

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Padthaway Primary School

Conducted in March 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Paul Harmer, Review Principal.

School context

Padthaway Primary School is located 287kms from the Adelaide CBD. The school enrolment is 58 students, and has increased over the past 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 1028, and is classified as Category 5 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 4.5% students with disabilities, and 10% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

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

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:

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

Effective Teaching: How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

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

In student interviews during the External School Review (ESR) the majority of students from years 3 to 7 were able to provide a range of strategies to use when stuck in their learning, for example "stop and think, try to work it out, draw a picture to calm down, rethink for a minute and then go again and ask a friend". Many students indicated using different strategies before asking the teacher. It is apparent that many students accept responsibility for themselves as learners and have positive learning dispositions.

Students were able to identify areas of learning that they wanted to improve in but did not know what they needed to do to improve. The majority of responses were effort-based, including practicing more, trying harder and writing faster. Opportunities for students to develop common understandings and a shared language for learning will strengthen their ability to become powerful learners. The majority of students indicated that most of their work was 'just right'; with many students saying they would not inform the teacher if their work was too easy.

In a survey conducted during the External School Review (ESR) relating to a recent unit of work, 75% of staff indicated that they had effectively created opportunities to intellectually stretch students to a moderate extent.

Recent NAPLAN results indicate that 94% of students in numeracy and 75% of students in reading achieved the Department for Education Standard of Educational achievement (SEA), however, only 25% of those students achieved in the higher bands for both reading and numeracy.

During interviews, staff provided varied responses about their understandings of intellectual challenge, such as students striving to meet their maximum potential and providing students with the opportunity to apply their learning in a new context and explain their thinking. It was also stated that “intellectual stretch is not just ‘extending’, it begins with what they can do, and building on from there”. The development and embedding of common understandings in relation to intellectual challenge for staff, students and families across the site is an area for further improvement.

Staff described what taking an intellectual risk looked like in their classroom as “not knowing the answer straight away”, “having a go when you may not be correct” and “being brave to talk about it with your peers”. Another staff member indicated that the use of a common language for positive learning dispositions, for example, ‘we are in the maze’ and the use of the term ‘yet’, were embedded practices, and taking intellectual risks was an integral part of class expectations.

Next steps for the school are to embed the language for positive learning dispositions across the site. Work in this area will be strengthened by sharing these understandings with families. This will be an important body of collaborative work for the school to undertake.

A range of strategies currently used to support students to develop persistence and resilience as learners were identified by staff, including using a classroom communication app to view growth mindset videos that are shared within the class and with families. Providing visuals of people who have persevered was also suggested. Some staff have identified and utilised a range of visual resources that support the development of persistence and resilience for students. Sharing successful strategies and resources across the site and with families will support the development of collective understandings and practice in persistence and resilience for all students.

Differentiation of learning tasks is essential in small schools with multiple year levels. Staff rated their proficiency in this area between 3 and 3.5 on a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 being embedded. They provided a range of strategies to improve differentiation, including differentiation at the beginning of the task to ensure individual needs are being met, developing three-tiered tasks focused on ‘I must complete, I should and I could’, and providing further opportunities to extend students. Staff also identified a range of strategies to improve intellectual stretch and challenge:

- linking learning with student interest
- finding time to scaffold learning for early finishers
- developing resilience and being open to creating opportunities for more questions
- preplanning deep questions, and
- teaching students how to stretch and challenge themselves.

Some students indicated that they were provided with a range of tasks that were differentiated according to their interest and/or ability. Several students were able to identify and articulate their own learning needs including understanding that there are different expectations for different students, knowing what they liked, and where they needed help.

The school has provided clear evidence of a strong commitment to ongoing improvement in this area. Next steps for the school will be to develop and embed common understandings and practices across the site in intellectual stretch and challenge for all students, and to share these understandings with students and families.

Direction 1

Collaboratively develop tasks to support and embed differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge across all areas of learning and year levels, and share the language for positive learning dispositions with families.

How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

The school has developed a range of systems to support consistency and coherence in the planning and implementation of the Australian Curriculum throughout the school. The school currently operates with 3 classes. For the majority of learning, with the exception of literacy and numeracy, each morning students work in 4 groups, where the 3 classroom teachers and the principal each undertake responsibility for the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy for their allocated group. This approach has provided an average group size of approximately 14 students, subsequently providing the opportunity for small group and individual instruction within each group.

The small group option also allows teachers to focus on only 2 year levels for literacy and numeracy. Each teacher undertakes the responsibility for instruction, assessment and reporting responsibilities in literacy and numeracy for their designated group.

Teachers develop a term overview of learning to be undertaken, which is distributed to parents at the beginning of each term. The school has collaboratively established a scope and sequence for learning in science, technologies and the arts, with the intent to implement humanities and social sciences during 2018. A whole-school English agreement and a data collection guideline were developed, while the numeracy agreement is due for review. Comprehensive systems and structures to support teachers in the planning and implementation of the Australian Curriculum were created.

Evidence of comprehensive planning and careful task design in a unit of mathematics, as a result of professional learning, was provided to the review panel during the ESR.

During the review staff looked at a range of datasets, including Running Records, NAPLAN writing, reading and numeracy, and PAT-M and PAT-R assessments. A disconnection between assessment achievements and grade allocations was apparent. Further work in these areas would strengthen the capacity of staff to triangulate a range of datasets and, subsequently, be confident when allocating grades. Sharing with the school community what constitutes an 'A' through to an 'E' grade at each year level will support congruence and clarity for all stakeholders.

The NAPLAN writing results for 2017 indicate considerable variance across year levels, the school would benefit from a review of current assessment practices in this area to ensure consistency across all year levels.

Staff indicated that moderation to provide accurate grade allocations was currently in the developmental stage, and rated their proficiency in this area from 1.5 to 3 on a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 being embedded practice. Most staff indicated that work in this area was especially difficult in small sites where they were the only person teaching a specific year level. Staff indicated that moderation could be improved through the provision of regular opportunities to work with peers from like schools on a regular basis. This will be an important and significant body of work for the school to undertake.

The collaborative design, development and implementation of tasks, to provide multiple entry and exit points that are aligned against year level curriculum, will support staff to develop confidence and fluency in the moderation of work across all areas of learning. It is important that this work is focused within and across year levels and learning areas. Opportunities to share planning and resources in moderation with peers from like sites will significantly contribute to building a body of work that can be a reference for all staff. Collaborative work in this area with peers from like schools will support all staff to confidently address the challenging task of ensuring that students in multiple year level classes receive their year level curriculum entitlement across learning areas.

Direction 2

Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff to participate with like schools in moderation processes that are aligned across year levels and the Australian Curriculum.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

During classroom walkthroughs the review panel observed some evidence of learning intentions in several classes. However, the learning intentions were generally broad and aligned to a specific area of learning. Learning intentions are designed to describe explicitly what students will learn as a result of the teaching and learning. Recent research indicates learning intentions without success criteria will have limited impact on student learning outcomes. Clarity of success criteria describes in specific terms what successful achievement of the learning goal looks like.

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. Learning intentions and success criteria are successful when used at the beginning of a lesson or unit of work and are clearly visible to students. The school is well-positioned to undertake further work in this area, with particular reference to developing and embedding common understandings and practices in learning intentions and success criteria across all classes and all areas of learning.

Staff discussed a range of datasets, including the progressive assessment tests (PAT) in reading and mathematics during the review. The results across the school were very strong, with a high majority of students achieving well above benchmark for their year level in both assessments. Discussions at the staff meeting included whether or not the students should be informed of the outcomes of such assessments.

Staff provided various examples of providing feedback for learning at group and individual levels, including how they differentiated feedback according to year level and individual student needs. Teachers rated their personal effectiveness in providing feedback ranging from 3 to 4.5 on a scale from 0-5, with 5 being exemplary.

Staff provided a range of examples of feedback they receive from students, such as “they will tell me if the learning is too difficult” and “some students are learning to reflect, others will say ‘I don’t know what to do’”.

There is clear evidence that feedback is used in a variety of ways and across many areas of learning to support students in improving their learning. The school can further enhance this important work by ensuring that feedback is a two-way process and is implemented across all aspects of student learning. Two-way feedback provides students with the opportunity to give as well as receive feedback about themselves as learners.

Students at all year levels benefit from opportunities to be active participants in their own learning; sharing data, discussing reports, setting learning goals and providing opportunities for students to share how they best learn gives real and explicit opportunities for all student to be successful learners. Feedback for learning provides students with the strategies to know how to improve. The school is well positioned to undertake this important work.

Two groups of students in the upper years used the TfEL student voice ‘action tiles’ to identify perceptions of their influence in co-designing learning and learning improvement across the site. Student perceptions were then cross-referenced with work that staff had previously undertaken using the same resource, revealing a variance between staff and student perceptions. The following 2 areas were identified by staff and students as being embedded practice: ‘students speak up to represent their own

and other's views' and 'students share what they already know, can do and understand'. This process has provided a baseline from which authentic student influence in their learning can be tracked, monitored and progressed. Opportunities to share this work with like sites and community will validate the next steps for the school in embedding authentic student influence in learning for all students.

Direction 3

Develop and embed authentic student influence for learning as a powerful means of students becoming equal partners in the learning process across the site, and share this work with the community.

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 Padthaway Primary School.

The school has developed scope and sequences for several areas of learning based on a two-year rotation cycle that provides clarity for staff in the implementation, tracking and monitoring of every student's entitlement to their year level curriculum. This is often a very difficult task in small schools. The school has also developed a review cycle for the development, implementation and review of English and maths agreements, and has a schedule for development of scope and sequences for further learning areas. Clarity of what to teach ensures student entitlement of access to a broad curriculum that is sequential and monitored for all students.

The panel also noted comprehensive planning and documentation of the following:

- site overview
- context
- site improvement plan
- preschool quality improvement plan
- operational plan and whole-site directions, which include reference to agreed school expectations on student learning and problem-solving.

The principal is in the 3rd year of her first leadership position, and in her 5th year of teaching. The work she has undertaken so far provides clear evidence of effective leadership that fosters a strong culture of learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Padthaway Primary School is characterised by effective leadership which provides strategic direction and planning within a culture of continual improvement.

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

1. Collaboratively develop tasks to support and embed differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge across all areas of learning and year levels, and share the language for positive learning dispositions with families.
2. Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff to participate with like schools in moderation processes that are aligned across year levels and the Australian Curriculum.
3. Develop and embed authentic student influence for learning as a powerful means of students becoming equal partners in the learning process across the site, and share this work with the community.

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



Brendyn Semmens
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

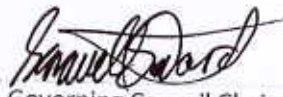


Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.



Olivia English
PRINCIPAL
PADTHAWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the 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 93.8%.

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, 63% of year 1 and 75% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the departmental Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for years 1 and 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement, for year 5, this result represents a decline, and for year 7 this result represents little or no change 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, no year 3, 29% of year 5 and 33% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline, from the historic baseline average. For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 100%, or 1 student 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 100% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students, and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement, for year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For years 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, no year 5, and 50% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 50%, or 1 of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.