

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Stirling North Primary School

Conducted in August 2018



Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Alison Lynch, Review Principal.

School context

Stirling North Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is located 10kms from Port Augusta and 300kms north of Adelaide, and is part of the Port Augusta/Quorn partnership. The current enrolment is 328, and has increased gradually over the last 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 958, and is classified as Category 3 on the department's Index of Disadvantage.

The school population includes 12% students with disabilities, 11% Aboriginal students, and 23% families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 4th year of tenure, a deputy principal, wellbeing coordinator, numeracy coordinator (0.2FTE), literacy coordinator (0.2FTE), and students with disabilities teacher (0.2FTE).

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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?

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

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Stirling North Primary School's focus on critical and creative thinking is evident throughout the school and supports students by providing an engaging curriculum through project and inquiry-based learning in an integrated curriculum. The panel found that students enjoyed the connected learning opportunities and parents reported that students were happy at school and they appreciated the focus on an integrated curriculum as it 'prepared students for high school.' Parents felt students had the opportunity to show their learning in a variety of ways. Classes showed their work at assemblies which are well-attended and appreciated by the community.

Whilst the review panel verified this as an area of strength, it was not fully reflected in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The panel saw pockets of good practice, particularly in upper primary classes, where there was authentic student engagement in co-designing the curriculum and planning of assessment rubrics. Teachers in these classes supported students by providing clarity of task, clear outcomes for self-assessment and opportunities for students to 'own' their learning.

As part of the review process, the panel conducted a pedagogical survey with all teaching staff investigating:

- differentiation
- intellectual stretch and challenge
- feedback for learning, and
- moderation.

Staff identified feedback from students, formative assessment and moderation as areas for improvement; this was corroborated by the panel's findings.

The review panel asked students how they knew how they were going with their learning and common responses showed a reliance on their teacher to tell them or students finding the work easy. Most students stated they receive verbal rather than written feedback, and the panel found little evidence of feedback in student workbooks. Students commented that they are not confident in knowing how they are tracking, and all stated they would like to be more informed on the 'next steps' to improve. Some students were aware of their reading data, and Running Records formed a whole-school data wall. Staff collect data according to the school's data schedule, but the panel found little evidence of how data was used to inform teaching on a daily basis. Students identified with a disability had clear, individual learning plans which were collaboratively constructed. Whilst the physical nature of the school does not limit team teaching, teachers reported they would welcome more opportunities to work with colleagues to continually refine their practice.

During lesson observations the panel found little consistent and coherent practice in literacy and numeracy across the school. However, there were pockets of good practice where students were aware of clear learning intentions and lessons had multiple entry points. There is opportunity to develop a cohesive approach to explicit teaching, providing scaffolded learning for all students and reduce the reliance on worksheets in some classes. Staff are at the beginning of a moderation process, which was the focus of a student free day earlier this year. Further opportunities for staff to work collaboratively on moderation will build teacher confidence and provide rigour.

The school has structured its leadership team to include a coordinator for literacy and a coordinator for numeracy. The numeracy coordinator is working with an outside provider, and 5 teachers looking at pre-testing students to identify interventions. There are the beginnings of a good coaching model, which has the potential to impact on whole-site practice. The literacy coordinator is focused on collecting data to assist teachers to identify intervention against the Big 6 areas of reading. The panel felt there is great opportunity to make clear exactly what effective teaching and learning looks like at Stirling North Primary School. Such a commitment will focus the school's teaching and learning agenda and support consistency in teaching and enhance the school's ethos of creating lifelong learners.

Direction 1

Support consistency in teaching and learning across the school by collaboratively developing and embedding common agreements, effective pedagogy and assessment in literacy and numeracy.

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

A copy of the 2018 site improvement plan (SIP) and copies of action plans were provided, which 'sit behind' and drive the SIP. The documents reflect the development of a systematic approach to providing supportive and safe conditions for students to be successful learners, and a clear intent to establish and embed a connected curriculum with students as co-designers of their learning. The SIP firmly has its foundations in Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Domain 2. This culture is visible to the governing council and other parents, who strongly support the school direction.

Governing council members believed the principal was leading positive changes, and felt connected to the school, appreciating the transparency of leadership. There was evidence provided to the panel that parents and governing council members felt included in decisions made at the school, and their opinions were valued. They supported leadership decisions and showed awareness of the site priorities.

The governing council is well-represented and active in social functions in the school. The school's yearly planning processes are currently led by the principal. When asked about self-review processes, staff talked about their professional development plans. Although staff struggled to articulate self-review processes, there is some evidence that datasets are analysed with most staff discussing how behaviour data had been interrogated. The school is currently collecting data using Sentral, which will provide teachers ready access to data. Perception data, student social and emotional wellbeing surveys, behaviour records, and a range of scheduled assessment information are available to form a valuable bank of multiple measures. Leadership reported that staff collected data, but the next step was to support interrogation and use of data to inform practice.

General feedback from staff was that the principal was driving school direction, supported by leadership. However, staff indicated minimal input into the SIP, and were not aware of the processes and timelines for review. Some teachers viewed the SIP as a guiding document, whilst others did not feel connected to it. When asked how the SIP translates into classroom practice, the junior primary teachers stated: "it's difficult in junior primary".

The principal has strategically asked leadership to set clear '100 day' plans to drive an improvement agenda. He has also included instructional rounds as part of ongoing practice to drive continuous improvement. Staff PLCs are provided a forum to share their work as part of a café process.

To create sustained improvements in educational outcomes it is imperative strategic directions and annual school improvement plans are determined collaboratively. Recent research refers to 3 main types of review: *strategic*, characterised as long-term and focused on key goals related to the school's vision; *regular*, generally smaller, focused and ongoing and feeding into the strategic self-review; and *emergent*, which arise in response to unexpected challenges and opportunities. There are opportunities to reflect on these and involve all stakeholders at a consultative level.

Direction 2

Develop comprehensive and collaborative self-review processes to inform and shape future direction using a range of data including NAPLAN.

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

It was clearly evident to the panel throughout the external school review that the school community, staff, students and parents, were focused on students and their learning. The school should be commended for the work they achieved in embedding safe conditions for learning. Students demonstrated pride in the school and valued the opportunities for student voice and leadership. The year 7 student leader group discussed designing and running lunchtime activities open to all students in the school. All students talked about a strong sense of belonging and being supported by staff who genuinely wanted them to do well.

Upper primary students articulated how they co-constructed learning with their teacher and had a strong voice in their learning. Students valued this practice, saying it 'involved them' in the learning process and reflected that 'it prepared them for high school'. The panel saw some evidence of students undertaking self-reflection and self-evaluation against rubrics, some of which were negotiated with students. One student stated: "rubrics motivate you to get a higher grade". These comments provide evidence that students in upper primary had a strong sense of ownership of their learning which motivated achievement. Younger students expressed a desire to have more voice in their learning which provides an opportunity to create common understandings to support whole-site consistency.

Some evidence of goal-setting for students was provided, but this was not consistent across the school. The goals varied in aspect: some were generalised comments and some were about learner achievement. The strategic intent to develop targets with students represents staff members' understanding that students having ownership of, and engagement with, their learning is key to maximising potential success.

Conversations with students made it clear that some students knew what their goal was. Of these students, most reflected that the goal was made early in the year and had not been changed. Many students who the panel conversed with were not aware of how they could achieve their goal or how adults could assist them, and goals were not visibly displayed. The panel found some evidence of peer-to-peer feedback, and upper primary students expressed the concept of "learning more in groups than a silo". Most would ask a class member if they were stuck and then ask the teacher.

The older students interviewed indicated that around 66% of their work, over any given week, was 'just right', whereas younger students estimated 83% of their work was 'too easy'. Students articulated the teacher could help them improve by providing harder and more challenging work. The panel found some evidence of differentiation, which was not consistent practice.

Parents talked about one of the strengths of the school being the exciting learning and the way staff thought 'outside the box'. Parents valued the increasing opportunities to share the learning through regular assemblies and events to showcase project work.

The school has a good reputation in the community, which includes the learning opportunities offered and access to sporting events such as the RAVE dance competition. Parents shared they were happy with the information they received about their child's progress, especially at interview, and how achievement was celebrated at school events. Some parents were unaware of their child's goals, but felt staff were approachable if they needed further clarification at any point. Governing council members stated NAPLAN was not a high profile for leadership as the focus was on how students learnt. There is strong community participation in events the school coordinates. Parents were supportive of the school's reporting process and appreciated using the SeeSaw app as a form of communication between school and home.

The panel saw some evidence of teachers supporting differentiated learning by providing open-ended tasks with multiple entry points. The school provides significant support for students through the use of SSOs both in class and intervention programs. These support structures and programs were valued by teaching staff and parents. It was evident to the panel there were positive working relationships between teachers and SSOs. The panel saw some evidence of data-driven intervention where the deputy principal was providing targeted reading intervention for SSOs to deliver, but this is emerging practice. Teachers reflected that greater use of data and evidence, and increased opportunities to moderate work, would further strengthen existing practice.

Teachers were asked about their understanding of intellectual stretch and challenge, and what this looked like in their classroom. Teachers predominantly talked about open-ended tasks and level of questioning, with little articulation of surface to deep learning and setting of challenge points. The panel felt there is opportunity for a consistent and strategic whole-school approach to building common understandings and practices of intellectual stretch, which will strengthen student achievement.

Triangulating data, such as PAT, NAPLAN and A-E grades by teachers can assist in building a consistent assessment profile of a student and reflect on curriculum planning and learning design and implications for students.

Direction 3

Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Stirling North Primary School.

Effective practice in school community partnerships was evident at the school. All stakeholders, students, parents and staff provided a number of examples of how students have the opportunity to have an authentic influence on school life. Some examples included how students are involved in running lunchtime activities and working collaboratively to improve school grounds.

Effective practice in student learning was evident in upper primary classes. Students worked with their teachers to co-construct their learning and collaborate on rubrics which have clear success criteria. Students were accessing a connected curriculum through inquiry-based learning, providing them with a high level of engagement and motivation to achieve.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Stirling North Primary School has created safe conditions for learning through effective relationships with students, parents and all stakeholders.

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

1. Support consistency in teaching and learning across the school by collaboratively develop and embed common agreements and effective pedagogy in literacy and numeracy
2. Develop comprehensive and collaborative self-review processes to inform and shape future direction using a range of data including NAPLAN.
3. Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students.

Based on the school's current performance, Stirling North Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.

Adam Wilson
PRINCIPAL
STIRLING NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 90%.

Appendix 2

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. In 2017, 41% of year 1 and 53% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In year 1, there is a decline from 69% to 41% in 2014 to 2017 respectively.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 61% of year 5 students, and 84% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 33% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 16% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 36%, or 4 of 11 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 40%, or 4 of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3 students, 53% of year 5 students, and 68% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 11% of year 3, 8% of year 5, and 13% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 3 of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 67%, or 4 of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.