

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR TRURO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in November 2016



**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.

This External School Review was conducted by June Goode Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Beth Walsh, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Truro 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 2015 was 94.6%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Truro Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 74kms east of the Adelaide CBD. The current enrolment is 41, averaging 44 students between 2011 and 2016. Whilst school enrolments are fluctuating, the Play Centre enrolments are increasing. The school has an ICSEA score of 955, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6 students with disabilities, and 5 families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 5th year of her 1st tenure at this school. The Principal has a 0.4FTE teaching load. There are 1.6FTE permanent teachers and a 0.7FTE contract teacher. The teaching staff are supported by 3 support staff totalling 56.25 hours. A Pastoral Care Worker works at the school for 1.5 days per week.

School Performance Overview

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

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Truro Primary School over the years 2011 to 2015. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2011 and 2015, 10 of 27 (37%) Year 1 and 13 of 25 (52%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Between 2011 and 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, show 13 of 22 (59%) Year 3 students, 25 of 33 (76%) Year 5 students, and 21 of 30 (70%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For 2011 to 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

Between 2011 and 2015, 5 of 22 (23%) Year 3, 4 of 33 (12%) Year 5, and 3 of 30 (10%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For 2011 to 2015, 1 of 6 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 to 5. Since 2011, no student has remained in the upper bands from Year 3 to 7.

Numeracy

Between 2011 and 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, show 16 of 21 (76%) Year 3 students, 21 of 33 (64%) Year 5 students, and 22 of 30 (73%) Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For 2011 to 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is generally achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2011 and 2016, 5 of 21 (24%) Year 3, 3 of 33 (9%) Year 5, and 3 of 30 (10%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For 2011 to 2015, 3 of 4 Year 3 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Effective Leadership: To what extent is professional learning implemented into practice?

Effective Teaching: To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Student Learning: How effectively does the feedback provided to students support and motivate them in their learning?

To what extent is professional learning implemented into practice?

Evidence was presented by the Principal, staff and the Governing Council members that confirmed the school's effectiveness in undertaking regular and comprehensive self-review. Due to low enrolments, the impact and effectiveness of professional learning and monitoring of student achievement is determined through site-based assessments using a range of datasets and triangulated with demographic, perception and process data.

Decision-making is based on evidence of the ongoing analysis to target future directions and professional learning. The Principal positioned the school as one with a deliberate and strategic improvement agenda to improve student achievement and build teacher capacity.

Parents shared positive feedback on the school priorities and the impact that staff professional learning has had on their children's education. They clearly articulated their understanding of Growth Mindset, maths and authentic learning, and shared their appreciation of the collaborative work being undertaken by staff to support and challenge student learning.

The Principal shared in her presentation the 'journey to excellence' over the past 5 years, including the reasons and evidence for targeting whole-school professional learning. The data was the catalyst used as motivation to collectively engage staff in the purpose of building shared school-wide approaches.

The facilitation of improvement and change requires strong leadership with a clear understanding and vision to build capacity with a focus on evidence-based results. Throughout the review, evidence was provided by all stakeholders who clearly articulated the difference the school is making to improve student achievement at and above the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Since 2012, the school has been on an intensive shift to focus on student growth and learning for all. As a result of low numbers achieving National Minimal Standards (NMS), a focus on improving consistency and moderation of Running Records has enabled an authentic whole-school picture of the progress being made by every student. A wide range of professional learning has been undertaken by staff since 2012. Strengthening teacher capacity and accountability following professional learning has resulted in increases in student achievement in both reading and numeracy. Students shared their high level of interpersonal

skills and use of technical language to describe their learning and their next steps in learning.

The Review Panel was interested in finding out the impact of Natural Maths. Maths was identified by students as the most popular learning area. Students commented: “maths is so much fun now”, “I like to problem-solve; our teacher puts up a problem, and then we have to work it out”, “sometimes she helps, but most times she asks another question”, and “sometimes my brain feels like it’s going to explode, but it feels so good when I work it out by myself”. Natural Maths was also identified by staff as the professional learning that has had the greatest impact across the site.

Staff shared their appreciation of scheduled performance development meetings each term. They highly regarded these as opportunities to reflect on class and individual data and programming, celebrate success and have time to debrief. The level of accountability and expectation was evident in documentation and conversations with staff. Staff also spoke about the recent whole-staff performance meeting. Whilst there were varying levels of anxiety, the result of sharing with colleagues was powerful in authenticating consistency in implementing whole-school approaches.

The Principal shared the need to ensure 2016 was a year to Reflect, Review and Refresh, following the extensive professional learning since 2012.

The Review Panel concluded the purpose of the range of professional learning was crucial to ensure staff strategically developed the skills to build teacher capacity and consistency in approaches across the school. Essential to this will be ensuring that induction processes are in place to support the transition for new staff into the whole-school approaches that need to be adopted and monitored.

Direction 1

Prioritise professional learning that has had the greatest impact to sustain consistent pedagogies and application across the school.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

The school has put in considerable deliberate, planned and passionate effort since 2012 in building a culture centred on improving student learning. An analysis of data identified the low levels of reading across the school. Together, staff determined the need to improve literacy skills across the curriculum. To support improvement in maths, staff engaged in Natural Maths, in particular, problematized situations, which staff are connecting to relevant life experiences. Many students informed the panel how their teacher shares what she is thinking when solving a problem: “sometimes the teacher tells us what she is thinking and how to solve a problem”, “we are learning how to find the problem in the words”, “we practise asking questions to help solve problems”, and “she gives us time to think and work through it ourselves”.

The structure of three classes in the morning has enabled a focus on specific literacy and numeracy learning. In the afternoon, students are combined into two classes, which provides for NIT as opportunities for staff to teach in an area of strength or interest.

Parents explained that since 2012 the school culture has changed to one with a focus on improving and engaging students in learning. They shared how staff are providing additional support if their child is behind and how students are extended in their learning. One parent commented: “it may be a small school, but there is quality teaching that happens here”.

All staff spoke of the high expectations for students and the use of goal-setting in supporting student growth and academic achievement. Students clearly articulated the purpose of goal-setting and how the teacher uses their personal goals to support and extend individual learning. Information on the impact of Growth Mindset came voluntarily through conversations with students as they shared their understanding of the difference between fixed and growth mindsets: “there are times when I want to give up, that’s a fixed mindset, but then in my head, I say, ‘you can do it, don’t give up’, that’s growth mindset”, and “it doesn’t work all the time, but most times it does”. The majority of parent comments reflected how their children use the Growth Mindset language at home.

A component of the Principal's teaching load is modelling and sharing her knowledge of authentic teaching and learning. Using perception data from students in a survey prior to planning provided her evidence on what students are thinking about their learning and how they like to learn.

Through a thematic approach in authentic learning, students are immersed in learning experiences ranging from experimentation to real-life problem-solving. Students' responses to this learning were positive; they enjoyed the hands-on approach and the challenge through the levels of questioning. The Principal shared the high levels of engagement and uptake by students in relation to this approach. The planning and programming is extensive, catering for the individual needs of all students.

The Review Panel sighted and heard evidence of the general capabilities being implemented to empower students to use critical thinking, whilst personal and social capabilities are being developed in integrated and authentic learning.

Whole-school tracking of student achievement is done through putting the faces on the data and this is frequently updated as new data comes in. Staff verified the use and value of collecting and analysing data as significant in supporting planning processes and programming. A future strategy to raise student achievement will be to engage students in using their personalised data to develop learning goals.

Staff shared how differentiation is providing support and challenge to student learning, where intervention programs for identified students are planned by teachers who then share and collaborate with support staff. Support staff described times when the teacher will work with identified students whilst they support the remainder of the class.

The Review Panel could not verify the extent of student voice in learning, although some students described teachers sharing the purpose for learning and how, at times, they are provided with choice about ways to demonstrate their learning.

Direction 2

Increase the level of student voice and choice in learning opportunities to motivate and increase academic achievement.

How effectively does the feedback provided to students support and motivate them in their learning?

Building resilience was identified through the AEDC data as an area of concern. Therefore, it will be imperative that students understand the purpose of feedback and the difference between feedback to challenge and stretch, versus praise, such as, 'great' and 'good effort', that make students feel good about themselves. The balance between praise and feedback does need to be considered. Praise supports the building of relationships and, initially, confidence. However, as in all learning, there needs to be the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to students owning their learning, with increased emphasis on feedback focused on the task and next steps, to motivate learning.

In student work samples, the panel noted praise being used, such as 'good work' and 'well done', as well as other forms of feedback through extrinsic methods, such as stickers in books. There was minimal evidence of purposeful feedback, which would provide next steps for the student to move forward. The challenge for staff will be to move away from low level, comfortable praise, to strategic feedback which stretches student learning.

The panel investigated student perception about how they were going in their learning. Comments ranged from "not too bad" to "good". When asked "how do you know?" comments reflected a low level of understanding: "I get lots of ticks on my page", "stickers", and "the teacher tells me".

Students were then asked *what they could do to improve their learning*. The majority of students shared learning behaviours or work ethic, rather than strategies to improve learning. They spoke of "trying harder", "listening to the teacher", "following instructions", and "concentrating more". One student had a specific strategy for improvement: "I'm aiming to improve my writing by using more descriptive words".

When the panel asked students what grade they received in the mid-year report, they commented that they didn't receive grades, and explained the equivalent terminology that is being used. Greater emphasis needs to be given to students knowing how they are progressing with their learning. Success criteria

aligned to A-E grades need to incorporate both teacher and student voice in determining indicators of success. Engaging students in adding their voice to the development of success criteria for learning will provide them with knowledge of where they currently are and then what they can do to reach higher levels of achievement. The question of “where to next?” will support students in going from compliance and doing okay to stretch, engagement and motivation for learning.

Due to the school’s low enrolments, moderation can be challenging. Networking with other schools in the Barossa Partnership will be useful in moving towards consistency across the school.

With feedback being critical to improving student achievement, it will be important that staff have a common understanding of how and when to use feedback. Collaborative sharing and classroom observations of feedback being enacted will assist all staff to understand how to use feedback effectively in the learning process.

Direction 3

Increase the engagement of staff and students in the use of authentic and formative feedback (staff-to-staff, student-to-staff, staff-to-student and student-to-student) to develop understanding and purpose in learning and to enhance learning outcomes.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Truro Primary School has developed a positive culture of improvement characterised by high expectations for students and purposeful self-review processes.

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

1. Prioritise professional learning that has had the greatest impact to sustain consistent pedagogies and application across the school.
2. Increase the level of student voice and choice in learning opportunities to motivate and increase academic achievement.
3. Increase the engagement of staff and students in the use of authentic and formative feedback (staff-to-staff, student-to-staff, staff-to-student and student-to-student) to develop understanding and purpose in learning and to enhance learning outcomes.

Based on the school's current performance, Truro Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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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.



Di Robertson
PRINCIPAL
TRURO PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson