

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR PORT AUGUSTA WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education
and Child Development

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is to improve the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.

The purpose of the External School Review is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in DECD schools.

The framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.

The overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This Report of the External School Review outlines aspects of the school's performance verified through the review process according to the framework. It does not document every aspect of the school's processes, programs and outcomes.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this Report.

This External School Review was conducted by June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Brenton Robins, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of Port Augusta West Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 91.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Port Augusta West Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 312kms north of the Adelaide CBD. The student enrolment in 2015 is 288. The school has an ICSEA score of 964, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Disadvantage.

The school population includes 13% Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, 17% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3% children in care, and 18% of families eligible for School Card assistance. The Port Augusta Special Class, Primary (Years 3 to 7), is located at the school. Students enrolled at the School of the Air attend Port Augusta West Primary School one day a week or fortnight.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the final year of a 3rd tenure, a Deputy Principal, a School Counsellor and a Coordinator. With the exception of the Principal, there has been high leadership turnover, with three Deputy Principals and five School Counsellors in the last five years.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 54% of Year 1 and 50% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of Year 3 students, 70% of Year 5 students and 79% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Years 3 and 7 has been upwards, Year 3 from 79% in 2013 to 89% in 2015, and Year 7 from 57% in 2013 to 79% in 2015. Between 2013 to 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards from 83% in 2013 to 70% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving above the results of similar students across DECD schools. For 2015 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 36% of Year 3, 25% of Year 5 and 16% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in 2013, 83%, or 10 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 20%, or 1 student from Year 3 in 2011 remains in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement

from the historic baseline average. For Year 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Years 3 to 7 upper band retention is downwards from 50% to 20%.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of Year 3 students, 70% of Year 5 students and 74% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards from 50% in 2013 to 74% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 29% of Year 3, 18% of Year 5 and 16% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 60%, or 6 students from Year 3 in 2013 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 40%, or 2 students from Year 3 in 2011 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 3 in 2013 and Year 5 in 2015, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: How are students challenged to aspire and achieve?

Effective Leadership: To what extent are the school's Professional Learning and Performance Development processes effective in building whole-school consistency in improving student learning outcomes?

Effective Leadership: To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?

How are students challenged to aspire and achieve?

From the data in the school report, high percentages of students are achieving the SEA standards; however, results showed little to no improvement in students achieving in the higher bands.

Increasing the percentage of students achieving and retaining at higher band levels needs to be a priority.

The Principal in her presentation clearly demonstrated the impressive evidence of multiple datasets used to track and monitor student learning and growth. Through conversations with staff, it became apparent that, whilst there was staff engagement, overall, it was leader-driven.

A future opportunity would be to extend the involvement of data that empowers ownership and accountability from all stakeholders. This may need to include establishing the purpose of data analysis from a whole-school perspective, including assessing what is happening in cohorts and drilling down to class levels and individual students. Identifying trends and patterns will enable a proactive approach to identify and celebrate what is working, whilst at the same time, reflecting on current practices and the impact, if any, these practices may be having. It will be imperative to address the analysis using multiple measures, perception and process data, and triangulating this with achievement data.

Drilling down to class level will provide evidence for teachers to plan and provide a differentiated curriculum that provides challenge and stretch for all students.

The Review Panel can verify with written and verbal feedback that teachers have high expectations and a genuine belief that students can succeed. The Review Panel sought clarification as to how students were being challenged and inspired to achieve. Targeted intervention programs are in place for identified students and progress data is used to determine impact.

For students in Wave 1, there was a varying degree of evidence, based on conversations with students, staff and in documentation, that students are being challenged with rigour and higher-order opportunities, which provide stretch and challenge. However, throughout the review process, it became apparent that many learning opportunities were teacher-directed and lacked differentiation.

The use of common downloads from websites or common worksheets were evident during walkthroughs. The sharing between staff of creating transforming tasks would be an opportunity for all staff to explain what worked and also what didn't; then, together, deeper understanding and confidence for delivery back in the classroom could be developed. Follow-up with peer-to-peer observations and feedback would enhance coherence and consistency and lead to pivotal improvement strategies that provide rigour and challenge in moving students to achievement above SEA.

The Review Panel was interested in finding out student perceptions as to whether they believed they were being challenged. The majority of students commented that they thought they were doing okay. When asked *how do they know?* the majority stated: "the teacher tells us", "when I get my report" and "I'm happy to get a C grade". Some, however, didn't know, and others couldn't rate where they believed they were at. When asked if they knew how to improve, comments were generally, "the teacher tells us", or similar statements such as, "I know I'm doing well, because I get my work finished and the teacher then gives me another worksheet", and "sometimes I get to help others and this helps me practice".

Evidence of the use of rubrics was provided; however, the majority of examples were downloaded from websites and not explicit to units of work. Whilst these can provide a starting point, it is essential that they are enhanced to include the specific criteria associated with achievement levels. Sharing the planning of these with students will provide them with insights as to what the criteria are for each A-E standard. The use of both peer-to-peer and individual reflection throughout the unit of work will enable students to be responsible for tracking their learning.

A group of students commented on how they are developing their skills and their executive functioning, and how this is challenging their learning. When asked to explain further, they responded: "it's about thinking first, "stop, think, and not give up", "it's important to try, sometimes you can get worried and frustrated, especially if you don't understand, but if you stay calm, then, you can have a go, even if it's only a small try at first," and "sometimes I look back over my work and this gives me ideas of what to do".

There are staff at Port Augusta West Primary School who clearly demonstrate an understanding of powerful and engaging learning opportunities. Comments from some students indicated their involvement in the learning processes. Some students were able to explain learning intent, success criteria and how they are responsible for their learning.

The next possibility to support alignment to whole-school agreements would be to encourage staff to share good practice with practical ideas. Encouraging this would foster alignment to the agreements whilst building staff capacity and confidence.

Direction 1

Increase the percentage of students achieving and retaining higher bands through strengthening effective pedagogies to challenge and stretch learning for all students.

To what extent are the school's Professional Learning and Performance Development processes effective in building whole-school consistency in improving student learning outcomes?

Regular and ongoing Professional Learning processes aligned to Performance Development are key to ensuring consistency in practice and improvement, whilst building the capacity of staff to learn and challenge each other to extend student learning outcomes.

The Review Panel acknowledges the challenges being faced with the turnover of staff, including leadership, and the impact that this has had on maintaining coherence to whole-school approaches. Changes to all leadership positions in 2017, provides an opportunity to review the school's vision and values, in order to promote a common purpose to learning.

The Principal in her presentation explained the whole-school focus on Empowering Local Learners (ELL), literacy and mathematics warm-ups, 'Play is the Way' and Growth Mindset. The Review Panel sought evidence to determine the level of uptake across the school. There was variance in the understanding and purpose of the whole-school agreements. Many commented that student behaviour issues are having a negative impact and resulting in disruptions to the learning program. The Review Panel noted the feeling of 'helplessness' from many staff in both formal and informal conversations.

The School Counsellor shared how 'Play is the Way' has been introduced to improve the level of resilience and engagement for students. However, there is a lack of consistency and commitment to its implementation across the school. Reference was made to a lack of time, with some staff stating that students "just won't engage". A future opportunity would be to practice as a staff what to do when a 'teachable moment' emerges. It will be imperative if this initiative continues that a common and accountable approach is established.

The Review Panel heard comments on the warm-ups being used in literacy and numeracy to develop automaticity. One group of students acknowledged and explained examples of warm-ups: "it gets us ready for learning", and another student commented: "it has helped me become more confident in maths". However, when the Review Panel asked other groups of students, the comments were: "we don't always do them" and "I don't think it helps my learning". Some teachers commented on the time it takes away from the lesson.

Growth Mindset was referred to in comments from staff and students. Although there was uptake of this initiative, along with goal-setting, evidence in conversations with staff and students indicated varying levels of commitment across the school. Many goals shared by students were around wellbeing, rather than learning. Examples of "writing 1½ pages", "reading 10 pages" and "putting the date on top of the page" are goals that make the students feel good about themselves, rather than goals that stretch learning.

Involving students as co-constructors of success criteria (or rubrics), will support their understanding of what is required to achieve the A-E standards of achievement, help develop their critical thinking skills to reflect on how they are going, and identify what they need to do to reach higher levels of achievement. This should then provide insights in developing goals that are targeted to improving and stretching learning.

The Review Panel acknowledges the work of the lead teachers in Empowering Local Learners (ELL), from opening their classes for staff to observe, to sharing at staff meetings. The Principal did explain the challenges with staff retention resulting in new staff being identified to become lead teachers in this area. Lead teachers clearly demonstrated the power of this initiative, to challenge and stretch student learning. However, the uptake and consistency varied, and this approach will need to be reviewed to identify its impact. If it is decided to continue, then there must be accountability from all staff in order to achieve consistency.

It is imperative that the impact of current professional development is determined to identify future directions about what will have the greatest leverage to build consistency and improvement. Staff voice will need to be pivotal to ensure ownership and responsibility to the agreed actions.

Direction 2

Strengthen levels of staff accountability to whole-school approaches through Performance Management processes, which align to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?

Collective responsibility and collective action could not be verified by the Review Panel, and there are definite pushbacks to initiatives and obvious divides in common approaches being developed at Port Augusta West Primary School.

A review of whole-school approaches by all stakeholders should be undertaken to provide the catalyst to drive the improvement agenda. Once agreed, there needs to be accountability by all staff through Performance Management meetings, which are aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, to ensure ownership and individual and collective responsibility.

The Review Panel was provided with evidence from staff that clearly demonstrated individual strengths and capacity to develop skills and knowledge. It will be necessary to identify lead teachers who can then support the improvement processes. Peer-to-peer observations based on targeted areas for building teacher capacity will establish a culture of learning for all.

It will be imperative that teachers become role models for Growth Mindset, and practise the use of visible learning approaches to develop their skills and confidence. Building a culture of trust is imperative and depends on everyone accepting their individual responsibility within the collective responsibility. Productive struggle is inevitable; sharing challenges, identifying what worked and what didn't, and deciding on future possibilities, will all support the improvement process and the focus on learning for all.

Direction 3

Strategically reflect on current processes and practices of self-review to establish a positive and purposeful culture for improvement.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Port Augusta West Primary School has faced high turnover of staff, including leadership, which has had an impact on sustaining a consistent approach to improvement. Student achievement data is being used to identify, track and monitor student achievement and growth.

The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Increase the percentage of students achieving and retaining higher bands through strengthening effective pedagogical practices to challenge and stretch learning for all students.
2. Strengthen levels of staff accountability to whole-school approaches through scheduled Performance Management processes, which align to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
3. Strategically reflect on current processes and practices of self-review to establish a positive and purposeful culture for improvement.

Based on the school's current performance, Port Augusta West Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

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Cathy Bornholm
PRINCIPAL
PORT AUGUSTA WEST PRIMARY
SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson