# Developing Key Directions for the next School Strategic Plan

This information supports School Review panels to develop key directions for the next School Strategic Plan.

On the final day of the school review, the School Review Panel collaboratively develops the key directions for the new School Strategic Plan (SSP). The SSP ensures that the school’s strategic direction to improve student outcomes over the next four years is identified and expressed through the development of goals, targets, and key improvement strategies (KIS) based on the evidence gathered throughout the review process.

**Goals** and **targets** focus on *what* the school is trying to achieve, and how their progress will be measured. Goals and targets align to the learning and wellbeing outcomes at the centre of FISO 2.0.

**Key improvement strategies (KIS)** articulate *how* the school will achieve their goals and targets. KIS align to the FISO 2.0 core elements.



Figure 1: Goals, targets and key improvement strategies align to FISO 2.0

**Process for developing Key Directions**

Over the course of the review process the panel will form a view regarding the next steps for school improvement.

The final panel day is an opportunity for panels to reflect on data and findings from the review process, come to a shared understanding of theschools’ strengths and areas for growth, agree on next steps, and articulate the most appropriate goals, targets and KIS for the next SSP.

It’s recommended that panels spend approximately 5 hours developing the key directions, and that they structure thinking around the following questions:

1. **Where are we now**? Reflection on data and evidence collated throughout the review (approx. 90 minutes).
2. **What do we want to achieve?** Developing goals (approx. 30 minutes) and setting targets (approx. 90 minutes).
3. **How will we get there?** Developing KIS (approx. 90 minutes).

Review panels will note that there are several places throughout this guidance where recommendations are able to be adjusted and tailored. This is to ensure that key directions are appropriate across the broad range of school contexts and sizes.

**1.** **Where are we now?**

The panel should ensure they have a shared understanding of the schools’ improvement priorities by reflecting on the data and evidence available through:

* the pre-review self-evaluation (PRSE) report
* current performance data and identified areas for improvement
* the school’s validated self-assessment of current practices against the FISO 2.0 core elements, including how these impact student outcomes and identified practice strengths and areas for growth
* the enablers and barriers to improvement identified with respect to progress in the school’s last SSP and in their recent Annual Implementation Plans (AIP).
* findings against the review’s Terms of Reference (ToR) focus questions gathered through fieldwork.

On the final day, panels can reflect on the data and evidence collated across the review by:

* brainstorming key themes that have arisen throughout the review
* reviewing available data and identifying the most significant areas for growth
* discussing the root cause of issues identified throughout the PRSE, field work findings against the terms of reference or the school’s performance against the previous SSP.

**2. What do we want to achieve?**

Once the panel has agreed on where the school is in their improvement journey, the next step is to identify what the school would like to achieve through their SSP. The panel articulates this through goals and targets.

**Goals**

**Goals** are a high-level statement that articulates the student learning and wellbeing outcomes that a school will focus on improving in their next strategic plan.

General guidance for developing goals:

* Goals should be developed based on areas where there are the greatest opportunities for growth and improvement in student outcomes, as identified throughout the review.
* Consistent with FISO 2.0, it is expected that all schools will have at least one learning and one wellbeing goal. Schools may also set goals that cover shared learning and wellbeing outcomes.
* Schools may choose to set goals at the broad student outcome level (e.g., ‘improve student wellbeing’) or may choose to focus on a specific cohort or area within student learning and/or wellbeing (e.g., ‘strengthen the resilience of all students’ or ‘strengthen the literacy of EAL students’).
* Goals should have scope for a range of supporting strategies over the four-year SSP.
* Goals should be accepted by staff and the community as appropriate.

The recommended process for developing goals is:

* draw on the understandings developed in the previous step
* prioritise the areas of student learning and wellbeing most in need of improvement so that there are an appropriate number for focus
* articulate these areas as simple and clear goals.

Tailoring goals for different school contexts:

* The panel should develop between 2 and 4 goals depending on school context, to ensure a sharp and narrow focus. Smaller schools may choose to pursue 2 goals in total, where medium to large schools may choose up to 4. It may be appropriate for very large schools to choose up to 5 goals.
* Schools may choose to set a specific goal for each of literacy and numeracy. However, schools whose next steps for improvements in student learning outcomes are foundational, supporting both literacy and numeracy (such as documenting a viable and guaranteed curriculum or developing a pedagogical model), may be best served by a single broader student learning goal. Once these foundations have been achieved, it may then be appropriate to focus on separate literacy and numeracy goals in subsequent strategic plans. Schools with sustained high performance in a given area can identify goals in other areas with greater opportunity for growth, or alternatively can specify a goal to maintain high performance in the area of strength, or to focus on a particular cohort or sub-area within it. For example, a school might look to a different area of learning or wellbeing, or, within an area of general high performance, focus improvement efforts on a priority cohort where data indicates there are opportunities for growth.

Things to avoid when developing goals:

* Expressing goals as a statement saying ‘how’ you will improve (this would be your KIS).
* Focusing on improving leadership or teaching practice (this would be your KIS).

| Example learning goals | Example wellbeing goals  |
| --- | --- |
| Improve student learning outcomes in numeracy | Improve student wellbeing outcomes |
| Increase student learning growth in literacy  | Strengthen the resilience of all students  |
| Improve student retention and post-school destinations |
| Improve students’ confidence as self-reliant learners |

**Targets**

**Targets** are the measures of achievement of the goals.

General guidance for developing targets:

* Targets measure the outcomes of all students.
* Targets should be developed using student data that will enable schools to meaningfully measure progress towards the student outcomes articulated in the goals.
* Targets may identify separate measures for specific cohorts of students where appropriate (i.e., EAL, Koorie, PSD, at risk).
* Targets are expressed as a proportion of students (e.g. X% of Year 7 students) and should include a baseline figure and a numerical target.
* Review panels should use multiple datasets to measure progress against each goal.
* Schools are encouraged to use the FISO 2.0 [system measures](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/fiso-2.0-system-measures.docx) where appropriate for their context, as these measures have been identified as having the largest impact on and correlation to positive learning and wellbeing outcomes.
* In addition to the standard data sets in Panorama, review panels may also utilise other data sets that support the school to track their progress towards their goals, including locally generated data.

The recommended process for developing targets is:

* identify which data sources will most effectively measure progress towards the goals
* consider which additional data sources can be used to triangulate progress (for example, including measures from NAPLAN data, Victorian Curriculum teacher judgements data and a learning-related factor from AtoSS to track improvements in student learning outcomes)
* identify a baseline for each different measure which articulates *where the school is now*. This is expressed as a proportion of students or cohorts (e.g., X% of Year 7 students)
* identify an appropriate target which articulates *what the school wants to achieve* over the four-year period*,* expressed as a proportion of students. Panels should consider how percentages translate to the number of individual students in their cohort as well as the performance of similar schools
* if appropriate or needed given the school’s data, identify any priority cohorts who should be captured within targets and set sub-targets or separate targets for these cohorts.

Tailoring targets for different school contexts:

* Each goal should have 2 to 4 targets and draw on multiple data sets where possible. Medium to large schools should include at least three data sources to ensure they are able to triangulate and verify their data. It may be appropriate to include 2 targets per goal for small schools with challenging data contexts. Larger schools may include 4 targets per Goal to capture the breadth of their work.
* The data sets chosen for targets may vary between schools based on their context, the findings of their review, and their future directions for improvement.
* New schools may not have baseline data available when setting targets; in these instances, it may be appropriate for schools to draw baseline figures from similar school performance.

Things to avoid when developing targets:

* Expressing targets without a numerical figure (e.g., ‘improve NAPLAN benchmark growth’, which lacks a baseline figure and target figure).
* Using phrases like ‘state average’ or ‘similar schools average’ as a target (e.g., ‘will be at the same level as the stage average’). This should be avoided as state averages and similar school averages change each year. If schools wish to reference similar school or state averages, they should do this using a baseline figure drawn from that dataset, and then set their own target (e.g., ‘increase NAPLAN above-level benchmark growth from 20% (2022 similar schools average) to 37%’).
* Using only one data source (e.g., NAPLAN) for all targets in one goal. Multiple sources of data support schools to build a more accurate and holistic picture of progress towards a goal, as well as allowing schools to triangulate data so that they can verify their progress.

| Example targets |
| --- |
| By 2026, increase the proportion of students working at or above level against the Victorian Curriculum in Number and Algebra from \_\_\_% (2022) to \_\_\_% |
| By 2026, increase the percent positive responses score on AtoSS for Years 7–12 in the factors:* Resilience from \_\_\_\_% (2022) to \_\_\_\_%
* School connectedness from \_\_\_\_% (2022) to \_\_\_\_%
 |

**3. How are we going to get there?**

Once the panel has established the long-term goals for improvement, they identify *how* the school will reach these goals through changes in practices and processes across the school.

**Key improvement strategies**

**Key improvement strategies** (KIS) are the high-level strategies that the school will implement to achieve the goals and targets.

General guidance for developing KIS:

* KIS are strategies that articulate ‘how’ the school will achieve their goal through changes to practice.
* KIS are aligned to one or more of the FISO 2.0 core elements and will be operationalised through the next four AIPs.
* They take between 2 and 4 years to complete.
* They are focused on strengthening leadership practices, teaching practices, or whole school processes.

The recommended process for developing KIS is:

* using the FISO 2.0 core elements, discuss the areas of practice most in need of strengthening to improve the student outcomes articulated in the goal
* consider what the next logical step is for the school to move towards the level of excellence for each core element as articulated through the [Illustrations of practice](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/fiso-2.0-illustrations-of-practice.docx)
* list possible KIS in order of sequential implementation (e.g., it may be necessary for the school to document the scope and sequence of the curriculum (*Teaching and learning*) prior to focusing on developing systems and processes to support the moderation of student work (*Assessment*))
* narrow down to 2 to 4 KIS that are achievable across the next four years per goal, with consideration to sequencing and impact.

Tailoring KIS for different school contexts:

* Each goal typically has 2 to 4 KIS that the school will implement over the 4-year SSP. Smaller schools may choose to pursue 2 KIS while medium and larger schools may choose to pursue 3 or 4.
* Review panels may advise that some goals have more KIS than others, based on the level of practice change required and the resources a school will dedicate to each goal (e.g., ‘improve student learning’ may require 4 KIS, while ‘improve student outcomes in STEM’ may require 2).

Things to avoid when developing KIS:

* Articulating an action that will take less than 12 months (these can be captured in the AIP).
* Expressing a high-level outcomes statement which should be captured as a goal.

| Example KIS |
| --- |
| * Develop and embed a school-wide instructional model for numeracy (Teaching and learning)
* Embed a consistent approach to diagnostic, formative and summative assessment across all learning areas (Assessment)
* Develop and implement a whole-school approach to activating student voice and agency (Engagement, Teaching and learning)
* Strengthen inclusion through whole-school multi-tiered systems of support (Support and resources, Leadership)
* Build and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment (Leadership, Teaching and learning, Support and resources)
 |

**Overall example of a goal, targets and KIS**

| Goal |
| --- |
| Improve numeracy outcomes for all students  |
| Targets |
| * By 2026, increase the proportion of students assessed as at or above benchmark growth in NAPLAN numeracy
	+ In Year 5 from 43% (2022) to 50%
	+ In Year 3 from 48% (2022) to 52%
* By 2026, increase the proportion of F-6 students working at or above level against the Victorian Curriculum in Number and Algebra from 80% (2022) to 85%
* By 2026, increase the proportion of positive response scores on AtoSS across the school for the factor ‘differentiated learning’ from 55% (2022) to 72%
 |
| Key Improvement Strategies (KIS)  |
| 1. Develop and embed a school-wide instructional model for numeracy (Teaching and learning)
2. Strengthen teacher capacity to analyse and use numeracy data to inform differentiated learning (Assessment, Teaching and learning)
3. Build and embed structures and roles that support staff collaboration, professional learning and collective efficacy for numeracy (Leadership, Teaching and learning)
 |
| Rationale for goal and associated KIS  |
| An analysis of the school’s NAPLAN and Victorian Curriculum teacher judgements data identified a high proportion of students demonstrating low to medium growth in numeracy. Additionally, the school’s Panorama Report indicated lower growth compared to like-schools. Teacher and student focus groups identified challenges with differentiating for students requiring support or extension in Numeracy lessons. Numeracy was identified as an area of focus for the next SSP. As differentiation was highlighted as the root cause issue for the school’s decline in numeracy outcomes the first chosen KIS focuses on embedding a clear, consistent numeracy instructional model across the school. Once this model is established, the school will focus on improving teacher capacity to analyse data to ensure they are targeting students point of need through differentiated numeracy lessons. |

**How do key directions become the new SSP?**

Once the school review report has been finalised, the key directions are entered into the Strategic Planning Online Tool (SPOT) on behalf of the school and form the draft SSP.

The draft SSP is shared with staff and the school community, promoting shared understanding and ownership of the review outcomes, including the goals, targets and KIS outlined in the key directions. As part of this process, the school has the opportunity to develop or revise its vision, values and intent.

Once finalised, the SSP, encompassing the updated vision, values and intent, and the goals, targets and KIS, is submitted by the principal, endorsed by the Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL), and endorsed by the school council president on behalf of the School Council, in SPOT. This must be completed in the Term following the school review.

Once endorsed by the SEIL in SPOT, the goals, targets and KIS articulated in the SSP cascade into AIPs over the next four years.

**Where can I find out more?**

For further information on developing key directions for the next School Strategic Plan, including advice on the use of data and adapting this guidance for specific contexts, visit the School Review Policy and Advisory Library PAL page on developing key directions.

**Support**

For support and advice relating to the key directions for the next School Strategic Plan, please contact the School Improvement Planning Unit:

improvement.support@education.vic.gov.au

© State of Victoria (Department of Education) 2023. Except where otherwise [noted,](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/copyright.aspx) material in this document is provided under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) Please check the full [copyright notice](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/copyright.aspx)