

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR PARINGA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in May 2015



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

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Antoinette Jones, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Paringa Park 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 a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and communication processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 94%, which exceeds the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Paringa Park Primary School draws enrolments from families living in the beachside suburbs of North Brighton and Somerton Park. The school has a national ICSEA score of 1088 with 94% of families in the middle and upper quarters of social advantage. The school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage (IOED).

The school's current population of 424 students includes 5 Aboriginal students, 23 students with Disabilities and 4 students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). There are sixteen mainstream classes and one Reception to Year 2 special small class for 8 students with Speech and Language Disabilities. There are 9% of students whose families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school's enrolment numbers are managed to capacity through a strictly enforced zone of enrolment. Consequently there is a waiting list kept to attend the school. The greater majority of Reception children transition to the school from only two local pre-schools. At one of these pre-schools, children attend sessions based on which school they will attend. At the end of Year 7, almost 85% of students from Paringa Park Primary School go on to attend Brighton Secondary School. Such a continuous pathway results in the development of strong relationships for students with their families connected as a local community.

Parents share high expectations for their children and many assist regularly in the classroom or with sporting teams. There are over 130 parents trained as volunteers in the school.

As members of the local Holdfast Partnership, leaders and other staff at the school are involved in action research projects that aim to create over the next five years a 'vibrant, collaborative and innovative learning community' for all local children and young people. The Holdfast Partnership Improvement Plan includes opportunity to involve parents in this endeavour and addresses the responsibilities of staff within and across the pre-schools and schools.

The leadership team consists of the Principal in his first tenure, the Deputy Principal new to the school this year, and the Senior Leader, Teaching, Learning and ICT, who is in the third year of her tenure.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning

How well are students achieving over time?

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

Effective Leadership

How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

How well are students achieving over time?

With approximately 85% of students demonstrating the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in 2014 in reading and in numeracy, the Review Panel found that students at Paringa Park Primary School are generally achieving well.

Specifically, in reading, 92% of Year 3 students achieved the SEA as measured by NAPLAN, as did 84% of Year 5 students and 87% of Year 7 students. These results are consistent with the school's average over the past four years (2011-2014) at all three year levels, including the pattern of drop in achievement at Year 5.

In numeracy, 90% of Year 3 students achieved the SEA as measured by NAPLAN, as did 76% of Year 5 students and 88% of Year 7 students. At Years 3 and 7, these results are consistent with the school's averages over the past four years (2011-2014), except at Year 5, where there was an 8% drop from the average. The 14% difference in 2014 between Years 3 and 5 is of concern to the school and is reflected in the identification of Numeracy/Mathematics as a whole-school priority for improvement.

In the early years, reading results are measured by assessing student achievement against Running Record levels. In 2014, 76% of Year 1 students and 89% of Year 2 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). These results indicate a strong starting level and good growth over time from one year to the next.

A further analysis was made of the school's capacity to sustain a student's achievement results over time.

Assuming matched cohorts, when comparing the strong Year 3 reading results in NAPLAN in one year, to the Year 2 Running Record percentages for the previous year, there is an evident trend indicating that the rate of learning from one year to the next is sustained and, in fact, increased. For example, in 2013, 91.1% of Year 2 students achieved the SEA, and in 2014, in Year 3, there were 92% of students achieving SEA. An even stronger result was seen the previous year, with 90% of the 2012 Year 2 students demonstrating the SEA and 100% of the cohort demonstrating the SEA in Year 3 in 2013.

These results indicate that students are acquiring sound developmental skills in the early years where rapid growth is more customary than the rate of growth seen by students as they move into primary years and middle years. This school's aim is to ensure that the gains made by students transitioning into Year 3 are continued on throughout their schooling. This is, however, not yet the case because the overall results for students as they progress further through the school, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate a decline in the proportion of students achieving the SEA.

This means that the school's task is to use formative assessment processes to ensure that all teachers are aware of each student's prior knowledge as the starting point for teaching. Higher gains will be made as a result of how effectively teachers are supporting all students to engage in their learning and how well the students themselves strive from one year to the next to achieve their full potential.

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

The 2015 school operational plans for literacy and numeracy include targets to increase the number of students achieving at higher standards in the Australian Curriculum by seeing 'movement' from C grades to B and A grades in student reports, for English and for Mathematics. Other targets include achieving expected scale score results in the Progressive Achievement Test, achieving proficiency at or above the SEA level in Running Records and in NAPLAN, and increasing the number of students demonstrating upper growth from same starting points one test year to the next.

Given that most students are already achieving at least the SEA base level (e.g. Year 5: Band 5 and above), the Review Panel found that it is appropriate for the school to be more specific about predicting a target for what the actual 'movement' or 'increase' will be. It is critical that high and explicit expectations are used to drive effective teaching and learning from Reception to Year 7. When target setting is evidence-based, using for example, cut scores as a guide, accurate predictions for improvement can be made.

Targets may also be influenced by looking outwards from the school to other schools in the Partnership. The Principal reported that this was about to happen in the Holdfast Partnership. Data already available to the school allows fine comparisons to be made between similar schools at the same IOED (e.g. distribution of proficiency bands) and with like ICSEA schools (e.g. gain made between tests from same starting points).

By tracking results in the higher proficiency bands of NAPLAN in each test at each year level, the Review Panel saw current data as evidence of this need to define specific targets. In 2014, there were 39 out of 60 students (65%) in Year 3 achieving scores in the higher two bands (H2B) in reading, 26 out of 58 students (44%) in Year 5, and 19 out of 60 students (31%) in Year 7. In numeracy, the same slide emerged again. There were 21 out of 60 students (35%) in Year 3 achieving scores in the H2B of numeracy, 18 out of 58 students (31%) in Year 5 and 13 out of 60 students (21%) in Year 7.

By achieving not just at the SEA as measured by NAPLAN (e.g. Year 5 Band 5), but at higher bands (e.g. Band 6, 7, 8), students demonstrate greater proficiency to respond to open ended questions and develop higher order thinking skills, their capacity to problem-solve and their skills to infer and apply what they are learning. These same sorts of capabilities are required by all students when demonstrating their learning in 'new contexts' to achieve a C or above in all subjects of the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

The retention of higher proficiency band results is therefore important from one testing year to the next. The Review Panel found that in 2010, 27 students achieved in the H2B in reading in Year 3. By Year 7, 15 of these tracked students were still achieving in the H2B. In numeracy, 21 students achieved H2B in Year 3 with 10 going on to achieve H2B in Year 7. This means that approximately half of the students did not retain higher levels of learning as they moved through the school.

Sustaining achievement over time and supporting and extending all students to achieve at higher levels is on the school's improvement agenda. To assist in this process, extensive work has been undertaken already by the Principal and administration staff to collect and track summative data at points in time since 2011. Data for all students is collated and used by class teachers. The Student Review Team tracks students with special learning needs and others with learning difficulties. A number of intervention programs are provided to assist students. Access to enrichment programs is also offered to eligible students. Class teachers have responsibility for devising their own processes to record ongoing assessment of student learning throughout the year and for working with the SSO to update records in the spreadsheets. Australian Curriculum A-E grades have also been included in these spreadsheets but the results are yet to be triangulated with other data sets available over time. It will be an important next step for the school to do this as part of the school's assessment moderation processes.

Direction 1

Increase the proportion of students achieving and sustaining higher levels of learning by monitoring the progress of each student and measuring performance against specific criteria, individual goals and site targets that are evidence-based and aspirational.

Most students who spoke to the Review Panel felt they were getting along “OK” at school. There were others who commented honestly that they felt they were “cruising” in class and that it depended on the teacher if they were really challenged or not. “Some teachers motivate you to learn by the way they approach their teaching”. They like to know the relevance of what they are doing and the ‘easy, average or difficult’ standard they are working towards.

The students said that when they feel they are doing well they “want harder work, not more work”. Students also said they like it when teachers acknowledge their effort and give them useful feedback. Older students commented that sometimes not all students worked as hard as they could and that they “don’t care and they try to get away with it”. They said, however, that the school’s new values: Bravery, Care, Challenge, and Trust, were used by teachers and students this year to help everyone be positive, “challenge” themselves, and be “brave” to have a go.

Parents who were members of Governing Council felt it would be useful for all parents to be involved in discussions and find out more about the way the school’s values were enacted so they could help to support and extend their children in their learning.

Parents wanted “more consistency across the school” because they felt the level of engagement, challenge and achievement experienced by their children also depended on which teacher they had each year. Good communication from teachers about what is taught and what is expected was valued by parents. However, some parents spoke of their experiences in relation to the frequency and quality of curriculum information varying from teacher to teacher. They also reported that while teaching styles may differ, it was the different methodology from class to class, sometimes at the same year level, that was concerning. When parents saw consistently ‘good’ practice they saw a positive impact on their children.

Parents appreciated the Principal’s ‘open door’ policy to raise or discuss an issue. Generally they wanted more information about how teaching works across the school and especially how teachers manage curriculum in composite classes at primary and upper primary years. They were interested, for example, in understanding how younger children can be supported to manage socially, about the homework policy for each year level, and about consistency regarding delivery of the curriculum topics and learning experiences.

With this level of interest and support for learning expressed by parents, and with the students acknowledging that they can always improve, the staff and Governing Council are well-positioned to start talking together about how best to extend and enrich learning outcomes across Reception to Year 7. Exploring ways to improve continuity and coherence in learning is a shared focus that students, as well as staff and parents, can work on together. The Australian Curriculum, with the expectation of higher standards of achievement, can provide a focus for this work. An effective process would include sharing information about the scope and management of the Australian Curriculum across the school, including clarity about the criteria used to assign A-E grades of achievement at each year level.

Direction 2

Increase student participation and parent engagement with the learning program by actively and openly involving each child and their parents as partners in their child’s learning.

How well does leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

The school has a distributed leadership model established as the process for achieving collective responsibility for improvement. This responsibility includes implementation of curriculum agreements and attention to the priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). The current SIP provides strategic objectives that address aspects of planning and teaching across the school. Teachers are expected to work as year-level teams (junior primary, primary years, upper primary) to implement relevant actions in each strategic objective. The four areas are: Literacy, Numeracy, Wellbeing, and Effective Teaching and Learning. There is a Site Improvement Team (SIT) committee for each area. The four committees develop operational plans and lead at least one staff meeting per term about an aspect of the plan. Membership of each SIT committee represents each year level team and is led by an elected teacher from the group.

The Review Panel found that the teacher leaders of the SIT committees were committed and engaged in their role. They reported that they and the other staff felt ownership for the SIP. They appreciated the opportunity during the external review process to meet together, listen to each and share ideas and practices. They felt that more opportunity to meet as SIT leaders would help to see connections across the four objectives and perhaps streamline the implementation that sometimes could be overwhelming.

Meeting as teacher leaders would also support them to develop a process to review the effectiveness of the strategies the staff was working on. They felt that opportunities to work together would help to support students to increase achievement at higher levels. “We can move students from lower to middle growth, but it is difficult to move more students from the middle to upper levels”. Some committee leaders felt that they could look at planning specifically for students to develop and use higher order thinking skills to enable them to ‘move’ from achieving C and B grades. Strategies such as common use of rubrics, taxonomy structures and Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) tools were suggested, along with the moderation of assessment tasks and the collection of samples of writing used to assign A-E grades.

During the external review, all members of the year level teams met at a staff meeting to identify the range of strategies they were currently using to enable students to achieve at higher levels. They gave many examples of the impact they were seeing to date, and acknowledged challenges still to be addressed.

The Review Panel’s analysis of the evidence collected indicated that the Scaffolding for Success (Literacy) was an explicit teaching approach most highly valued across all teams with significant buy-in and commitment to action evident in the feedback. Staff felt that they and the students had gained a greater understanding of literature, genre and the structure of text by using an explicit process of deconstruction and reconstruction to develop their comprehending and composing skills. As a result, they felt students were assisted to be more independent and confident as writers and in particular use a wider vocabulary in their work across the curriculum. Teachers were committed to the professional learning model they were engaged in, valuing the observation feedback they received from the external consultant acting as a coach in their classrooms. More than one staff member said “it is the best professional learning ever”. One challenge ahead is to develop an agreed approach to assessing writing as evidence of learning over time.

The second most shared response from the teams was in the area of Numeracy. Each team identified the range of professional learning they had been engaged in over time, saying that the most useful strategies had been to focus on having a logical sequence to introduce strategies, assessment tools to identify misconceptions so that students could be grouped for explicit teaching, and increased use of a ‘problematized situations’ approach to engage all students and extend high achievers. The challenges include planning for targeted and differentiated teaching to address the needs of all students.

The Review Panel found that shared professional learning is clearly building collaboration and focusing connections within teams. The panel found, however, that there are few whole school expectations clearly articulated to ensure that a coherent approach to teaching is implemented across the school. Currently, there is no documentation that, for example, describes the outcomes of team work and curriculum planning, or the design of assessment tasks. To ensure that teachers are able to engage in high quality curriculum planning together to support students to reach their full potential, the school now needs to start formalising what may be assumed, to make explicit what is expected.

The development of statements that describe what effective teaching looks like across Reception to Year 7 (e.g. initially in English), and at each year level (e.g. the current Spelling and Grammar Guide), and what ‘assessment for learning’ practices will include, are starting points for agreement. Focusing team work on student learning and strengthening the role of committees to monitor and evaluate improvement will assist in this ongoing work. The performance and development processes already in place will support staff to ensure high quality planning and effective teaching is resulting in higher levels of learning for all.

Direction 3

Raise the level of learning for all students from one year to the next by developing and implementing teaching agreements that ensure high quality curriculum planning and evidence-based teaching practice exists across the school from Reception to Year 7.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Paringa Park Primary School is tracking well. There is a commitment evident to create conditions for students to achieve at higher levels. Positive action exists to track student achievement over time, to deprivatise practice through performance and development processes, and to build teacher capacity and implement school improvement priorities.

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

1. Increase the proportion of students achieving and sustaining higher levels of learning by monitoring the progress of each student and measuring performance against specific criteria, individual goals and site targets that are evidence-based and aspirational.
2. Increase student participation and parent engagement with the learning program by actively and openly involving each child and their parents as partners in their child's learning.
3. Raise the level of learning for all students from one year to the next by developing and implementing teaching agreements that ensure high quality curriculum planning and evidence-based teaching practice exists across the school from Reception to Year 7.

Based on the school's current performance, Paringa Park Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Phil Reid
PRINCIPAL
PARINGA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson