

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR TANUNDA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in March 2015



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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Wendy Moore, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Tanunda Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies, indicating also which aspects of school organisation policies are due for review in the current year.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has maintained the DECD target for attendance over the past three years, with 94% attendance rate in 2014 which exceeds the DECD target of 93%. The school's lower attendance rate of 89.5% for students in the Tanunda Disability Unit is due to the fact the students in the Unit are more susceptible to illness.

School context

Tanunda Primary School and Tanunda Disability Unit are located in the historical Barossa Valley. Primary school mainstream enrolment numbers have been stable and strong over the past five years with enrolments in the Disability Unit increasing to capacity. There are currently 391 students enrolled in the primary school and 40 students enrolled in the disability unit.

The primary school enrolment figures include 26 Students with Disability, and a small number of Aboriginal students and students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). The school has an ICSEA score of 1021, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The Principal has been at the school for eleven years. The responsibilities of the Deputy Principal include coordination of the Disability Unit. There is a Senior Leader and a Coordinator appointed from within the school. The Senior Leader is responsible for the day to day management of the disability unit; with overall responsibility of the Unit resting with the Principal and Deputy.

At the time of the *External School Review*, the Principal was undertaking higher duties in DECD. Consequently, as the acting Principal, the Deputy Principal took full responsibility for all stages of the *External School Review* process.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning:

How well are student achieving over time?
To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

Effective Teaching:

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Improvement Agenda:

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

How well are student achievements tracked over time?

The Tanunda Primary School and Tanunda Disability Unit site improvement priorities for 2014-2016 aim to improve student achievement in literacy and in numeracy.

In 2014, approximately 90% of Year 7 students at Tanunda Primary School achieved the DECD standard of educational achievement (SEA) in reading and numeracy as measured by NAPLAN. In Year 5, 74% of students achieved the SEA in reading and 61% in numeracy. In Year 3, approximately 72% of students achieved the SEA in both reading and numeracy. This pattern of results is reflected over time, most notably with the Year 7 cohorts consistently achieving and exceeding annual targets following a decline in results at Year 5. Practice NAPLAN tests are identified as an improvement strategy to support learners to achieve annual targets.

In the early years, reading results are measured by assessing students against running record levels. In 2014, 73% of Year 2 students and 69.8% of Year 1 students achieved the SEA, with 38% of these Year 1 students achieving at the Year 2 SEA.

The school is currently analysing, setting targets and reporting school performance against the percentage of students achieving in the higher two bands in all aspects of the NAPLAN tests and as compared with other schools. Tanunda Primary School has also set a target to reduce the number of students achieving in the lowest two bands.

The acting Principal reported that the site improvement targets and measures are deliberately aspirational so the school can raise achievement levels in the early years, build on these results into Year 3, and then each year onwards after that. The school is aiming to see evidence over time that all students are making expected growth as measured by e.g. Progressive Achievement Tests and/or by scoring in higher bands, at points in time, as measured by NAPLAN.

As the school continues to improve its capacity to achieve good results in the early years, sustain high growth in the upper years, and eliminate the repeated downward trend in the primary years, the school's effectiveness will be demonstrated by consistent gains in student performance, over time, from Reception through to Year 7.

The following lines of inquiry were explored by the Review Panel to support growth and sustain achievement.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

Included in the DECD data dashboard for the school are the numbers of students scoring in the higher two proficiency bands of the NAPLAN reading and numeracy tests. In 2014, 27% of Year 3s, 23% of Year 5s, and 35% of Year 7s scored in the higher proficiency bands of the NAPLAN reading test. In numeracy, the achievement percentages for higher band scores follow a similar pattern with 27% of the cohort achieving in the higher two proficiency bands in Year 3, 18% in Year 5 and 33% in Year 7. These results mirror the pattern shown in the percentages reported earlier for students achieving the SEA. Further analysis of the higher band data over time for literacy and numeracy shows that half of Year 3 students achieving at this level retain this achievement into Year 5 and through to Year 7.

When asked by the Review Panel about being challenged in their work, older students gave examples, such as; “in writing, the teacher tells us what an A looks like”. One middle primary group said they have personal and academic goals and younger students said they could improve in their learning by practising, trying harder or by doing more work. Students shared their perception that “most kids try to get slightly better” and that when they are in the younger year level of a composite class they feel they are challenged. Older students felt they are expected and supported to work independently on problem solving while the teacher is working with small groups and helping others. Parent responses to similar questions indicated that some parents felt their children could be doing better and that they were ‘coasting’ along.

Overall, parents felt positive that they had good relationships with the teachers and appreciated information about what their children are learning in class or in the disability unit, and how they are going. Some parents added that the regularity and extent of this information about the curriculum and learning “depends on the teacher”. They thought that the more timely the communication the more useful it is because then they understand what is happening and know what is expected of themselves and their children.

Following a discussion about Year 7 trend data, the Review Panel met with staff working together in the upper primary general learning area (GLA) team to discuss their collaborative approach. The teachers felt they were seeing good growth because they have made their expectations clear (e.g. “Way to A”), by believing that everyone can learn and by not giving up. They felt they knew their students well, could find another way if there was a problem, used student interests and supported the students to be self-regulated as learners.

Over 90% of students, parents and staff report in the opinion surveys that they feel staff expect the students to do their best. To ensure that the ‘best = higher achievement’, it will be important for the school to find out the extent to which students are personally engaged and intellectually challenged to improve their achievement levels.

Direction 1

Increase the numbers of students attaining and retaining higher levels of achievement by engaging all students in regular opportunities to reflect on their progress against expected outcomes (initially in mathematics and numeracy), receive feedback on their learning, and develop targets that stretch them to attain and exceed their current level of achievement

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Review Panel verified that the school’s focus on literacy and numeracy in the current Site Improvement Plan (SIP) builds on the previous improvement agenda that commenced in 2011. The vision for 2014 -2016 states that through “high quality teaching and learning, all young people in the school are supported and encouraged and are achieving their best”. The acting Principal and staff members shared evidence of how

the school is supporting teachers to support students in this endeavour. The Review Panel heard that following the inaugural 'Data Discussion Day' all staff members are now engaged in analysing school data for the purpose of school improvement planning, and most recently for the purpose of identifying the individual needs of students.

Engaging in analysis is a significant step towards all staff members consistently using achievement information as the starting point to improve student performance across the whole school. The Review Panel heard from teacher leaders and committee convenors at a staff meeting that there is a clear expectation for everyone to monitor the learning achievement of each learner in all areas of the curriculum.

The school has an established school assessment framework as the regime for school-wide data collection. This year the school has started to use an electronic data management system to record results over time. The acting Principal reported that the school will judge the value of the system by the school's improved capacity to track the individual achievement of each student.

Currently there is also a documented agreement for spelling (2011) which includes a systematic approach to teaching phonics in the early years and a skill continuum that covers early years, middle primary and upper years. The writing document (2013) supports a consistent approach to teaching genre and an R - 7 genre map has been prepared to guide planning at all year levels. Such agreements and scope and sequence documents ensure that teachers are able to plan together to ensure consistency and continuity for students in their learning. The information is also useful to share with parents and students so they know what is expected.

Achievement and progress for students in the purpose built Disability Unit is monitored against the developmental learning goals set in each student's learning plan. Parents are involved in this process. The individual plans are reviewed annually in Term 3 using observation and assessment information collected throughout the year. The Review Panel heard that the staff members in the Unit are working collaboratively to identify pre-intentional and intentional developmental steps to track student progress towards the goals of each student's individual learning plan. The outcomes identified are being aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and the Foundation Stage of the Australian Curriculum.

The school has strategically appointed an internal Coordinator to support teachers as they develop their practice against the new Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and prepare personal performance and development plans to guide this learning. The Coordinator's role is to assist teachers to set goals and implement strategies that reflect individual needs in relation to the school's improvement priorities. A feature of these plans at Tanunda is the agreed inclusion of focused classroom observation using the DECD observation tool. The peer observations are initially to be undertaken in the area of numeracy. The performance and development plans shared with the Review Panel were comprehensive and clear, including: reference to the APST indicators they were aspiring towards; relevant professional learning courses and programs; and indicators related to use of student achievement information.

Overall, the Review Panel found the school's priorities to be focused on improving student learning by developing effective teaching practice to ensure consistency and coherence across the school. Staff members reported that as they work together and sustain the commitment, the desired improvements in student learning will result. Along with any site targets, these results must also be judged and measured against the DECD standard of educational achievement (SEA).

Direction 2

Raise and sustain higher levels of achievement for all students as they progress through the school, by developing a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and learning design that ensures learning intentions and criteria for success are made explicit for students

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

In the 2014 staff opinion survey, 94% of respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree with the statement 'this school looks for ways to improve'. The Review Panel found evidence that whole-school data is being well used to drive improvement decisions, and support curriculum planning and effective teaching across the school.

The Review Panel heard that the work undertaken by the teacher leaders as convenors, deputy convenors and members of each of the three Site Improvement Committees (SIC) was thorough, with the operational plans going well beyond the scope of the SIP. Through their membership of one of the SICs, all primary school and disability unit teachers are supported by their peers to implement the school's strategic directions and link their professional learning to site priorities. Staff confirmed the model builds ownership for improvement. Convenors of the committees, and some members of GLA teams, said they valued the school's structures and identified consensus decision making processes as integral to making the collaboration work.

The Review Panel heard from the acting Principal that the role of the senior staff members with overall responsibility for performance of committees, teams and individual members was carried out through distributed line management.

The Governing Council members who spoke to the Review Panel were aware of the school's internal review process and SIP but said they had not ever actively looked at the school's performance data. Following the AGM this year, these parents shared a realisation that they could be taking greater interest in setting the directions for the school and in gaining more feedback from other parents and staff. Further analysis of the annual parent perception surveys, particularly in relation to statements like "the school takes parents' opinions seriously" (where 22% responses fall into the 'neither agree nor disagree' category) would indicate that it could be timely to continue discussions about vision, values and shared directions for the future.

Direction 3

Engage the Governing Council and the broader parent community in direction setting and strategic planning in ways that focus on working with the school to improve learning outcomes for students

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Tanunda Primary School is tracking well. Good performance is evident by a culture of improvement using student achievement data as the basis for strategic planning.

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

1. Increase the numbers of students attaining and retaining higher levels of achievement by engaging all students in regular opportunities to reflect on their progress against expected outcomes, receive feedback on their learning, and develop targets that stretch them to attain and exceed their current level of achievement
2. Raise and sustain higher levels of achievement for all students as they progress through the school by developing a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and learning design that ensures learning intentions and criteria for success are made explicit for students
3. Engage the Governing Council and the broader parent community in direction setting and strategic planning in ways that focus on working with the school to improve learning outcomes for students

Based on the school's current performance, Tanunda Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Susan Cameron
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Nicole Cawley
A/PRINCIPAL
TANUNDA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson