



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Sandy Creek Primary School

Conducted in July 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

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

School context

Sandy Creek Primary School is located 59kms from the Adelaide CBD and caters for students from Reception to Year 7. The current enrolment is 68 and remains steady. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage and is part of the Greater Gawler Partnership.

Data from the school context report indicates the school population in 2017 includes 3 Aboriginal students, 17% of students with disabilities, 4 children in care, and 24% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her first year of a 5-year tenure, with a 0.1FTE teaching component.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching:	To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of students?
Student Learning:	How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?
Improvement Agenda:	How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of students?

Staff demonstrated a strong commitment and empathy in supporting students and their families at Sandy Creek Primary School. During the External School Review (ESR), the panel was provided with clear evidence of inclusive practices that were undertaken to ensure that the academic, social and emotional needs of students were being met.

There was consistent evidence from stakeholders regarding the importance of positive relationships to support and strengthen the wellbeing of each student. Parents spoke highly of the levels of communication that operate within the school, including how staff listen, follow-up and follow-through, when there may be concerns regarding their child. Some parents acknowledged the proactive approaches that were implemented by staff to support their child's progress. The Review Panel was able to verify the inclusivity of the school and the subsequent commitment to supporting all students to achieve.

Whilst some work has been undertaken with Growth Mindsets, it was apparent that work in this area is at the initial implementation stage. Students were able to articulate what some Growth Mindset terms meant; however, general responses were provided when asked how they applied this knowledge to their learning. The next steps for the school will be to embed the language of Growth Mindsets across the school so that it becomes embedded practice for staff, students and families.

The impact of students setting their own learning goals, and the subsequent monitoring and tracking of learning, was not able to be verified. Many students stated that they had written their learning goals down, some time ago, and hadn't looked at them since. When students set their own learning goals and targets, in conjunction with their teacher, they are sharing the ownership and have the opportunity to become true partners in their own learning. Learning goals based on individual student datasets provide clear indicators for next steps in learning. This process also provides the teacher with opportunities to develop effective differentiation processes within and across learning areas for groups and individuals.

The Review Panel concluded that strategic and comprehensive work is undertaken in supporting students

with high needs in mainstream classes, and the school is working on balancing the needs of all of their students. Some staff commented that managing inappropriate behaviours took priority, and this often disrupted teaching and learning outcomes. Students stated that, at times, they felt they were not heard because the teacher was often working with students who were disruptive or who were requiring consistent attention.

Alternate learning opportunities and their connectedness to mainstream teaching for students with high needs were outlined. The school may benefit from a review and reflection of current processes to investigate how well the needs of all students are being met. Differentiation within learning tasks and across learning areas that provide opportunities for students and individuals to engage in learning, in a range of contexts, may support the cohesion of learning and engagement for all students.

During the walkthrough process, the Review Panel observed effective teaching practice involving students in hands-on activities and using high-order questioning to deepen creative thinking. Students in these classes were highly engaged in their learning. The Review Panel was also able to verify that some staff are providing high quality learning programs in a range of learning areas.

Some students were not engaged in learning. Students shared the task with little enthusiasm and minimal effort, with several students avoiding the task completely. Engagement is a precursor to learning and the school would benefit from developing common understandings and consistent practices in engagement for learning across the school.

Staff outlined the extensive professional development they have undertaken. Some staff reported that they felt they were “second-guessing their work” because they did not have time to consolidate new learning. Time for staff to trial, reflect, adapt and consolidate new learning, thus building teacher capacity, will be an important factor in embedding common pedagogical practices across the school.

The Review Panel acknowledges the work undertaken by teachers and School Services Officers (SSOs) in supporting students with diverse needs. The SSO shared progress being made through the implementation of the *Interception* program, which primarily supports students with verified Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The SSO outlined how she used the program in classes to support students in reducing anxiety levels. The panel sighted evidence of a student using strategies from the program, albeit it was apparent that the school may well benefit from further work in this area.

During the review, the panel was able to verify the positive impact SSOs are making to students identified for intervention. Teachers commented on the high regard and close working relationships that are present.

At the time of the review, effective and consistent pedagogical practices were not embedded across the site. It is important for staff to develop and implement a cohesive and connected approach to the delivery of the curriculum to ensure the needs of all students are addressed.

Direction 1

Develop and embed common understandings and practices in effective pedagogical approaches that support and engage the diverse range of needs of individuals and groups of students.

How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?

There are varying and inconsistent levels of effective feedback provided to students to support and motivate them in their learning. Low-level feedback was sighted in student workbooks; examples included: ‘good job’, ‘well done’, ‘do it again’ and ‘don’t rush next time’; verbal feedback included statements such as: “great effort” and “nice work”. Feedback provided generally focused on effort or behaviour, with minimal evidence of feedback for learning. When the Review Panel sought evidence from students about feedback on their learning, students’ responses included “stickers”, “stamps or ticks in books” and “sometimes we mark our own work and each other’s”.

Feedback for learning is truly effective when it is a two-way process. Feedback to and from students is an integral component of the teaching and learning process. When we seek feedback from students about our teaching, we are demonstrating that we value student opinions, are modelling that we are learners and that we are committed to developing an authentic community of learners. Important work for staff and students at Sandy Creek Primary School will be to develop common understandings within and across all

year levels in generating and embedding feedback for learning as a genuine two-way process.

The Review Panel met with groups of students from Years 3 to 7. During those conversations, students referred to their learning as 'doing okay', some shared that the teacher talks too much, and that they wish they didn't all have to hear the same thing before doing the task. Students who are more capable described the frustration of always having students ask them how to do it, resulting in them being taken away from their learning. Students referred to wanting to have more input in regards to their learning, as well as to having more involvement in project work, tasks and presentation.

When students were asked how they could improve their learning, many students believed they could be included more in their learning processes. When asked in what ways, students clearly articulated a strong belief that they could be responsible to improve their learning if they were more involved: "Sometimes the teacher tells us why we need to learn something, it helps us to understand" and "If we are shown what really good work looks like, then we have something to aim at". Students at all levels benefit from knowing the intent of the learning and what they need to do to succeed.

Learning intentions describe explicitly what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of the teaching and learning. Clarity of success criteria needs to focus on what the students are to learn, not what they are to do. Learning intentions and success criteria are most effective when students are provided with an example of the intended product that is expected of them before they undertake the task. Further work in these areas will support both teacher and student learning.

A further opportunity would be to have collective discussions on what effective feedback to improve learning sounds and looks like. The use of TfEL perception data at the beginning and end of units of work will provide authentic opportunities for students to share how they best learn. This can then lead to the development of a consistent approach to providing feedback which supports challenge and provides next steps to improve student learning outcomes.

Direction 2

Strengthen effective pedagogical practices for learning across all year levels through the use of TfEL perception data as part of regular classroom reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

At the beginning of the year, the Principal involved staff in collecting and analysing data. Together they looked at the data from the perspective of the 'whole child', identifying the strengths and areas of improvement for each child.

During the ESR presentation, the Principal outlined the processes used in the collection and analysis of data to inform current whole-school practices and track student achievement. Staff are currently participating in professional development to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of using data to inform instruction. The learning program supports educators in using collaborative data inquiry to drive continuous improvement of teaching and learning for all students. The Principal shared the focus on student growth as the measure for improvement, recognising and understanding that a range of datasets is helpful in supporting a school improvement process.

The Review Panel acknowledges the diversity of students enrolled at Sandy Creek Primary School. Staff are using the Positive Education professional learning program to support this work. The Review Panel can verify the extensive work being implemented to support the learning and nurturing of students with identified needs. Processes are documented and presented with clear visuals to ensure clarity of process. Further consideration regarding the balance between students in Wave 1 and those in Waves 2 or 3 needs to be considered to ensure clarity of outcomes that are positively impacting on learning programs.

Staff commented that there is now more emphasis placed on data and analysis to determine patterns and trends across the school in relation to literacy and that this is also developing in mathematics. Data is now accessible to teachers, and it will be important to extend this initiative so that staff can confidently and independently use and analyse student data to refine teaching and learning.

It was identified that there also needs to be accountability to the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards (A-E) in addition to other growth measures. Students were not able to clearly articulate the

criteria for a 'C' or an 'A' grade. Opportunities for staff to work with other staff from within and beyond the partnership will further support consistency and congruence when moderating student work. It is essential that this is done collectively with peers to ensure confidence in grade allocations for individual and groups of students. Clarity and consistency of moderation processes with accurate data will support staff in challenging students to achieve at higher levels.

Whilst the Review Panel acknowledges the work being undertaken in data analysis to inform school improvement, consistency in approaches to ensure smooth transitions for students as they move through school is an area that could be enhanced.

Direction 3

Develop and embed a collaborative whole-school culture in tracking, monitoring, reviewing and sharing student learning outcomes through agreed datasets within and across year levels.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Sandy Creek Primary School.

The sense of community at Sandy Creek Primary School is evidenced by the connectedness of all stakeholders. The school is a considerable part of the wider community and offers opportunities for all. Open days and celebrations ensure the welcoming nature continues. The involvement of all stakeholders in the review of the improvement agenda was highly valued, with all parties feeling they were being listened to. The level of transparency was a strength and evidenced from the conversations with staff, students and parents.

The impact of the Japanese exchange and language program continues to be strengthened at both the school and community level. The powerful extent that staff, students and community are engaging with this initiative was evidenced in both formal and informal conversations throughout the review. Staff and students are active participants in the learning process, and all stakeholders share and acknowledge their strengths and celebrate their successes. Development of knowledge and cultural awareness aligning to inclusivity is evidenced at the school.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Sandy Creek Primary School is working in partnership with parents, stakeholders and the local Partnership, to ensure the aim and purpose to improve learning outcomes for all is being addressed.

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

1. Develop and embed common understandings and practices in effective pedagogical approaches that support and engage the diverse range of needs of individuals and groups of students.
2. Strengthen effective pedagogical practices for learning across all year levels through the use of TfEL perception data as part of regular classroom reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.
3. Develop and embed a collaborative whole-school culture in tracking, monitoring, reviewing and sharing student learning outcomes through agreed datasets within and across year levels.

Based on the school's current performance, Sandy Creek Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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.



Robyn Gibbes
PRINCIPAL
SANDY CREEK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Sandy Creek Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Part 5: Safety – the aspect of cyber-bullying is currently under the school's bullying and harassment folder. A specific Cyber-Bullying Policy is to be actioned.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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 2016 was 92.8%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

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

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Sandy Creek Primary School over the years 2012 to 2016. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. On average, from 2012 to 2016, 52% (23 of 44) of Year 1 and 52% (23 of 44) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

From 2012 to 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 30 of 38, or 79% of Year 3 students, 34 of 45, or 76% of Year 5 students, and 38 of 44, or 86% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

From 2012 to 2016, 11 of 38, or 29% of Year 3, 11 of 45, or 24% of Year 5, and 10 of 44, or 23% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100%, or 4 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 67%, or 2 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

From 2011 to 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 27 of 39, or 69% of Year 3 students, 31 of 45, or 69% of Year 5 students, and 35 of 44, or 80% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA.

From 2012 to 2016, 7 of 39, or 18% of Year 3, 5 of 45, or 11% of Year 5, and 9 of 44, or 21% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For 2016, Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 2 of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 2 of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.