

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in March 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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Marlene Henschke and Rick Bennallack, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Grange 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 policies:

Part 1 Governance:

Site bullying data tabled at Governing Council twice a year.

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 93.9%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Grange Primary School, located 10kms from Adelaide in the western suburbs, has an enrolment of 725 students, representing a steady increase over the last five years, from 596 in 2011. The school has an ICSEA score of 1055 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1.5% Aboriginal students, 2.8% Students with Disabilities, 29% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), less than 1% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM) and 16% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of his tenure. Prior to his placement, five principals had been appointed to the role in five years. Other members of the Leadership Team include a Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and two Coordinators, one in the area of Literacy, and one in Numeracy. The Deputy Principal has a 0.2FTE teaching load and the Assistant Principal has 0.3FTE. Other than the Principal, all Leadership Team members' tenures expire at the end of 2016.

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, 62% of Year 1 and 61% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 2 has been upwards, from 52% to 62%.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 90% of Year 3 students, 82% of Year 5 students, and 89% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 & 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards from 93% to 82%.

In 2015 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, results show the school is achieving within the range of similar schools across DECD. Year 3 results are higher than similar schools' achievements.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 3 NAPLAN Reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 52% of Year 3, 34% of Year 5, and 38% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading 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 Reading 57%, or 19 of 33 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015; and 65%, or 21 of 32 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 5 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average and an improvement at Year 7.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88% of Year 3 students, 85% of Year 5 students and 86% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average and little or no change at Year 7.

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

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 43% of Year 3, 21% of Year 5 and 31% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards from 31% to 21%.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Numeracy, 43%, or 10 of 23 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015; and 65%, or 15 of 23 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

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

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

Effective leadership: How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?

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

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Throughout the External Review, the panel sourced evidence that confirmed staff hold a clear understanding of the pre-conditions, pedagogical approaches and planning practices that ensure effective learning outcomes for students. Responses to the collective inquiry question posed at staff meeting: *What makes a good school an outstanding school?* represented widespread understanding of contemporary practice. This knowledge is diversely implemented across the school.

At Grange Primary School, students have access to varying pedagogical approaches. In some classes,

students are delivered strategic teaching that elicits deep thinking, enables them to solve problems and provides intellectual challenge. Students in these classrooms are able to discuss their learning and explain strategies they are employing to progress through the learning process. In other classrooms, students engage in activities and tasks that require limited thinking. In these instances, students describe their learning by reference to producing a product: discussing the properties of the artefact, rather than the skills they are developing or the learning they are experiencing. Many students determine successful outcomes as having completed the work on time and neatly.

The Review Panel acknowledges the professional learning and inquiry that has been undertaken recently regarding effective and consistent practice, and the intent to deprivatise the learning culture in order to develop coherent approaches. The panel was provided evidence of a clear intent to move Grange Primary School from a *good* school to an *outstanding* school. The quality practice evident within some classrooms provides a model upon which to build to achieve this aspiration.

A range of valid data is gathered at Grange Primary School. The panel was provided examples of achievement, perception and contextual data. A central system is used to store data and is accessible to all staff. Reports regarding the strategic or diagnostic usage of the data sets were varied. Teachers mainly reported having referenced data to determine groups based on ability, 'where the student is at'. Almost all students confirmed this practice, discussing placement into groups according to how well they are achieving, and describing the teacher supporting the group of students who are experiencing difficulties, whilst other groups complete activities, for example, spelling contracts.

It was highly apparent throughout the review that staff have engaged in professional learning, led by the Principal, regarding the Wave model of intervention, promoting the right of each student to access, and the responsibility of every teacher to deliver individualised learning targeted to students' needs. The panel commends this direction. The next step in this improvement process is to ensure data is used analytically to determine *why* a student is at the level they are, to determine both miscues and strengths and to design learning opportunities that respond to this data.

Direction 1

Provide targeted teaching that meets the needs of every learner, by building teacher capacity to use data diagnostically to design differentiated learning opportunities.

How well does the school leadership foster a culture of improvement?

The panel heard through many discussions that the appointment of a Principal who has displayed commitment to student learning and collective school improvement has brought about long-awaited stability. Almost all parents and staff uniformly expressed their appreciation of the approach the new Principal has brought to the school, describing his leadership as focused on learning and, as one parent stated: "how can you argue with that?"

Some significant change has been afforded in a short period of time, through strong and well-informed leadership. Of note is the review of improvement planning practices and documentation at the school. A collective approach to the review of the school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) was undertaken last year. Valid data was accessed by staff to determine priorities and inform direction. From this process, the areas of Literacy and Numeracy were identified as fundamental to improvement. The panel heard that this process was consultative and rigorous; an important and well-designed approach from which to begin the improvement journey.

The establishment of effective systems and processes designed to progress consistent, evidence-based practice is representative of effective and strategic leadership. Through a number of forums, the panel heard that the introduction of Performance and Development processes has enabled staff to reflect on existing practice, celebrate successes and plan for further growth. One staff member described the process as an *entitlement* that she appreciates and benefits from.

The investment of six half-days dedicated to professional learning for every teacher, as well as what has been offered through school and Partnership opportunities, has been well-received by staff. The recent professional learning regarding numeracy teaching practices has clearly had a positive impact as evidence

of consistent approaches is apparent across many classrooms. Professional learning is further strengthened by the coaching model implemented by the Coordinators of Literacy and Numeracy. Leadership of Performance and Development and Professional Learning systems will be key in embedding consistent pedagogy across the school.

It was highly apparent to the panel that quality teaching and learning are at the heart of the improvement plan at Grange Primary School. Parents and staff are clear that this direction is paramount. Many conversations the panel held throughout the review made evident that unified leadership, collectively focused on the learning agenda, will ensure the school's priorities are achieved.

Direction 2

Broaden educational leadership across the school through a coherent and unified approach to leading effective curriculum and pedagogical development.

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

Conversations with students made evident that many of them are able to think diversely and creatively, and pose sophisticated suggestions and opinions. In all forums convened, students at Grange Primary School responded thoughtfully to the questions raised and engaged readily with discussions; they clearly value learning and hold strong opinions regarding what constitutes quality learning.

One comment from a Year 5 student determined quality learning as *learning new things, people being interested and the teacher getting involved*. When asked what would be 'interesting', he replied: "Something we're likely to encounter in our lives, real-world logic". Purposeful and engaging learning opportunities were observed in some classes during the review. In one class, students discussed their differing plans to solve a problem and to assess success with a clear understanding of the learning intention. In another class, students had access to questioning techniques that prompted them to think deeply, whilst creating a culture of shared inquiry. In many instances, students were of the opinion that they were required to finish a piece of work, for example, a spelling contract. Once the work was complete, they reported being provided another worksheet or being directed to read a book. A focus on compliance and completion was evident.

The panel heard about and spoke with students identified as Students with High Intellectual Potential (SHIP). It was reported that these students had previously received intervention from an outside source, implemented through classroom withdrawal, for extension-building activities. These students and some teachers were of the opinion that access to this form of intervention had been limited in 2016 and, as a result, opportunities for intellectual challenge were compromised. Through time spent in classes and conversations with students, the panel was made aware of the learning potential of many students, in addition to those identified as SHIP. In one class, younger students were all expected to write the numerals 1 to 10 on a range of drawings on a worksheet. In speaking with the two students next to her, the Review Panel member heard one student spontaneously begin to count by twos and the other then began to count by tens, past one hundred. When asked why they would count like this they replied: "You can get to your number quicker". Potential such as this exists within classes across Grange Primary School and the opportunity to maximise this potential is highly apparent.

The panel is aware that an opportunity for a teaching staff member to be released to support SHIP is imminent. This initiative can be used strategically to work alongside classroom teachers to co-plan and co-teach to deliver learning opportunities that are purposeful, engaging and challenging for all students. Approaches of this nature, that embed effective practice across all classrooms, will see Grange Primary School move from *good* to *outstanding*.

Direction 3

Enable student ownership of learning and intellectual challenge through collective inquiry into authentic engagement to inform pedagogical practice.