Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Sandy Creek Primary School

Conducted in May 2021

Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

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

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

This report 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.

We acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Rebecca Pears, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mark Vincent, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
    - Governing Council representatives
    - Leaders
    - Parent groups
    - School Services Officers (SSOs)
    - Student representatives
    - Teachers.

School context

Sandy Creek Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 59kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 74. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 68. The local partnership is Greater Gawler.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1026 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students, 30% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 7% children/young people in care and 23% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in his 1st year of tenure.

There are 5 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

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.

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.

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 impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
Teachers participated in professional development on Big Ideas in Number, and activities and assessments related to this were implemented across the school. The TfEL compass surveys were implemented in 2018 and 2019 to gauge student perceptions about their learning. English and maths agreements were created to increase consistent practices across the school. Staff participated in both professional development and worked with other schools, through the Learning Design Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) strategy, to improve the use of feedback and formative assessment strategies. Teachers were involved in designing learning tasks and moderating student work with other schools. They also improved their practice in relation to identifying learning intentions and success criteria with students. A data collection schedule was established; data is recorded, and all staff have access to it. Professional development in Reciprocal Teaching Practices and Jolly Phonics occurred, and staff are implementing this pedagogy to create more consistent practices.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

All staff are to be commended for their commitment to continuous improvement. They demonstrated a cohesive understanding of the current intent and content of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities. Student achievement data was used as a base for SIP formation, and performance and development processes are aligned to enable its implementation. The whole school, including school services officers, are involved in reviewing the SIP, and the Governing Council are regularly informed about progress in relation to its implementation. Staff identified the impact enacting the SIP had on improving student achievement.

Staff participated in professional development in Reciprocal Teaching Practices and a synthetic phonics program and implemented their learning into classroom practice. As a result, there is more consistency across the school. Staff identified changes they made to their practice through SIP implementation. Examples of this include whole-school teaching of phonics and grammar at the same time each morning to provide the opportunity for small group instruction, consistent implementation of reciprocal reading strategies, and introduction of numeracy tests and related activities across the school.

The data collection schedule was recently reviewed to ensure coherence across the school. Previously, some student achievement data was not documented on the online system. Processes were implemented to prevent this from reoccurring. Further strengthening of the schedule will ensure that collection and documentation of data becomes a consistent and embedded practice. The school has been analysing student achievement data, and there is the opportunity to embed consistent practices in relation to ongoing data analysis throughout the year. Staff are committed to working collaboratively to continually improve. Revising the literacy and numeracy agreements will support this endeavour. The school is well-positioned for the new principal and staff to continue to work together to develop common plans to ensure coherence and consistency of practice across the site.

Direction 1   **To further strengthen and embed school improvement processes and develop whole-school plans to ensure consistency of practice across the site.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

The school is to be acknowledged for their focus on improvement, as both teachers and children were reflective when discussing their learning. Teachers participated in professional development related to areas identified in the SIP. Teachers differentiate learning to cater for individual student needs. There is an additional teacher, 0.5FTE, working every morning in the middle primary school, which enables smaller groups of students to be taught in both English and maths. Students are regularly grouped according to learning needs. These groups are flexible, and students work between classes to cater for their individual needs.

Students could articulate the concepts of a growth mindset very clearly and were articulate when explaining the importance of challenging themselves in learning. The panel observed that students were highly engaged in learning tasks and independently followed well-embedded classroom routines. Teachers identified that they could improve their ability to extend and challenge the more capable students.

Students had examples of learning goals, many of which were developed recently. Students were able to articulate the benefits of SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound), and describe various components of these goals. Students had goals in a range of areas, including English, mathematics, organisation, and leadership. More than half of the students interviewed had English goals but no identified mathematical goals. Some goals were in a visible written form that could be accessed by students, but practices varied. The school would benefit from developing and implementing consistent practices in relation to students monitoring and reviewing their learning goals.

Providing opportunities for students to engage with their own achievement data and teacher feedback will assist students in designing aspirational learning goals. Consistent whole-school processes, in relation to students monitoring and reviewing their own learning goals in a continual process, would provide opportunities to further stretch and challenge students in their learning.

Direction 2   Embed whole-school practices that enable students to identify aspirational learning goals and ensure students monitor and review these goals through a continuous process.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Teachers adhere to a data collection schedule to ensure consistent data is collected across the school. A range of student achievement data is being collected and analysed to track student growth. Examples of achievement data collected include Running Records, a consistent sight word list, and Progression Achievement Testing data in reading and mathematics. Early years teachers are analysing the usefulness of datasets to ensure all data collected serves a purpose in improving learning outcomes.

Teachers use student achievement data to identify next steps in learning. In addition, they are implementing pre and post-tests to ensure learning design caters for student's learning needs. Students are regularly grouped based on prior assessments. School Services Officers (SSOs) support small groups of students to further differentiate learning and work very closely with teachers. They document student progress and regularly discuss this information with teachers to support the tracking and monitoring of student achievement.

Teachers provide students with a range of feedback, particularly in a verbal form. Teachers identified that it would be beneficial to provide more detailed written feedback for students and monitor its use to ensure all students receive it. Students are not necessarily using the feedback from teachers. Often, when discussing next steps in learning, students discussed their own perception of what their next steps should be, not necessarily directions discussed by teachers. In addition, students reported that they give both written and verbal feedback to each other. Students use strategies such as identifying and sharing two good things and one area that could be improved, to provide feedback to other students.

Teachers are well-positioned to collaboratively work with students and embed the use of feedback. Providing detailed feedback to all students, particularly in a written form so it can be tracked and monitored, will help inform and motivate students to improve. This would allow identification of next steps in learning to ensure stretch and challenge.

Direction 3 **Strengthen and embed whole-school practices to ensure that feedback is utilised by all students to improve their work.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The staff at Sandy Creek Primary School need to be commended for their shared commitment and responsibility for ongoing improvement of teaching and learning. Both staff and students were very reflective and demonstrated a growth mindset towards their development. Students were articulate and supportive of each other. The school is very welcoming and friendly. Parents shared their appreciation of the approachable and inclusive nature of the school. They reported the school has very few behavioural issues and that their children's individual needs are catered for.

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

Direction 1   To further strengthen and embed school improvement processes and develop whole-school plans to ensure consistency of practice across the site.

Direction 2   Embed whole-school practices that enable students to identify aspirational learning goals and ensure students monitor and review these goals through a continuous process.

Direction 3   Strengthen and embed whole-school practices to ensure that feedback is utilised by all students to improve their work.

Based on the school's current performance, Sandy Creek Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.

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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

School performance overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the Department for Education 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. 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. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Sandy Creek Primary School from 2016 to 2019.

Further information concerning school performance is available in the school's annual report.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2016 to 2019, 59% of year 1 and 78% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 78% of year 3 students, 82% of year 5 students, and 73% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 41% of year 3, 45% of year 5 and 15% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2016 to 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 82% of year 5 students, and 79% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 34% of year 3, 18% of year 5, and 21% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.