replicated in Australia,” she explained. “But observing the programs and techniques that support learning in Australian schools of similar profiles is significantly more likely to lift outcomes than trying to mimic the strategies of vastly different educational and societal contexts.”

The identification of high-gain schools was one aspect of today’s release of updated data on the My School website. A range of information, including 2016 NAPLAN results, 2016 profile and population data for each school and the 2015 financial information for each school, including capital expenditure and sources of funding, was also updated today.

Ms Cronin said the My School website is one tool families, teachers and educational leaders use to consider how schools are performing.

“My School is one reference to help educators and parents understand where focus should be put,” she said. “The website offers only part of a school’s story, though. It is personal engagement between students and families and the teachers, school leaders and the school community that provides a true insight into that school.”

The understanding of the importance of NAPLAN results is similarly balanced with other educational factors in Catholic schools, Ms Cronin explained.

“Catholic education’s focus on the development of students – academically, socially, morally, physically and spiritually – means NAPLAN is understood as one measure among many of a student’s learning journey,” Ms Cronin concluded.

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