

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Heathfield Primary School

Conducted in February 2021



Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

The purpose of the External School Review (ESR) is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in government schools.

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

This report outlines aspects of the school's performance verified through the review process according to the framework. It does not document every aspect of the school's processes, programs and outcomes.

We acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Conradi, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Heathfield Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7 in the Adelaide Hills. It is situated approximately 19kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 127. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 63. The local partnership is Mount Lofty.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1084 and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 6 Aboriginal students, 4% students with disabilities, 9% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 13.25% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their first year of tenure.

There are 11 Teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 4 Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Effectively monitor the growth of student achievement against the DECD SEA by translating the targets and stanines in the School Improvement Plan from percentages to scores
- Direction 2** Implement procedures to collect, collate and analyse A to E grades to help monitor individual student growth, inform future planning and support moderation at the classroom and school level.
- Direction 3** Ensure that teachers work with students to develop a deeper understanding of their learning dispositions so they can articulate their next learning steps and develop higher expectations of their learning.
- Direction 4** Support improved learning outcomes for students with complex learning needs by reviewing the current support and determining whether alternative learning support programs may be more effective.

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
<p>Direction 1 The newly appointed principal has indicated that due to many recent leadership changes, whole-school monitoring of data across cohorts in 2019/2020 was limited. Analysis of achievement data and effective tracking of student progress is an area the school has been working on recently.</p>
<p>Direction 2 Whole-school and class moderation of student learning tasks has not been a focus for the school previously. A-E grades continue to be a focus for the school.</p>
<p>Direction 3 There still exists wide variance about what constitutes high expectations and challenging learning. The panel established that students continue to be satisfied with just completing tasks and have limited understanding of their next steps in learning.</p>
<p>Direction 4 The school has identified a variety of intervention programs to implement including the Multi-sensory Literacy support program that operates for students from R-7.</p>

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school critically evaluate current curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice to determine challenges of practice?

The school has identified improvement goals in literacy and numeracy through the analysis of historical student achievement data. When identifying the most appropriate challenges of practice and associated actions, the opportunity to collaboratively evaluate current pedagogical practices were not considered. Omitting this important step has reduced the effectiveness of the improvement process. As a result, the school improvement plan it is not driving expected outcomes in the goal areas.

There are differing views amongst staff on how to use and analyse student achievement data to determine and drive improvement. Currently, the type and quality of student assessments varies, with teachers having autonomy for collecting, evaluating and tracking of students in their own class. This data, while assisting teachers with planning and programming, has limited whole-school strategic purpose. The introduction of consistent assessments practices combined with whole-school collaborative analysis will provide valuable strategic information on student progress and school improvement.

Whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements are drivers of quality teaching and learning. Teachers indicated that the current documents are in need of review. They will need to include a focus on evidence-based pedagogical practices with clear expectations and an R-7 sequence of learning.

With recent stability in leadership, there is an opportunity to bring about consistency of practice and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and improved student achievement. All staff have indicated that they are looking forward to working collaboratively to improve outcomes for students.

A strategically developed SIP is the key to whole-school improvement. Processes that enhance understanding, collaboration, collective ownership, commitment and accountability are critical. The department's school improvement planning handbook will guide the school through the process of identifying those practices that impact significantly on building teacher capacity and improving outcomes for all students.

Direction 1 **Collectively and collaboratively develop and implement a congruent school improvement plan by using the recommended process outlined in the department's handbook for school improvement.**

Conditions for effective student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

A play-based learning approach is currently being introduced in the early years. The engagement and challenge experienced by students is providing high levels of success in their learning and personal development.

The school has focused on improving phonics in the early years through explicit teaching and effective evidence-based pedagogies. As a result, students are experiencing improved achievement and success in reading.

Learning intentions and success criteria rubrics are used effectively in the year 6/7 class with students indicating a clear understanding of the required and extended learning. However, there is variability across the school in their effective inclusion in the learning process. A clear focus on progressions in learning and success criteria will guide the teaching and learning. It will assist teachers in identifying the most appropriate learning tasks to achieve the expected outcomes.

The panel observed quality differentiated learning design that challenges and engages individual students in some classes. In other classes, differentiation of learning task occurs mainly at the composite year level and predominantly by outcome. The individual learning needs of all students needs to be considered when designing the learning.

Students have limited understanding of their progress in learning and what their next steps are likely to be, particularly in literacy. Opportunities to receive formative feedback and to analyse, discuss and reflect on their achievement will enable them to understand how they are going in their learning and what they need to focus on to improve. This will enable the development of specific and effective student goals with focused attention on the next steps in learning and individual student improvement.

An opportunity exists for the school to audit the consistency of high-impact teaching strategies and current pedagogical practices across the school with the view of improving engagement and challenge through wave 1 teaching. This has potential to provide the highest lift in achievement, and assist in decreasing the reliance on wave 2 intervention programs.

Direction 2 Build the capacity of teachers to improve student achievement through a whole-school focus on explicit teaching and differentiated learning.

Effective leadership

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes in building teacher capacity?

In the absence of a formal process for professional learning, teachers have been supporting each other through an informal support network. Despite this, teachers tend to operate in relative isolation with limited opportunities to share, observe or collaborate professionally.

Recent re-engagement of professional learning opportunities with local partnership schools has been welcomed by staff. New professional learning has been implemented in most classes with class libraries and reading being the latest focus.

The introduction of school-based professional learning communities (PLC) will provide staff with the opportunity to engage collaboratively around identified school improvement initiatives. PLCs will further assist in building teacher capacity and promoting consistency of practice.

The collaborative development of a formal observation process will provide teachers with feedback on their classroom performance, build their capacity and assist the school in monitoring the impact of whole-school initiatives. The staff have identified this as an area for development in 2021 in a recent survey.

Mentoring of early career teachers is a critical component of the induction of new teachers into the profession. It makes the necessary connections between theory and practice and supports their professional and personal growth. The school will need to urgently develop a retrospective induction process that is tailored to the individual learning needs of current early career teachers. Moving forward, the school will need to develop a formal process that ensures all new and early career teachers are effectively supported.

The reintroduction of PDPs for all staff and strategic use of the department's PDP template will focus the development on SIP initiatives and student learning. This process works best when the identified goals, actions and targets are linked to the challenges of practice and are monitored frequently with constructive feedback provided.

Coaching and mentoring are effective drivers in building teacher capacity, particularly for the early career teachers. Refining the role of the newly appointed literacy coordinator to include coaching and mentoring would be strategic.

The school has a number of experienced and skilled teachers. It may be useful to consider capitalising on individual staff skill sets to lead areas of identified school improvement.

Direction 3 **Build the capacity of teachers through the development of a whole-school collaborative approach to professional learning that includes mentoring and coaching, formal observation and sharing of pedagogical practices.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Stability in leadership will provide the opportunity to bring about consistency of practice and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and student achievement. All staff are poised for the improvement journey to begin and are looking forward to working collaboratively to improve outcomes for students.

Introducing the most effective professional development processes will be critical to the school's improvement journey. The school will need to be strategic and collaborative in identifying the most appropriate professional learning processes that will have the potential to provide the biggest improvement.

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

- Direction 1** **Collectively and collaboratively develop and implement a congruent school improvement plan by using the recommended process outlined in the department's handbook for school improvement.**
- Direction 2** **Build the capacity of teachers to improve student achievement through a whole-school focus on explicit teaching and differentiated learning.**
- Direction 3** **Build the capacity of teachers through the development of a whole-school collaborative approach to professional learning that includes mentoring and coaching, formal observation and sharing of pedagogical practices.**

Based on the school's current performance, Heathfield Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

School performance overview

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

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019 79% of year 1 and 75% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students and 87% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 this result represents a decline and for year 5 and 7 little or no improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 55% of year 3, 58% of year 5 and 43% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline and for year 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100% or 5 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 68% or 6 out of 9 students from year 5 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students and 96% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 7 this result represents an improvement and for year 5, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 75% to 96%.

For 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 59% of year 3, 25% of year 5 and 44% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50% or 2 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 75% or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.