

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Melrose Primary School

Conducted in November 2020



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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Greg Platt, 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 groups
 - Teachers

School context

Melrose Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 273kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 30. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 21. The local partnership is Flinders.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1007 and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, no students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 38% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 4th year of tenure and there are no other senior leaders.

There are 4 teachers including none in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- 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.
- Direction 3** Develop, strengthen, and embed pedagogical practices to design learning and tasks that engage, stretch and challenge students to think critically and creatively.
- Direction 4** Embed the Australian Curriculum, TfEL and the Assessment Standards at the site level and, collaboratively, with like schools.

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

The current principal has been in the position for 4 years. Actions were taken to address previous ESR directions, and include:

- The school improvement plan (SIP) is a 'live' document. The standard of educational achievement is aligned to student achievement, determining where support is needed and directing students to aim for higher bands.
- Curriculum programs such as Brightpath, Quicksmart, MultiLit and Accelerated Reader, are used for mainstream and intervention support. Achievement data is used to inform cohort and classroom planning.
- A school assessment schedule is in place to conduct assessments such as One Minute Maths Tests, South Australian Spelling Test, Phonics Screening and Running Records.

- Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) professional learning, with regular support from the Flinders Partnership Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP), towards designing of learning and assessment tasks. It is part of the educators' performance development focus for effective use of formative assessment and feedback.
- Every staff member uses the Australian Curriculum for programming, learning design and assessment. Teaching for Effective Learning strategies are a permanent agenda item at staff meetings.
- Flinders Partnership LDAM strategy promotes collaboration in building capacity. The Partnership SLLIP worked on a regular basis to support the teachers and principal.
- Whole-school focus on learner dispositions, with explicit teaching and common language, promoted student voice, student leadership capacity, and effectively built resilience and the school's values.
- Focus on collaborative moderation, designing tasks to stretch students, their ability to problem-solve and creative problem-solving skills, including maths investigations, and varying ways to assess student learning.
- Primary Mathematics Association (PMA) Investigation is a whole-school initiative, which was recognised through a whole-school Maths Fair, where students presented their investigations to families and community members.
- Outside-of-school academic competitions – National History Challenge, Young Writers Competition and the Annual Melrose Primary School Literacy Competition.

Some elements of previous directions are still to be addressed, and actioned, in conjunction with strategies identified in the SIP.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

Staff have a very strong understanding of the connection between curriculum, teaching and assessment to ensure quality teaching for all learners.

The SIP challenge of practice has a strong connection with the department and research-based information on best practice and is based on the analysis of student achievement data. Curriculum planning is linked to SIP actions and curriculum delivery.

Teachers recognise that SIP goals and targets keep them on-track, and achievement growth is monitored regularly and cross-checked with the SIP during staff meetings. Continue the regular monitoring and review of student achievement progress. This may include gathering evidence from students on their perception of the impact and growth with their learning.

Teachers have a strong understanding of the impact of planning in relation to their practice. The curriculum mapping strategy in HASS and art let staff plan using an 'A and B year of study' model to ensure curriculum requirements are met in 2021.

Specific programs were successfully introduced to address both the social and academic needs of all students. Teachers indicated that programs, such as Accelerated Reading and Brightpath, and achievement data, all made a significant impact on literacy. The numeracy focus uses an investigative maths approach that is both explicitly taught and worked through online resources. These were buoyed by learning agreements in literacy and numeracy, to ensure consistent and sustainable practices.

Due to the small staff size, engagement in collaborative planning is mainly via staff meetings. Continue to build teacher capacity through personal learning, staff meetings and network learning teams. Use the expertise of each other to showcase particular strengths or successes in planning, implementing and monitoring student growth. Continue collaborative reflection on practice, to connect learning from reception to year 7.

Direction 1 To gain high-yield learning outcomes for all students, strengthen the consistent commitment to the improvement model with specific reference to sustaining high achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Effective teaching and student learning

Effective pedagogy: How effective are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Collective efficacy through professional conversations and trust between all staff was evident. Staff appreciate formal and informal opportunities, and encouragement, to achieve their best and to continue enhancing their teaching craft.

The school has been strategic in adopting quality learning programs, such as the accelerated reading and investigative maths approach, coupled with explicit teaching using Brightpath, Quicksmart maths and MultiLit early literacy intervention. They were successful in engaging and challenging all students. Teachers talked about approaches and strategies introduced, and recognised their value in their daily work.

Staff articulated a variety of strategies used to provide differentiated learning to accommodate individual student needs, and are focused on individual or group learning, through extension in the primary maths class.

Learning intentions are discussed at the beginning of lessons, but are not fully embedded or understood by all students. Refining learning intentions to focus on the 'what and why' of the learning task, with reference to the curriculum requirements and real life examples, will provide clarity for students. Strong success criteria rubrics are used in the primary class, where all students are able to clearly articulate the purpose, and use of rubrics in helping them improve their work.

Learning goals are common practice, mostly focusing on accelerated reading targets. Students know their achievement progress through regular check-ins, using the reading wall charts and subject assessments rubrics. Feedback to students is generally done orally, with the focus on 'where to next' with their learning.

Programs offered within the literacy and numeracy framework attracted a genuine interest from students. Students highlighted the maths investigations as a good way to stretch their thinking, and would like more of this type of learning. This, coupled with external extension opportunities offered to the students, is to be commended.

The concept of high expectation is promoted across the school, with teachers modelling expectations, school awards and newsletter acknowledgement. The learning dispositions strategy was the catalyst for a whole-school approach towards developing a code of conduct, which was well-received and understood by the students and broader community.

Direction 2 To meet the learning needs of all students continue developing high-impact teaching and learning strategies, aligned to the school's pedagogical framework with a focus on high learning bands.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Melrose Primary School demonstrates a whole-school culture of continuous improvement, strong sustained leadership, clear school processes and accountability and aligned professional learning. Expectations of students are of the highest level, while aspiration in student achievement characterises the culture. The school is well-positioned to refine established highly effective practices whilst exploring new possibilities for the future.

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

- Direction 1** To gain high-yield learning outcomes for all students, strengthen the consistent commitment to the improvement model with specific reference to sustaining high achievement in literacy and numeracy.
- Direction 2** To meet the learning needs of all students continue developing high-impact teaching and learning strategies, aligned to the school's pedagogical framework with a focus on high learning bands.

Based on the school's current performance, Melrose Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



Kerry Dollman
Director
Review, Improvement and Accountability



Anne Millard
Executive Director
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



Murray Koster
Principal
Melrose Primary School



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. Between 2015 and 2020, 81% or 17 of 21 of year 1 and 68% 17 of 25 of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 3 students, 69% of year 5 students and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2016 and 2019, 54% of year 3 students, 45% of year 5 students and 25% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

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

Numeracy

Between 2016 and 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 77% of year 5 students and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2016 and 2019, 46% of year 3, 40% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

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