

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Hackham East Primary School

Conducted in May 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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Shelley Cameron, Review Principal.

School context

Hackham East Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 27 km south of Adelaide in the suburb of Hackham. The current enrolment of 309 is made up of 287 mainstream and 22 special class students, a Junior Primary and Primary. Over the last five years, enrolments have been steadily declining from 364 in 2012. The school has an ICSEA score of 947, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 16% (46) Aboriginal students, 13% (38) students with disabilities in mainstream classes, and 20 verified students with disabilities in the two special classes, 2.6% (8) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1.3% (4) children in care, and approximately 44% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his third tenure, a Deputy Principal appointed in 2013, and a Senior Leader in his fourth year as part of the team. The Leadership Team works collaboratively. The Deputy Principal has key responsibility for Literacy and Student Support and Intervention, and the Senior Leader for Wellbeing and Mathematics.

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:

Effective Teaching: **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

Effective Leadership: **How well does school leadership facilitate the development of coherent high-quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

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

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

It was clear to the panel that the staff at Hackham East Primary School is a dedicated group of professionals working hard to support students and their families. Parents, with whom the Review Panel spoke, described teachers as being accessible through a range of ways and were supportive of the school's moves to build student resilience. Thirty-two students met with the panel in student forums, and conversations were had with others in classrooms and learning spaces. Students were positive about the school's "way of learning that was hands-on", and described teachers as supportive, helping with "not only learning life, but also personal life". Collaboration between staff is critical to the success of the school.

Assessments in literacy and mathematics, according to the school's schedule, provide data to track, monitor and plan for learning. These work in tandem with the Self-Review Process Program to provide a connected and coordinated approach to managing the school's core business of teaching and learning. During the on-site visit, the panel saw evidence of differentiated learning in calm classrooms and saw that teachers work actively to build and maintain classrooms and shared spaces as positive learning environments. Teachers talked with the panel about using data to determine flexible learning groups, some of which are across classes, and there is some evidence of particular assessments used diagnostically. The timetable has been managed to support teams of teachers to have literacy and numeracy lessons at the same time. A range of teaching strategies is evident with appropriate levels of scaffolding and support, including using data in data walls and in collaborative conversations within teams. School Service Officers (SSOs) work alongside students in classes or in a limited number of withdrawal intervention programs, based on identified needs. The Quicksmart Numeracy Intervention program is implemented school-wide with targets students

identified using the Progress Achievement Tests (PAT) in maths.

Parents with whom the Review Panel spoke praised the inclusive nature of the school. They held a view that students in the Special Needs classes were not regarded as 'kids with disabilities'; rather, the school enabled an approach "to see the person and not the disability". It was reported to the panel that there was a longstanding approach of celebrating multiculturalism and respect for Aboriginal Culture. The school has 46 Aboriginal students currently enrolled, and the panel met with the Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET). The panel learnt that the Aboriginal Education Team, which consists of the AET, the Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) and the Deputy Principal, meet weekly to discuss and monitor support for Aboriginal students and families. The panel heard that the school is building capacity through Cultural Competence learning that is being undertaken alongside some families.

A key aspect of the school apparent to the Review Panel was the saturation of common language throughout, including leaders, teachers, support staff, students and families. Consistent practices are guided by school-based agreements in literacy, a lotus diagram in mathematics, and school-designed Scope and Sequences in reading and mathematics. Teachers relatively new to the school described these as being very helpful, and staff involvement and connection with them has supported teacher knowledge about the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. During classroom walkthroughs, the Review Panel saw evidence of the agreements, including classroom libraries and independent reading, as aspects of literacy blocks, and heard teacher talk related to natural maths strategies and explicit teaching of problem-solving. Teachers were heard building on prior knowledge in lessons and using common language and shared expectations in teams.

Teachers provided examples of using rubrics with students to make self-assessments and comparing them with teacher judgements. One student shared an example of an assessment rubric from a HASS assignment. The student had a clear understanding of the task and its relationship to the Australian Curriculum. The panel heard that students in the Upper Primary regularly engage with the Australian Curriculum. Developing meta-cognition in students so that they can use the language of learning to think more explicitly about their own learning is an effective strategy in improving outcomes. At Hackham East Primary School, the panel met with students who could describe their learning tasks and who could articulate knowledge of a wide range of strategies that could be used to improve learning.

A number of students shared aspects of their learning with the panel through their iPads, and were clearly comfortable and confident with the device and related apps, such as Keynote and Pages, as tools for learning. Support for innovative practice over a long period of time, including an extensive focus on Digital Learning, has ensured that students are familiar and engage confidently and responsibly with digital tools. One teacher referred to the use of the 1-1 iPads as "akin to carrying a pencil case" in earlier times. Senior students talked of using Google Classroom to share work with peers from their own and other classrooms and to be able to make comment, give feedback and submit assignments at a range of times. They provided examples of how communication between students, and teachers and students, has been enhanced using this platform.

The panel had a discussion with all teachers regarding an A-E collation of data in English over two consecutive years in which very few students across the school were assigned 'A' grades. Teachers presented as highly reflective practitioners during these discussions, and a range of considerations was raised, indicating to the panel a shift towards viewing the curriculum more openly. Teachers reported being involved in moderation processes with colleagues from nearby schools and spoke of how this had assisted in developing their understanding and confidence in making judgements. The panel heard that these processes were evolving and currently focused on mathematics, including a common assessment task. Two teachers described recent professional learning that provided clarity about how to design learning opportunities that engage students in intellectual stretch. All teachers were mindful of the need to ensure that students are provided with opportunities to demonstrate learning that involves higher-order thinking and is beyond a satisfactory standard.

Direction 1

Raise student achievement by collaboratively designing challenging learning and assessment that stretches student thinking and enables them to use skills and processes in new contexts.

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

The Review Panel met with the Leadership Team and heard about structures and support that had been put in place to enable staff to work in collaborative teams from 2014. Rigorous self-review processes in 2013 and feedback from a DECD Diagnostic Review to improve consistency and, therefore, reduce variation across the site, particularly in relation to literacy practices, saw a change in instructional practice supported through collaborative expertise. Teaching staff and SSOs are grouped into like year level or specialist teams called Professional Planning Teams (PPTs), who are geographically co-located and work collaboratively in both face-to-face and online communities. A Team Leader supports each PPT and every team member is an advocate for one of the school improvement priority committees. This structure, created to drive improvement, has meant that change is managed in a way that brings others on board and leads to commitment to action. Support to improve practice is enabled through ensuring common approaches are 'teased out' in professional discussions and clear expectations for learners are articulated.

A culture of professional sharing and development is becoming embedded through the team structure. Teachers reported that collaborative planning is supported through the allocation of staff meeting and release time, and that using the Google Docs online application enables ongoing communication amongst colleagues. SSOs reported that their access to these contributed to them feeling valued as part of the team. Parents with whom the Review Panel spoke described the staff as willing to learn. The Review Panel concurs with this view, and heard that a range of professional learning opportunities, connected to the School Improvement Plan, enhanced the growth of practitioners. SSOs reported that there was support for them to develop through formal and informal learning opportunities, and that they had opportunities to develop a broad range of skills through multi-skilling.

Performance and Development processes were reported by staff as supporting their professional development. Staff indicated that these were responsive to their needs and varied depending on their level of experience. Some teachers indicated that the structure of the Performance Development Plan (PDP) enabled them to be focused on a few professional goals, without being overwhelmed. Leaders reported that they regularly observed teachers in classes both informally and formally. Formal observations are documented using an agreed school-wide template. The strong collaborative culture at the school and shared ownership is supporting peer observations. Teachers reported finding it helpful that the Deputy Principal demonstrated particular practices in classrooms in the area of her expertise and they felt comfortable asking for this support from Team Leaders.

The Review Panel saw and heard that school resources have been deliberately allocated to initiate and support a model of professional learning communities, and can verify that PPTs are an effective and valued structure for staff to collaborate, plan and assess learning. The Review Panel facilitated the staff meeting to further the Lines of Inquiry. Staff worked in five small groups to come to a consensus about strategies and initiatives that had the most impact on improving student learning outcomes at Hackham East Primary School. Building collaboration and consistency through professional planning teams was endorsed as a key improvement lever through this process. The school has a broad change agenda. The Review Panel heard from a parent that the school is "always looking for new ideas" and this comment was echoed in a number of ways. Currently, the school is involved in a DECD trial project of an *Interoception* program. Interoception is reported as having made an impact for some students at this early stage of implementation. The school is using a planned approach that infuses the program into practice at *whole-school, small group and individual* levels.

Conversations with leaders and staff about embedding agreed initiatives put the spotlight on ensuring that regular review processes evaluate the effectiveness of programs and strategies from a whole-school perspective. The Leadership Team has clearly articulated a vision that is well-understood and commonly owned by staff, students and families, and one teacher described it as people "singing from the same song sheet". Teachers and leaders collaborating as evaluators of the impact of their actions will support a continued strategic focus and reinforce collective responsibility. Teachers are working in teams to analyse data to inform planning for individuals and cohorts. It is important that data analysis involves key stakeholders using evidence from the perspective of the whole school to determine future school priorities and targeted strategies.

Direction 2

Collaboratively analyse data regularly to determine whole-school trends to inform planning for learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and actions.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

The panel met with a group of people representing eleven families who were strongly supportive of the school. Three of these parents reported a reluctance to move their child from the school even though they had moved house. The panel also met with a group of Governing Councillors who were supportive of the school's Information Technology focus and indicated that they are listened to and that issues are brought to them. Families are supportive of the school in their outdoor play initiatives. The panel heard from the Leadership Team that High Expectation Play has been progressively introduced since 2015. Students are expected to "demonstrate the school values, high expectations and the 'Golden Rule'. Children can ride scooters, bikes on the bike track they built, build cubbies, play with loose parts and climb trees". Students articulated that this type of "risk-taking was learning for life" and were observed supporting each other in the yard and the classroom. One parent summarised that a strength of the school was "the way they listen to students and that students have input".

Students reported aspects of negotiated learning and staff reported student initiatives and outcomes from passion projects. The panel heard from teachers that students influenced how shared spaces were used. Students, particularly in the upper years, reported giving feedback to teachers regarding "ways of explaining things". In focus groups, students reinforced that they were encouraged "to have an opinion on what we do in class" and were "not just told". They showed an awareness of preferred ways of understanding things and the panel heard that it was common practice for teachers to seek this information from students, particularly at the end of a lesson. Some students talked about using peer feedback to improve their writing. Many students talked about the Writer's Notebook, one likening it to "planting seeds", and expressed an understanding of revising their work over a number of drafts to improve the quality. The panel heard from a student about a specific peer feedback routine and a reference was made by a teacher to feedback routines. Feedback protocols such as 'Two Stars and a Wish' are one way of scaffolding students into constructive feedback.

Students, staff and families all talked about students being expected to achieve their personal best. The panel explored the concept of personal best within an ethos of high expectations with a number of groups. High expectations in ways that students conduct themselves and behave are highly apparent. There is not a consistent view or evidence that confirms that the high expectations ethos has been translated into learning and achievement. One parent expressed a view that students are supported to meet standards and that "being able to recognise where their personal best is, is not obvious or articulated".

Along with a focus on self-management, students at the school are being supported to develop self-efficacy through learning about Growth Mindsets and aspects of meta-cognition such as the learning pit. Teachers talked of prompting students with questions like: *What strategies can you use to get out of the pit? What can you do now to help yourself?* and *Are you happy with this?* Classroom walkthroughs confirmed that explicit teaching of these concepts, including talk of strategies to "get out of the pit", is growing the school-wide language. Students, with whom the Review Panel spoke, related the concept of personal best to one of effort and whether they had tried hard enough. The challenge is to give students an explicit understanding of what they need to do to achieve personal best, without limiting their response. Research is clear that developing meta-cognition in students, along with the use of feedback, are two of the most high-impact strategies that improve student learning outcomes. Having success criteria available to students will support them in understanding what it is they are meant to be doing, and learning conversations that establish the range of ways to demonstrate success will lead students into deeper levels of understanding and thinking.

Direction 3

Improve student agency in learning by strengthening the feedback culture to align with success criteria, established with learners, and underpinned by high expectations.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Hackham East Primary School.

Effective practice at the school that underpins improvement focuses on strong relational learning. *Play Is The Way* philosophy is the vehicle to build self-direction, self-motivation and self-discipline in regards to learning and behaviour. Consistent and agreed management practices use a whole-school language to enable students to engage in learning tasks. The school values of *Friendliness, Good Manners, Courage, Compassion, Tolerance and Persistence and resilience*, as well as the ethos of *Play is the Way*, are evident across the whole school community. Parents commented that the school was not just developing students, but “creating a community of kids who will be able to adapt their skills to become productive adults”.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Hackham East Primary School is a school where teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning and effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions.

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

1. Raise student achievement by collaboratively designing challenging learning and assessment that stretches student thinking and enables them to use skills and processes in new contexts.
2. Collaboratively analyse data regularly to determine whole-school trends to inform planning for learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and actions.
3. Improve student agency in learning by strengthening the feedback culture to align with success criteria, established with learners, and underpinned by high expectations.

Based on the school's current performance, Hackham East 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.



Bob Thiele
PRINCIPAL
HACKHAM EAST 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 Hackham East School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 87.2%.

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, 43% of Year 1 and 60% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline in Year 1, and little or no change in Year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of Year 3 students, 58% of Year 5 students, and 46% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for Years 5 and 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2016, 23.1% of Year 3, 23% of Year 5 and 11.1% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 80%, or 6 of 7 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 3 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 77% of Year 3 students, 45% of Year 5 students, and 46% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement and for Years 5 and 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is within, and for Years 5 and 7, below the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 7% of Year 3, 7% of Year 5 and 14% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 25%, or 1 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 80%, or 4 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.