

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Lenswood Primary School

Conducted in August 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Lorna Fenech, Review Principal.

School context

Lenswood Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 27kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 70. The school has an ICSEA score of 1033, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her second 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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

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

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

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

The school has consistently demonstrated high levels of achievement in NAPLAN assessments over time. During the External School Review (ESR) the 2017 NAPLAN results were released. NAPLAN Writing data in 2016 and 2017 was analysed. Year 3 students maintained 100% at SEA in both years. Year 5 students improved from 85% SEA in 2016 to 100% at SEA in 2017. Year 7 students decreased from 71% at SEA to 67% over the same time period. Higher-band attainment, however, indicated a decline across all year levels, with 33% of Year 3 students and no students in Years 5 and 7 achieving in the higher bands.

These results indicate that close analysis of current practices in the teaching and assessing of writing is required. At present, there is no common approach to the assessment of writing. Staff and students would benefit from the implementation of a common assessment tool to analyse, track and monitor writing progress across the school. Opportunities for students to be partners in reviewing the results of their writing assessments will provide them with the tools to know how to improve.

When students from Years 3 to 7 were asked to identify areas of learning that they found challenging, two areas were consistently identified: writing and maths. Students also identified writing and maths as the areas they wanted to improve in. Writing was the predominant area of learning identified by students as being challenging and the area that they wanted to improve in.

Staff analysed a range of datasets at the staff meeting held during the ESR, including Running Records data, NAPLAN (reading, writing and numeracy), Progressive Assessment Test Mathematics (PAT-M), Progressive Assessment Test Reading (PAT-R) and the 2016 A-E grade allocations mid and end-of-year. Observations presented a strong correlation between all Year 3 results.

It was also noted that there were several instances where there was a lack of correlation between higher-band achievement and grade allocation. Staff posed the following enquiries: "Was this due to a differentiation issue, that is, were students consistently given the opportunity to achieve at a higher level?"

Staff also discussed that the apparent anomalies across datasets may be due to inconsistencies in moderation. Moderation is often difficult in small schools where there are no peers who teach the same year level. In interviews held during the ESR, staff indicated that the local partnership has provided opportunities for all staff to work on moderation with their year level cluster groups. Some groups had found this to be very beneficial stating that they met during term time, and also during the school holidays.

It was acknowledged that effective moderation was a challenge.

Suggestions for improvement in moderation processes by staff included all members of the group benefiting from having the same task to moderate, as well as having the opportunity to focus on the same task across year levels. Moderation at a school level during staff meetings was also suggested. Staff indicated that 'we all need to get better at it'. Staff identified as a priority the need to continue dialogue in determining specific criteria to unpack what makes an 'A' and a 'B'. 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 what constitutes each grade from A to E at each year level with the school community will support congruence and clarity for all stakeholders.

The school would benefit from developing systems to track and monitor grade allocations across semesters and year levels to ensure common understandings across all staff. It is equally important to develop end-of-year processes where staff allocate time to analyse and discuss datasets as an integral component of handover procedures.

Discussions with staff and students indicated that not all students were aware of their reading levels; every student needs to know their reading level and be involved in the setting of aspirational targets for improvement. 'When we share the learning with the student, we acknowledge that learning is a partnership, and we provide opportunities for the student to take ownership of their learning'.

In discussions held during the ESR it became apparent that there was a need to develop common understandings and consistency in processes used when undertaking Running Records. Running Records are a diagnostic tool used to inform the teacher of students' oral reading strengths and areas for development. Results from the analysis are then used to make decisions about the types of reading instruction individual and groups of students require. It is important that class teachers regularly undertake such assessments to ensure any adjustments to instruction can be implemented.

Whole-school processes to analyse data as part of the school's regular self-review processes are significant factors in ensuring common understandings and practices across the site. Planned and regular opportunities for staff to engage in cyclic self-review processes that include a focus on assessment for learning will support students as they progress through the school.

Effective self-review includes consistency in conducting, tracking and monitoring of agreed assessments enabling results to be shared and analysed. Sharing growth over time in a visual manner with students and parents will further strengthen the school's improvement agenda.

Collaborative planning and review processes enhance common understandings of individual and group strengths and provide indicators for further development. The learning of students as they progress through the school will be transparent and understood by all stakeholders.

Direction 1

Strengthen and embed cyclic self-review processes to include planned and regular opportunities for staff to collaboratively track, monitor, and plan learning across all year levels.

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

The school, as part of the local partnership, have recently begun a three-year professional learning program focused on improving teaching and learning. The professional learning programme is organised around four aspects. The first aspect has a focus on students understanding how to learn; the second is focused on teachers knowing the impact of their work supported through the use of multiple sources of data and student reflection; the third aspect is related to teachers as passionate and inspirational professionals; The final aspect is focused on effective feedback to students that will support them to know where they are going, how they are going and where to next.

As a result of this professional learning, the Principal reported that staff are currently working on learning intentions and success criteria. In a survey undertaken during the ESR, 50% of staff indicated that clarity of learning intentions was achieved to a high degree when reflecting on a recent unit of work. However, only 16% of staff indicated that the students had understood the learning intentions to the same degree.

Further work in developing the clarity of learning intentions will support students in their learning.

A staff member reported that using the term 'success criteria' had assisted in strengthening student resilience when learning became challenging. Another staff member reported that when they had used explicit learning intentions and success criteria, the students were more engaged in their learning and stayed on-task for longer periods of time. It was further noted that students also showed more excitement in their achievements. The staff have demonstrated a clear commitment in undertaking new learning and, in particular, sharing the language of learning with students.

In small schools, where teachers have multiple year levels within the one class, it is important that students are able to access the year level curriculum they are entitled to. It was identified by staff during the ESR that this was an area for further development across the school. The collaborative development of a scope and sequence that may be rotated biannually for identified areas of learning, for example, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), the arts and technologies, will be important work in providing coherence and congruence in curriculum delivery. The intent is to ensure that each student receives their year level appropriate curriculum. In this way, the school can guarantee a viable curriculum for each student.

Several parents indicated in interviews held during the ESR that they believed their children could be stretched more in their learning. Teachers indicated that intellectual stretch included pushing students out of their comfort zone, finding where they are at and moving them forward. Another staff member stated that they had been very successful in getting students to believe that they can do everything, but now it was time to 'set up more grit' and scaffold them into new learning. There is clear evidence of common understanding regarding intellectual stretch and challenge from teachers. It is important that the school develops consistent understandings across the school community regarding intellectual stretch and challenge, in particular, that intellectual stretch and challenge is applicable to all students.

Staff noted that developing perseverance and resilience was an area for development across all classes. Teachers shared a range of strategies they use to build resilience with the students in their care; this included using themselves as examples of how they work through new and unfamiliar challenges. It was noted that students have been focused on the product, and staff are now building common understandings that attempting new learning by 'having a go' is more important than work that is perfect.

Student perseverance and resilience may be further enhanced from the collaborative identification and embedding of a common language to describe the *what* and the *how* of working through the unfamiliar. In this way, challenge is normalised, mistakes are understood as an integral of learning, and it is acknowledged that they 'may not be there yet'. Using agreed language that supports students to know and understand that new learning includes making mistakes will support the embedding of perseverance and resilience across the school community.

Teachers identified a range of suggestions to improve intellectual stretch and challenge, which included the following: designing learning tasks with multiple entry and exit points, using peer tutoring and asking students 'who thinks they are an expert in this and who's not an expert yet?'

The school demonstrates a high level of commitment to students with learning difficulties and there are very clear processes and practices in place that successfully support identified students. The school's learning data over time indicates very high levels of students consistently achieving the DECD SEA. Higher-band achievement across year levels and learning areas over time does not reflect the same consistency. Next steps for the school are to identify, track and monitor the students who are achieving in the higher bands. Informing students and their families of their achievements and celebrating their success will assist in building and sustaining a culture of continual improvement and excellence across the school community.

The school is well-placed to develop a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch and challenge through the development of transforming tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points, and differentiate learning for groups and individual students.

Direction 2

Collaboratively develop transforming tasks to support and embed differentiation and intellectual stretch and challenge across all areas of learning and year levels.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Interviews held with teachers during the ESR indicated that a diverse range of strategies regarding feedback for learning were currently in place across the school. Strategies included verbal and written feedback, observations, discussions, individual conferences, class meetings, surveys, the use of formative assessment and sharing results of DECD assessments with students.

Staff reported that they were able to determine that feedback was successful when they saw students making changes to their work and setting their own learning goals informally. A further strategy had involved students assessing their own learning project after they had observed the teacher assessing the initial project. It was remarked by the teacher that the students were rigorous in their grading.

When asked how feedback for learning could be improved, teachers provided suggestions such as, showing students the criteria for success and asking the students to provide feedback to them about their teaching.

Some students from Years 3 to 7 when interviewed during the ESR about what they needed to do to improve were able to identify the learning areas they needed to improve in, and could provide specific aspects to focus on. Other students indicated effort or behaviour responses, for example, concentrate more and think harder. Some students indicated that they did not know what they needed to do to improve. It is apparent that there are diverse perceptions from students regarding feedback for learning. Embedding common understanding relating to effective feedback across the school will strengthen feedback for learning for all stakeholders.

Staff were asked about feedback they received from the students and responses included students stating constructive criticism was supportive and not a negative experience, and sharing at the end of the day being used as a regular forum for some students to provide feedback. A further example as an indicator of feedback from students was that students were often heard to say: "I've got that now".

Older students indicated that they were provided with opportunities to influence learning in their classroom 80% of the time. They articulated a strong sense of ownership in school decision-making through their role and responsibilities as Student Representative Council (SRC) members. Students indicated that they felt empowered and were able to contribute to the progress of the school. During the ESR, some of SRC representatives used the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) student voice action cards and identified that *students as teachers* was now embedded practice in their class. The school is well-positioned to extend and strengthen the role of the SRC by developing a focus on student influence in learning and embedding the language for learning within and across the school. Staff acknowledged that feedback from students about themselves as learners and their preferred pedagogies to improve learning were areas for development, particularly from Reception to Year 5.

There is clear evidence that feedback is used in a variety of ways and across many areas of learning to support students to improve learning. The school is now well-positioned to further enhance this important work by ensuring that feedback is a two-way process and is implemented across all aspects of student learning. 'When we involve students in their learning as equal partners and develop their self-awareness regarding their strengths, preferences and areas for improvement we develop expert learners'. 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, 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.

When we share learning data with every student, we are providing them with evidence from which specific and targeted goals for learning can be set. Students can then become an equal partner in their learning journey; they develop awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement and, with assistance, are able to set achievable goals and targets. Students at all year levels benefit from the opportunity to have authentic influence on their learning. The school is well-positioned to undertake this important work.

Direction 3

Develop and embed authentic student influence for learning that is strengthened by embedding TfEL perception data as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.

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 Lenswood Primary School.

Effective practice in linking with and using community resource people to support students through School Community Partnerships was very evident. The strong community support for the school has been influenced by the dedication and commitment of community members volunteering their time to support the students in a range of different fields.

Some members of the community who provide ongoing support for the school have had close connections with the school for decades; one member's connection has been for fifty years. One community member listens to every student in the school read every week; this has been a regular occurrence for many years. Other community members support in transporting students to sporting events, while another volunteer runs the wood shed where students (who are on a roster system across the whole school) design and create wooden artefacts. The school produces a school musical one year and an arts spectacular the next. It was affirmed by parents and staff that without community support these events would not be sustainable and, importantly, they were the highlight that the whole community looked forward to. In particular, the panel noted that the school was the hub of the community, and a highly significant focal point for the community. Evidence of these practices was verified through observation, meeting volunteers, parents and anecdotal evidence by staff and students.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

At Lenswood Primary School the demonstrated growth in student achievement is at or above what would normally be expected of a school in a similar context. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing, collaborative professional learning.

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

1. Strengthen and embed cyclic self-review processes to include planned and regular opportunities for staff to collaboratively track, monitor, and plan learning across all year levels.
2. Collaboratively develop transforming tasks to support and embed differentiation and intellectual stretch and challenge across all areas of learning and year levels.
3. Develop and embed authentic student influence for learning that is strengthened by embedding TfEL perception data as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.

Based on the school's current performance, Lenswood Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

Leah Kennewell
PRINCIPAL
LENSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Lenswood 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:

- Parent Complaints Policy
- Updating Governing Council on bullying trends
- Cyber Safety Policy.

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 2016 was 93.8%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

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

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 100% of Year 1 and 75% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of Year 3 students, 92% of Year 5 students, and 88% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For Year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 62% in 2014 to 100% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools. For 2016 Year 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 75% of Year 3, 32% of Year 5, and 38% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 2 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 67%, or 2 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of Year 3 students, 69% of Year 5 students, and 100% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 79% in 2014 to 100% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For 2016, Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 75% of Year 3, 8% of Year 5, and 25% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 15% in 2014 to 75% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 1 of 1 student from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 67%, or 2 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.