EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR WAROOKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Bryan Rotherham, 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 Warooka 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 2 Learning Improvement Item 5:

All teachers are to access the learning program that supports the implementation of the materials, before delivering the *Keeping Safe* Child Protection Curriculum.

Part 6 Site Procedures Item 1:

Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are to be reviewed annually and updated every 5 years; WHS is to be included as a standard agenda item on all staff and leadership meetings.

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 2015 was 91.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Warooka Primary School, located 225kms from the Adelaide GPO, is situated at the southern end of the Yorke Peninsula. The school caters for approximately 86 students from Reception to Year 7. The site supports a school-based preschool catering for approximately 8 students in 2016. The student cohort consists of approximately 8% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 4% Students with a Disability, and 21% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The community has four major 'hubs': families who live/associate with Marion Bay, Corny Point, Point Turton and Warooka. The largest percentage of families comes from the Marion Bay region; and relatively few families live in the Warooka township. Approximately 85% of students travel to school by bus. The school is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 997.

The school Leadership Team comprises a Principal in his final year of tenure at the school.

School Performance Overview

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

Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 10 of 11 Year 1 students and 8 of 10 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The Year 1 results are above the school's historic baseline, whilst the Year 2 result shows little change compared to the school's historic average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that all 12 Year 3 students, 8 of 10 Year 5 students, and all Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, the results are higher than the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5 and 7 results are consistent with the school's historic baseline average.

From 2013 to 2015, for Year 7, there is an upward trend evident from 69% (2013) to 100% (2015) at SEA.

For 2015 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving at the top end or above the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 5, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In Year 3 NAPLAN Reading, from 2013 to 2015, the school has maintained a consistent performance at the top end or above the average results of similar students across the DECD system. Over the last three years, Year 5 and 7 results have been consistently within the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 58% of Year 3, 20% of Year 5 and 29% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

Of the 4 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 2 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. Of the 3 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 2 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is higher than the school's historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 11 of 12 Year 3 students, 9 of 10 Year 5 students and all Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, the result shows little or no change compared to the school's historic average.

From 2013 to 2015, there are no discernible trends for Year 3, 5 and 7 numeracy.

In 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within and at the top end of the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 50% of Year 3, 40% of Year 5 and 29% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result shows an improvement against the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 4 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 3 remained in the top two bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result is an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. One student who achieved in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is within the school's historic baseline average.

The Principal was appreciative of the learning journey the community had undertaken during his leadership at Warooka Primary School. He acknowledged the work of the staff throughout this period. He described them as: "highly invested professionally, personally and emotionally". His knowledge and awareness of the needs of individual students throughout the discussions was evident.

The Principal described his work in meeting the health and wellbeing needs of students, staff and community through some difficult and challenging times. He described his key actions as establishing strong professional relationships between staff with a focus on a whole-school approach towards teaching and learning from School-Based Preschool through to Year 7. He was proud of the learning support provided to students through the teacher-guided assistance of School Services Officers (SSO).

The Principal acknowledged the experience amongst the teaching staff and reinforced this through this statement: "It's the nature of our teaching that influences our school data." However, he did reinforce that: "Staff understand that the links and continuity in learning are vital." Again, he reinforced the notion of learning as a continuum from preschool to Year 7 and beyond. What resonated with the Review Panel was the Principal's resolute focus on building a strong sense of 'community' with and for the school.

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the Lines of Inquiry as per below.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: **To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

Effective Teaching: **How effectively are teachers using DECD pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching?**

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

Improvement Agenda: **How well does the school make data-informed decisions about student learning?**

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

Student engagement in the learning program was evident through the positive relationships that exist amongst older and younger students across Warooka Primary School. This was verified through staff, student and parent comment, as well as in observations at the school. Student engagement with schooling is built early through the School-Based Preschool (SBP) program, and an explicit culture of meeting the needs of students from 3 to 13 years of age.

Students are provided with practical opportunities to work in cross-age groups to encourage student voice and ownership within the school. Parents and staff described this as a school 'strength'. Students spoke positively about the encouragement that they offered one another during these 'school committee' opportunities. Students also spoke highly of the teachers with whom they worked, describing them as "really good role models." Parents acknowledged the influence of older students working with younger students through such opportunities as 'buddy reading' and 'sport time'.

Members of Governing Council acknowledged the value of mixed-age classes in providing opportunities to support and challenge students. There was general consensus from this group of parents that quality learning is occurring at the school, and was evident through their children's attitude to school, conversations with their children, and communication from the class teachers and Principal.

The school engages students through a variety of integrated ways, many of which connect with community programs and other extra-curricula opportunities. These opportunities include (but are not exhaustive of): community garden, school kitchen-garden, beach care, beach day, surf day and camps. These programs were viewed by some staff as 'one-off' events, rather than offering strong curriculum links, and offering students an opportunity to connect their learning in other authentic contexts.

Providing students with an opportunity to apply their learning in different contexts supports the opportunity for students to 'stretch' their learning. In support of 'stretch', it was substantiated that one teacher uses rubrics with writing to describe the A–E standards to support students' pursuit of challenge to higher levels of achievement. This is a positive example of making learning expectations clear for all students who want to strive for higher outcomes; however, it was not verified as widespread practice across year levels or areas of study. Some Upper Primary students commented that they had not achieved an 'A' grade in their learning to date.

Parents verified that some of the Upper Primary students were working at higher levels of maths learning through the use of a commercial text. Whilst this offers a form of vertical extension for capable students,

the Review Panel would prefer challenge to be expanded to include problem-solving, open-ended questioning and authentic application of mathematical concepts in real-life scenarios. Some parents were mindful of the need for the learning program to cater for holistic child development, not just academic performance.

Parents were mindful of the need to broaden the links of Digital Technologies into the learning program. They commented positively about the digital movies produced at the school, but wanted to see digital technology integrated more into the broader curriculum provision and beyond media presentations.

Curriculum and pedagogical alignment was verified at the transition point from SBP to the early years of schooling. The two teachers are offering a play-based approach to learning for young children. The program links the learning from the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Australian Curriculum (AC). The learning was verified as planned and scheduled between the two teachers. There was visual evidence within the two classes that the play-based program is intentional as it relates to specific intended learning outcomes. There was verified evidence that the teachers monitor the range and level of engagement displayed by the students in this early years program.

The Principal commented that the school has a reputation for successful student achievement within the local area. This perception was verified through the data presented above and through interviews with parents. Accompanying work in establishing respectful professional relationships was beginning to align the curriculum and pedagogical approaches across the school from school-based preschool to Year 7, to minimize what was described as a "choose your own adventure" approach across the learning continuum. The work to connect teaching and learning across the school was evident in the 2016 SIP, where there is reference to developing 'whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy.' A staff comment that supported this view was: "Staff take their own approach to teaching numeracy." This work now needs to be progressed through the collaborative efforts of staff.

Direction 1
Embed agreed and defined pedagogical approaches that support 'challenge and stretch' for all learners across the school through staff collaborative endeavour.

How effectively are teachers using DECD pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching?

Students with learning needs are identified early in schooling, and are supported by teachers and trained SSO staff working in a collaborative way. Timetables for support are established and skillsets of SSO staff are matched with student needs. For example, a speech program operates between the middle break periods, focusing on implementing specific recommendations from Speech Pathologist reports under teacher direction. An SSO described her work with high-capacity students, while the teacher supports those who need more direct support. These are verified examples of effective practice in structuring the learning for students based on varying needs.

A variety of approaches and programs are used across the year levels to support learning in literacy, numeracy and social/emotional development. There was limited evidence of a strategic approach to building a connected and coherent curriculum program across the primary levels of schooling. There was evidence of incoherency in the approaches to Phonics and Grammar, Guided Reading, Play is the Way/Program Achieve; maths work books, and the use of student portfolios.

Class observations verified calm supportive classes with effective relationships between teachers and students. Teachers provided explicit instructions during lessons, checked for understanding, asked clarifying questions and made themselves available to individual students or groups as needs emerged.

The Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) was not used strategically by staff to make collaborative decisions, embed agreed teaching strategies or reflect on their own teaching practice to build their professional practice. A high level of trust exists between all stakeholders within the school and community. The Principal and teachers are highly regarded as dedicated professionals by students and parents alike. The teachers are trusted by the Principal for their experience and capacity to deliver quality outcomes. These aspects were verified through conversations with staff, students, parents and the

Principal.

Direction 2
Improve the learning growth and engagement of every student through planning, designing and differentiating teaching to cater for the varying needs, skills, abilities and interests of all students.

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

Opportunities for staff professional learning are afforded to both teachers and SSO staff alike. These occur through Partnership and Pupil Free Day opportunities. It was confirmed with teaching staff that these opportunities also occur through staff meetings; however, a longer-term schedule of connected professional learning was not evident during the review. A process using a 'Parking Lot' approach was the method used by staff to design the agenda and nature of professional discussion at these meetings. In recent feedback to the Principal about these meetings, one teacher wrote: "Opportunity for learning at staff meetings along with nuts and bolts organisation."

Performance and development of teaching staff occurs through pro-chats biannually. These are 'loosely' based on the AITSL professional teacher standards. A common DECD framework is used by staff to plan their professional development and areas for improvement. It was verified that these plans are linked to the Site Improvement Plan. Written feedback in the form of notations is provided to staff following pro-chats. This process was verified through Principal and staff interviews and documentation provided.

The Principal was described as 'being visible' in classrooms, but visits were seen as unstructured and informal. The staff are yet to explore the opportunity to observe, support and build consistent understanding and approaches to teaching practices across the school in the priority areas defined in the SIP (literacy and numeracy). At the time of the review, there were no documented staff agreements about the implementation of defined strategies to key aspects in literacy and numeracy learning. A curriculum scope and sequence in geography, developed in concert with a curriculum consultant, was provided as evidence of a planned approach to connect learning in a coherent way across the school.

Direction 3
Build upon the evident teacher capacity through strategic leadership actions that support staff professional learning, performance feedback and delivery of coherent curriculum and pedagogical agreements.

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

The school has only recently mapped a schedule to collect and review various datasets to track and monitor student learning. This schedule is based on an agreed position developed by the local Partnership of schools. Staff verified that the data was shared with them, but it was not analysed together as a staff team. A teacher comment that summarised this perception was: "A lot of data is collected; it's more of an individual process around analysis and setting programs". Students confirmed the link between data analysis and the resultant impact on their learning. Students in the Upper Primary commented that the teacher "goes through the things we could do better in NAPLAN."

A 'Data Management Plan' for the school was provided as a supplementary document to the data collection schedule. This plan identified a 'high leverage strategy' of de-privatising current practices with the intended outcome of improving student learning. As this strategic approach was relatively new to the school, the Review Panel could not evaluate the extent to which this practice has impacted student learning.

A data wall has been recently developed in the staff room to support staff discussion, tracking and monitoring of students at the school and individual levels. Parents confirmed that data is used in parent-teacher discussions. Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) were verified

for students who required support with their learning. Learning and social goals were established in documented plans to guide programming decisions by teachers.

There were variations in the way communication occurred between teachers and SSOs in recording, tracking and monitoring the intervention programs on offer. Staff verified that there was limited time to meet to transfer information formally; however, it did occur at the informal level. A staff comment about formal documentation included: "informal conversations are great, but formal recording needs to occur." SSO staff did confirm with the Review Panel their involvement in data discussion in the Term 4 review process.

Direction 4
Raise achievement levels through the collection and analysis of various data to monitor, track and target support for learners at the school, class and individual levels.

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OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Warooka Primary School has a supportive and positive school culture where students are central to work undertaken at the school and within the community. The teaching staff are entrusted with providing a quality learning program and are valued as positive role models within the community. The students are highly supportive of each other within the school program, and this is acknowledged by students, staff and parents. The school learning and perception data confirms that the school is performing effectively.

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

1. Embed agreed and defined pedagogical approaches that support 'challenge and stretch' for all learners across the school through staff collaborative endeavour.

2. Improve the learning growth and engagement of every student through planning, designing and differentiating teaching to cater for the varying needs, skills, abilities and interests of all students.

3. Build upon the evident teacher capacity through strategic leadership actions that support staff professional learning, performance feedback and delivery of coherent curriculum and pedagogical agreements.

4. Raise achievement levels through the collection and analysis of various data to monitor, track and target support for learners at the school, class and individual levels.

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

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Beth Walsh
PRINCIPAL
WAROOKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson