

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Wallaroo Primary School

Conducted in May 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 Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Robins, 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
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Wallaroo Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 160kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 106 students. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 177.

The school has an ICSEA score of 936 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 18% Aboriginal students, 10% students with disabilities, 1% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 7 children in care, and 70% of families eligible for School Card assistance. There is significant transience in the school.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of her tenure at the school and a student wellbeing leader.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Raise the achievement of identified primary students not achieving the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement in literacy and numeracy through targeted interventions.**
- Direction 2** **Increase the proportion of students achieving above the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement by developing more challenging learning tasks, and strategically integrating the broader Australian Curriculum in support of varied learning needs and interests.**
- Direction 3** **Achieve high standards across the Australian Curriculum by building teacher capacity to expand pedagogical practices described in the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) and extending the current learning culture of high expectations.**

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

Since the previous review, there have been many changes to leadership and staff. Currently, a very positive culture exists within the school and its community. It is evident through discussions with all stakeholders that there has been a significant shift in pedagogical practices over the past 4 years and school expectations are now clearly outlined in documentation. Explicit teaching has been the focus of the improvement journey and staff and parents refer to this as being a significant impetus of the change to culture and learning. Explicit practices are seen by staff as being beneficial to the wellbeing and learning needs of Wallaroo Primary School (WPS) students.

Teachers like the rigour and consistency of the explicit teaching expectations and describe clarity in knowing what is expected of them. Assessment is high on the agenda and is regularly collected by all teachers. Parents felt well informed about their child's progress. Intervention is informed by data collected on students, and rigour to the timetable enables students to move between classes and groups according to their learning needs.

The school has worked with external providers and the partnership in implementing the Australian Curriculum (AC) and is currently incorporating Blooms taxonomy into learning to develop creative and critical thinking. There is still work to be done with the AC in Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) and incorporating the pedagogical practices described in TfEL which will further stretch and challenge learners. The panel found students to be happy, engaged learners.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

Extensive documentation and clarity of processes are evident at WPS. Regular self-review processes have been identified and the panel observed one of these processes in action at staff meeting. Staff regularly assess students and agreed whole-school assessments are collected each term and shared with families. Students are assessed prior to starting at the school to ensure identification of learning needs.

The data review team established last year identified gaps and misconceptions in learning to inform the current Site Improvement Plan (SIP). While most teachers elected to be on this team, further staff meetings ensured a collaborative process in establishing the current SIP. Support staff and parents said that while they had not been actively involved in these discussions, they trusted the leaders and teachers and were kept informed. Teachers were able to discuss how the challenges of practice related to their current work, while support staff were less clear. Performance development plans sighted provided evidence that they are aligned to the SIP. The school's current focus for teachers is 'I am an evaluator, what is my impact?' This is still an evolving and significant concept for the school.

Many high yield strategies have been identified for implementation into classroom practice including lesson structure, wait time, pose pause pounce and bounce, 3 ways of knowing and learning, learning intentions and success criteria. Consistency in the implementation of these strategies, including the language of learning, were not evident to the panel at the time of the review. Staff feel supported to pursue professional learning to improve pedagogical practice and their strengths and passions are identified to others for collegial support in these practices. There is much work identified in the SIP for implementation however many staff are exploring other programs and approaches. Staff are aware that embedded practice takes time and commitment, therefore attention to SIP priorities and strategies that have best impact on student outcomes should take priority.

Direction 1 Ensure the best educational outcomes occur for all students, through ongoing systems of self-review, which effectively evaluate the impact of all implementations and actions, and consistently embed those effective practices R-7.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Partnership work has supported staff to plan and assess using the AC and network learning groups have enabled rich dialogue as part of task design and moderation with partnership colleagues. External providers for the partnership have guided this journey and while teachers at WPS see this work positively, they identify LDAM and other high yield strategies such as learning intentions and success criteria, as ongoing work to improve.

Explicit teaching has been a consistent pedagogical practice since the previous ESR and is well embedded. Teachers like the structure and knowing clearly what is expected of them at WPS. Significant resources, documentation and rigour in practice across the school were evident to the panel. A literacy block until recess and numeracy block until lunch, absorb two thirds of the school day. Parents and staff see this as being a pivotal change for the school that has met the needs of the students. The panel noted several instances where staff were reading from a 'script', students using program workbooks and consistent repetitive 'chanting' of warm-up lessons across classes. Timetables and lessons are aligned to enable students to move between classes according to their learning needs and students move happily across year levels for lessons that should provide them additional support or stretch.

Differentiation and stretch are described by teachers as being an integral part of what they do and it was evident to the panel that they know their students and associated data. Teachers provided one example that has been designed over time as part of the explicit lesson structure, where 3 levels of warm ups are provided for above level, at level and below level students.

Classroom dialogue that promotes deep thinking and problem solving was not evident to the panel during observations of the explicit teaching program. Some teachers talked about classroom dialogue and differentiation practices as being more prevalent in the afternoons that were less structured.

The panel found that learning is significantly teacher directed at WPS. It is noted that the SIP identifies classroom dialogue as one of the strategies for improvement.

Direction 2 Ensure differentiation, challenge and stretch within daily practice, by strengthening pedagogical practices of effective task design, improved balance between explicit teaching and classroom dialogue, and establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Summative data practices are extensive at WPS and well documented. Student assessment is used to inform intervention and student grouping for explicit teaching lessons. Performance discussions with teachers are focused on student achievement and specific actions undertaken to address individual needs. PAT data in particular is unpacked at a deeper level to determine misconceptions and future planning. Feedback from students on their learning and wellbeing has been a practice each term at the school. Leaders and staff are clear that student voice about their learning is taken into account for future planning.

Student assessment is regularly recorded, analysed and shared with parents. Parents confirm that data is shared with them at interviews and that they know their children have goals. Students know that data is collected about them and shared with their parents however they were not able to articulate how they are doing in their learning, or describe to the panel what improving their work would look like eg how they could achieve an 'A'. They referred to their reports as the way they know if they are doing well.

Students were able to talk about goals and feedback they receive. The examples provided were mostly broad and not focused specifically on the next step in their learning progression. Formative assessment practices were described by teachers as conferencing, checking in with students during explicit teaching and students clarifying their thinking during discussions. The opportunity for formative assessment practices and feedback to inform students on the next stage of their learning is work yet to be refined by the school. Students were found not to have a 'language of learning' or regular engagement with their assessment, which would enable them to benchmark their learning.

Explicit feedback and formative assessment go hand in hand in providing both teacher and student the next steps for individual students. Consolidating a consistent 'language of learning' R-7, and enabling student access to their feedback and assessment, will facilitate specific learning goals for stretch and challenge to be set, monitored and regularly reviewed by students.

Direction 3 Strengthen student agency in learning by developing deeper teacher practices in the use of formative assessment and feedback that enables students to benchmark their learning and take ownership of monitoring, assessing and setting specific individual learning goals.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Students, parents and staff describe with clarity the improvements they have seen to the teaching and learning at Wallaroo Primary School. There is strong school community support for the work of the leaders and staff. Explicit teaching has been the backbone of significant change and the wellbeing of students has been purposefully addressed. All staff are dedicated to the priorities of the school and to constantly improving their practice. There is clear attention to knowing the students and their individual needs through assessment and connection with families. Regardless of transience, there is a strong sense of connectedness and cohesion within the school.

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

- Direction 1** Ensure the best educational outcomes occur for all students, through ongoing systems of self-review, which effectively evaluate the impact of all implementations and actions, and consistently embed those effective practices R-7.
- Direction 2** Ensure differentiation, challenge and stretch within daily practice, by strengthening pedagogical practices of effective task design, improved balance between explicit teaching and classroom dialogue, and establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria.
- Direction 3** Strengthen student agency in learning by developing deeper teacher practices in the use of formative assessment and feedback that enables students to benchmark their learning and take ownership of monitoring, assessing and setting specific individual learning goals.

Based on the school's current performance, Wallaroo 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, 80% of year 1 and 72% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement for year 1 and for year 2 little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 71% of year 3 students, 78% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 an improvement and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 92% to 50%.

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

In 2018, 19% of year 3, 22% of year 5 and no 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, 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, and no 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 52% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students and 33% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 an improvement and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 83% to 33%.

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

In 2018, 5% of year 3, 11% of year 5 and 8% 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, 100%, or 1 out of 1 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 100%, or 1 out of 1 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.