

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR GREENOCK 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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Peter Reid, 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 Greenock 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:

Part 1 Governance: Item 3

Collaborative engagement in site improvement planning and self-review processes is under development.

Part 5 Safety: Items 1, 2 and 5

Updated training sessions about protective practices will be provided for parent volunteers in 2017.

The Cyber Safety Policy is under development.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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's average attendance rate to date for 2016 is 95.6%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Greenock Primary School is located in a small town on the north-west edge of the Barossa Valley, 66 kilometres north of Adelaide. The school has an ICSEA score of 1021, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

There are currently 99 students at the school allocated to one of four composite classes: Reception/Year 1, Year 2/3, Year 4/5 and Year 6/7. The school population includes 10% students with disabilities. There are no Aboriginal students and no students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) attending the school. Ten percent of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

Enrolment numbers are stable and expected to remain that way. Families send their children to the school from not only the local township and rural surroundings, but also from farther afield. Recent demographic data (2014) indicates that 50% of students live less than 2 kilometres from the school, while 36% live greater than 5-10 kilometres away.

Leadership consists of the Principal, who is in the 4th year of her five-year tenure.

The school is an active member of the DECD local Barossa Partnership.

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, 64% (9 of 14) of Year 1 students and 71% (5 of 7) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). These results are an improvement from the historic baseline average at Year 2.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of Year 3 students, 79% of Year 5 students, and 82% 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, and for Year 5, there is an upward trend from 64% in 2014 to 79% in 2016.

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

In 2016, 40% (6 of 15) of Year 3 students, 14% (2 of 14) of Year 5 students, and 27% (3 of 11) 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 those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or one of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 50%, or one of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average at Year 5 and little or no change at Year 7.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of Year 3 students, 86% of Year 5 students, and 64% 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 7, the result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, while at Year 5 there is little change.

For 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of students with similar characteristics from across the DECD system. At Years 5 and 7, the results are within the range of similar schools.

In 2016, 20% (3 of 15) of Year 3 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline. In 2016, no students in Year 5 or 7 achieved in the top two bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, no students in Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 or 7 in 2016. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average at Year 5.

Summary

The Review Panel's analysis of these results points to three priorities that can act as a catalyst for ongoing improvement at the school:

- higher outcomes in the early years in reading need to be consistently sustained to ensure all students are on track towards the SEA;
- the gains made by the current Year 3 students in three out of the four NAPLAN measures need to be retained from one year to the next;
- and the number of students achieving at higher levels, especially in numeracy, needs to increase.

The school's current improvement agenda shows recognition of these targets, with its focus on strengthening numeracy and literacy pedagogy. Within this process, the school has identified a significant change priority to empower students as learners by providing challenging tasks and by supporting them to achieve their learning goals. The lines of inquiry for this review explored the impact of this work.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process?

Effective Teaching: To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

Effective Leadership: To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process?

The structure of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) at Greenock Primary School includes an extensive set of targets, strategies and evaluation measures. Significantly, the measures aim to monitor progress towards achievement of the SIP targets and the effectiveness of the strategies. The plan is rightly focused on what the school wants to see happening consistently in every classroom to ensure that students are developing the capabilities required to achieve at and beyond the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

To identify strategic approaches, all staff had participated in a number of self-review processes during 2015 about the extent to which a set of identified evidence-based practices were used in their classrooms. The Principal reported that the outcome of the audit tools used had indicated a number of areas for improvement.

Subsequently, using the Leading Numeracy Improvement (DECD) processes, staff pinpointed three change strategies to implement in their numeracy/mathematics program: identify learning goals with students, provide challenging tasks for students, and use digital technology to connect learning with real contexts.

One line of inquiry explored during the review, therefore, considered to what extent students are able to influence their own learning. Staff reported that this year they had been trialling and testing-out various approaches to increase engagement and challenge for students. Generally, this included examples such as: making learning focus areas explicit at the start of some units of work; using video for self-assessment and feedback; and using individual term-by-term goals for reading, mathematics and yard play.

When students were asked how they knew how well they were going, or about how much progress they were making in their learning, they responded with the following examples: "I try my best", "I get an A to E grade", "we get stickers", or "10 out of 10". When talking about what sort of feedback they received, their comments included: "teacher says it's great or very good", "use more descriptive words" or "I get to share my work with another class". Younger students knew they had improved when they go up a level in their reading "after they answer four questions about a book". In classroom walkthroughs some students talked about the learning focus the class was working on while others were not yet able to do so.

While all students could talk confidently about how much they liked their school, they were less clear when describing the opportunities they had to become aware of how they best learn, what standard they were working towards, or how they could influence their learning. Some said they found the work easy, while others did not see themselves as being challenged. When asked about how they identified and set goals for themselves, a range of responses was received, including some students saying they had class goals, others knowing what their next reading level was, and one group saying they received a form to fill in and stick on their desk.

Largely, when students spoke about opportunities to set and use learning goals, the Review Panel found that there was limited and/or uneven use of such strategies within and across classes.

At a meeting of staff during the review, the panel gained additional evidence by observing a process whereby staff used a set of cards to categorise the extent to which a range of possible 'student voice' strategies was activated across the school. Albeit the time was short, the staff productively engaged in the task with discussions revealing respect and trust to explore, challenge and try new strategies.

The school needs to now activate their intentions to develop powerful learners by ensuring that all students are engaging in strategies that expect and support them to influence the outcomes of their own learning and life at school. As all students increasingly know and understand the learning intentions, set relevant targets and goals and learn how to give and use feedback about their progress, the students will be well-supported and even better placed to develop the skills required of 21st Century learners.

The Site Improvement Plan priority to develop 'persistence, confidence and problem-solving skills' in students so they can engage in 'productive struggle' (initially in mathematics) must remain on the school's improvement agenda. This focus, alongside the continuous process of developing growth mindsets, is crucial to maximizing and sustaining success for all students from Reception to Year 7.

Direction 1

Systematically enable all students to achieve at higher levels by using a range of strategies to support them in engaging in 'productive struggle' and using feedback as part of the teaching and learning process.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The Review Panel heard that over the past few years the Principal and staff have worked collaboratively to establish and develop a positive focus on the use of assessment data. This work has built the school's capacity to collect and analyse information related to student achievement to guide decision-making at the individual, class and school level. The Principal was pleased to report that, as a result of the focused effort, the school has made significant moves, from having no longitudinal data, to now having spreadsheets for tracking growth, a systemic collection and reporting process, and a whole-school electronic data management system.

A 'Monitoring Student Achievement Action Plan' is now used to guide this work.

The Principal was able to share a process she had led recently with staff to correlate multiple measures of data ('the green sheets'), to enable teachers to place the most recent achievement of each student within concentric circles aligned against the SEA and the coding used in the school's Scorelink system. The visual impact of assessment information depicted in this way would certainly give each teacher and team a starting point for disciplined dialogue discussion about planning and instruction, and is verified by the Review Panel as an innovative and effective process to support self-review.

Staff reported that this year they were looking to further develop their data literacy skills, and were at a point of knowing what assessment information is most accessible and useful – "the most diagnostic is the most useful". This criterion is endorsed by the Review Panel because diagnostic and, in fact, all formative assessment processes, point teachers to the response required to move students from their starting point to their next step towards the target, goal or standard. One group of teachers shared a process they had recently designed "to frame the analysis of the data in a way that is most useful for us" in which they had analysed their NAPLAN numeracy results by aligning the question items with the Australian Curriculum. This information will, in turn, allow them to highlight the needs of the class, and individuals and groups within the class, and plan the next mathematics overview with this information in mind.

The staff at the school are, however, aware that knowing the database alone is not central to learning improvement. They have spent a considerable length of time developing teaching agreements to ensure they use evidence-based approaches for planning, formative assessment and instructional practice. For example, to make shared expectations explicit, the school has recently completed the development and documentation of their Literacy Agreement and their Mathematics Agreement. Both agreements are comprehensive and guide and support teachers in their work to ensure all students achieve their 'personal best':

- The Mathematics Agreement is based on the Australian Curriculum and the use of eight effective practices to move students from surface-to-deep-to-transfer learning. This agreement also makes explicit matters related to intervention, assessment and the agreed lesson structure.
- The Literacy Agreement covers the whole range of skills and knowledge required to develop oral language, reading, vocabulary, and writing proficiency. It also includes scope and sequence tables, genre maps, intervention strategies, and a statement about literacy across the curriculum.

The implementation of both agreements is supported in the SIP with annual strategies.

Teachers said they are designing and implementing their programs from the agreements, but mostly in isolation from each other. They said that although the workload was increasing, they did like the changes, and were positive about the opportunities they had to share their work informally and in staff meetings.

To engender a shared accountability for implementation of agreements, the Review Panel found that the Principal and other staff would do well to formalise a strategic use of collaborative structures. For example, use of norms for team work, provision of time for regular collaborative planning, rostered and focused peer observation, and sharing of ways to incorporate student voice. As a small school, it is particularly important to have collective responsibility for joint action, which will be beneficial when focusing and sustaining an agile improvement cycle that is planned, time-bound and results-oriented.

Direction 2

Develop shared accountability for the implementation of school agreements by establishing structures and processes for teachers to plan and evaluate collaboratively.

In the near future and over time, the information included in these new agreements will need to be communicated appropriately by teachers to the parents across the school. The Review Panel expects that this clarity will be well-received. All parents who were interviewed valued the effective relationships they have with teachers, any regular communication about what is happening at school and, especially, information about how well their child is progressing in their learning and what they could do at home to help. The school's tradition of all staff coming to the central playground area at school dismissal time was appreciated, because parents see the teachers as accessible, and it allows for informal catch-up and an opportunity to make appointments, as required, about student progress and/or curriculum matters.

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

The Principal at Greenock Primary School has encouraged teachers to be reflective practitioners, to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to guide their annual performance and development planning, and the SIP to support their professional learning to meet needs at a whole-school level.

At the time of the on-site visit, all teachers had recently asked their students to complete the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) teacher feedback surveys. While the surveys had not yet been shared to identify patterns, the collated responses were tabled with the Review Panel as evidence of work in progress. This information will provide staff with insight to influence their practices and ongoing professional learning.

The Review Panel heard from teachers that across the Barossa Partnership, all staff have recently been involved in professional learning meetings once per term about how to design and deliver challenging mathematics tasks for students from Reception to Year 7. Class and specialist teachers have recently looked at ways to 'transform tasks' to be open-ended with multiple entry and exit points. With the thinking required to do this, as a small staff teaching composite classes, teachers have found it useful to also use staff meeting time to help each other develop new know-how.

Opportunities for moderation of teacher judgements with other small schools was highly valued by staff as both just-in-time and regular professional learning. Teachers said that working with their colleagues from other schools who have the same or similar small cohorts or multi-age classes, assists not only with planning, but also with moderating assessment tasks and making assessment judgements.

One teacher said that prior to having this opportunity, "we thought we were doing OK, but we had no comparison to make". The Principal also reported how much she valued the opportunity to network with

other leaders from small schools and with those with similar school improvement agendas.

The Review Panel endorses the staff engagement in this aspect of school effectiveness. The Principal may wish to draw guidance from the External School Review Framework's indicators, as these relate to the following direction for improvement.

Direction 3

Build teacher and leadership capacity across the school by engaging in professional learning processes that enable staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their practices and evaluate their impact on learning.

Indirectly emerging from this aspect of the review was evidence from parents that they too are interested in school improvement. The Governing Council actively participated in the external review discussions and was very interested in knowing how their school was going. While being proud of the school and its traditions, they were also keen to see and support continuous improvement for all students.

During the interview, they shared some recent thoughts about considering ways to bring the role of the former Site Improvement Committee back into the core work of the Council itself. As part of policy compliance associated with this review, the Principal has identified collaborative engagement in improvement planning and self-review as an aspect of school governance to be further developed.

The Review Panel felt that it is, therefore, opportune for the Principal and the Governing Council to explore ways to strengthen partnerships that bring powerful outcomes in supporting successful learners. With collective endeavour and enthusiasm this could be innovative and exciting work for the school community.

Direction 4

Strengthen the role of the Governing Council in site improvement processes by exploring ways to further develop parent and community partnerships that positively impact on student learning.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Greenock Primary School is progressing and improving performance and effectiveness. A positive culture of continuous improvement has been developed over time and is characterised by a commitment to implement whole-school agreements. The challenge ahead is for all students to experience challenging and engaging learning, sustained over time, and designed to enable them to achieve at higher levels. Strategic development of parent partnerships will advance this endeavour.

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

1. Systematically enable all students to achieve at higher levels by using a range of strategies to support in engaging in 'productive struggle' and using feedback as part of the teaching and learning process.
2. Develop shared accountability for the implementation of school agreements by establishing structures and processes for teachers to plan and evaluate collaboratively.
3. Build teacher and leadership capacity across the school by engaging in professional learning processes that enable staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their practices and evaluate their impact on learning.
4. Strengthen the role of the Governing Council in site improvement processes by exploring ways to further develop parent and community partnerships that positively impact on student learning.

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



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.



Viv Wright
PRINCIPAL
GREENOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson
Jason Bentley