

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mount Barker Primary School

Conducted in March 2019



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 Julie Bishop Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lynette Simons Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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 Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Mount Barker Primary School caters for children from Reception to year 7. It is situated 35kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 373 students. Enrolment has fluctuated over the past five years. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 419.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1017, and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 9% students with disabilities, 1% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 2% of families eligible for School Card assistance and 4 children in care.

The school leadership team consists of an acting principal in their 2nd year, an acting deputy, a student wellbeing leader, a pedagogical leader and a co-ordinator of the disability unit.

The previous ESR was undertaken in 2015 and the previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Maintain and further develop the current interventions in literacy, and identify, document and implement a similar, recognised intervention strategy to improve student achievement in numeracy, to support the realisation of targets in the site improvement plan.
- Direction 2** Support teachers to embed effective practices into teaching and learning programs and regularly review and evaluate the impact of agreed whole school approaches in terms of effectiveness for moving more students to higher levels of proficiency.
- Direction 3** Identify and implement strategies that build teachers' capacity to meet the needs of all student cohorts and that embed collective responsibility for student achievement outcomes across the whole school.
- Direction 4** Develop a consistent whole school approach for sharing data with students and the provision of constructive feedback that motivates them to own and improve their achievement and learning outcomes.

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

Review of intervention programs has been undertaken, data is used to identify students requiring intervention, NIT time is used to create collaborative opportunities for teams to meet, learning design, assessment and moderation activities are used to support growth in numeracy.

A review of literacy and numeracy agreements has been completed, teachers' PD goals reflect a commitment to literacy and numeracy identified in the SIP, and data is used to identify cohorts and individual students' needs.

Collaborative practices are embedded in staff meeting cycle, teachers are engaging in action research cycles to collect base data and they share and reflect on findings within teaching teams. Staff implement a change in pedagogy, collect data, share and reflect on findings with the team. The school uses PAT-M as a vehicle for addressing individual and group needs in mathematics. Teams use data to identify trends, plan shared assessment tasks, and engage in teaching and moderating findings.

Increased teacher efficacy focusing on data analysis, PD relating to high yield strategies, effective feedback and goal setting are also evident. Learning dispositions to provide students with clarity in what it means to be a successful learner are being developed.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

The school provided clear evidence of extensive consultation processes undertaken in the development of the school improvement plan (SIP), which included all members of the leadership team, staff, parents and governing council.

SIP goals were informed by school data sets, literacy and numeracy guidebooks, and advice from staff. The school leadership consulted authors of the guide books to ensure that the school's proposed pedagogical approach to learning were congruent with department priorities.

The SIP is directly linked to performance development plans of staff and leadership and roles and responsibilities in relation to the SIP are clearly defined. Comprehensive data analysis from a whole-site perspective was considered with specific reference to literacy and numeracy. Perception surveys were undertaken with staff and parents.

In determining the challenge of practice to guide whole school improvement leadership identified a range of strategies from the relevant guide book.

The school reported that there were strong levels of support for the site in the development of the SIP; this included: developing the first draft at a partnership meeting, onsite consultation with the education director and the principal consultant and a one-to-one consultation with the principal consultant for 'fine tuning'. The principal reported that the progress of the SIP is monitored each term at a partnership level. Leadership acknowledged strong levels of support from the local education team.

Leadership identified the following as next steps to strengthen school improvement planning: establishing a school improvement team representative of teachers and leaders, allocating time to monitor the progress of the SIP at identified staff meetings and implementing the traffic light system to generate next steps.

Direction 1 Implement and embed processes where all teachers are provided with planned opportunities to participate in the development, monitoring and review of the SIP throughout the year.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

During interviews, many students, when asked what they could do when stuck in their learning provided effort-based responses e.g. 'try harder', 'practise more', 'ask for help'. Students were also asked to identify

an area of learning they were good at, and explain how they knew they were successful and many responses related to task completion as an indicator of success.

The panel observed limited evidence of students using and articulating metacognitive strategies to monitor and regulate their own learning. Many students were reliant on teacher directions for next steps and were unable to provide a range of strategies they used to improve their learning.

58% of staff indicated in a survey conducted during the ESR that feedback given to students to know how to improve was achieved to a medium extent.

Staff identified a range of strategies to improve feedback for learning, including feedback from the perspective of the student and focusing on developing a range of feedback processes that are deep and rich indicators of achievement. Staff identified the need to ensure that task completion is no longer perceived to be the criteria for success.

Further suggestions from staff included training students how to provide peer feedback and developing common understandings to ensure all students understand that feedback is a pivotal component of learning and is used to deepen learning. Other staff reflected that embedding the dialogic classroom had been very supportive in progressing authentic student influence. The school is well positioned to progress this important work.

Direction 2 Develop and embed a whole-school approach to authentic student influence in learning across the site, including embedding the language of learning with students and their families.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?


The school has worked assiduously to develop a comprehensive whole-site approach in developing and implementing an effective pedagogical framework. The framework is based upon the following pillars: visible learning, teacher efficacy and the dialogic classroom. The pedagogical framework provides a coherent agenda for whole-school improvement that is embedded in research-based best practice.

Immediate work for the staff within this framework will be the development of whole-school processes in working with students to set and review learning goals and targets in a regular cycle of review thus ensuring access to ongoing challenge.

When reflecting on a recent unit of work, via a survey conducted during the ESR, only 23% of staff indicated they had created opportunities to stretch and challenge students to a high extent. The majority of students during interviews, stated that most of their work was just right or too easy. Several students indicated that the Maths Olympiad was an opportunity to be stretched and challenged. Conversely, in the same unit of work, 86% of teachers indicated that they had engaged students to a high degree.

It is apparent that designing learning to ensure that all students are provided with the opportunity to be regularly challenged in their learning will be significant work for the school to undertake.

Staff identified that developing consistent understandings relating to challenge across the site, including the understanding that challenging learners does not equate to working at a higher year level, will improve differentiation. It was also noted that finding ways to sustain higher band achievement was an ongoing area for development.



The development of whole-school processes with specific reference to differentiation, transforming tasks and task design will be essential in ensuring every student has regular, planned opportunities to be challenged across all areas of learning.

Direction 3 Develop and embed whole-school processes in effective learning design, ensuring that all students are regularly challenged in all areas of their learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Mount Barker Primary School has worked diligently to develop a cohesive and comprehensive approach to school improvement. The school has aligned the work of visible learning and dialogic pedagogy to develop and strengthen collective teacher efficacy.

Transparency and clarity in expectations and a whole-school approach to learning improvement are key factors in the improvement agenda at Mount Barker Primary School.

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

- Direction 1** Implement and embed processes where all teachers are provided with planned opportunities to participate in the development, monitoring and review of the SIP throughout the year.
- Direction 2** Develop a whole-school approach to authentic student influence in learning, including embedding the language of learning with students and their families.
- Direction 3** Develop and embed whole-school processes in effective learning design, ensuring that all students are regularly challenged in all areas of their learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Mount Barker Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022



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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. In 2018, 74% of year 1 and 80% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for years 1 and 2.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 81% of year 3 students, 87% of year 5 students and 73% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline and for year 5, an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018 the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 70% to 87% respectively.

For 2018 year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than, and for years 5 and 7, within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 37% of year 3, 40% of year 5 and 30% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 16 of 24 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 50%, or 7 of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 87% of year 5 students and 78% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline, for year 5, an improvement and for year 7, little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 53% to 87% respectively.

For 2018 years 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within and for year 5 higher than, the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 14% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 16% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 62%, or 5 of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 43%, or 3 of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.