

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ROBE 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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Brenton Conradi, 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 Robe 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 policy:

Part 1 Governance:

The site's policy and practices in relation to student behaviour including suspensions, exclusions and expulsions.

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 attendance rate for 2015 was 91.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Robe Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school of 90 students, located 326kms south-east of Adelaide in the township of Robe. School enrolments have been steady over the last five years and students are currently organised into four classes. The school has an ICSEA score of 1040 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes two students who have been identified with a learning disability according to the DECD criteria, and one student who has a Non-English Speaking Background. Approximately 90% of the student cohort lives within 5kms of the school, and 9% of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his third tenure, with a previous longstanding connection as an educator in the school, and a Coordinator in Wellbeing.

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, 83% of Year 1 (10 of 12), and 94% of Year 2 (15 of 16) students, demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change at Year 1 and an improvement at Year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 7 of 8 Year 3 students, 2 of 3 Year 5 students, and 10 of 13 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. Many of the students not meeting the SEA were absent on the day of the test and, with small cohorts, absence of even a small number of students affects interpretation of school performance trends.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 4 of 8 Year 3, 1 of 3 Year 5 and 2 of 13 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2013, 3 students at Year 3 achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading proficiency bands and all have left the school. Two of 4 students from Year 3, taking into account arrivals and departures, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 7 of 8 Year 3 students, with 1 student absent or withdrawn, 2 of 3 Year 5 students, and 10 of 13 Year 7 students, with 2 students absent or withdrawn, demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 3 of 8 Year 3, 1 of 3 Year 5 and 4 of 13 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy 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 numeracy, 100%, or 1 student from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 80%, or 4 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and challenged in their learning?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self-review processes in shaping improvement?

To what extent are students engaged and challenged in their learning?

Robe Primary School has a strong sense of community. In conversation with both parents and staff, the Review Panel heard about the collaboration and mutual respect between the school and families. This has been enhanced by a stable staff team over the last 5 years, led by the Principal in his third tenure. Robe Primary School supports students from 55 families. The Review Panel met with parents representing 15 families. All were supportive and reported that the school is communicative and works with them to support the 'whole child', including meeting social and emotional, as well as learning needs. Parents shared a number of examples of ways in which they had worked in partnership with school staff to support their child. Some students are the children of staff members and the Principal indicated that staff remain professional in their role as both parents and educators. Governing Councillors reported that they feel included and that "their voice is heard". The consensus was that all staff are accessible and listen and respond when issues are raised.

Student achievement is compared from year to year to identify trends and monitor growth. The school has a documented assessment schedule, and positive trends in numeracy and literacy are evident over time. In 2015 NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, there are students in the higher two bands at all year levels and this is generally in the range of one third of students in each cohort. There is a school-wide focus on mental computation and automatic recall of number facts, as well as mastery of processes, which have built the confidence to achieve in students. Some students have been extended by being challenged through reduced time limits for specific tasks and others are working on mental activities in mathematics designed

for the year level above. In one case, a student joins an older class for a maths lesson each week.

Students who spoke with the Review Panel were very articulate about their learning and clear about where their strengths and areas for improvement were based. They talked of teachers making it clear that there are different expectations attached to particular year levels, which is helpful to students as all classes in the school are composite, and some cater for three year levels. Teachers analyse data such as the PAT-M at question level to inform targeted teaching and address areas of common misconceptions. Teachers reported that problem-solving, both multi-step problems and problems requiring literacy in maths, are the areas for improvement. During the onsite visit, the Review Panel heard teachers talk about ongoing monitoring to evidence the success of strategies put in place to develop these skills.

In his presentation to the Review Panel, the Principal identified “the challenge of raising the bar to maximise every student’s learning”, as an area of future improvement for the school. There are students achieving in NAPLAN higher bands (HB) at all year levels, and opportunities for students to raise their levels of achievement exist. At Year 3 (*HB Bands 5 and 6*), there are no students in Band 6 or above in Reading or Writing; at Year 5 (*HB Bands 7 and 8*), there are no students in Bands 8 or above in Spelling, Grammar, Writing or Reading, and at Year 7 (*HB Bands 8 and 9*), there are no students in Bands 9 or above in Spelling, Writing or Reading. Students are keen to learn and achieve, and the building of fluency skills and confidence has led to high achievement. The next step for the school is to design tasks to engage students through the challenge of building onto their foundation of prior knowledge and skills.

Direction 1

Inspire higher levels of achievement by designing learning that challenges students to think in multiple ways and use higher-order thinking to improve.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Discussions that the Review Panel had with staff, students and parents, as well as observations undertaken during the onsite visit, confirm that Robe Primary School is a coherent and connected learning community. The Principal asserted that staff are highly committed to their role as educators, and the Review Panel observed teachers in informal conversation centred on students. The Review Panel met with parents in two separate groups and, in both, parents expressed their appreciation for the consistency of teaching across the school. This was supported by regular communication between school and home. Parents described a range of ways that they gained information from the school about their child’s learning and particularly appreciated text messages, some including photos. The Review Panel found that this was a deliberate whole-school strategy that staff had agreed upon as part of a *Kids Matter* initiative, aimed at promoting conversations about learning at home.

Students communicated positive learning dispositions. In conversations with the Review Panel about their work, they made comments such as: “If I’m proud of it, then I know it’s pretty good”; “You can learn from your mistakes”; “If you don’t know why you got it wrong, you tell the teacher and she tells you”; “I like using the program that I’ve never used before” and “I thought I did well on this because I learnt more art skills and I learnt more about myself”. The Review Panel observed a school environment that is safe and orderly, and heard that it is based on restorative principles, enabling a school focused on learning.

Students carry Student Learning Folders with them throughout their schooling that document and celebrate progress and achievements in learning. Students reported that teachers select work samples for these records. Teachers give feedback to students, often verbally, including during individual conferences, and there were times when students were engaged in giving peer feedback. One teacher referred to using *Two Stars and a Wish* as a scaffold to support students in this process. Teachers are endeavouring to find ways of giving students feedback that is immediate, and use of written feedback through notes and comments is also evident. The Review Panel saw an example of a rubric that scaffolded students to know what to do to get an ‘A’. Evidence indicates that the use of rubrics and transparent success criteria is emerging and currently limited to the upper year levels.

Teachers at Robe Primary School are using assessment to support learners’ improvement. The next step for the school will be to further develop a range of formative assessment strategies across the school.

Direction 2

Enhance student ownership and demonstration of higher levels of achievement by building on the use of assessment for learning strategies.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

The Review Panel facilitated the staff meeting and also met in a focused conversation with all staff members. These processes led the Review Panel to conclude that teachers at Robe Primary School are reflective practitioners who look for ways to support individualised learning and work with flexible groupings in classes. A transition process for children starting school that was described is illustrated by an 'open gate' policy with the adjacent kindergarten, and parents affirmed the continuity of learning between preschool and Reception. Classroom walkthroughs were undertaken and provided evidence that a range of teaching strategies is used with appropriate levels of scaffolding. The Review Panel saw students using graphic organisers for both thinking and writing.

The Review Panel heard from both students and teachers that students set goals during the Quality Start period at the beginning of every year that are reviewed each term. Students reported that they engage in reflecting about these goals and about their learning at particular times during the year. Students interviewed valued the opportunity to make comment as part of the formal reporting process to parents twice a year.

Two classes have used the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework review tools to formally seek feedback from learners about the teaching and learning in their classrooms. These teachers reported making changes to practice in response to this feedback. This generally included involving students in having a greater say in their learning. The Review Panel heard that some teachers refined their teaching and lesson planning in response to ongoing student feedback.

Student input is a level of involvement and investment that can be a powerful tool for improving performance. The use of scaffolds for learning is enhanced when students are supported to use them to develop metacognition and the language of learning. Teachers at Robe Primary School are beginning to engage in opportunities for moderation of teacher judgement using A-E grades. Students can be brought on board with these processes, involving them in evaluating their own work, using transparent and co-constructed success criteria and describing outcomes using *I can* statements. The positive school-wide learning culture has students and staff well-placed to take these next steps.

Direction 3

Improve and personalise student engagement in learning by strengthening the role of student voice and negotiation in the learning process.

How effective are the school's self-review processes in shaping improvement?

Students interviewed by the Review Panel enjoyed coming to school and talked of a friendly environment with "no bullies". Parents confirmed that "kids don't like to miss a day at school". The Principal shared that school operations were governed by the school values of *Respect, Integrity* and *Courage*, and typified by the school motto of *Stand Proud*.

The current School Improvement Plan (SIP) has the focus priorities of Literacy - grammar and punctuation, Numeracy - problem-solving, and student and staff wellbeing. Staff affirmed that the plan is determined collaboratively and is based on an analysis of student achievement data. The school has recognised that, in a small school in particular, school improvement efforts must be clearly focused, and has identified 'Improving literacy achievement through a focus on Grammar and Punctuation' as their main work for the year.

The school has a range of valid and reliable data about student achievement and growth in both literacy and numeracy. Teachers are using data to inform their planning and instruction. When the Review Panel

asked teachers about their use of data, they heard that it was used for grouping, to determine where to start in teaching in maths, for example, and that systemic data (NAPLAN) is reviewed at a question level as well as for individuals and cohorts. The Review Panel heard that cohorts are tracked over time, being mindful that small numbers can sometimes 'skew' the data. Teachers are working towards "common practices across the site" and documenting Reception to Year 7 scope and sequences.

The SIP targets focus on growth in student achievement, aspirations of above national mean scores in NAPLAN, and process targets in teachers' work. Sharpening the quantifiable aspects of the targets to focus on students' potential for high performance will ensure that strategies specifically targeted at improvement for the most-able students are actioned.

Direction 4

Lead high performance by further utilising the precise analysis of student achievement data to inform targeted actions that challenge and extend students.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Robe Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. Student achievement data and other evidence is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Inspire higher levels of achievement by designing learning that challenges students to think in multiple ways and use higher-order thinking to improve.
2. Enhance student ownership and demonstration of higher levels of achievement by building on the use of assessment for learning strategies.
3. Improve and personalise student engagement in learning by strengthening the role of student voice and negotiation in the learning process.
4. Lead high performance by further utilising the precise analysis of student achievement data to inform targeted actions that challenge and extend students.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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.

Chris McLay
PRINCIPAL
ROBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson