

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Northfield Primary School

Conducted in July 2019



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lynette Simons, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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:
 - School Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Northfield Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 10kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 382 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 320 and has been increasing over the last 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 951 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The local partnership is Torrens.

The school population includes 10% of Aboriginal students, 8% of students with a verified disability, 62% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 73% of students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 12 children in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 4th year of their tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal, an assistant principal and a wellbeing leader. There are 29 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career, 5 Step 9 teachers and 2 Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA2) teachers.

There are 2 sub schools – junior primary (reception to year 2) and primary school (years 3 to 7).

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Improve reading and numeracy achievement, and retention in upper bands, reception to year 7, through an increased focus on explicit and high expectations for student learning.
- Direction 2** Raise student achievement through the use of multiple measures of such achievement to inform decisions and actions at individual student, class and whole-school levels.
- Direction 3** Improve student achievement by regular and strategic use of self-review processes to determine the impact that school strategies and practices are having on this achievement, and as the basis for improvement and change.

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Leaders believed at the completion of the last External School Review (ESR) there existed a strong school ethos with children at the centre. Staff were passionate and committed to making a difference. Student wellbeing was prominent in the operation of the school which was evident in the agreed 'Peace Code', which provides a framework for learning, safety and values. In 2017, a new leadership team began to articulate a greater focus, through agile change processes, towards student learning with expectations on teachers to be more evidence-based in their planning for learning. This was supported by a centralised student achievement data system for all staff to access.

In conversations with staff, it was evident to the panel that the collaborative processes facilitated by leadership in developing the improvement priorities for 2019-2021 had instilled a sense of ownership and clarity of these priorities. Teachers described targeted professional learning, allocated 'cohort team' meetings, performance development processes and documented one page agreements as highly supportive for them to improve their practice against the schools' pillars of improvement within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) for English, numeracy and wellbeing for learning.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How well do we critically evaluate current curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice to determine challenges of practice?

A culture of improvement has been developed by a united leadership team who value consistency, transparency and rigour. The current SIP which has been collaboratively developed using evidence as a guide in determining the priorities for improvement. From interviews with staff, these priorities were well understood by the majority of staff and provided direction and focus for improvement. A number of teachers referenced work that was taking place to develop the Challenges of Practice.

Targeted professional learning has been provided to build the skills and knowledge of teachers in the development of numeracy and literacy intervention. The panel was made aware of professional learning groups called 'cohort teams', for reception to year 2, years 3 to 5 and years 6 to 7, which are led by a leadership team member. Cohort teams meet regularly and provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice, utilising data of student progress in numeracy and literacy. The early years (reception to year 2) and upper primary (years 6 to 7) cohort teams were particularly effective.

New teachers to the school and early career teachers commented that the cohort teams provided support for them by enabling discussion, reflection and the sharing of good practice. Specialist teachers commented that they felt included in taking part in full day cohort meetings each term in oral language and reading comprehension. Teachers and leaders believed their Professional Development program (PDP) processes supported the development of the SIP, with each teacher aligning their goals with the plan and meeting regularly with leadership to discuss their progress. Examples of PDP documentation and written feedback from leaders were cited by the panel.

To continue this momentum and to further strengthen the development of the Challenges of Practice, there is a need to align and make more explicit the expectations of teachers, cohort teams and supporting PDP processes in the Challenges of Practice.

Direction 1 To ensure the critical evaluation of current practice make more explicit the roles and expectations of teachers and cohort teams, supported by PDP processes, in determining and implementing Challenges of Practice.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING & LEARNING

- 1. To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?*
- 2. How effectively are teachers using evidence based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?*

Classroom observations and discussions with teachers highlighted the varying learning needs of students in classrooms. When asked how they addressed this issue, a number of teachers described their programming in which they intentionally planned learning to meet specific needs of students. They provided evidence of learning and assessment tasks that offered students multiple entry and exit points. A number of teachers referenced 'cohort teams' where they were reflecting on the effectiveness of their pedagogical practices using evidence-based learning improvement sprints while tracking and monitoring learning achievement of targeted students. Teachers believed this was influencing the development of effective practices in phonics, bookmaking and numeracy.

In interviews with parents and School Council representatives, the vast majority believed their children were engaged in learning and that teachers were very supportive of their children to be successful. However, a number of parents commented that the level of challenge and type of work provided to their children varied between teachers.

Student agency in learning was evident in teacher conversations across the reception to year 2 and year 6 to year 7 cohort teams. Students were provided with opportunities to make choices of how they present their learning and/or how they may work in the classroom. Classroom observations identified pockets of good practice in which teachers asked for feedback from students about their learning in units of work. Some class teacher's co-designed learning rubrics with their students, while others had one-on-one conversations about how students could approach project work. Specialist teachers used student reflections in journals at the end of work units as feedback about how they could improve their practice.

However there was little evidence of formalised approaches for students to provide teachers with feedback to inform improvements in teacher practice. Student responses about their learning progress indicated that they did not have a language of learning beyond referencing grades. In conversations with leaders and teachers, they believed authentic opportunities for student agency in learning was an important strategy to further develop with teachers and students.

Direction 2 To ensure engagement and challenge for all learners, reach agreements on evidence-based high yield pedagogical practices that support student agency in learning.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING & LEARNING


How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Leadership provided the panel with a comprehensive data schedule outlining the collection, analysis and review of numerous of datasets. Leaders and teachers used data to identify strengths and weaknesses of students and guide their planning for learning. Reception to year 2 teachers used diagnostic data to group students to support and challenge learners more effectively. Cohort team's referenced data while tracking identified student progress in learning improvement sprints. Teachers commented that these sprints while having a focus on improving pedagogical practice also supported planning of learning and assessment. This was particularly strong in the conversations with the reception to year 2 and year 6 to year 7 cohort teams.

There was evidence of a small number of staff gathering and analysing student achievement data to inform next steps in learning. However, when questioned it was not clear or consistent among teachers how this translated into differentiated practices or learning and assessment. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of differentiated curriculum planning and implementation varied as did its implementation.

Students believed they were supported in their learning by teachers asking questions in class to check their understanding. Students in the upper primary years commented that they received verbal and written feedback on their assessment tasks which gave them directions for improvement. Leaders and teachers described a shift in focus of intervention to being everyone's business with teachers and SSOs trained in the support for students with special needs.

The use of student achievement and other data to inform improvement in teacher practice was developing slowly in cohort teams. There was evidence of a small number of teachers and groups using assessment practices to effectively inform their planning. Conversations with teachers indicated that this practice was not consistent across the school. It was also evident that there was not a clear or consistent agreement to differentiating the learning and assessment to meet the needs of all students.



Direction 3 To ensure the needs of all learners are met, reach agreements on what are high yield differentiated practices and how these are informed by assessment and feedback.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

It was evident to the panel that the previous ESR directions had shaped the Northfield Primary School's improvement agenda. Planning and decision making processes were evidence-based and targeted. The current agreed SIP highlights a collaborative improvement process supported by ongoing improvement planning and monitoring processes, with leadership facilitating cohort team meetings that build leader and teacher capacity. Observations by the panel confirmed that the school is providing effective conditions for learning.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** To ensure the critical evaluation of current practice make more explicit the roles and expectations of teachers and cohort teams, supported by PDP processes, in determining and implementing Challenges of Practice.
- Direction 2** To ensure engagement and challenge of all learners, reach agreements on evidence-based high yield pedagogical practices that support student agency in learning.
- Direction 3** To ensure the needs of all learners are met, reach agreements on what are high yield differentiated practices and how these are informed by assessment and feedback.

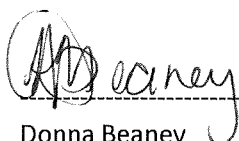
Based on the school's current performance, Northfield Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
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Donna Beaney
PRINCIPAL
NORTHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



SCHOOL 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 2018, 0% of year 1 and 0% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 72% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change, and for year 7, this represents an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3 and 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within, and for year 7, is achieving above the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 31% of year 3, 21% of year 5 and 7% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 17% to 31%.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 6 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 3 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 3 students, 69% of year 5 students and 72% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement, and for year 7, this represents little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 10% of year 3, 7% of year 5 and 5% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 3 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 14%, or 1 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.