



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Elizabeth Vale Primary School
Conducted in October 2017



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.

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 Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Debbie Grzeczowski and Ilia Tsoutouras, Review Principals.

School context

Elizabeth Vale Primary School is located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, 24kms from the CBD, and is part of the Elizabeth Partnership. The school's enrolment is 440 and has increased rapidly from 2015. It is predicted that enrolment in the mainstream will continue to rise. The school has a significant level of mobility of families. The school has a school-based preschool. The school has an ICSEA score of 878, and is classified as Category 1 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 59 (13%) Aboriginal students, 69 (18%) students with disabilities, 187 (43%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 11 children in care, and 332 (86%) families eligible for School Card assistance. There are 2 Special Education classes and 61 students in EALD classes; in total, the school has 22 classes. The school also hosts an annex of Adelaide North Special School called "Pathways", comprising an additional 24 students.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her fifth year of tenure, a Deputy Principal in his fifth year, an Assistant Principal – Intensive English Learning Centre in her second year, an Assistant Principal – Leader of Learning in her fourth year, an Assistant Principal – Early Years in her second year, a Counsellor in his fifth year, and a Coordinator – Student Support, in her first year. There is a mix of experience amongst the teaching staff, with 4 Graduate teachers and approximately 50% with less than 5 years teaching experience.

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:

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

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

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

To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident?

Elizabeth Vale Primary School has increased in enrolment rapidly from 256 students in 2012 to 440 students in 2017. There is a school-based preschool, which has doubled in numbers in this period. As can be seen from the context outlined above in this report, there are several leaders appointed in recent years, some of whom are new to leadership, and many early career teachers. With the increase in enrolment, the number of staff has consequentially increased, and there is a constant turnover of teachers. In these circumstances, the Review Panel was keen to inquire into the way in which the school has developed a collaborative and collective culture.

The school's ICSEA score is 878, indicating a high degree of educational complexity and disadvantage. The Principal has endeavoured to ensure that teachers develop an understanding of poverty and trauma, so that they build relationships with students and families, but not use this as an excuse for low academic levels. The Review Panel found that there is a strong belief amongst staff that students can learn. The school is improvement and growth-focused. The student achievement data outlined in Appendix 2 of this report shows significant improvement in all year levels, albeit from a low baseline. The Review Panel did not find leaders to be complacent and satisfied with the growth in academic achievement, but wanting to progress students further.

The school has focused deeply on developing students' reading proficiencies and on positive education to build students' emotional self-regulation and perseverance. Change has been managed in a way that has brought others on-board, and supported by knowledge and capacity development of staff. They have stayed the course on these priorities, and the results of their deep focus have paid off. In 2016 and 2017, Year 6 and 7

students reported, through the DECD Wellbeing and Engagement survey, a higher level of emotional engagement with their teacher, cognitive engagement and academic self-concept, than the state average. Students responded positively to questions about themselves as students, their level of interest and confidence in the school.

Leaders spoke about the collaborative culture that exists between leaders and across the school. Early career teachers are supported through intensive coaching support, including by a Speech Pathologist in the junior primary. A group of graduate teachers indicated they feel comfortable to ask for support and advice without any fear of judgement. Teachers are keen to improve their teaching capacities, and many participate in professional learning and collaborative planning in their own time. The Review Panel acknowledged the high level of commitment of teachers and leaders to their students, their families and the school.

The Principal is keen to honour the separate entities of the school: the Preschool, the Special Classes, the Intensive English Language Classes (IELC) and mainstream, while building a sense of a whole school. Each term the school focuses on an aspect of learning, such as Aboriginal Studies in Term 2, and *Let's Love Reading* in Term 3. The specialist classes have been located in different sections of the school, so that IELC is placed next to mainstream, to encourage children to mix together. Parents of children in IELC classes and the Governing Council thought that all children were benefitting from the diversity and the opportunity to play and learn from each other.

Leaders meet once a week and discuss organisational matters to ensure the school is managed smoothly, with strong and predictable routines for students. This is important in the context of the school, with a high percentage of students experiencing trauma. Leaders were clear on their specific job roles and talked about improvements they hope to make within their section. For example, the Senior Leader – Early Years, has ensured that phonological awareness and teaching of synthetic phonics are daily practices in the Reception/Year 1 classes, and that transition from preschool to school is a seamless experience for the young students.

The Review Panel wondered what the next phase of improvement will be. The school is the recipient of a Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) grant, and \$7.5 million for asset development, which will provide exciting opportunities. The current School Improvement Plan (SIP) refers to Powerful Learning – pedagogy, learners, partnerships and learning. There doesn't appear to be an articulated and clear narrative about the future, and the statement of Powerful Learning is not accompanied by plans that would guide the school's actions. The Review Panel heard different versions of what is meant by 'Powerful Learning', and the implications for practice were not clearly understood. It was not clear to the Review Panel what the collective vision or strategic plan for the school is, except that they want to maintain the upward achievement trend.

Leaders talked about their work, their tasks and their collaborative culture of support for each other. They have a Performance Development Plan (PDP), largely focused on what they have and want to do, with less emphasis on developing leadership proficiencies and dispositions; that is, the 'how' of leadership.

It is timely for the school to develop and determine the next phase of its improvement and, through this process, articulate a clear vision. This will involve building the strategic thinking and capacities of leaders, so that leadership is distributed and mindfully shared, as the school engages in new initiatives, while maintaining their effective practices.

Direction 1

Develop strategic leadership capacity to enable the school to articulate a vision for the future and develop, implement and evaluate a strategic plan to continue the school's improvement journey.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged?

As stated above, the school has focused on student growth, and has been successful in getting more students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement. The effectiveness of their practices in literacy is evidenced by fewer students needing intervention in the MiniLit program.

They have analysed the test results to identify the gaps in learning so that their instruction can be more personalised. This has been an effective strategy to support Aboriginal students. Each student has a *Deadly Reading Plan*, enabling the class teacher and Aboriginal Education staff team to be on the same page, providing targeted intervention. In speaking to the Review Panel, students were well aware of the growth they have made, and had aspirational goals and self-belief in continuing to improve.

The Review Panel observed students learning in their classroom contexts. Teachers endeavour to explain the learning intention for each lesson. Teachers also make the success criteria explicit so that students know what is expected. Graduate teachers indicated this was new learning for them, and the clarity of the learning intentions help them to plan corresponding experiences and activities.

Students were mostly able to explain their routines in mathematics and literacy lessons. They described the maths block as 'warm-ups' (repetition of number facts), concepts, and problems (which involve applying the concepts). Many students indicated they love reading, and talked about the Daily 3 or Daily 5. More able students talked about learning to recognise similes, metaphors, and to use comprehension strategies, such as summarising, predicting and inferencing. Students have goals and are aspiring to achieve them. Many students were also able to talk about the feedback they have been given to get better, such as: "try not to mix-up your reasons when writing a persuasion", "don't make your sentences too long", or "extend paragraphs and expand on one idea". They demonstrated the strategies they have learnt to self-regulate, such as 'finger breathing' and 'stay in your own bubble'.

It was evident that teachers provide explicit instruction and use rotations, or stations, to provide differentiated learning support. The school has a high number of 'mobile' or transient students, as well as regular transitions into the IELC classes, and then into the mainstream. Teachers are quick to find out new students' language and learning needs. The whole school is very aware that language and an extensive vocabulary open up doors for young people. A comprehensive method of tracking achievement, especially in reading, has been developed. The school recognises that their achievement in mathematics and numeracy is not as high as in literacy, and has established a Maths Coordinator role in 2018 to provide coaching support and to work more deeply on 'trust the count' and regular assessments.

Many teachers agreed that the school needs to get better at providing intellectual stretch for students. Almost no students who met the SEA achieved in the higher proficiency bands. This has been a pattern for many years. The Principal confirmed that no teachers have referred a student to the intervention committee to support higher intellectual achievement intervention.

The Review Panel also thought it was time for greater challenge for those who have met the SEA. The school has supported students to learn and use emotional regulation strategies when things get hard, and both students and teachers said there are less 'melt downs' than there used to be. Some teachers indicated they were not familiar with the concept of learning design. The school, at this stage, has not done a lot of work in transforming and redesigning tasks across curriculum areas to ensure there is the opportunity for students to demonstrate creative and critical thinking.

As stated above, the school has received a grant to support STEM teaching and learning. Initial work has commenced with two teachers identified to be lead teachers. Students currently have opportunities to engage in design and technology lessons. With the funding provided to support STEM, it is timely for the school to develop a common understanding of what authentic, collaborative process design and cross-disciplinary learning means in the Elizabeth Vale Primary School context. Professional learning also needs to be provided to ensure task design in all learning areas enables opportunities for students to stretch their thinking. Moderation processes within cohort teams and in the local Partnership will provide a chance for teachers to critique their tasks with feedback from others.

Direction 2

Provide greater opportunities for students to engage in creative and critical thinking through developing a whole-school understanding and enactment of STEM pedagogy, together with professional learning, in task design in all curriculum areas.

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

In light of the school's context, with a rapid increase in enrolment and high turnover of teachers, the Review Panel was keen to find out what was the glue that provided coherence for students. Coherence is important for students, as it helps them to connect concepts, use common language, and to make sense of their schooling experience. Multiple strategies are needed, but the absence of a coherent approach frequently results in educators working at cross-purposes, and results in confusion for students. Teachers were asked to explain their literacy and mathematics teaching approaches, and find what was common and different between classes and year levels.

At the beginning of the year all classes engaged in a culture-building program. Each teacher reinforced the school values within their class, worked on Growth Mindset strategies, developed class expectations, and established a portrait of each child. Many teachers used visual scaffolds to support these processes in their classrooms. There are common approaches to literacy across the school. A more comprehensive description of these practices is outlined in the report under the section: *What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?* As stated previously in this report, students were able to describe the common approaches to the maths block.

Teachers were also asked what school structures and processes supported them to 'be on the same page', to use common language and provide consistency. They talked about the extensive induction they received, which was carefully managed so teachers did not feel overwhelmed. Coaching by the Speech Pathologist and the Senior Leader, Leader of Learning was frequently mentioned as instrumental in helping teachers to become more proficient in the school's pedagogical approaches. There have been observations of graduate teachers, and others as requested, with feedback conversations.

The Review Panel met with a group of graduate teachers who spoke positively about the advice that had supported them in 'backwards' planning. Many of the graduate teachers had completed their final practicum of their university studies at Elizabeth Vale Primary School, and had been fortunate to observe other teachers, especially in the scaffolded literacy pedagogy.

The assessment and reporting expectations are very clear. Teachers talked about being in and out of each other's classrooms on a daily basis, sharing triumphs and advice when lessons didn't go as well as planned. The Review Panel concluded there are high-level 'deprivatised' classrooms and a strong adult learning culture at Elizabeth Vale Primary School.

Through the term, year levels meet in cohort teams, which were identified as being critical to coherence and consistency. There is also whole-school professional learning in several staff meetings, such as Cultural Competency Training in Term 2. Some teachers referenced the commonality between their pedagogies to the school's Literacy Plans (also called Agreements) developed in 2015, which includes a statement of the research, success indicators, and a list of what teachers will do. The Maths Plan is currently under review. Some teachers did not know these documents exist, and there seemed to be little reference to them through performance and professional development processes, or as a guide to review and evaluate their own practices in cohort meetings.

It appeared to the Review Panel that the school has achieved a high level of consistency and coherence; however, it is mainly through the coaching model, verbal conversations and feedback, opportunities to observe others, the school's collaborative culture and access to training. While this has been successful thus far, it is a risk in the longer-term, as currently it depends on key individuals within the school to be the coherence makers.

It is important to document pedagogical Agreements, as these expectations can be used as reference points against which teachers engage in peer and self-reflection of their practices. New teachers appointed to the school also need to know what is expected. Agreements need to be 'living documents' that are used, and not placed on a shelf, and need to be regularly reviewed in terms of new initiatives and current research. The process to develop and review the school's Agreements is informative and builds an understanding of the current research, and connectedness of practices within the school.

Direction 3

Build on the school's effective pedagogies and ensure coherence for students by documenting whole-school expectations, and using these documents for ongoing self and school improvement in teaching practices.

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 Elizabeth Vale Primary School.

The Principal has a comprehensive understanding of the acquisition and power of language, and has been instrumental in leading this development across the school. Teachers ensure students have explicit instruction in phonological awareness, alphabet principles, synthetic phonics, and comprehension strategies, and create opportunities for oral language and vocabulary development. Scaffolded literacy pedagogy is used to model the deconstruction of texts so that students gain a greater understanding of why and how authors use language in different genres. This pedagogy is language-rich, and involves teachers in using meta-cognition strategies as they share their thinking about the writing and author's intentions with their class. This understanding of language and literacy is a major factor in students' love of reading, and in the improvement in their proficiency skills.

These practices were evident during the ESR in interviews with students, observing students in learning in their classrooms, through individual teacher and cohort team reflections on their practices, and in interviews with graduate teachers.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Elizabeth Vale Primary School has a culture of improvement characterised by high expectations for students. There is demonstrated growth in student achievement. Effective teaching actively engages learners.

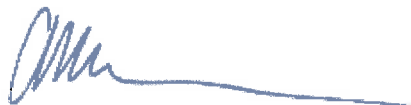
The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Develop strategic leadership capacity to enable the school to articulate a vision for the future and develop, implement and evaluate a strategic plan to continue the school's improvement journey.
2. Provide greater opportunities for students to engage in creative and critical thinking through developing a whole-school understanding and enactment of STEM pedagogy, together with professional learning, in task design in all curriculum areas.
3. Build on the school's effective pedagogies and ensure coherence for students by documenting whole-school expectations, and using these documents for ongoing self and school improvement in teaching practices.

Based on the school's current performance, Elizabeth Vale 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.



Julie Murphy
PRINCIPAL
ELIZABETH VALE 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 Elizabeth Vale 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 87.9%.

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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2017, 68% of Year 1, and 44% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement, from the historic baseline average, for both Year 1 and Year 2.

The trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 24% in 2014 to 68% in 2017, and for Year 2, from 32% in 2015 to 44% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 54% of Year 3 students, 41% of Year 5 students, and 36% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved lower than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

Between 2015 and 2017, the school has consistently achieved lower in Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2017, 7% of Year 3, 2% of Year 5, and no 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.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 44% of Year 3 students, 27% of Year 5 students, and 42% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Year 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 30% in 2015 to 42% in 2017.

For 2017 Year 3 and 5 the school achieved lower, and for Year 7 within, the range of results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2015 and 2017, the school has consistently achieved lower in Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2017, 5% of Year 3, 3% of Year 5, and no 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.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from none in 2014 to 5% in 2016.

