

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR WATERVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in November 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 Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Patrick Moran, 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 Watervale 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:

- Provision of advice from the Governing Council to the Principal so as to strengthen and support public education in the local community, through the collaborative development of the Quality Improvement Plan.
 - This is a requirement for the newly-established OSHC service. The Policies and Parent Handbook are complete, and the QIP document will be finalised by the end of Term 4, 2015.
- Cyber Safety Policy – awaiting SRC input as policy does not reflect current practice.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school was found to be compliant with this policy, and has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 93.3%, which meets the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Watervale Primary School is located 113kms north of Adelaide in the Clare and Gilbert Valley district. The school had an enrolment of 57 students in 2014, and 65 students in 2015, who live in Watervale and nearby townships, including Sevenhill, Blyth, Mintaro, Leasingham, Penwortham and Clare. The school's ICSEA score in 2014 was 1073. It is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population in 2014 included 2 Aboriginal students, 4 Students with Disabilities, and 8% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership consists of a Principal in her 3rd year of her 2nd tenure, who has a 0.4FTE teaching load. As a small school with 6 teaching staff working across 3 classes, all staff are actively encouraged to develop leadership skills within the work of the school.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student learning:	How well are all students progressing against the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA)? To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?
School Community Partnership:	How effective is the parent/school partnership?

How well are all students progressing against the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA)?

The school has a small enrolment and it should be noted there was only one student in Year 7 in 2014 and none in 2015. This is because most Year 7 students enrol at the local high school, which runs a Years 7 to 9 Middle School program. Consequently, the school's data analysis focuses on the tracking of individual growth and progress over time against standardised tests.

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2014, 5 of 8 Year 1 students, and 5 of 5 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Between 2012 and 2014, the trend for Year 2 results has been upwards, from 40% in 2012 to 100% in 2014.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 5 of 5 Year 3 students, and 4 of 7 Year 5 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In relation to students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in 2015, 1 student was in Year 3, and 1 student was in Year 5. This compares to an average of 3 and 2 students for Years 3 and 5 respectively, over the previous five years, 2010 to 2014.

With respect to retention, 1 of 3 students from Year 3 in 2013 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015.

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 4 of 5 Year 3 students, and 7 of 8 Year 5 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Of the students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher bands for numeracy in 2015, 2 were in Year 3. No students in Year 5 scored in the higher proficiency band range. This compares to an average of 4 and 1 students for Years 3 and 5 respectively, over the previous five years, 2010 to 2014.

Results for the retention of students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in numeracy show that 0 of 4 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 in 2013 to Year 5 in 2015.

A wide range of data, in addition to Running Records and NAPLAN data, is collected and analysed throughout the year. Comprehensive records of individual student progress, growth and achievement are maintained across the year levels, and there is a Schedule for Assessment and Accountability. Two staff meetings a year are dedicated to analysis and discussion of student achievement data, which is collated by the Principal. Through this analysis of data, the school develops a visual representation of all students within a Wave 1, 2 and 3 model in literacy and numeracy, guiding the level of support provided to each student. As a result of self-review processes, staff recently recognised that they are not referring to the Australian Curriculum Standards data, or giving any consideration to it, in their analysis of data. Steps are being taken to address this aspect of data analysis.

Direction 1

Continue to regularly critically evaluate the data analysis process and outcomes to ensure all relevant data is triangulated to inform ongoing planning and instruction designed to improve individual student progress and achievement.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

The school has three key learning focus areas outlined in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). These are Literacy, Numeracy, and Wellbeing, which encompass the cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual and physical aspects of learning.

Targets in the Literacy and Numeracy focus areas aim for quality teaching supported through the TfEL framework, targeted data analysis, professional development relevant to the Australian Curriculum, and a minimum of 25% of students scoring in the top two proficiency bands. Complementing these targets is a key wellbeing goal to provide optimum learning environments that foster engagement, powerful learners and intellectual stretch for all children.

In order to understand how the goals and targets are being realised in classroom programs the Review Panel met with all staff for 90 minutes to explore teachers' pedagogical approaches and practices. During that time, all teachers were invited to outline the learning intentions and assessment design for a recent thematic project undertaken by their students, and to describe how they planned for and met the needs of a student in each of the three Waves model, used to identify the level of support required by individual students.

To complement this, students from every class and year level were asked to bring work samples to share with the panel. It was interesting to compare what students told the Panel they were learning and why, with what the teachers had outlined in their overviews. The Review Panel was able to see the connection between the teachers' descriptions, the activities undertaken, and the learning outcomes. Students across the school, however, offered generalised and, at times, unclear descriptions of the learning intentions, and ideas for how they could target their learning efforts to improve the outcome. They did, however, outline a range of personal behavioural strategies for being a 'good' learner, such as listening and not interrupting, keep trying, work hard, and check the notes on 'how to improve' provided in reports.

Staff recognise the potential for increasing opportunities for all students to experience intellectual stretch, and parents were supportive of activities that will stretch, motivate, and engage their children positively in their learning. A very popular strategy that parents and students spoke positively about is the process of sharing PAT data with students. They find the approach helpful and, senior students in particular, talked of ways the process could be improved in the future. This suggests a high level of engagement by the students, and the Review Panel would encourage the school to engage with their feedback.

In light of the initial progress made in the implementation of such effective strategies, the next step is to strengthen the implementation of the school's strategy for purposeful inclusion of students in decision-making and improvement. In particular, the focus should be on strengthening the learning power of all students by enabling them to participate actively in setting personal learning goals and plans, and increasing their ability to use high-level thinking skills and apply what they have learned in new and increasingly complex situations. This will support the school's goals related to the fostering of optimum learning environments.

It will also be beneficial for staff to co-construct a common language with students and parents to discuss and describe what it means to be a powerful learner, who is engaged and intellectually challenged at Watervale Primary School. Similarly, as the staff and Principal spoke with the Review Panel about the challenge of articulating what they do in their everyday teaching practice, further discussion, debate and definition of terms such as 'powerful learning', 'engagement', 'explicit teaching', and 'intellectual stretch', and how they are put into practice, will help staff members describe their work explicitly and coherently with others. This aspect aligns with Domain 1 in the TfEL framework, and reference to the TfEL Guide should help staff progress this aspect of their work.

Direction 2

Foster and promote appropriate student intellectual challenge that enhances deep understanding and engagement in relevant and purposeful tasks by co-constructing common understandings of powerful learning, and strengthening the inclusion of students in personal learning improvement planning processes.

As seen from the earlier example, teachers are open and receptive to new pedagogical approaches and shared their opinions and experiences in a respectful and honest way. Also, through their local partnership, teachers engage in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that provide a forum for discussion and professional learning. Consequently, across the school, there is an 'improvement culture' headset and staff are motivated

to explore ways to respond to the learning needs of their students effectively. Hands-on group work and learning through play, for example, have been implemented to help engage students in their learning in new and motivating ways.

The Review Panel observed students who are articulate and respectful of others, and very willing and enthusiastic about sharing their work, and their learning. They reported that they had learned a lot since their mid-year report, and all believed they had improved and now know more than before.

The strategy for involving students in data discussions, if undertaken as a whole-school approach, should help students see their growth and progress in a positive way, even when the assessment grade may remain static. Also, engaging them in the planning of assessment tasks that demonstrate their skills and knowledge at higher levels of proficiency can provide a structure for highlighting personal learning growth and progress in ways that are relevant and meaningful for students and parents, and which complement the assessment outcomes against the Standards.

This is particularly important, given that descriptive comments in the mid-year and end-of-year reports are highly valued, but the word equivalent of 'satisfactory' as a descriptor for being 'at standard' is perceived unfavourably by some parents and students. It is perceived as meaning their child's learning is 'average'. While the issue can be defined as primarily semantic, perceptions can be powerful. Consequently, this presents the opportunity to action the school's strategy to 'broaden opportunities for active and constructive communication, information and feedback' with parents and students, and strengthen student influence on their learning.

While building teacher capacity to provide quality formative and summative feedback is an important strategy for the school to continue, students also benefit from planned opportunities to develop their capacity to participate in effective and constructive feedback processes that authentically value their opinions and enable them to influence their learning in positive ways.

Direction 3

Build the capacity of teachers and students to engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes that further strengthen students' influence on their learning.

How effective is the parent/school partnership?

Parents appreciate the acceptance and inclusion of all children, and spoke of the school's good reputation in the local community. There is a strong partnership between the school and families, and parents value the open door policy, responsiveness and approachability of the Principal and staff. The school has run parent workshops in literacy and numeracy, and parents spoke positively of these opportunities to understand better how to support their children's learning.

There is a strong and active Governing Council and the school obtains community views on a range of topics. In a recent survey conducted by the school, for example, many parents indicated they would like the school to seek their opinion about educational programs, and to participate in decisions about their children's education.

Parents as partners in their children's learning is to be encouraged and, given the interest expressed, it would be beneficial for the school to formalise systems and processes for teachers and families to work together to maximise student learning. In particular, the establishment of multiple opportunities that assist parents to share their opinions and participate effectively in decision-making processes would be a useful strategy for the school to implement. In this way, the Principal and staff can engage in decision-making and judgements about student learning based on professional knowledge that acknowledges parental perspectives and input.

Direction 4

Establish systems and processes for teachers and families to work together to maximise student learning and make informed decisions based on professional judgement.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Watervale Primary School is tracking well. The school has effective planning and targeted intervention processes in place, and the leadership provides strategic direction and promotes shared leadership within a small school context. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders, and children experience a strong sense of belonging and inclusion within the school setting.

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

1. Continue to regularly critically evaluate the data analysis process and outcomes to ensure all relevant data is triangulated to inform ongoing planning and instruction designed to improve individual student progress and achievement.
2. Foster and promote appropriate student intellectual challenge that enhances deep understanding and engagement in relevant and purposeful tasks by co-constructing common understandings of powerful learning, and strengthening the inclusion of students in personal learning improvement planning processes.
3. Build the capacity of teachers and students to engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes that further strengthen students' influence on their learning.
4. Establish systems and processes for teachers and families to work together to maximise student learning and make informed decisions based on professional judgement.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
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.

Wendy Burge
PRINCIPAL
WATERVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson