The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Fairview Park Primary School

Conducted in July 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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Marie Wright, Review Principal.

School context

Fairview Park Primary School caters for children from preschool to year 7. It is situated 19kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Tea Tree Gully Partnership. The school enrolment in 2018 is 238 students. Enrolment has fluctuated over the last 5 years. The school is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1026.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 7% students with a verified disability, 17% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 2% students of EALD background, and no children in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of her tenure at the school, and a senior leader, student intervention and wellbeing. There are 15 teachers, including 8 Step 9 teachers, and none in the early years of their career.

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:

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

Effective Teaching: **To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?**

Effective Leadership: **To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?**

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

Every student is engaged and motivated by teaching characterised by:
- high expectations
- explicit support to tackle hard learning, and
- learning design that provides challenge through problem-solving, inquiry, and real-life connections.

Such teaching develops self-directed learners who are fully equipped for lifelong learning and the rewards it offers.

There is a focus on mindset and disposition through the powerful learning concept at Fairview Park Primary School. There is evidence that this work is becoming strongly embedded across the school and is influencing ways students can think and talk about their learning. Teachers reported seeing a change in student behaviour and engagement in learning through consistent references to powerful learning attributes and school values. Powerful learning is providing a meta-language about learning, which also supports the development of social and emotional self-management in the classroom and yard. Upper

primary teachers talked to the panel about how they have recognised the value of productive struggle in maths. Middle primary teachers said the powerful learning work has better equipped students to accept struggle in learning as they can talk about and make positive sense of the value of such struggle. Students indicated that they understand the links between working hard to achieving learning goals, and that liking learning was important to improvement. Whilst mindset is a big focus, evidence of growth and improvement in learning appeared to be anecdotal and based on teacher judgement. The capabilities that are being developed through powerful learning could be effectively monitored through tools designed for purpose, for example, TfEL and Visible Learning.

Across the school various initiatives to develop self-directed student learning through inquiry-based pedagogies are being implemented:
- Playful Literacies
- Elementary Engineering
- Years 3 to 5 maths project
- STEM 500
- questioning focus, and
- Thinking Maths.

Work in these projects is supported by regular expert input and collaborative planning time. All teachers are seeing the value of such transformative pedagogies to student engagement and motivation in learning. The impact of this work could be strengthened through evidence-based monitoring of the outcomes of the inquiry-based pedagogies.

The Brightpath writing initiative is an approach that is being adopted across the whole school, through which teachers have begun to share learning data with students. All teachers showed evidence that they are developing an understanding of the need for and value of students knowing where they are at in their learning, understanding learning intentions, and the explicit criteria for making learning growth. Student achievement data leads to goal-setting, which is valued by staff and students. This work could be strengthened by moving to a more rigorous process for frequent monitoring and review of the goals.

Teachers have begun to understand the value of student agency in learning through goal-setting, and said that sharing data with students enables them to accept the level they are at and see where they need to go next. Some older students are using a range of ways to know if they have learned, and see teacher marking as valuable for them to learn better. In one class, students had an A-E rubric and students knew clearly what they needed to do in order to achieve an 'A'. Students in one class were happy to ask for help at the classroom 'help desk'. Younger students were engaged and self-motivated. There is more work to be done in this space.

The principal identified that some teachers are continuing to protect students from A-E grades. An audit of students in some classes showed limited understanding of learning intentions and success criteria of a piece of work they discussed with the review officer. It was only in one class that the panel found evidence of good student understanding about and application of learning intentions and success criteria. Younger students were less able to articulate how they know they are learning or how the teacher lets them know what the learning is.

A mechanism for students to provide feedback to teachers about teaching has been initiated through the student representative council (SRC). However, it is at the discretion of the teacher as to whether they incorporate and respond to this feedback from their students. The panel was given evidence that some teachers discount this feedback as individual student preferences and biases.

Through use of data with students to set goals and powerful learning and inquiry-based pedagogies, teachers are becoming aware of the value of harnessing student agency in learning through metacognition. The school is well-placed to broaden and develop consistency of practices that will further enhance student agency in learning. Teachers can make stronger links between dispositional learning and increased academic student achievement. There is a need to privilege 'investigative pedagogies' and use them dominantly rather than marginally. Using student achievement data with students and families can be deepened with more regular and rigorous review of goals, and by habitual student reflections about learning intentions and success criteria.

Direction 1
Develop common agreements for consistent whole-school practices to fully develop student agency in learning and develop students as self-directed learners.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

Teachers must become more informed evaluators. They need to continually ask and check if and how their methods are making a positive difference to the learning of all their students. They must carefully monitor the impact they are having as they teach so they can continually adjust what they are doing to be more effective for more students more of the time.

There is whole-school collection of a range of student learning data, which teachers regularly analyse together. All teachers are aware of and compliant with the testing requirements. Leadership is starting to see the value of data triangulation. There is good monitoring of reading development through Running Records and then through Lexiles.

Data is used widely to group students for instruction. In some cases, such as in Jolly Phonics, where teachers are regularly collecting data to check for learning growth, groupings are fluid and responsive to changing needs. Students move between classes depending on task or needs in Jolly Phonics.

Whilst data is used to group students, review of the groupings is mostly infrequent and informal. Teachers are not aware of the need for formative assessment, and there is a need for 'in-learning time' assessment. To shift the differentiation through groupings, teachers rely on their judgement, or if a student requests review because they want to progress to a higher group. The school should ensure that grouping and streaming students based on ability is reviewed for efficacy through evidence-based practices. The year 3 to 5 team had a deeper understanding of the need to use evidence-based monitoring, as well as teacher judgement to closely monitor the impact of teaching actions on student learning outcomes.

Parents value the school, and trust that teachers are successfully monitoring student learning growth and keeping students on-track in learning. The school is seen as proactive in the identification and provision of support for students with special needs, in both the disability and intervention areas. Parents know about and appreciate the differentiation that occurs, as well as the provision for the extension of higher-achieving students. However, what parents regard about the school is more wellbeing than learning-related, as they assume the school would let them know if learning was not occurring. Although they value the term overviews, which describe curriculum content, parents would like more data about student learning that regularly informs them about their child's achievements against standards. There are opportunities for the school to improve the way it uses data to report student learning to parents. Teachers share data with families at interviews, but parents said they find it difficult to understand.

The school seeks and resources intervention programs in response to data-identified student needs. However, Aboriginal student learning data shows that, whilst attendance has improved significantly, there is still opportunity for achievement to improve. Continuous critical review of the success of provision of interventions for Aboriginal students is needed to ensure improvement occurs continuously.

The school has made considerable advances into understanding the value of using data for planning. However, with a few exceptions, such as Jolly Phonics and Brightpath, current data practices are largely *summative* and used to set broad differentiation parameters. Firm planning and review is less evident, with over-reliance on teacher judgement to monitor the impact of practices that have been planned using data. Improvement initiatives are not being monitored for impact. Most reflection is based on teacher judgement rather than deliberate collection of objective evidence. There is a need to bring an evidence base to this work.

Direction 2
Deepen the extent to which curriculum planning and instruction is evidence-based using both formative and summative assessment tools.

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?

School improvement must build teacher capacity with a focus on getting improved results for students. Successful schools hold quality student learning as their core business, and support teachers to work collaboratively to incorporate agreed whole-school, evidence-based best practices effectively into their classrooms.

All groups of stakeholders reported that the new school values have become an active, lived part of the school culture. The school has been successfully re-cultured around learning through these values and the narrative about learning that is being fostered through the powerful learning dispositional work. The panel found little evidence that student behaviour is impacting significantly on learning. Year 1 to 2 students said that the disruptive behaviour of others is what sometimes gets in the way of their learning. Students like the school and have helpful and supportive teachers. Generally students understand that the purpose of schooling is learning, and value what is learning-related at the school. They could describe a range of academic skills they are getting better at.

Parents appreciate and trust the responsive approachable leadership and staff team. School governance is strong, underpinned by numerous sub-committees, the number of which is notable for a school of this size. The governing council reported strong parent support for and involvement in the school. Families stay at the school because of its strong community feel. Students are supported well at key transition points of preschool to school, years 7 to 8, and when students come into the school from other sites.

Some whole-school agreements have been developed, and all teachers said they use agreements to inform their planning. However, the whole-school agreements do not appear to be fully owned and embedded. Teachers are able to interpret the agreements and tweak them to suit their personal teaching style and preferences; however, there is a need for more clarity about and accountability for agreements and what the 'non-negotiables' are.

Teaching practice is being deprivatised through frequent collaboration for planning and review. Teachers are increasingly team-teaching, although not all class teachers are able to work in a team. All staff are open and eager to improve their practices and value the ways they are supported to take up new learning. There are different improvement projects in the school, and many teachers said it's hard to balance the demands at times, although they are able to influence and modify leadership expectations.

Performance and development practices are effectively linked to training and development, the collaborative work in school teams and partnership. Staff are regularly supported with release time and common planning times. The professional learning community (PLC) model is structured by leadership questions and agendas. Some teams meet more frequently with leadership, depending on the improvement focus. There is obvious benefit of more regular time with leadership. Teachers would like more PLC time, especially to work on their own agendas; however, more observation and feedback from peers and leaders would add value to bringing new learning into classroom teaching. All teachers spoke positively about the benefits of one observation and feedback session to developing questioning practices. This provided scaffolded support to move new learning into practice.

There are many programs and training being engaged in, however, cycles of improvement are not clear. Improvement actions are based on implementing someone's good ideas rather than evidence-based determinations by staff of what needs to be improved, and collaborative evidence-based monitoring of the impact of planned actions. There is still considerable discretion about teacher practice. The panel found little evidence that consistent pedagogies are being developed and monitored despite the abundance of improvement work. There is an over-reliance on the individual or pairs of teachers finding their own ways of implementing a practice they have developed, have an interest in, or have been encouraged to explore. Agreements about and accountability for implementation were not strong.

Direction 3
Strengthen and deepen the school's improvement agenda by agreeing on whole-school priorities, reducing the number of initiatives and implementing structured peer observations and feedback to support all teachers to embed agreed non-negotiable pedagogies.

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 Fairview Park Primary School.

The panel identified that the efficacy of the collaboration between the preschool and junior primary sector of the school is notable. The quality of preschool learning and the value it adds to students successfully transitioning to school is a great strength and a major reason that families choose the school. Close collaboration between preschool and junior primary teachers is fostered through quality communication and collaboration around improvement initiatives such as Playful Literacies. The resourcing of quality leadership for the preschool is another key element of the value that coherent early years' practices contribute to student learning.

The school resources rigorous, high-quality practices for intervention and support of students with verified disabilities, which is evidence-based, regularly monitored for efficacy, and individualised through a case management 'team around-the-child' approach. Additional resourcing is sought and tailored as needed, and early intervention scaffolds students to adjust quickly and successfully to the school, enabling their learning to be activated and the teaching and learning environment to be protected from disruptive behaviours.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Fairview Park Primary School effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted intervention. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing, collaborative professional learning. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.
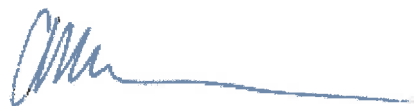
The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

1. Develop common agreements for consistent whole-school practices to fully develop student agency in learning and develop students as self-directed learners.
2. Deepen the extent to which curriculum planning and instruction is evidence-based using both formative and summative assessment tools.
3. Strengthen and deepen the school's improvement agenda by agreeing on whole-school priorities, reducing the number of initiatives and implementing structured peer observations and feedback to support all teachers to embed agreed non-negotiable pedagogies.

Based on the school's current performance, Fairview Park 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.

Melissa Evans
PRINCIPAL
FAIRVIEW PARK 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 92.7%.

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, 69% of year 1 and 88% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in both year 1 and 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 79% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students, and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 3 has been downwards, from 91% in 2015 to 79% in 2017.

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

In 2017, 39% of year 3, 23% of year 5, and 23% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 50%, or 7 of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 69% of year 5 students, and 90% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 72% in 2015 to 90% in 2017.

In 2017 year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across government schools. In 2017 year 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school achieved higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 30% of year 3, 15% of year 5, and 13% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 2 of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 38%, or 3 of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.