

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Paracombe Primary School

Conducted in May 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Phil Garner, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and David Pitt, Review Principal.

School context

Paracombe Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 30kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Torrens Valley Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 68 students. Enrolment has fluctuated slightly over the last 5 years. The school is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1058.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 6% of students with a verified disability, 18% of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background, and no children in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 1st year of her tenure at the school. There are 5 teachers including 3 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers. The principal has a 0.3FTE teaching commitment, including 0.1FTE at the preschool located in Houghton.

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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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| Student Learning: | To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning? |
| Effective Learning: | To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction? |
| Effective Leadership: | To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity? |

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

When teachers have high expectations for students and provide tasks that are engaging and of high interest, students build self-esteem, increase confidence and improve in academic achievement. This is exemplified when students are provided with opportunities to co-design the learning, are challenged in their thinking and understand the criteria for success.

The analysis of student achievement data, particularly, NAPLAN results, indicates that high numbers of students at Paracombe Primary School are achieving at or above the department's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) (refer to Appendix 2). This is a commendable result. However, upon closer analysis, there is concern that the majority of year 5 and 7 students are making significantly lower progress between assessments, compared with that of the state average. This is reflected in fewer students at Paracombe Primary School achieving in the NAPLAN higher bands.

Students at the school are well-behaved, friendly towards each other, welcoming, generally positive about school life and compliant. Students indicated that their level of engagement in science, technology, engineering, maths, and the arts with the specialist teacher was high, with co-designing of the learning an embedded aspect of the teaching and learning process. Students reported high levels of interest and challenge, with a focus on problem-solving strategies that are supportive and reflective. In discussions with the teacher, it was evident that student voice, self-directed learning with multiple entry points and high levels of student collaboration, enable students to take ownership of their learning, creating a nurturing environment that encourages students to take risks and stretch their learning. However, this level of engagement and stretch was not represented across all classes or all areas of learning. Students rated learning across all subjects as easy, with low levels of engagement and challenge. Some students responded: "I don't really get challenged in writing I just get told to do more writing or in spelling, do as many activities as I can". In an attempt to challenge students, acceleration to the next year's level content work is common practice.

Throughout the school, displayed student learning has taken on a decorative approach, in contrast to challenge and creativity. Conversations with teachers, students and class visits showed varied understanding of what constitutes student engagement or intellectual challenge. Some of the parents who met with the panel commented that "work is too easy, some students are bored" and "not all the learning is connecting or engaging for the kids". It is imperative that a collective and coherent understanding exists amongst teaching staff of what student engagement and intellectual challenge looks like in a successful learning environment.

The principal is aware of the challenges the school faces in creating a community focus on student achievement. The creation of engaging learning environments where thinking is valued and visible, and where every student feels driven by challenge, is the focus around the whole-school vision, and the Now, New, Next initiative that is progressively being embedded across the school.

A fresh opportunity to capitalise on the enthusiasm, motivation and commitment of teachers and students exists in the new phase of teaching and learning. The effective use of the Education Department's frameworks to guide learning design and teacher practice, particularly, Domain 2.3 and 2.4 will be critical to the success of the school's learning journey.

Direction 1

Implement pedagogical change with a focus on high expectations, engagement and intellectual challenge and the incorporation of opportunities for students to negotiate the learning.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

Deep, diagnostic analysis of student achievement data that informs teaching and learning and pedagogical practices is the current focus for the principal. School assessments, for example, the recent whole-school Jolly Phonics checkout and the Tierney Kennedy Maths project, have been used to identify gaps in student learning and are beginning to be used diagnostically in some classes. Diagnostic analysis of NAPLAN and Pat-M and R data has been conducted by the principal to monitor and track student progress; however, some teachers see the use of this type of data as identifying gaps in student learning

for individual intervention, rather than a tool to guide the learning design. A wide variety of in-class assessments used to track student progress are also used in the ability grouping of students.

Formative assessment in STEAM classes is authentic and effective in guiding student learning. An inquiry model with multiple entry points forms the basis of learning. Self-review practices are embedded aspects of the learning process guiding the next steps in learning design. This pedagogical approach was not evident across the whole school, with some students indicating that support and guidance in their learning is limited. Some competent students assist the less competent students in their learning. Differentiation of learning tasks in some classes is limited to graded worksheets, with some classes of multiple year levels engaged in the same task without multiple entry points.

The review panel observed a high usage of photocopied worksheets in some classes, with low-level written feedback representative of comments of praise, rather than constructive feedback about the next steps in learning. When asked, "How do you know how you are going in your learning?" students replied: "From the number of ticks and crosses we receive or the grades in our report card". The importance of formative assessment as a tool to enhance student achievement should not be underestimated.

Using student achievement data with strategic intent is a powerful way to guide the next steps in student learning. The school has introduced goal-setting as a whole-school focus using the Now, New, Next format. While it is acknowledged as a new initiative, it was implemented with varying degrees of success. Some teachers did indicate they were struggling to make measurable learning goals for students. Students were unaware that assessments of results in NAPLAN or Pat M/R could be used to guide their next steps in learning. They indicated that this would help set meaningful learning goals.

The school has already identified the need to strategically focus on diagnostic analysis of student achievement data to identify individual and group learning needs. A continued focus on this over time will enable effective SMARTAR goals to be developed by all students.

Direction 2

Use evidence of learning, formative assessment strategies and diagnostic analysis of student achievement data to support learning design, and differentiated learning for all students.

To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

The school has embedded professional performance development plans for all staff. These are linked to the site improvement plan and professional development opportunities, and are reviewed on a regular basis. Teachers value the coherence between their performance development plan and access to training and development. The principal is seen by staff as an activator of professional learning, and provides access to high-quality professional development opportunities in literacy, numeracy and STEAM, which have begun to influence learning design in a positive way.

High-quality teaching and learning is a result of clear, explicit links between high expectations, targeted professional learning, teacher professional collaboration, learning design, and performance accountability. While the school has the capacity to ensure a strategic focus on improving teacher performance, the panel noticed inconsistencies in the understanding of purposeful learning and pedagogical approaches that enhance student learning.

Teachers, particularly early career teachers, need opportunities to engage with current learning theories alongside high-quality practitioners through a formal approach to classroom collaboration, including observations, instructional rounds or learning walks, and professional learning communities. The high

percentage of early career teachers and the challenges this brings to their ongoing professional learning and development is acknowledged. Also acknowledged is the enthusiasm and commitment of these teachers and their keenness to improve their pedagogy and student achievement.

The school is well-placed to develop a strategic approach to building teacher capacity that, over time, will result in professional learning becoming embedded in the culture of the school.

Direction 3

Implement a strategic approach to building teacher capacity, based on high-quality professional learning, classroom collaboration, high expectations, and professional accountability.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that contributes significantly to school improvement at Paracombe Primary School.

Community partnerships are very strong at this school and are nurtured by the staff. Parents are willing and able to be involved in the school in a variety of ways, including governing council, organising special events such as the end-of-year musical, transporting students and being involved in student learning.

Parents appreciate the school's committed and caring teachers. They reported the school to be community orientated within a safe, friendly and inclusive environment.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Paracombe Primary School is well-placed to build on their success as a positive teaching and learning community with a strong focus on improving student achievement.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

1. Implement pedagogical change with a focus on high expectations, engagement and intellectual challenge and the incorporation of opportunities for students to negotiate the learning.
2. Use evidence of learning, formative assessment strategies and diagnostic analysis of student achievement data to support learning design, and differentiated learning for all students.
3. Implement a strategic approach to building teacher capacity, based on high-quality professional learning, classroom collaboration, high expectations, and professional accountability.

Based on the school's current performance, Paracombe Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



Anne Rowe
PRINCIPAL
PARACOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Philip Jackson

23/8/2018

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 91%.

Appendix 2

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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2017, 89% of year 1 and 75% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement in year 1 and a decline in year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of year 3 students, and 100% of year 5 and 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 33% of year 3, 50% of year 5 and 57% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from 67% in 2015 to 33% in 2017.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 100%, or 3 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of year 3 students, and 100% of year 5 and 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 33% of year 3, 50% of year 5 and 43% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75%, or 3 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 67%, or 2 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.