

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR WILLIAMSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 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 Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Susan Copeland, 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 Williamstown Primary School has verified that the school is working towards all applicable DECD policies:

Site Procedures - Item 1

Staff have been reminded about the importance of timely input of ED 155s into the Incident and Response Management System (IRMS) to improve the school's response time to reported incidences.

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 complaint with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 90%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Williamstown Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7 with a co-located preschool. It is situated 60kms from the Adelaide CBD, on the border of the Barossa Valley region and is part of the Greater Gawler local Partnership. The enrolment in 2016 is 203 students, with 34 children at the preschool. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1023.

The school population includes 60% boys and 40% girls, 2% Aboriginal students, approximately 16% of students eligible for School Card assistance, and 11% of Students with Disabilities. Enrolment has been steady over the last 5 years. There is an increasing number of students enrolling at Williamstown Primary School with complex social and emotional needs.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 8th year of her tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal and Counsellor. There is a range of experience amongst the teaching staff.

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, 40% of Year 1 and 83% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represented a decline in Year 1 from the historic baseline average and a 3-year downward trend from 86% in 2013 to 40% in 2015. The Year 2 result represented an improvement against the historic trend.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3, 71% of Year 5, and 67% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represented little or no improvement from the historic baseline average. It is noted that 3 of 31 (10%) students in Year 3, 1 of 24 (8%), and 4 of 24 (17%) students in Year 7 did not participate in the test.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school achieved results lower than similar students across DECD schools. For Years 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the range of the results across DECD schools.

In 2015, 8 Year 3 (26%), 6 Year 5 (25%) and 4 Year 7 (17%) students who sat the test achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline in relation to the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50%, or 4 of 8 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 33%, or 2 of 6 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. These results represent little or no improvement from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 61% of Year 3 students, 79% of Year 5 students, and 71% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represented a decline, and in Years 5 and 7, little or no improvement in relation to the historical average.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved results lower than similar students across DECD schools. For Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving above, and for Year 7, within the range of the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 5 of 31 (16%) Year 3 students, 1 of 24 (4%) Year 5 students, and 5 of 24 (21%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represented a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 25%, or 1 of 4 students from Year 3, remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result represented a decline from the historic baseline average. From Year 3 to 7, 67%, or 2 of 3 students remained in the upper bands in 2015, representing an improvement.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on 4 key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching:	How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?
Effective Leadership:	How effectively is teacher collaboration facilitated through the provision of time, structures and clear expectations?
School Community Partnerships:	How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?
Improvement Agenda:	How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Students talked to the Review Panel about what teachers do to support them in their learning. They appreciated that teachers explain the purpose of what they are learning and make connections to 'real-life'. Teachers explicitly demonstrate a concept and 'deliver the content in multiple layers'. The use of closed, open and flip questions is a common practice to enable students to think on various levels. Others use inquiry and investigations with open-ended tasks to engage students in the learning process.

Teachers and students explained how the school caters for the range of learning needs. They use a three-wave model of intervention in developing reading skills. This consists of whole-class teaching, guided reading groups and one-on-one support if they are struggling in their reading. A group of students (independent readers) are involved in Reciprocal Reading or a book club, in which they study and analyse a novel, practising the skills of summarising, predicting, clarifying and asking questions. Parents were positive about the support provided to their children.

For learning to be effective, teachers need to have clear outcomes in mind. Some teachers are using assessment rubrics to make the learning expectations transparent to students and to develop greater student responsibility and self-monitoring. Students said that knowing the success criteria tells them what is expected and what constitutes 'quality' work. The Site Improvement Plan specifies the *whole school use of writing rubrics in line with AC (Australian Curriculum) which helps students become more aware of own learning progress and areas for development* as a key strategy. Currently, the extent that success criteria are made visible and explicit to support students to improve varies across the school.

A few teachers identified that they need to provide more opportunities for students to demonstrate they can transfer concepts and skills into new contexts. The key to this work is the way in which teachers design learning tasks, which require deeper thinking and greater intellectual challenge. Several parents commented that the extent their children are challenged depends on who their teacher is. The number of students achieving in the higher bands of NAPLAN would indicate this is an area for improvement for the school.

Direction 1

To support and intellectually stretch students, improve the design of tasks and ensure assessment criteria are transparent to motivate and guide students to improve.

How effectively is teacher collaboration facilitated through the provision of time, structures and clear expectations?

Over the past few years, the school has endeavoured to provide greater coherence and consistency for learners as they progress through their schooling. The Literacy Block structure, Reception to Year 2, and Years 3 to 7 Literacy Agreements outline the expectations of teachers. In Term 2, the common focus was on improving teaching and learning in writing. A genre map was developed and, at the time of the review, classes were learning the 'procedure' genre.

There is also a Mathematics Agreement which describes the Numeracy Block, consisting of three parts: mental routines, problem-solving, and sharing time. The Review Panel observed a science lesson, where students utilised their numeracy skills by graphing their results and literacy skills in writing up their findings. It is planned that in Term 3 there will be a focus on mathematics and numeracy teaching across the school.

Several teachers described the culture at the school this year as being the most collaborative it has been during their tenure. They indicated the sub-school Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were working well this year, as teachers were more willing to share and learn from each other.

Time is a precious commodity in schools. The school is able to periodically release groups of teachers. This was seen as important time for teachers to work together to develop common understandings and consistency between classes. Teachers also talked about their use of social media to communicate with each other, and to ensure they were all 'on the same page'.

Many teachers at Williamstown Primary School are the sole teacher at their year level (that is, one Year 2/3 teacher, one Year 6/7 teacher). They indicated more opportunities for them to work with teachers in the same year levels from nearby schools would really help, as it would enable them to develop a better understanding of the Achievement Standards and to gain greater consistency in their judgements and grading of student work.

The weekly staff meeting is one of the few occasions that teachers can get together regularly to discuss learning and to plan together. The staff meeting consists of administration followed by professional learning time. It was acknowledged that sometimes, despite good intentions, admin takes over the PD time. As one teacher told the panel: “most of us are IT savvy, and there are more effective ways of communicating than taking up staff meeting time”. They agreed that it requires self-discipline by all staff to put their learning as the number one priority, and to use this time to maximum benefit.

Direction 2

To support teachers to provide consistency in their judgements of student work, create and maximise professional learning opportunities within the school and with nearby Partnership schools.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

In 2015, the Year 6 and 7 students participated in a DECD Middle Years wellbeing survey. The results showed that many students at Williamstown Primary School reported a high level of engagement with their learning (55% compared with the state average of 32%), while low engagement level was 10% compared with the state average of 36%. Of the 10 domains inquiring into students’ social and emotional development, perseverance was the lowest, although this was consistent with survey results across schools in DECD.

The school has adopted a Positive Education approach to build students’ character strengths. Positive Education focuses on specific skills that assist students to strengthen their relationships, build positive emotions, enhance personal resilience, promote mindfulness and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Students and parents provided anecdotal stories of how Positive Education was helping them to become more confident, and more willing to ‘have a go’. The Review Panel observed the school is a caring environment, where students support each other, and across all ages, through the ‘buddy’ system.

Leaders talked about the importance of the *gradual release of responsibility* to support students in developing greater independence. The gradual release of responsibility is recognized as a successful approach for moving classroom instruction from teacher-centred, whole-group delivery, to student-centred collaboration and independent practice. To be successful, the ‘gradual release’ model requires teachers to scaffold and personalise the learning processes, as some students need more explicit modelling and support than others. The opportunities for students to participate in shaping their experiences at school must be real and sustained over time.

The Review Panel observed students in the Year 6/7 class willingly engaged in doing 2 to 3 drafts on their writing, and actively co-constructing the assessment rubric through the process. This enabled them to have a deep understanding of what constituted quality writing, and they were highly motivated to persist and improve their final product. They talked about the gradual release model and explained how it supported them to take more responsibility for their learning.

While many teachers talked about Positive Education and the *gradual release of responsibility* as important initiatives, it was evident that the level of take-up in classrooms varies at this stage.

Direction 3

To reinforce students’ character strengths, particularly the capacity to persevere and maintain motivation, embed the gradual release of responsibility model and Positive Education into daily practices.

How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

At Williamstown Primary School, teachers and leaders endeavour to know their students well. They are committed to putting 'faces on the data' and to regularly tracking individual student progress. For example, teachers take Running Records weekly for beginning readers to observe the strategies students are using to decode and comprehend texts. The school uses a range of literacy assessment tools and a traffic light system to identify students who need intervention support and those who are in extension groups, and to design strategies and activities accordingly.

The school is commended for the use of data within the classroom, and for tracking and monitoring individual progress.

During the review, the Review Panel noted trends in the level of student achievement. In particular, the 3-year decline in Year 1 Running Records, and the Year 3 Numeracy results, which are below the range of students with similar characteristics, are causes for concern. Various reasons were put forward as possible explanations for these results.

In light of these trends, it may be wise for the school to reconsider and interrogate all datasets, including A-E grade distribution, to be sure that their strategies and efforts are getting traction and achieving the intended impact.

Direction 4

To ensure the school's interventions and actions are impacting on learning outcomes, analyse and utilise patterns and trends in achievement data to make strategic decisions.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Williamstown Primary School provides a coherent and engaging curriculum for students. Teachers' pedagogies support students to understand what they are learning and why. Teachers are putting faces to students' individual achievement data and using it to track progress.

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

1. To support and intellectually stretch students, improve the design of tasks and ensure assessment criteria are transparent to motivate and guide students to improve.
2. To support teachers to provide consistency in their judgements of student work, create and maximise professional learning opportunities within the school and with nearby Partnership schools.
3. To reinforce students' character strengths, particularly the capacity to persevere and maintain motivation, embed the gradual release of responsibility model and Positive Education into daily practices.
4. To ensure the school's interventions and actions are impacting on learning outcomes, analyse and utilise patterns and trends in achievement data to make strategic decisions.

Based on the school's current performance, Williamstown 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.

Julee Veljanovski
PRINCIPAL
WILLIAMSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson