

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR GREENWITH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in July 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 Liz Matheson and Julie Bishop, Review Officers, 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 Greenwith Primary School has verified that the school is compliant with all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be working compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2015 was 91.3%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Greenwith Primary School is a metropolitan school located 25kms north-east of the Adelaide CBD. It caters for approximately 700 students from Foundation to Year 7. The school data indicates a steady increase in enrolment from 637 in 2009.

The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1029. The local DECD Partnership is Golden Way.

The school population includes 7% (51) Students with a Disability, 2% (12) Aboriginal students, 4.3% (30) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 10% (69) students from a Non-English Speaking Background, and approximately 16% (111) students who are eligible for School Card assistance. The school has 25 classes.

The school is co-located with Our Lady of Hope Catholic School. This arrangement is quite unique, as the two schools share facilities, including the administrative building, staffroom, canteen, the Resource Centre and play areas, including the courts and the oval. Greenwith Kindergarten is located adjacent to the school.

In 2016, the Leadership Team consists of an Acting Principal and 3 Assistant Principals (APs). This is a new leadership team. A new Principal was appointed in Week 4, Term 2 2016. One AP is in the 5th year of her second tenure, and the other 2 APs are internally appointed. One of the APs is appointed year-by-year depending on the school enrolment. The other AP was appointed for 6 months at the start of 2016, backfilling the substantive Deputy Principal who is in another position until, at least, the end of Term 2. This is an unusual situation, as the Leadership Team was stable for the past 7 years.

Greenwith does not have a high turnover of staff. There is, however, a large number of part-time teaching staff, which impacts significantly on logistical arrangements, especially in structuring classes and Non-Instruction Time.

The school has a Defence Support Transition Aid (DSTA), which is a federally funded position, to support students from Defence Force families.

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 2015, 73% of Year 1 and 81%

of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in both year levels.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of Year 3, 78% of Year 5, and 74% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement against the historic average. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline. It is noted that 10 of 82 (12%) Year 7 students did not sit the test.

For 2015 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved results within the range of similar students across DECD schools. The Year 7 results are within the range by only 0.3%.

In 2015, 38 Year 3 (41%), 31 Year 5 (35%) and 22 Year 7 (27%) students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change in relation to the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 24 of 36 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. In 2015, 48%, or 16 of 33 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. These results represent little or no improvement.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 65% of Year 3 students, 78% of Year 5 students, and 77% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents a decline, for Year 5 an improvement, and for Year 7, little or no improvement in relation to the historical average. The Year 5 result represents a 3-year upward trend.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved below, at Year 5 above, and at Year 7 results were within, the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 21 of 92 (23%) Year 3 students, 8 of 88 (9%) Year 5 students, and 19 of 82 (23%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 4 of 12 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result represents little or no improvement from the historic baseline average. From Year 3 to 7, 72%, or 13 of 18 students remained in the upper bands.

Lines of Inquiry

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

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| Effective Leadership: | How effectively does the school's strategic direction impact on learning and outcomes? |
| Student Learning: | To what extent are all students intellectually stretched? |
| Effective Teaching: | How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning? |
| Effective Leadership: | How effectively is teacher collaboration facilitated through the provision of time, structures and clear expectations? |

How effectively does the school's strategic direction impact on learning and outcomes?

The school's values of *collaboration, organisation, respect* and *excellence* are esteemed by the community and students are acknowledged for exhibiting these behaviours. The 2015/2016 School Improvement Plan (SIP) is in draft form, as the school is in a significant change phase, with a new Leadership Team forming during this year.

A clear vision and strategic direction, collaboratively developed and owned by staff, is important for schools, as it becomes the basis upon which decisions are made. It sets the school's improvement agenda, and helps everyone's efforts to be pointed in the same direction. Most importantly, it sets a guide for the work of teachers, as it is their work in the classroom that enables the school to realise its vision and strategic intent. In a big school like Greenwith Primary School, it helps to develop congruence between year levels, so that learning for students as they progress through school is more seamless.

Through the review, it became evident that the school's vision, strategic direction and SIP are not fully aligned or connected to teachers' daily work. In their reflection on the ESR Framework, approximately 35% of staff indicated they thought the school's improvement culture was in a 'developing' or 'functioning' stage and less than 5% placed it in the 'embedded' stage. Teachers commented that they need to be included in the construction of the school's vision.

As a new Leadership Team will be formed during this year, there is an opportunity for the school to collaboratively define its vision. This will entail ensuring the school's current planning and development processes and structures are inclusive and aligned, so that the strategic plan is 'operationalised' or enacted.

There needs to be a conduit between the strategic whole-school improvement work, and the work of the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and individual teachers. These connections need to be strengthened so that leadership at all levels is developed and acknowledged. There is not yet alignment and coherence between the three levels (strategic, year-level teams and classroom) of planning and practices. The level of expertise and experience of staff is an untapped resource. Additionally, the Review Panel found the Year 7 leaders' group to be articulate and insightful about what helps and what hinders their learning.

Improvement requires a regular and strategic process of reviewing, planning, acting and evaluating. The use of achievement and engagement data regularly and over time, at all levels, is critical to ensuring judgements and decisions are based on evidence. Most importantly, teachers need to see these processes as relevant to their daily work.

Direction 1

Develop a shared, improvement-focused vision and establish cyclical and aligned structures and processes to collectively achieve the strategic plan.

To what extent are all students intellectually stretched?

The staff was commended on their early identification and support for students with special needs by most of the parents with whom the Review Panel spoke. They gave many examples of how their children with complex needs are being supported by teachers and members of the Leadership Team. It was less clear how students were being intellectually stretched. Several parents talked about their children being in a Higher Order Thinking (HOTS) group; however, this was seen as a one-off, rather than everyday support to challenge their children. Both parents and students talked about extension work, where the tasks seemed to require more of the same, rather than deeper-level thinking.

In response to a survey reflecting on a unit of work in Term 2, 2 teachers rated themselves low, 25 as medium, and 5 as high, to the question *How effectively did you create opportunities to stretch students, to enable them to think deeper about their topic?* Additionally, in response to the question *How effectively did you enable students to apply their skills/understanding in different contexts?* 7 rated themselves low, 22 rated medium and 4 rated high.

Following a pupil-free day, which focused on transforming tasks to challenge students' thinking, teachers commented: "I only participated in the PD yesterday, however, I am excited to make adaptations to my learning tasks for further opportunities for intellectual stretch", "I learnt how to look at higher intellect verbs to redesign tasks", and "I have just begun to implement this, however, I have noticed my students are more alert and attentive when they are being challenged."

These and other comments from many teachers, suggest they realise there is room for improvement in the way they challenge and stretch students' thinking. This needs to be an integral part of their planning and teaching, and not the kind of learning that takes place in an intervention programme. Some teachers acknowledged that this will mean working and thinking about learning differently. Some have begun the initial work of redesigning or transforming their tasks, to enable students to think more deeply and creatively.

Alongside this work, students need help to develop a growth mindset, so that they are able to persevere, and not give up. Learning occurs when children make mistakes, when they get an answer incorrect, and understand that there are different solutions and different perspectives. Teachers and parents will need to work on this understanding together to support students.

Direction 2

Enable students to be more intellectually challenged by focusing on transforming tasks in all learning areas, and support students to develop growth mindset dispositions and learning behaviours.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Students interviewed by the panel talked about teachers' practices that helped them learn and kept them interested and engaged. They described hands-on learning, science experiments, inquiry or investigative tasks. Students talked about an increased use of digital technologies by some teachers. There were also opportunities to demonstrate what they have learnt in different ways. Students said that some teachers show examples and help them to 'visualise' what is expected. Assessment rubrics, shown and discussed with students at the forefront of a unit of work, were seen as helpful.

Most of the students in Years 3 to 7 with whom the Review Panel spoke, however, described their daily learning as mainly teacher-directed, with limited opportunities to discuss, work together, or use an inquiry method. They could give examples of learning intentions, but were less able to explain the relevance or purpose of their learning. Many described the reliance on worksheets and whole-class teaching as common.

Teachers were asked to reflect on Term 2 and identify what went well. Many teachers referred to their use of the backwards-by-design planning method, which enabled them to have greater clarity of their learning intentions. Others commented on the use of formative assessment strategies, in which they frequently 'check-in' with students, to see what they have understood. In group meetings with the Review Panel, teachers talked about the current 'programme' for reading and maths in some sections of the school, and described the approach as being 'prescriptive', reliant on worksheets, and not very engaging.

In their reflection survey, 1 teacher rated themselves low, 19 as medium, and 12 as high, in response to the question: *How well did the feedback you gave students help them to know how to improve?* There appears to be a difference in teacher and student perceptions on this matter. When asked what they need to do to improve their grades, many students talked about behavioural factors such as needing to "try harder" or "I'm too chatty", or commented on the presentation or neatness of their work. They were less able to articulate explicit strategies for improvement.

A few teachers talked about going 'deeper into the topic' as being more effective. A teacher commented on the *changed balance in teacher/student input so that there was more partner discussion and less teacher time*. A few others also identified greater student input into the learning, using students' interests and inquiry questions to direct the learning process, as an aspect of the term they did well.

In preparation for the ESR, 65% of teachers shared the perception that they are catering for the varied needs of learners in their classes. This perception seems to be mismatched with the students' description of their daily learning, where whole-class teaching was commonly talked about. The Review Panel

wondered what teachers meant by *differentiation* and to what extent their teaching is targeted and tailored for the range of interests and needs. It seemed to the Review Panel that development in this aspect of teachers' work is related to the transformation of tasks to enable multiple entry points as described in Direction 2 above.

The Review Panel concluded that there is a need for pedagogical shift, to enable students to be more active in the learning and assessment processes, and to be able to articulate clear strategies on how to improve. This is 'work-in-progress' and needs to be systematically and effectively supported.

Direction 3

Strengthen pedagogical practices designed to provide intentional targeted and tailored support, and which promote active student involvement in learning and assessment, so that students know how to improve.

How effectively is teacher collaboration facilitated through the provision of time, structures and clear expectations?

The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were identified by teachers as being integral to their work, and important in building their capacity. A culture of sharing, working and planning together was apparent to the Review Panel. They meet in their PLCs once a week, in the limited NIT time available, after school and in school holidays. They collaboratively develop their term overviews and plan units of work. They design some common assessment tasks so there is consistency across their year level. Teachers commented positively on the opportunities they have had to moderate students' work, within the school and the broader DECD Partnership.

The school has developed and documented Curriculum Agreements in Literacy, Numeracy, Jolly Phonics and Assessment expectations. Early career teachers, and teachers newly appointed to the school, stated they found these documents to be very useful as they outline what is expected. These documents are also intended to provide the glue between the pedagogical approaches used within and between year levels, so that students experience seamless and coherent learning as they progress through their schooling. The Review Panel noted that the documents are promoting contemporary evidence-based teaching practices. The extent that these Agreements are enacted in the classroom, particularly in regard to the pedagogical practices, appeared to vary in extent and depth. The Review Panel wondered, as did some teachers and leaders, why new 'programs' such as the I Maths and Spelling, had been adopted, given the existing school Agreements spell out the expected pedagogical practices.

Approximately 45% of teachers classified the school's strategies to build teacher capacity as *developing* or *functioning*, and pointed to this aspect of the school as needing improvement. The Review Panel explored this perception with teacher representatives during the review. All three groups commented on the limited opportunity to 'follow through' on their professional development. There was a sense of swapping and shifting emphasis, rather than deeply focusing on new learning so that it could become embedded into daily practices and teacher thinking.

The Review Panel concluded it was timely for the school to provide opportunities and support to strengthen the PLC work, with the expectation that they inquire into and evaluate the impact of their pedagogical practices on students' learning and engagement. In doing so, they need to move their current focus on sharing and planning, to an analysis of student work samples and results, as this is the evidence of their impact. The strengthening of the PLC work, tied to the school's vision and strategic direction, will provide the vehicle to enable the school to implement, over time, Direction 3 outlined above.

Direction 4

Strengthen the PLC work to enable teachers to inquire into, and evaluate, their impact on student learning and engagement.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Greenwith Primary School has structures and processes to collect and use achievement data to track students' progress. Teachers use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional sharing. A culture of improvement was evident.

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

1. Develop a shared, improvement-focused vision and establish cyclical and aligned structures and processes to collectively achieve the strategic plan.
2. Enable all students to be more intellectually challenged by focusing on transforming tasks in all learning areas, and support students to develop growth mindset dispositions and learning behaviours.
3. Strengthen pedagogical practices designed to provide intentional targeted and tailored support, and which promote active student involvement in learning and assessment, so that students know how to improve.
4. Strengthen the PLC work to enable teachers to inquire into, and evaluate, their impact on student learning and engagement.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Tanja Antoun
PRINCIPAL
GREENWITH PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson