

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR EUDUNDA AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in October 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Judy Anderson, 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 Eudunda Area 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 3 School Organisation: Item 1

The school will re-work the Attendance Policy and develop an Attendance Plan with a view to create greater exposure of the importance of regular school attendance within the community.

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 86.7%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Eudunda Area School is located 108kms north-east from the Adelaide GPO. The school caters for approximately 131 students from Reception to Year 12.

The student cohort consists of approximately 10% of students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, 10% students with a disability (SWD), 5% Flexible Learning Options (FLO) students, and 30% eligible School Card holders.

The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 943.

The school Leadership Team comprises a Principal in his third year of tenure at the school and two Assistant Principals.

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 considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Eudunda Area School from 2011 to 2015 to overcome any anomalies.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. From 2011 to 2015, 4 of 26 (15%) Year 1 students and 4 of 26 (15%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The 2015 Year 1 and 2 results are below the school's historic average.

From 2011 to 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 19 of 31 (61%) Year 3 students, 20 of 32 (63%) Year 5 students, 25 of 51 (49%) Year 7 students, and 61 of 96 (64%) Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. In 2015, the Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 results are below the school's historic baseline average. It must be noted that the students who are absent or withdrawn from NAPLAN are recorded as not meeting the SEA. In 2015, this equates to 25% of the student cohort in Years 7 and 9.

From 2011 to 2015, students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands included 8 of 31 (26%) Year 3 students, 5 of 32 (16%) Year 5 students, 5 of 51 (10%) Year 7 students, and 11 of 96 (11%) Year 9 students. In 2015, the Year 3 result is below the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 4 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 student remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. Of the 2 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2009), taking into account arrivals and departures, 0 remained in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

For 2015 Year 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving below the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 9, the school is achieving within the results of similar results across the DECD system.

Numeracy

From 2011 to 2015, the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 15 of 31 (48%) Year 3 students, 19 of 32 (59%) Year 5 students, 25 of 51 (49%) Year 7 students, and 61 of 96 (67%) Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. The Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 results are below the school's historic baseline average.

From 2011 to 2015, students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands included 7 of 31 (23%) Year 3 students, 2 of 32 (6%) Year 5 students, 0 of 51 (0%) Year 7 students, and 11 of 96 (11%) Year 9 students. In 2015, the Year 3 result is below the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 2 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 0 remained in the top two bands at Year 7 in 2015.

For 2015, in Year 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving below the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 9, the school is achieving within the results of similar results across the DECD system.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2015, all 17 Year 12 students who had the potential to complete their SACE did successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. In the 2015 SACE results, 90 of 93 grades were achieved at a C- or higher. This result also represents an improvement compared to the historic baseline average.

The Principal's presentation focused on the improvement journey undertaken at the school over the past three years, with a central focus on improving school culture. A 'targeted' external school review in 2013 determined a number of recommendations for change. These included key aspects of role clarity for staff, behaviour management, links to preschool, strategic leadership for improvement, improving staff capacity in teaching and learning, provision of targeted intervention, and marketing of the school.

The Principal believes the school has improved significantly over time. He described the intensity of the work since the 'targeted' review, and described the many strategies and structures that had been implemented with the staff, and relatively small Governing Council, to lead this improvement agenda. The improvement effort has been strategically implemented throughout this period with a clear focus on staff professional learning and delivery of effective teaching practices to improve the educational outcomes for students at Eudunda Area School. An additional intended outcome of this work has been to restore public confidence in the school's capacity to deliver a rigorous and highly connected learning pathway for all students from Reception to Year 12.

As a result of the above data and the Leadership Team's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the effectiveness of this work.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

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

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice?

To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

The school collects and analyses multiple forms of data related to learning, perception, demographic and wellbeing. The collection and analysis of these datasets is scheduled over the school year. Staff committees are established to monitor the progress of the school's improvement agenda and impact over time. These verified operational committees of staff include Site Organisation and Communication (SOC) Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and School Improvement Team (SIT). As a result of the work of these operational structures, it was verified that the improvement work is more closely aligned to patterns emerging in the data and evidence collected.

Through the school self-review process staff have identified a number of areas for improvement in learning and teaching. These include: student wellbeing, numeracy, growth mindsets, design of tasks to differentiate the learning, and the need to make learning more visible for students. An identified area for improvement is on the matter of parent connection with learning, and the concept of teachers, students and parents as partners in improving outcomes for students.

The focus and use of data across the school is still developing. The school does not have a data management system in place, but has developed its own tables and spreadsheets to monitor achievement against the SEA in NAPLAN and A-E grades. A traffic light system is used to highlight each student's achievement against the SEA and whether or not there has been learning growth between assessments. The school has also undertaken some preparatory work on Hattie's growth measures. These aspects were evidenced in school documentation. Whilst NAPLAN is a tool that does measure growth over time, the 'lag' time between tests is somewhat problematic in responding at the classroom level.

The staff discerned a need, from the numeracy data, to place greater emphasis on statistical inference, ratio and percentage from a school perspective. Whilst relevant, this 'gap' can often be cohort-based and concept-based rather than focusing on improving deeper causal factors. This approach can lead to fragmented improvement efforts, rather than improvements in curriculum design and effective teaching strategies that will leverage greater long-term impact on learning.

The collection, use and application of data now needs to transcend to the class and individual levels, to better inform the individual students and teachers about how to promote learning and personal growth by design. The repository of knowledge about each student, built up over the years, should be used to target and personalise growth for every student. Although the Primary section of the school is starting to work with data to inform programming, some Secondary staff indicated that it was a need for their section as well. Some staff raised the possibility of multi-level Home Groups to foster deeper relationships, personal growth over time and monitoring of personal goals.

The school should use datasets, beyond NAPLAN, to plan, track and measure the growth of every student from Reception to Year 12. These datasets include attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, A-E scores, PAT Reading and Maths, Running Records and SACE. With lower class numbers across the school there is an opportunity to plan for growth and to accommodate this in the learning design and transformation of tasks

planned by teachers. To some extent, the Year 12 intervention process is evidence of a move toward this process.

It was verified that some teachers do undertake goal-setting with students, however, this is largely teacher-driven and goals are stored in teacher folders. It is important that the students and parents are aware of these goals and that they are visible for the purposes of reflection and creating focus for each student's personal improvement.

It is critical for students to know that there is a clear expectation for them to improve as learners, regardless of their starting point. Setting realistic goals for improvement with parents and students will help cement this expectation. Using the school's datasets, particularly those with defined standards for each year, teachers should be able to clearly define goals that equate to at least a year's growth in learning. Defining what the school will do to achieve these goals and how parents can assist will strengthen parent engagement in the school. 3-Way Interviews could serve as a conduit for this goal-setting process.

Reflecting and reporting on progress can be accommodated within the school's reporting timeline across the academic year. It was verified that teachers follow-up with parents if they are unable to make appointments for reporting. One teacher was commended, by parents and some staff, on her professional initiative to contact parents simply to 'touch base'. They saw this as a strategy to overcome any residing barriers from years past with respect to the important role of parents as partners in their child's learning.

Roundtable discussions were an aspect of reporting to parents and community members about learning at Year 8 and 9. The learning focus is negotiated and differentiated for students. Students are clear about the assessment standards required to achieve an A or B with their learning. This is a good example of effective practice of students owning and taking more responsibility for their learning in a publicly accountable way.

Direction 1

Improve learning and personal growth using datasets to establish personalised goals in learning with students and parents; ensure that these goals are visible, monitored and reported at strategic intervals throughout the year using evidence to validate the growth of each student.

How effectively does the leadership foster a culture of learning?

In July 2013, a targeted external review was undertaken at Eudunda Area School. The review examined the effectiveness of the school in the following key areas: Leadership, Teaching and Learning, Staff Wellbeing and Student Wellbeing (inclusive of student behaviour management). Ten recommendations for improvement emerged from this review. The Review Panel verified that all recommendations emerging from this review have been addressed to positively impact the cultural dimension raised at the time.

Role clarity for the Leadership Team and all other staff members has been an intended outcome from the 2013 review. The clarity about various roles and responsibilities across the staff has supported the school's strategic approach to improvement since 2014. There are clear leadership role definitions in place to aid the streamlining of leadership, support, delegations and responsibilities. In interviews, parents and teachers commented about knowing who to see about key aspects of school 'life' and the positive level of responsiveness they received. Staff and students confirmed they were listened to and supported, which was important to their own wellbeing.

The school has set out a very comprehensive strategic plan for change over the period of 2015 to 2017. Importantly, it defines the targets, measures and strategies to achieve improvement at the school. Staff and parents verified that the focus on improvement, rigour, higher expectations and accountability to students, parents and the community had increased over time. The Review Panel verified the collection and use of a variety of datasets to monitor improvement and guide decisions about school curriculum priorities and teaching practices. In particular, the introduction of Agriculture, as a valued curriculum option in 2016, was welcomed by staff, parents and students.

Staff, parents and students confirmed that the school culture has improved significantly over the last three years. Parents and teachers confirmed the school had once experienced a loss of confidence within the local community, but this was shifting back to one of trust and credibility. Clear expectations,

accountability and follow-up of matters related to communication, behaviour, attendance, performance and a positive culture were verified by parents and staff as dimensions that have improved. In describing the work for 2016, the Principal documented the following statement for staff and the community, which aptly encapsulates the tenor of his message to all about what he wants the school to achieve for the students who attend Eudunda Area School: *To develop high achievement, engagement, intellectual stretch, resilience and a growth mindset for every learner and community member.*

The Leadership Team has established the 'conditions for learning' with respect to positive relationships, staff teams, professional endeavour and a focused approach to improvement. For example, students were clear about the role of school values in guiding their reflections about behaviours in the school. A focus through 'Play is the Way' and 'Boot Camp' in the primary classes has helped with normalising group behaviour and social relationships for younger students. This was evident in conversations between adults and students at the school. The school is now at the 'tipping point' of developing the 'language for learning' with students and adults alike, so that the discourse about expectation and challenge is applied consistently in all classes.

The alignment of the language and vocabulary associated with the 'learning culture' being sought is critical for long-term improvement. Also important in this transformation is the alignment of the actions to match the words. The Review Panel noted growth mindsets posters in some rooms but not others, and that not all students used the language associated with growth mindsets as a natural part of conversation about how to improve as learners. Equally, this principle applies to the technical language of different subject areas, task design, assessment criteria or school vision. Again, this was visible in some classrooms and not others. This will support the school's clear focus on learning improvement and expectation of growth from every student at the school.

A focus on maximising attendance at school should be maintained as an aspect of strengthening growth mindsets across the school community. Attending school and making 'every day count' must be a mantra reinforced with students and parents alike. The attendance audit done during the on-site visit showed the attendance rate has improved to the end of Term 3 2016.

Direction 2

Establish a common language and culture fostering growth mindsets and apply it authentically across the school to an embedded stage.

How effectively are teachers using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice?

Teaching staff have been provided with two lessons per week of in-school time to develop their capacity as professionals. The Review Panel confirmed that staff had committed time to understanding and using the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) in their development as professionals. The use of TfEL was also referenced in staff planning exemplars provided to the Review Panel.

The Principal also reads for his own professional learning and shares current aspects of his research about contemporary teaching practice with staff. This was verified in documentation, staff interviews and teaching practices of staff. A focus on improved teaching practice is also evident in the SIP and teacher performance documentation.

When staff had difficulty understanding how to deliver numeracy across the curriculum, discuss growth mindsets in pastoral care settings, or develop skills of moderation, they explored different avenues to expand their understanding and practice. For example, they have used YouTube video clips and other Partnership schools to support the learning process in improving these areas of teaching practice.

Numeracy has been a curriculum focus throughout 2016. Staff were trying to make intentions for learning clear for most lessons and to differentiate the learning based on the needs and interests of students. Some teachers described differentiation as a natural precondition for teaching multi-year level classes at Eudunda Area School. One parent made the comment: "Teachers have been great in being able to 'hook' my son and support his learning. He's not overly academic but he wants to come to school and that's the important thing".

Positive, open and encouraging relationships between teachers and students were verified during interviews with parents and staff. Secondary students interviewed spoke articulately of the professional guidance provided by teachers. The valued characteristics of teachers at the school include being good communicators, mobile in classrooms, building independence, setting challenging and interesting tasks, providing time to support students, being happy in their job and influencing students in a positive way. Effective relationships for learning were described by one Year 11 student as: “I can talk to my teacher, or any preferred teacher, and they won’t judge you or blow you off”.

The learning data linked to reading, as evidenced in the ‘School Performance Overview’ section of this report, indicates an urgency from the school to address the pedagogical approaches used to teach reading, particularly through the foundational stages in the early years. This approach offers an opportunity to further build the relationship with the preschool, connect early years teachers to the Early Years Learning Framework, and explicitly teach oral language development, phonemic awareness and phonics. The pattern represented in the data has been a regular pattern over time, which must be remediated initially at the classroom level. The flow-on impact on student learning will improve over time and across year levels as students develop stronger proficiencies of fluency and comprehension earlier in their schooling experience.

Identified staff members (a teacher and SSO) have been trained in intervention practices such as Mini-Lit and Multi-Lit (reading) and Quicksmart (numeracy). Mini-Lit and Multi-Lit are currently offered out of the classroom to targeted students from Year 1 to 7, and are being monitored for their impact and effectiveness. Quicksmart was implemented to students from Year 3 to 9 from Term 2, and at the time of the review, the data was not yet available to the school, or the Review Panel. It is essential that reading support programs and approaches, in assistance of skills of fluency (automaticity) for learning, connect across year levels and classroom programs.

Direction 3

Plan and implement an evidence-based and connected literacy program across the school, with a particular emphasis on growth and achievement in Reading.

To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

The school’s strategic plan does describe the aspects of teachers’ work it wants to see delivered in classes across the school. It is important that teachers clearly see their defined work in the SIP. The Principal is open and transparent about the improvement agenda he has established for the school. The aforementioned staff role statements and work undertaken with TfEL is evidence of the work that has progressed to raise the professional capacity of staff at Eudunda Area School.

When building staff understanding about the role of growth mindsets in improving learning, the Principal provided every staff member with a copy of Carol Dweck’s book. This provided an important foundation for discussion amongst staff about how this can be best applied to learning in the classroom. In particular, the secondary team has applied these concepts and attitudes into the task design component of their work. Leadership and teaching staff hold an expectation that all staff will engage with professional learning.

Task design was being transformed to connect and differentiate for the various needs and abilities of students. In particular, Year 11 and 12 students indicated that clarity in tasks and assessment criteria was made explicit for them through the use of rubrics and links to the expected standards. They verified that teachers explained the tasks and expectations for all students, differentiated tasks where necessary and moved around the classes to support their understanding. When asked about consistency in approach across subjects, one student commented: “Every single subject has the same approach”.

The school connects and engages with other schools in the local Partnership to share and broaden their learning with other professionals. Secondary teachers had made shifts in their planning for differentiation. Others confirmed their commitment to the school’s change agenda through the PLC groups where ‘homework’ tasks are provided and staff are asked to implement them in their classes and report back on changes to their practice. One teacher commented: “The homework makes you stop and think about your

own practice". Staff commented positively about a numeracy 'blog' on LearnLink that was established for staff to share their reflections and progress in teaching numeracy across the curriculum.

Documentary evidence was provided capturing the staff professional learning with another Partnership school to develop their capacity to moderate work against the Australian Curriculum A-E standards. This work demonstrated staff commitment to plan tasks that allow all students to exhibit learning at a high level and have the standards applied consistently across all classes and subjects.

Staff did comment on the 'continuity factor' in their own professional learning. They fully support and appreciate the learning pursued through PLC groups, but felt that sometimes they moved from one piece of work to another without truly embedding their practices. The clear message from staff was to spend more time going deeply into developing their agreed practices before moving onto the next focus. About this 'flow' of learning, one staff member said: "It's not perfect, but it's pretty good".

There is staff expectation about sharing their practices with each other during their meetings, with one teacher commenting: "I love staff meetings now". The Principal values his personal commitment to learning and this has transferred to staff. Teachers confirmed that peers observed each other teaching last year, using TfEL as a lens for identifying effective practice, and that Leadership Team members were participating in observations this year. This was evidenced in documented 'observational feedback', aligned to TfEL pedagogical framework indicators, and accompanied with leader comments identifying aspects for improvement.

There was ample evidence of staff performance and development practices being undertaken across the school. One highly effective strategy presented through documentation involved each teacher developing a personal narrative titled 'My Story' that outlined how they develop and promote success in their classroom. Through this personal reflection, teachers described processes and provided accompanying evidence about the impact they are having on students in their class, through the implementation of school-based strategies for improvement. Specific and targeted feedback from line managers to each teacher, in relation to this personal narrative, was provided to the Review Panel.

Direction 4

Strategically align effective and efficient staff structures so that collaborative endeavour and teacher capacity building continue to establish task transformation, intended learning and criteria for success as cultural norms in all classes.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Eudunda Area School has developed a clearly defined improvement agenda and has based this on data and evidence. The school Leadership Team has worked diligently at addressing previous directions for school improvement, particularly as it related to the development of the cultural dimensions for change and a clear focus on improved outcomes in student learning.

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

1. Improve learning and personal growth using datasets to establish personalised goals in learning with students and parents; ensure that these goals are visible, monitored and reported at strategic intervals throughout the year using evidence to validate the growth of each student.
2. Establish a common language and culture fostering growth mindsets and apply it authentically across the school to an embedded stage.
3. Plan and implement an evidence-based and connected literacy program across the school, with a particular emphasis on growth and achievement in Reading.
4. Strategically align effective and efficient staff structures so that collaborative endeavour and teacher capacity building continue to establish task transformation, intended learning and criteria for success as cultural norms in all classes.

Based on the school's current performance, Eudunda Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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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.

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David Cluse
PRINCIPAL
EUDUNDA AREA SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson