

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR CLARENDON 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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Judith Howie, 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 Clarendon 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 2 Learning Improvement: Item 5

All teachers will have been trained in the delivery of the Child Protection Curriculum, *Keeping Children Safe*, by the end of the upcoming July school holidays (2016). A scope and sequence for composite classes is yet to be developed.

Part 4 People and Culture: Item 3

All staff will have documented Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) by the end of Term 4, 2016.

Part 5 Safety: Item 5

The ICT Student User Agreement will be updated for all students by the end of Term 3, 2016.

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 89%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Clarendon Primary School is located in the Adelaide Hills, 28 kilometres south of the Adelaide CBD. The school has an ICSEA score of 1041 and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. Less than 10% of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

In 2016, there are 95 students attending the school. The school population includes 4% of Students with Disabilities. There are no students from any other identified priority groups.

The enrolment numbers have increased by 30% since 2013 and by 50% since 2010. The school is nearing capacity at some grade levels. An expression of interest process is used to manage enrolments and plan accurately to ensure class sizes remain at appropriate levels. An enrolment protocol exists between schools in the local Sea and Vines Partnership.

The Principal started at the school in 2013 and is in the fourth year of his first tenure. He teaches one day per week. There are three composite classes: a large R/1/2 class taught by two contract teachers, a 3/4 class taught by a permanent teacher and a 5/6/7 class taught by a contract teacher.

There is one specialist teacher providing Physical Education and Kitchen Garden lessons, and another teaching Languages Other Than English: Indonesian. There are six non-teaching staff and a Pastoral Care Worker providing student, curriculum and administration support.

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 students and 25% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) by the end of Term 3. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline period (2011-2013) and no improvement trend over the recent three years (2013-2015).

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of Year 3 students, 60% of Year 5 students and 75% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For Years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline period (2008-2011). At Year 7, the results represent an improvement from the historic baseline period, and an upwards trend from 33% in 2013 to 75% in 2015.

At Year 3, the school is achieving at the lower range of the results in reading compared with similar groups of students across DECD schools. At Years 5 and 7, the students are within the range of results of similar groups of students in other schools.

In 2015, 38% of Year 3, 40% of Year 5, and 12.5% of Year 7 students, achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. There was one out of three students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Reading in Year 3 in 2011, remaining in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of Year 3 students, 40% of Year 5 students and 75% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For Years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline period (2008-2011). At Year 7, the results represent little or no change from the historic baseline period, and an upwards trend from 33% in 2013 to 75% in 2015.

In Year 3 numeracy, the school is achieving at the lower range of the results compared with those of similar groups of students across DECD schools. At Years 5 and 7, the students achieved within the range of results of similar groups of students in other schools.

In 2015, 25% of Year 3, 20% of Year 5, and 12.5% of Year 7 students, achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. The one student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in Year 3 in 2011 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Summary

The cohort numbers at Clarendon Primary School fluctuate from year to year. Over the 2013-2015 period, enrolments at any one year-level have ranged from 3 students to 16 students. Proportional results (by percentage, not numbers), have been reported above to demonstrate the school's performance against its own historic baseline, against three-year trend results and against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement. This reporting method also minimises the possibility of identifying individual students.

In the school's 2015 Annual Report, the Principal has indicated that while means and trend data over time are useful for some aspects of analysis: "the individual learning progress and achievement of each student is what is used by the school staff to identify growth opportunities and learning goals for students".

Consequently, the Review Panel explored several lines of inquiry related to how well this small school is supporting all students to progress against the SEA and demonstrating higher levels of learning.

Lines of Inquiry

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

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

Effective Leadership: To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

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

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

Clarendon Primary School is a community school that values 'environmental education, active, ethical and healthy lifestyles, natural play, engaging curriculum and positive connections', as an integral part of educating children for the twenty-first century. Purposeful engagement was observed in play and in class. Safe conditions for learning exist at the school.

Students are aware of the many special features of their school and could easily talk about what they liked and what was going well. Students who had recently transferred from other schools told the following to the Review Panel: "at the old school the learning was too fast"; "I have trouble learning things quickly, here I can come back to it"; "I'm more motivated here, there's a good environment". Younger children were keen to show the playground areas, the cubby houses and the garden, and were looking forward to Nature Play Day.

With equal motivation, students could talk about how well they were engaged and challenged as learners.

Students were clear about what 'challenge' means to them, often using powerful learner language (for example, 'growth mindsets', 'learning pit', 'stretch', 'have a go') to explain what thinking they had to do to persist. For example: "it means not doing things that are too easy for you, but not too hard either, so you don't struggle too much"; "giving us work that I'm not that good at, but I am having a go at"; "to have to work a bit higher than your level"; "it's when the teacher gives us a test we already know, but she makes it harder"; "to me a challenge means to not understand something at first, but then come to understand it".

Challenge and learning mathematics went hand-in-hand for many of the students: "maths has tricky and difficult questions that take a while to answer"; "maths is hard for me sometimes"; "a maths challenge means you never get it right"; "partner work helps with problem-solving challenges".

When asked about knowing if they were working at their level, most said they knew when they were at the appropriate level when the work was 'just right'. Others thought it depended on how hard the work was and how much time it takes: "it's hard sometimes and easy sometimes"; "our teacher makes our work not too hard and not too easy".

Some students were able to talk about transferrable skills they were developing: "I think I am working at standard, because of all the strategies the teacher gave us"; "I am working at standard now, but I had to catch up on a few things from last year". But all students knew what level they were at when the teacher gave them their report.

Few students talked about their individual learning plan goals and the discussions they had with their parents at three-way conferences. Parents thought the three-way conversations in Term 1 had given them a good picture of 'where their child was up to', but some were left not knowing 'where to next'.

In reading a sample of written reports, the Review Panel found that teachers were using descriptive evidence-based language, informing students and parents about the extent to which the students are challenging themselves as learners. The Personal Learning Capabilities also give prominence to critical dispositions, such as asking questions that further their own learning, contributing creative ideas, and collaborating with others. The school report card has been improved recently, and it was thought by

students and parents to be useful, with effort and capabilities reported by students as: “you can get 1, 2, or 3”, along with the learning and achievement summary comments and grades. Such explicit reporting is a demonstration of shared accountability at the school.

The student voices shared above provide evidence that they are engaged in their learning and that they are aware of how to challenge themselves. Teachers are also trialling a range of ways to improve feedback processes and deepen engagement by ensuring that powerful learning language is used alongside learning improvement strategies. The self-talk and ‘know how’ must be complementary.

To support the school’s intent to engage students as twenty-first century learners, *Higher Standards of Learning Achievement* are included as Strategic Priority 1 for 2015-2017. The Review Panel’s summary analysis of performance data suggests that higher standards can be achieved across the school, through ensuring that numeracy and literacy growth in the early years is supported by a developmental learning continuum so students can achieve the standard expected by the end of Year 1 and 2; raising the NAPLAN results of all students from Year 3 onwards to achieve within the upper range of comparative groups of students (be outward-facing); and by increasing the number of students demonstrating achievement at the highest levels of the Australian Curriculum (A-B-C grades).

The Teaching for Effective Learning framework is being used by the school to support teachers to provide classroom conditions that strengthen engagement and challenge for all students. The aim is to now monitor the impact of this collective effort.

Direction 1

Increase the number of students progressing towards and achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement, by providing safe conditions for rigorous learning that support and challenge every student to demonstrate their personal best.

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

Families make a deliberate choice for their children to attend Clarendon Primary School. Students come from the local area and twenty-two surrounding suburbs, with 58% of students living 5 to 10 kilometres away. A few parents said they were drawn to the school because of its small size and/or by the garden and school surroundings. Some parents also said they like the school because their children are happy, making social improvements, developing resilience, and/or were willing to ‘have a go’. Others said the school helped their children to be grounded, well-rounded and confident in themselves as a whole.

After a period of increasing enrolments (30% since 2013) and staff consistency, the school is now in a stage of transition from what was to what will be. Even though 60% or more of the staff are not permanently appointed to the school, all staff work co-operatively and collaboratively together to help all students.

To achieve the school vision, the Principal has been leading the staff and parents through some new work, while also respecting the positive culture, strong traditions and valued features of this unique small school.

In 2015, the Principal aligned the school’s strategic plan with the DECD strategic objectives and the local DECD Partnership Plan. There is now a set of ‘big’ strategic priorities at Clarendon Primary School with associated Key Action Plans for 2015-2017, which are: Literacy, Numeracy, Powerful Learners, Student Wellbeing and Positive Education (foundations for success), and Child Safe Practices. In addition, the Principal is leading strategies to encompass greater community engagement in planning and governance, and is working on the provision of targeted and specialist services for students.

While this systemic model is comprehensive and well-considered, the Review Panel felt that the levels of documentation and the associated data and dialogue-based self-review processes, were wide-ranging, and most likely beyond the collective capacity of a small school, especially one in a transition stage.

Having said this, and despite the unpredictability of staff continuity, the Review Panel heard and observed that the Principal and the current staff share a full commitment for whole-school and long-term planning. Staff are improving their practices, not just in their own classrooms for their own students, but together as a group for the good of the school. However, having the time and capacity to balance the implementation

of the many key actions, and evaluate the targets for impact on learning, is an ongoing challenge.

Hence, the 2016 plan to narrow the focus on improving the teaching and learning of mathematics and numeracy has been well-received. The decision to go 'deeper on less' was also seen by staff as a positive way to allow students more time to 'explore, discover and engage with concepts'. Working across the Partnership has also supported teachers in their own professional learning and development.

In light of the competing demands that linear planning does generate, the Principal shared some initial thoughts about a refocused approach to leading improvement: "so we are not trying to do too much". The Review Panel concurred that the proposal to develop a Continuity of Learning Strategy 'to maximise learner achievement and accelerate student improvement' is practical, feasible and doable. Aside from the possibility of staff turnover, it is essential 'to be intentional, not hopeful' that an R-7 curriculum and best programs, practices and pedagogies are in place. In this way, students will be supported to achieve, not only the expected DECD SEA, but also the personal capabilities resulting from the school's approach to 'educating the whole person'. The Review Panel fully endorses such a proposal.

To simplify this complex work, some selected key actions can be drawn from the school's existing improvement plans as the basis of common agreements; for example, big ideas planning, ongoing professional learning, or exploring the effective lesson format. By developing a coherent curriculum that also addresses the intentional use of teaching strategies, the school will be building continuity of learning for all students.

Direction 2

Ensure continuity for all students, year-to-year and from Reception to Year 7, by building teacher capacity to develop and deliver a coherent curriculum plan, effective teaching and powerful learning.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Review Panel found that staff at the school are collaborative and demonstrate a positive and professional attitude to their work. Parents felt the school accommodates the needs of students, and that the teachers and School Services Officers (SSOs) know the students well.

The panel also heard that many staff generously step beyond their immediate roles in order to ensure the school can provide a range of activities and programs to enhance the experiences of the students.

To improve student learning outcomes, the Principal has made certain that all staff know where each child is up to as a learner. He has led the school in the last few years from having no data about student achievement, to now having a data bank that records and analyses the results of all students at the school. A data collection timeline is in place for summative data. Teachers and SSOs also provide this data on a just-in-time basis. Results are colour-coded against the SEA and individual targets.

Student progress and growth is monitored so that interventions and enrichment can be discussed. Enrichment Team staff meetings happen twice per term, to track progress and growth of students below SEA and to determine the strategic response in-class and as supplementation. The work of the SSOs helping students was well-regarded by students, staff and parents, who all said that: "what they are doing is making a difference".

Since 2015, all students have an Individual Learning Plan, which is used to set goals and improvement strategies, with and for students. The full impact on learning of this is yet to be evaluated and reviewed.

All teachers are also developing a range of formative assessment processes to support regular individual and class feedback, term-by-term planning and the delivery of specific literacy and numeracy programs.

At the meeting of staff during the review, the teachers completed a questionnaire about the challenges associated with teaching in a small school, including how best to manage the delivery of a coherent curriculum with multi-grade classes. The teachers shared their views and experiences about how they are building their capacity to address the challenges of curriculum, pedagogy and the teaching standards.

Their collated comments reveal the expectations being managed by staff at the school:

- teach across a range of different Australian Curriculum subjects and standards in each class
- know the continuum of 'must have' knowledge, skills and experiences (high-stake outcomes)
- develop formative assessment and open-ended learning tasks that cater for diversity
- moderate planning and tasks to ensure validity of A-E grades (in-school and between schools)
- develop the thinking and vocabulary around growth mindsets and powerful learning.

Direction 3

Support staff to know and address the range of needs in multi-age classes by working collaboratively to design formative assessment processes, and moderate teacher judgements against the school's agreed curriculum and the Standard of Educational Achievement.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Clarendon Primary School has a strong positive identity and students have a sense of belonging. A culture of collaboration and reflection is evident amongst the staff. Parents are supportive and interested, and want to work in partnership with the school to support improvements. The school is now poised to deliberately design and deliver an integrated and challenging learning program that provides rigour and continuity for all students from Reception to Year 7.

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

1. Increase the number of students progressing towards and achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement, by providing safe conditions for rigorous learning that support and challenge every student to demonstrate their personal best.
2. Ensure continuity for all students, year-to-year and from Reception to Year 7, by building teacher capacity to develop and deliver a coherent curriculum plan, effective teaching and powerful learning.
3. Support staff to know and address the range of needs in multi-age classes by working collaboratively to design formative assessment processes, and moderate teacher judgements against the school's agreed curriculum and the Standard of Educational Achievement.

Based on the school's current performance Clarendon 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.

Josh Anderson
PRINCIPAL
CLARENDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson