

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Hawthorndene 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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Catherine O'Dea, Review Principal.

School context

Hawthorndene Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 14kms south of the Adelaide CBD and is part of the Mitcham Hills Partnership. The enrolment is 347 students, up from 301 in 2010. The school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1121.

The school population includes three Aboriginal students, 4.3% (15) students with a disability, 5.5% of families eligible for School Card assistance, thirteen students of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background, and two children in care.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of her tenure at the school. The school has a Deputy Principal and a Coordinator in TfEL implementation. The partnership Senior Leader: Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) is based at the school. There are 17 (14.9 FTE) teachers, including 3 in the early years of their career, and 14 Step 9 teachers (including staff on leave).

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:

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

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

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

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Through this line of inquiry the panel explored to what degree student voice in the school is being activated and harnessed to accelerate learning improvement. Facilitating student input into all aspects of learning design, as well as regularly providing opportunities to genuinely shape their experiences at school, are powerful tools for improving student performance.

The panel found that Year 6/7 students are being empowered with knowledge of success criteria through the regular use of assessment rubrics. Students are involved in the development of these rubrics. They could talk to the panel about how the rubric assisted them in improving their work and reaching the standard. However, there was less evidence that in other sections of the school students are being empowered with understandings of success criteria. A point of development for the school is to ensure that all students understand how to be successful in learning tasks, and how to improve the standard of the work they are presenting.

Students told the panel that they are able to have a say in their learning and in the school, and gave the following examples: in some classes, students are asked for their opinions, in others, topic choices are offered, and class meetings are held.

The panel was impressed by the range and quality of ideas that students have about improving their school. These include the timings of recess and lunch, addressing issues with the electronic one-day-a-week lunch ordering system, provisions for recycling, and access to the library and its resources during break times. Students told the panel that class meetings are held in some classes, and in those classes, students are able to feed their ideas into the Student Action Team, which is the school's latest initiative to facilitate student voice. A point of development for the school is to fully harness student ideas from Reception to Year 7, and to collaboratively design learning opportunities with students around these ideas. For example, student views

about litter management issues, the provision of drinking fountains, and playground safety and improvement could be co-designed by teachers and students into inquiry units with resultant real actions in the school environment.

The school has worked with staff and students to develop an agreed list of *Powerful Learner Attributes* (PLAs). These are intended to foster a growth mindset in students, and to provide them with skills for self-talk and self-management of learning. The panel found evidence from teachers, students and parents that the PLAs are positively impacting on student social and emotional self-management for learning. A range of students talked to the panel about how they use the PLAs. These uses include internalising a range of strategies for what to do when “you don’t know what to do in your work”, planning and time-management in order to meet deadlines, self-talk when learning tasks seem overwhelming at first glance, and “giving things a go” even when it appears tasks are disliked or not of interest.

The panel explored ways in which teachers seek and apply feedback from students about the impact of their teaching. A few teachers were able to give the panel examples of how they use this form of student influence to shape learning design. These include use of a specific TfEL survey, asking students what they think the teacher thinks is important, and using ‘tweet’ cards for students to indicate things the teacher did that helped them in a lesson. However, most teachers did not understand the concept of seeking student feedback about their teaching, and confused it with providing opportunities for student self-reflection about learning.

Student Action Teams (SATs) have been initiated in the school. These teams are groups of students from Years 4 to 7 who have self-nominated and been elected to work on one of 5 significant areas for development in the school. These areas are: charity and fundraising, sustainability, sports, lunch time activities, and performing arts. The work of the SATs is well-resourced and supported by the school, and students are authentically able to implement actions as a result of the work that they do in these teams. An example of this is the success of the lunchtime Art Activities program, which is being facilitated by students.

The community as a whole values its children deeply, and there is a lot of volunteer time given to students by teachers and families in order to provide a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These are offered at lunchtimes, as well as out of school hours.

At the staff meeting, the panel conducted an audit of teacher views about student voice at the school using the DECD *Student Voice Audit – Action Tiles*. The staff rated the school as ‘developing’ or ‘embedded’ in 18 of 19 aspects of student voice that are identified in this audit tool. The panel findings did not support the level of this staff evaluation of the degree to which student voice is being activated and harnessed in the school. The panel concluded that whilst some teachers some of the time seek and authentically act on some student views, these practices are neither regular nor consistent across the school.

The school is well-placed to use the DECD *Student Voice Audit – Action Tiles*, or another robust process, to explore this issue more deeply with staff, asking evaluative questions such as ‘to what degree is this true’ and ‘what is the evidence for’ the conclusions that teachers are currently making about student voice. In this way, students’ level of involvement in their learning and the school can be strengthened.

Direction 1

Investigate and develop a shared understanding of whole-school agreements about protocols and practices, which genuinely make active and apply student voice to all aspects of learning and school life.

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

Through this line of inquiry, the panel explored to what degree the school is focused on improving the teaching that learners receive, and the learning they experience so that there are positive and sustained impacts on student learning outcomes and wellbeing. It is essential that the approach taken to the design of learning has core integrity and consistency between teachers to ensure that there is strong learning coherence for students regardless of the classroom in which they are being taught.

The leadership of the school has been re-shaped in the past 18 months. The priorities for the new Leadership Team have been to develop inquiry-based pedagogy, to foster teacher collaboration through the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), to address a curriculum imbalance between the arts and health and PE, to improve the provision of intervention for additional student needs, and to focus staff attention on

the quality and the use of internal spaces in the interests of improved pedagogy. This has meant some significant changes for staff. Leadership perception is that these changes have been difficult for some staff, however all groups of staff told the panel that they value the changes that are being made and can see their benefits. Teachers told the panel that they enjoy and value the challenges of working collaboratively, they appreciate the deepening professional support of colleagues, and they can see the results of their efforts in student learning and wellbeing.

Teachers shared with the panel that they are being supported by the school to improve their practice through increased resourcing and targeting of training and development, structured work in their PLCs, and aligned Performance and Development processes. It is important for school leadership to balance the amount of training and development being undertaken at any one time and to ensure that bringing the training into practice is thoughtfully linked to Performance and Development and the work of the PLC. Teachers stated that the support they are receiving through the Deputy Principal and SLLIP to implement changed practice is effective and beneficial. For example, teachers have been provided with help with planning, modelling and observational visits to other sites. This kind of support is moving into a coaching model and the panel suggests that coaching is a logical next step for the school.

While most teachers indicated agreement with the rate of change, some expressed a view that the rate of change has been too rapid. They feel they need more time to consolidate new learning, and to trial and embed it into practice. A point of development for the school is to consider ways that each teacher can be individually supported more through coaching practices in order to trial and embed improved pedagogy. Additionally, the difference between teams should be acknowledged and accommodated in the ways the work of the PLCs is being resourced.

Teachers have been supported closely by leadership to develop collaborative inquiry units of work. All teachers agreed that this has been a positive initiative, and they value the support provided for this by the school. Teachers told the panel that they recognise the value of inquiry learning to students. They list such benefits as enabling children to demonstrate more thinking and skills, to talk and discuss more deeply, and to contribute regardless of their levels of 'ability' (fluency). A next step for the school is now to share the units of inquiry that PLCs are developing across the school. Moreover, the design of the Inquiry Units needs to include ways of evaluating their effectiveness. This evaluation needs to be informed by the identification of targets for learning improvement to ensure that teachers develop intentionality in their improved practice, and keep improved student learning at the core of their improvement agenda. The panel found that all groups of teachers value the PLCs and have ideas about 'where to next' in the collaborative work that they are doing.

The panel found that most teachers are passionate about their work and have high levels of commitment to improved student learning outcomes. However, the panel found that, despite recent collaboration between teachers, there is a lack of consistency in the practice of teachers, including in literacy and numeracy. This is perhaps due to a lack of explicit focus in recent times on agreements about literacy and numeracy that were developed some time ago. Furthermore, the depth and quality of collaboration varies between teams. By developing or revisiting whole-school agreements about literacy and numeracy practice at the school, pedagogies will be made more consistent and learning more coherent for students.

The panel concluded that the school is underestimating the impact it is having on influencing teacher reflection about and change to teaching practice. All teachers are being positively impacted by the changes leaders are making to teacher development and support. Teachers are being influenced to work more collaboratively in order to enrich the learning landscape for students, and to improve the whole-school quality and consistency of pedagogy and the organisation of curriculum for teaching and learning. A next step for the school is to ensure that the focus for development and improvement is kept narrow and deep, in order to keep it manageable for teachers and to facilitate the embedding of new learning into practice. As well, by rationalising strategic improvement to practice with collaboratively negotiated, evidence-based student learning targets, all teachers will develop skills not only in quality learning design, but also in the evaluation of the effectiveness of their teaching.

Direction 2

Continue to deepen and sharpen the improvement focus to ensure commitment from and support for all staff and use an evidence base of student learning to inform and implement change.

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

Through this line of inquiry, the panel explored teachers' conceptualisations about intellectual stretch and challenge that are informing their current practice. The panel also explored teachers' use of an evidence base to track the learning growth of all students, in order to ensure improvement of engagement and intellectual stretch, as well as differentiation of practices to continuously develop student fluency in literacy and numeracy.

The panel spoke to teachers in teams. There is a team of teachers in the early years who demonstrated to the panel that they have a clear concept of intellectual stretch as being a quality of learning design for all students all the time. These teachers spoke about how challenging it is to set up inquiry opportunities for students, but that the more it is done, the more skilled teachers become. They said that the value of the inquiry work to students was so apparent that they are experimenting with ways to apply inquiry principles to more literacy and numeracy practices. Teachers said that by making learning 'real-life' and connecting it to their experiences, children are able to think and wonder more in their learning. Providing higher challenge for the most able students is what they find most challenging, but doing so provides great insight into the capabilities of these and all children.

The degree to which students have shifted from compliance in task completion to engagement in learning has been an area of attention by the school. The panel found that the Year 6/7 students are significantly empowered and engaged in their learning. These students told the panel that they value group work as it enables them to work at something and to make it even better. These students regularly use rubrics to assess their own and each other's learning and referred to rubrics as useful to them in determining how to produce work of a higher standard. The 'brain growing work' that is regularly offered to these students is highly valued and they enjoy 'having a go' at a 'big, hard problem' and then collaboratively reflecting on their strategies. Parents supported the view that their children in these classes are highly engaged and enthusiastic about learning this year, and teachers rated highly in the student voice audit the category of students as advocates for 21st Century learning.

Despite this evidence from some students and some teachers, the panel found that the depth of understanding about intellectual stretch is not consistent across the school. Some teachers see it as for brighter students only, and some see that it is best managed through extension tasks (from a higher year level) or through the provision of extra-curricular opportunities. It is important for the school to come together and discuss and reach a common agreement about intellectual stretch and to apply this understanding to all learning design, consistently and regularly.

The panel concluded that there is strong collective capability in both the understanding of engagement and intellectual challenge in learning, and in the application of such understanding in practice. However, the panel found that there is a lack of consistency between teachers in such knowledge and skills, and that not all students are being optimally engaged and challenged. In a school with overall high levels of student fluency in literacy and numeracy, it is critical for the improvement of student achievement growth and equity, that engagement and challenge are deeply understood and consistently acted upon.

Direction 3

Develop a common understanding of student engagement and intellectual challenge across the whole school, and protocols for pedagogical application of this understanding.

All teachers could identify some uses of data in their learning design, however, the panel found that there is a significant lack of consistency in data collection across the school. There have been previous, whole-school agreements, however, these are no longer complied with by all teachers.

The whole-school tracking of student learning growth has been greatly strengthened by the implementation of the data management system *ImproMation*. Teachers told the panel that they are more frequently using this system to access data in order to differentiate their teaching. It is important for the school to work with staff to develop a whole-school assessment map to strengthen the evidence-base for improvement at the school.

The school has strengthened its processes for intervention. It has used whole-school student achievement data tracking to profile students with additional needs in each class. This information has been made accessible to specialist, TRT and classroom teachers, and has facilitated improved differentiation and provision for additional needs. As well, SSO support for additional needs has been more equitably distributed across the school. A point of development now for the work of the PLCs is to utilise student learning data when designing units of work. This will deepen the data literacy of teachers, as well as provide more intellectual stretch for students. The school must support teachers to regularly and systematically analyse and interrogate data in order to identify

actions needed to support individuals and groups within classes. This will enable teachers to give more explicit direction to the SSOs who are allocated to provide support for additional learning needs, and ensure teachers take responsibility for the programming for special needs support.

SSOs would benefit from continued upskilling in strategies for student support. It is important that all teachers are supported to understand that programming for the additional support needs of students is the responsibility of the teacher, not ancillary staff members. SSOs can be supported over time to develop a skillbase in how to effectively relate to and work with students with additional needs. SSOs who are employed to support students need to meet together regularly with the leader in charge of Special Needs and Behaviour Management to ensure regular communication and training delivery. The school also needs to further fine-tune the timetabling of SSO support.

The panel concluded that the school has acted decisively to collect, manage and present data to enable teachers and leaders to engage in regular dialogue. Additionally, data is being increasingly used to inform school improvement and differentiation of practice. Data is now being used especially effectively to identify and represent the additional needs of students. The next step for the school is to bring the application of data even closer to the work of teachers to strengthen differentiation and the explicitness of the provisions teachers are making for identified additional student needs.

Direction 4

Develop whole-school agreements about practices which ensure all students are engaged in quality differentiated learning at all times.

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 Hawthorndene Primary School.

Various strategies are used to enable families to be involved as partners in their child's learning. The panel found that parents are strongly connected to the school. Parents view themselves as partners with teachers and students in the interests of quality learning for all students. A series of Governing Council sub-committees strongly support the ongoing development and provision of services for the school. These include a sports committee, which ensures a wide range of SAPSASA and after school sports are available, a grounds committee, which runs regular working bees to maintain and improve the beautiful school environment, and an OSHC committee, which manages the quality OSHC program that is available to families. Parents support each other in the school community and there are strong links through families to the broader community, including local business. The educational and social capital that exists in the school through this positive, energetic and democratic parent commitment to the school is contributing greatly to the learning and wellbeing of past, present and future students.

Resources are strategically deployed and aligned to support the achievement of the Site Improvement Plan outcomes. A priority for improvement and change in the school is focusing staff attention on the quality and use of internal spaces in the interests of improved pedagogy. In order to support this, school leadership has prioritised an internal refurbishment of the school. This is contributing significantly to the development of teaching capacity. As teachers reflect on their practice and embed strategies for 21st Century learning, they are able to improve the physical appearance and structures of their classrooms and adjoining break-out spaces to better match the different ways of working that are becoming increasingly practised. This attention to the way the school looks and is set up is contributing positively to the changing pedagogical culture. Students are better able to collaborate, investigate, use ICT, and be active in their learning. Clutter has been significantly reduced and space is being used more optimally.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Hawthorndene Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. 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. Investigate and develop a shared understanding of whole-school agreements about protocols and practices, which genuinely make active and apply student voice to all aspects of learning and school life.
2. Continue to deepen and sharpen the improvement focus to ensure commitment from and support for all staff and use an evidence base of student learning to inform and implement change.
3. Develop a common understanding of student engagement and intellectual challenge across the whole school, and protocols for pedagogical application of this understanding.
4. Develop whole-school agreements about practices which ensure all students are engaged in quality differentiated learning at all times.

Based on the school's current performance, Hawthorndene 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.

Diane Winterling
PRINCIPAL
HAWTHORNDENE 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 Hawthorndene Primary 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 92.6%.

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 98% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in both Years 1 and 2. From 2014, the trend for Year 2 has been upwards, from 91% in 2014 to 98% in 2016.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 93% of Year 3 students, 89% of Year 5 students and 87% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2016 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools. For Year 7 Reading, the school achieved above the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 67% of Year 3, 72% of Year 5 and 40% 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 Year 5, there is an improvement from 34% in 2014 to 72% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 85%, or 23 of 27 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 61%, or 14 of 23 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 79% of Year 3 students, 94% of Year 5 students, and 89% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been downwards, from 92% in 2014 to 79% in 2016. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 85% in 2014 to 94% in 2016.

In 2016 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within, and for Year 5, above the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2014 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 42% of Year 3, 42% of Year 5 and 31% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been downwards, from 69% in 2014 to 42% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 57%, or 13 of 23 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 71%, or 10 of 14 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.