EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Walkerville Primary School

Conducted in March 2017

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Simon Harding and Brenton Conradi, Review Principals.

School context

Walkerville Primary School is located 6km north-east of Adelaide, and has steadily increasing enrolments reaching nearly 700 in 2017. The school has an ICSEA score of 1136, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes a low percentage of students with a disability and ATSI enrolments, both less than 1%. However, 42% of students identified as from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) in 2015. Of the families who have immigrated and enrolled at the school, 75% identify as 'Skilled Visa' stream. Since 2010, there has been 1 suspension at the school, in 2012. Families within the community reflect lower levels of unemployment, financial stress or disability than state and national levels.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the first 12 months of his tenure, two Senior Leaders with responsibility for the Early Years and Australian Curriculum Years 4 to 7, and a Coordinator with a focus on Information Technology.

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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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

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

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

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

Throughout all processes of the External School Review (ESR) it was highly apparent to the Review Panel that the students at Walkerville Primary School are articulate, enthusiastic and respectful young people. During the walkthrough process and student group conversations, the learners with whom the panel members spoke discussed their opinions and perceptions about their school and their learning with eagerness; representing an understanding of the importance of education and their commitment to achieving successful outcomes. The mature and measured manner with which they responded to the panel's questions was a highlight of the ESR process.

Document analysis, the leaders' presentation and conversations with staff made evident that the intent to Develop Powerful Learners is a priority at the school. In 2017, this intent, coupled with *Develop Resilient People*, provides the direction staff work towards, underpinned by the Australian Curriculum, Early Years and Information Technology. The leader articulates a strong commitment to developing coherence regarding pedagogical implementation across the school. The evidence sourced through the ESR confirms this intent.

Through the walkthrough process and conversations with staff and students, the panel saw and heard examples of students being provided with opportunities to take part in learning that requires them to think laterally, work in teams, pose and test hypotheses and conduct inquiry. Some classes engage in team teaching, and students are provided opportunities to work in groups across classes, to share the planning, experimentation and documentation of their learning. During the walkthrough, panel members saw students taking part in challenges to prove or disprove a theory provided by the teacher. One student spoke about his class Learning Agreement, which makes evident to students the expectations regarding, and attributes of, effective learning, including time spent on-task and the next steps to achieve a successful outcome.

Older students with whom the panel spoke discussed a clear understanding of the purpose of their learning; one student citing that he had been taught a strategy that he utilises to solve problems when working numerically. When asked what a strategy was, older students were able to articulate the concept as one that supported them to solve problems.

At the time of the ESR, it was evident that students are provided opportunities to engage in intellectual challenge and to stretch their thinking to varying degrees across the school. In some classrooms, students discussed taking part in spelling contracts, using whole-class worksheets or focusing on a particular writing genre in order to complete the NAPLAN test successfully. When asked 'How do we teach at Walkerville?', teachers offered a variety of responses, some describing the approaches as quite different from class to class. Teachers' understanding of approaches implemented in year level cohorts other than their own was mixed. The panel was informed that staff have had access to professional learning that has focused on developing students' thinking and, at the time of the ESR, it was apparent that this has impacted on practice in a number of classrooms. These examples provide a model from which to further promulgate practice across the school.

The ESR panel members were left in no doubt that the intent to Develop Powerful Learners is widely understood and valued by staff. The opportunity to further embed consistent teaching strategies that progress this priority, and that engage students in processes designed to solve problems and stretch their thinking, is an exciting opportunity that both staff and students are well-placed to undertake.

The Review Panel members heard of the staff members' recent work in introducing the concept of Growth Mindsets to the students. Every student with whom the panel spoke was able to discuss this concept and its influence on their perception about learning. It was highly apparent that this concept has been introduced and embedded consistently and effectively throughout the school. This achievement represents the capacity staff have to implement agreed approaches, and is a model from which the priority to Develop Powerful Learners through contemporary pedagogy can be achieved.

Direction 1
Develop Powerful Learners engaged in intellectual challenge and deep thinking through the implementation of consistent pedagogy informed by recognised frameworks and implemented across all year levels.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Examples of students provided opportunities to understand learning processes and to influence these were evident throughout the ESR process. The panel heard teachers discuss the importance of making learning intentional and heard some students speak about the purpose of the learning they were undertaking. Some students reported that they had access to rubrics that allowed them to work towards a grade and spoke about the understanding they would need to demonstrate to achieve an 'A'. Other students discussed having been provided criteria they need to meet to complete a project successfully. In the early years, each student has scaffolds available to them to refer to when engaged in literacy learning. These comprise a sight-word/book and dictionary, and a Review Panel member observed a student independently utilise these when attempting to encode.

In many conversations the Review Panel heard students and teachers refer to the use of feedback in class. Some students spoke about the teacher providing them written or verbal input that allowed them to understand how to improve their learning and where the next level of achievement lay. A student informed the Review Panel that "If you only get ticks, you can't improve", representing a sophisticated understanding of the importance of formative feedback. In one discussion, a student spoke about 'Self Reflection Time' that the class engages in each Friday. During this time, students consider their successes and areas for improvement. The latter then informs the teacher's planning for the upcoming week. During the walkthrough process, the panel saw boards displayed that invited students to identify if the learning at that time was 'Stretch, Comfort or Panic'. Examples such as these provide an opportunity for staff to refer to when considering how a similar approach might operate within their class, in order to provide all students across the school with opportunities to offer teachers feedback about their learning.

Some students discussed having set goals regarding their progress. In some instances this was initiated by the student, challenging themselves to reach a reading level or achieve full marks in a test. Through conversations throughout the ESR, it was evident that in some classes students are provided opportunities to set authentic goals and the strategies to progress towards these are made clear. The panel concurs that this approach is characteristic of teaching designed to Develop Powerful Learners.

The appreciation and enthusiasm students at Walkerville Primary School bring to their learning was evident throughout the review and, in some classes, teaching strategies capitalise on this potential through processes that inform, consult with and empower the learner. Students in these settings understand the purpose of their learning, make decisions about and monitor their progress against co-constructed criteria and access formative feedback. To progress the priority to Develop Powerful Learners, the opportunity to broaden these approaches across the school is apparent.

The Review Panel was provided extremely comprehensive documentation that showed how each learner's progress is tracked in literacy and numeracy. Achievement data, grades, learning plans and standards reached are included in the document. The panel commends this exceptionally detailed approach to tracking every student's development.

It was apparent through conversations with staff that teachers value the importance of data and that the influence of data on teacher planning operates at varying levels across the school. One teacher discussed and provided documented evidence of her use of data to design teaching that is tailored to her students' needs, citing her analysis of PAT-R data to inform trends in students' use of comprehension strategies. Another teacher spoke about her use of observation data to inform the design of her classroom environment to meet her students' learning styles. The development of a data schedule that identifies which assessments will be conducted and when was highlighted in conversations with early years teachers. Less evidence was sourced to confirm that data was used diagnostically to identify students' miscues or strengths, or that teaching and planning is informed by this, and data used to form ability groups was common.

Direction 2
Establish student agency within learning through shared inquiry into, and implementation of, strategies that enable students to understand the criteria for success and monitor their progress towards known learning goals.

Direction 3
Design learning responsive to students' needs through deep analysis of data to identify miscues and strengths of all learners and inform strategic planning.

How effectively does the school Leadership foster a culture of learning?

The learning culture at Walkerville Primary School is one characterised by high expectations. DECD and school achievement data shows students achieve above comparative levels, and growth data sourced through NAPLAN is very positive. It was highly evident, however, that the school leader is committed to continuous improvement and further achievement for the students at the school. As such, Running Records levels at Walkerville Primary School are set higher than DECD expectations and conversations challenging the relevance of existing Standards of Educational Achievement in a high-performing school are underway. Parents with whom the panel members spoke expressed appreciation of the school's focus on educational achievement, whilst also commending the culture that provides students a safe and inclusive environment in which to learn. Perceptions of all parents with whom the panel spoke were uniformly positive regarding the school's intent and practice.

Structures and processes have been strategically implemented to maximise professional learning opportunities and collaboration for staff at the school. Many staff discussed their appreciation of shared NIT release times and their geographical location to colleagues with similar year levels. The panel heard many reports of the sub-school meetings that are convened after staff meetings and formed by year level. These meetings were described as opportunities to plan and organise events such as excursions, provide input to whole-school initiatives, discuss matters pertinent to cohort levels and share ideas. Some teachers spoke very positively about the staff members' collective contribution to Working Groups previously

convened to align with school priorities. The panel was also informed of recent professional learning undertaken to progress pedagogical development and learning design.

Almost all staff with whom the panel spoke discussed the highly collaborative nature of staff at the school. Teachers described colleagues' expertise and willingness to share ideas and resources. Teachers' commitment to their students and the school was evidenced through reports of electing to meet regularly, out of hours, in year level groups, to continue shared planning and supporting each other. Some opportunities for team teaching have been implemented and represent a culture of shared responsibility. The panel also heard of informal peer observations having supported teachers to implement new ideas.

Teachers' readiness to share and support each other was apparent across the school and sees the staff now well-placed to build on the existing culture of collaboration. To further embed agreed pedagogy across the school, and maximise the impact of teacher leaders, the panel agrees that the initiation of strategic and intentional processes of collegiality is key. Dedicated and planned times for observation designed to provide colleagues with both affirming and formative feedback will support staff to embed pedagogical strategies that Develop Powerful Learners. Using existing sub-school structures to provide provocations for shared debate and discussion will ensure the school's priorities remain at the forefront of the agenda.

Direction 4
Build upon the school's collaborative culture and progress pedagogical development through processes strategically designed and dedicated to maximise collective learning and shared responsibility.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Walkerville Primary School.

Effective practice regarding the strategic intent to develop a positive culture for learning was evident at the school. Student perceptions about learning have been influenced by the introduction of the approach to Growth Mindsets leading to improved motivation and willingness to undertake all learning opportunities. In particular, the panel noted the highly consistent nature of this implementation, characterised by the coherent language employed to describe the concept across the school. Students in conversation groups and in classroom walkthrough processes were able to articulate how Growth Mindsets can support them to participate optimistically in learning. The panel also appreciated that the success of this school-wide undertaking represents the capacity that exists at Walkerville Primary School to embed coherent, consistent practice.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

At Walkerville Primary School the demonstrated growth in student achievement is above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context and a culture of improvement is characterised by high expectations for students.

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

1. Develop Powerful Learners engaged in intellectual challenge and deep thinking through the implementation of consistent pedagogy informed by recognised frameworks and implemented across all year levels.

2. Establish student agency within learning through shared inquiry into, and implementation of, strategies that enable students to understand the criteria for success and monitor their progress towards known learning goals.

3. Design learning responsive to students' needs through deep analysis of data to identify miscues and strengths of all learners and inform strategic planning.

4. Build upon the school's collaborative culture and progress pedagogical development through processes strategically designed and dedicated to maximise collective learning and shared responsibility.

Based on the school's current performance, Walkerville Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.

David Chadwick
PRINCIPAL
WALKERVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Walkerville Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 2016 was 95.1%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 91% of Year 1 and 90% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change at Year 1 and an improvement from the historic baseline average at Years 1 and 2.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of Year 3 students, 93% of Year 5 students and 93% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average and for Years 5 and 7, little or no change.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has shown an increase from 91% to 96%.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 61% of Year 3, 53% of Year 5 and 29% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. There is an improvement trend in Year 5 reading, from 33% in 2014, to 53% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 79%, or 27 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 42%, or 8 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of Year 3 students, 93% of Year 5 students and 90% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average, and for Years 5 and 7, an improvement and decline, respectively.

In 2016 for Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2014 and 2016, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 52% of Year 3, 37% of Year 5 and 46% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 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 two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 76%, or 19 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 77%, or 10 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.