EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MELROSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in September 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 Julie Bishop, 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 Melrose 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 2: Learning Improvement

One member of staff who works 0.2FTE has not completed the full day Child Protection Curriculum due to lack of access to training.

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 working towards being compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 94.2%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Melrose Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is located 276kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 21 students and has shown a decline over the past five years. The school has an ICSEA score 1019 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 24% (5) of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 5th year of tenure. There are 3 teachers (1.6FTE), including 1 in the early years of her career, and 2 School Services Officers (SSOs).

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. 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.

The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Melrose Primary School from 2011 to 2015 to overcome any anomalies.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. From 2011 to 2015, 9 of 18 (50%) Year 1 students, and 13 of 19 (68%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For 2015, the Year 1 results indicate no change against the school's historic baseline average, and the Year 2 results are below the school's historic baseline average. There are no discernible trend patterns over time for either the Year 1 or 2 cohorts.

From 2011 to 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 12 of 16 (75%) Year 3, 9 of 12 (75%) Year 5, and no Year 5 students in 2015, 9 of 12 (75%) Year 7 students in 2015, and no Year 7 students in 2012, demonstrated the expected achievement of the DECD SEA.

From 2011 to 2015, in Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In NAPLAN Reading, from 2011 to 2015, 38%, or 6 of 16 students at Year 3, 8%, or 1 of 13 students at Year 5, 0%, or 0 of 12 students at Year 7 achieved in the top two bands.

Of the two Year 3 students who tested in the Higher Bands in NAPLAN Reading at Year 3 in 2012, 1 (50%) student, remained in these bands at Year 5 in 2014.

Numeracy

From 2011 to 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 13 of 16 (81%) Year 3 students, 12 of 12 (100%) Year 5 students, no Year 5 students in 2015, 8 of 12 (67%) Year 7 students in 2015, and no Year 7 students in 2012, demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

From 2011 to 2015, in Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In NAPLAN Numeracy, from 2011 to 2015, 4 of 16 (13%) Year 3 students, 0 of 12 (0%) Year 5 students, and 0 of 12 (0%) Year 7 students were in the top two bands.

Of the two Year 3 students who tested in the higher bands in NAPLAN Numeracy at Year 3 (2011), neither remained in these bands at Year 5 in 2013 or at Year 7 in 2015.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Improvement Agenda: **How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?**

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?**

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

How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

In 2013, the focus for literacy was to improve reading levels and attain the regional targets. In 2014, the school developed whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy. Consistency of tools to determine baseline data in maths was identified, and included: a commercial tool for Reception to Year 2, NAPLAN Years 3, 5, and 7, and PAT-M Years 3 to 7. The teaching of literacy included a focus on the Big 6, the introduction of a Phonics program, agreements to use a specific set of sight words, and the implementation of strategies to support comprehension in reading from a common source, together with Running Records, NAPLAN and PAT-R data.

The Principal stated that due to high staff turnover (there has been almost 100% of class teacher turnover each year for the past four years), it has been difficult to embed the SIP strategies as new staff have not been involved in the development of the SIP and, thus, had little ownership of the process and content. The Principal is to be commended for the work undertaken to support staff new to the school, in understanding the direction, rationale and purpose of the SIP strategies.

The staff collectively analyse student results during staff meetings. Student progress is closely monitored with appropriate interventions implemented as soon as possible. The 2016 Site Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies the tracking and monitoring of every learner's growth through analysis of student data, and the subsequent development of learning goals to be recorded in each student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

as a major strategy. ILP three-way conferences are held in Terms 1 and 3.

Students reported that they set their learning goals twice a year. A teacher is employed one day per week to support students identified as requiring intervention; this occurs in withdrawal mode with the intervention teacher setting the learning program.

The classroom support SSO reported that all staff are involved in the staff meeting discussions where student progress is reviewed, which is seen as very inclusive and valued by all. The classroom teacher sets the learning plan for the SSO.

At the staff meeting held during the External School Review (ESR) staff were provided with the following 2016 datasets: NAPLAN, PAT-R, PAT-M and the mid-year A-E grade allocations. Staff were asked to focus on the correlation between the higher bands in NAPLAN reading and numeracy, above SEA in PAT-R and PAT-M, and A and B grade allocation for Years 3, 5 and 7. Further analysis at other year levels of PAT-R, PAT-M, and A and B grade allocations was encouraged.

Congruence was found only at Year 5 English, NAPLAN Reading and PAT-R and at Year 1 between PAT-R and the Running Records data. Discussion and analysis indicated that there were significant differences between the standardised test results and the allocation of A and B grades. Staff responses indicated that going deeper into the data had provided the opportunity to consider what misconceptions may have been held regarding individual students. It was also indicated that the test results did not necessarily reflect what was observable in the classroom.

Triangulation of datasets is a powerful tool for staff to gain a comprehensive understanding of the learning for both groups and individuals. The school is committed to work on maintaining students in the higher bands as they progress through school. Regular opportunities for staff to meet and analyse a range of datasets and develop proficiency in the triangulation of data will support their aspirations.

Teachers in larger schools have the opportunity to discuss and moderate grade allocations in year level groups, which is not possible in small schools where the class teacher is responsible for multiple year levels. The collaborative structures at Melrose Primary School could be adapted to provide for moderation in teams, thus, further strengthening their collaborative understanding of learning needs and providing opportunities for the students to realise their aspirations.

Direction 1
Staff develop competence in analysing multiple measures of learning data and use the data to provide greater congruence between cohort planning, classroom planning and the SIP.

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

Student perception data from the T*f*EL (Teaching for Effective Learning) feedback survey undertaken early Term 3 was, in general, very positive. Areas perceived by students as requiring further consideration were: encouragement to question what they knew or to look at things from different angles; not being given time to talk and explore their thinking and ideas together. Students also perceived that they did not have much choice about what and how they learn, and that they did not get to choose different ways to learn to make learning enjoyable and more exciting.

These areas are directly linked to T*f*EL Domain 4 where the focus is on supporting students to personalise and connect their learning. The emerging work that the school is undertaking on individual goal-setting for learning is a very valuable start in supporting students to develop ownership of their learning.

During the ESR, students were asked if they knew what they needed to do to improve their learning; most responses were effort-based or aligned to the mechanics of learning.

In writing, most students responded that to improve they would need to write neater, use punctuation, capital letters and full stops. However, two students were able to articulate a deeper understanding of writing. One student indicated they needed to improve sentence structure, use more describing words and add more excitement. A second student indicated an understanding of different writing genres and spoke about recounts and narratives.

Most students who identified reading replied with effort and behaviour-based strategies, that is, the way to improve was to read harder books or read more. There was strong evidence from some students who were able to articulate several reading strategies when asked what they needed to do if they get stuck.

There are emerging examples of authentic student influence as can be evidenced from the following example. The school is to be commended for the work they have done in establishing the Buddy reading program that operates once a week. The Upper Primary students listen to the Junior Primary students read. The Upper Primary class was trained in how to give explicit feedback to each other and to recognise the skills of a good reader; these strategies are then used when listening to the Junior Primary students read. This is a very valid example of authentic student-to-student influence.

It is apparent that ongoing specific, regular and two-way feedback with all students about their learning is essential for them to become highly engaged in their own learning and, subsequently, develop the skills to become reflective learners.

The school is to be commended for the work they have begun in this area, in particular, the intention to sit with students and talk through the standardised test results on an individual level. This could be further strengthened by the student then setting and reviewing their personal goals for improvement from the information shared.

When teachers adapt and refine their teaching strategies in response to feedback from students, strong learning communities develop. All students can benefit from the development and implementation of perception data as a valuable means of informing next steps for learning.

The school is to be commended for the work they have already undertaken in collecting student perception data, especially in the upper grades. Further work in this area at regular intervals throughout the year and from different perspectives will be valuable tools in supporting teachers to inform next steps in their classrooms.

John Hattie's research on Visible Learning indicates that feedback is one of the most influential practices that impact on student achievement.

Direction 2
Promote authentic student influence in learning by developing in students a clear understanding of learning intentions and the capacity to engage with feedback, data and evidence that enables learning-related, individual goal-setting.

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

The teaching staff undertook a self-analysis of their own competencies within the four T*f*EL domains in early Term 3. The results indicated the following: in Domain Three *Develop expert learners: 'teach students how to learn'*, all staff indicated that this was not embedded practice, and was an area they were working on. This was also the case in Domain Four: *Personalise and Connect Learning* where both *connect learning to students' lives and aspirations* and *apply and assess learning in authentic contexts* were identified as areas to be embedded by all staff.

All staff indicated *participating in professional learning communities and networks* together with *design, plan and organise for teaching and learning* were not embedded practice.

In Domain Three *fostering deep understanding and skilful action* and *explore the construction of knowledge* were embedded practice for one staff member.

Staff also completed a survey undertaken during the ESR, which indicated that learning intentions, effective pedagogies and creating opportunities to stretch students were achieved to a medium or low extent.

When reflecting on recent professional learning and the impact it had had on their teaching practice, teachers indicated that unit planning with the Coordinator, Primary Australian Curriculum (CPAC) had supported them to make learning intentions clearer. Teachers also reported that the recent work on

Growth Mindsets and the setting of shorter SMART goals had supported students to achieve goals in a shorter timeframe. Teachers stated that, initially, goal-setting was not specific enough.

It is evident that there is strong intention from staff to develop competence and confidence in effective pedagogical practices, including the embedding of learning tasks that allow for multiple entry and exit points. This is especially important for classrooms that have multiple year levels.

The school has maintained T*f*EL as an integral part of their SIP priorities since 2014, however, due to the high levels of staff turnover, the school is in the position of needing to continually revisit and build teacher capacity each year. This makes the embedding of effective pedagogies very challenging, with the subsequent impact being the restriction of opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability to undertake challenging and rigorous learning, in an ongoing manner.

The students display very strong learning dispositions and it will be imperative for the school to explore a range of options to provide regular opportunities for teachers to build their personal and collective capacity to design learning and tasks that will stretch and challenge students.

Direction 3
Develop, strengthen and embed pedagogical practices to design learning and tasks that engage, stretch and challenge students to think critically and creatively.

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

Teachers reported that the Coordinator, Primary Australian Curriculum (CPAC) has worked with the staff in backwards design and unit planning; this was very appreciated by staff.

One teacher indicated that this had supported them to integrate learning areas and made learning intentions clearer.

Teachers also reported that it was difficult to access professional learning. One teacher stated that they had gone to a neighbouring school to observe a specific approach to learning and that it was extremely beneficial. Another teacher stated that it was very difficult coming into the school where there was no other person teaching at the same year level, and there was very little evidence of any prior work. The teacher stated that this was possibly due to the high staff turnover.

One teacher had been in an 'out-of-classroom' role and had missed most of the DECD professional learning around the implementation of the Australian Curriculum; regular professional learning in this area was difficult to access.

Another teacher indicated that professional learning in Growth Mindsets had been a powerful tool.

Two staff members attended professional learning in PAT-M and PAT-R, resulting in a teacher being confident to sit down with each of the students and talk through their results with them and share the learning with the student.

Staff indicated that performance development has helped them refine assessment, and to focus their learning intent.

It is apparent that access to regular and ongoing professional learning in current pedagogies, literacy and numeracy, planning using the Australian Curriculum and assessing against the standards, is essential for the ongoing development of both the staff and students.

This is difficult to achieve on many levels in a small and, somewhat, isolated school. Capacity to fund release, and then to locate appropriate professional learning without having to spend an inordinate amount of time travelling is very challenging.

Staff also indicated they did not see the Partnership as being able to fulfil the need of being able to talk with peers who are in the same position as they are.

A strategic approach to identify the professional learning needs of teaching staff, combined with avenues to access the learning regularly, is essential.

There are several small schools within the local area that are in similar situations. The development of a 'like schools' network may provide opportunities to redress the current difficulties in building teacher capacity in small schools, especially those with high turnover. An inventory of skillsets of staff and curriculum areas where staff require support could be developed. Schools could arrange peer observations, joint staff meetings by year level and, with the ongoing support from DECD personnel, a comprehensive ongoing learning plan could be developed.

Direction 4
Embed the Australian Curriculum, TfEL and the Assessment Standards at the site level and, collaboratively, with like schools.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Melrose Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. The staff work collaboratively to plan and target interventions.

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

1. Staff develop competence in analysing multiple measures of learning data and use the data to provide greater congruence between cohort planning, classroom planning and the SIP.

2. Promote authentic student influence in learning by developing in students a clear understanding of learning intentions and the capacity to engage with feedback, data and evidence that enables learning-related, individual goal-setting.

3. Develop, strengthen and embed pedagogical practices to design learning and tasks that engage, stretch and challenge students to think critically and creatively.

4. Embed the Australian Curriculum, TfEL and the Assessment Standards at the site level and, collaboratively, with 'like schools'.

Based on the school's current performance, Melrose 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.

Gail Murphy
PRINCIPAL
MELROSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson