

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR WILLUNGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in November 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sharron Ward, 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 Willunga Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Part 3 School Organisation:

The anti-bullying policy is currently under review; to be completed for the beginning of the 2017 school year.

Part 5 Safety:

The cyber-safety policy and procedures are currently under review and will be implemented at the beginning of the 2017 school year.

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 91.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Willunga Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 45kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 448 students, representing a pattern of growth. The school has an ICSEA score of 1033, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2.9% Aboriginal students, 4.3% students with disabilities, 1.5% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 0.44% children in care, and 22% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal (Acting) for the 2016 school year. There are two senior leaders, a Deputy Principal placed for the 2016 school year with the major responsibility for Special Education, and an Assistant Principal in her first year managing the intervention program.

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, 63% of Year 1 and 70% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 44% in 2013 to 63% in 2015.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of Year 3 students, 61% of Year 5 students, and 71% 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 average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 43% of Year 3, 19% of Year 5 and 22% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 53%, or 8 of 15 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 40%, or 10 of 25 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of Year 3 students, 63% of Year 5 students, and 63% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

For 2016 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. For Year 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving below the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 33% of Year 3, 9% of Year 5 and 6% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 44%, or 4 of 9 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 44%, or 4 of 9 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016. For Year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Effective Leadership	How effectively does the school leadership foster a culture of learning?
School Community Partnerships:	How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?
Improvement Agenda:	How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?
Effective Teaching:	How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

2016 saw significant changes in the Leadership Team. The Deputy Principal was appointed as acting Principal for the year, an experienced Deputy Principal was placed at the school for 2016, and the Assistant Principal was released from classroom teaching to lead the intervention programs.

The Leadership Team reviewed perception data from 2015, specifically, the parent opinion survey and the staff psychological health survey. The parent survey indicated that priorities to be addressed were the lack of connectedness with the school and seeking more opportunities to be involved in the school. The committee structure of the Governing Council was restructured with an emphasis on authentic collaboration between the school and the Council. Governing Council members stated that the implementation of subcommittees has provided multiple strands to address issues, and that there are now opportunities for parents not elected to Governing Council to be included on committees. Governing Council members also stated that the establishment of an email address for parent feedback was a highly valued tool to keep people informed and to provide an avenue for transparent communication.

The survey also indicated that email reminders were the most useful form of communication. The school has improved communication processes through the implementation of specific apps, including a parent communication app and an online school interview app. These have been developed using a common

platform to link multiple layers of school communication.

The psychological health survey from staff in 2015 indicated that only 23% of staff were able to manage their work demands without ongoing, significant concerns. The following processes were implemented to address staff psychological health: provision of a focus through the Personnel Advisory Committee (PAC), as a strong voice for staff; the establishment of a Staff Wellbeing Committee to manage the psychological health survey, staff handbook, and induction processes; and the development of a Student Wellbeing Committee, with the responsibility for student celebrations and whole-school events, including opportunities for fun.

The Curriculum Committee has undertaken the following responsibilities: overseeing the curriculum budget allocations, developing a new report format in response to 2015 feedback and staff consultation, and developing recommendations for the future sustainability of ICT. The final area of work involved focusing on the development of congruence in the alignment of the Australian Curriculum (AC) with specific reference to composite classes.

The school engaged a private consultant to support staff in developing a culture of effective school improvement. This work is based on the research of Hattie, Marzano and Wiliam, with a specific focus on promoting and supporting staff to embed practices that result in high impact for learning; the work also references links to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The Leadership Team elected to maintain the current Site Improvement Plan (SIP) as the cycle finishes at the end of 2016. Performance and Development processes were aligned to reflect DECD guidelines, including staff aligning their personal learning goals with the SIP.

Student Free Days have been focused on data, including 'putting faces on the data', and looking from individual, class and whole-school perspectives with a focus on maths. Processes that support collaborative learning were used throughout. Individual student files for vulnerable students were unpacked, with staff having time to discuss strategies with each other. Work has also included a focus on the eight effective practices building on the work of the Partnership.

Responses from the parent groups interviewed during the External School Review (ESR) indicated that the Leadership Team is enthusiastic, with parents acknowledging the work and effort that has gone into the improvement agenda. The Governing Council reported that the establishment of a Learning Committee has really helped with parent contributions making a positive difference.

The psychological health survey undertaken in 2016 indicates that 64% of staff are now able to manage their work demands without ongoing, substantial concerns. This is a significant change within twelve months, and clear evidence that the self-review processes to inform and shape improvement in this area have been very effective. 2017 provides the opportunity for consolidation of self-review processes to further enhance learning outcomes for students and strengthen teacher capacity.

Direction 1

Embed self-review processes to strategically engage staff, students and the community in whole-school improvement, leading to improved outcomes in learning.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Interviews were held with approximately 64 students from Years 2 to 7 as part of the ESR. Students were asked how they knew if they were successful in writing. Responses included: "pay attention to capitals and full stops", "if the teacher says it's really good", "no sticker means it's not Ok" and "I don't really know". Some students indicated that they handed work in and would get a smiley face or a sticker without explanations. Other students indicated a range of strategies, including 'doing a bigger twist', 'check your spelling' and 'ask a friend'. Most responses from students were effort-based in relation to improved learning. Authentic feedback for learning provides students with clear understandings of next steps for improvement.

During teacher interviews some teachers stated that they provided feedback for learning via the use of a writing rubric. Another teacher used the English as a Second Language or Dialect (EALD) language and literacy levels to show students what was required to progress to the next level. Both examples are

evidence of explicit success criteria for writing. A further example was provided where students leaving for a break would indicate their level of success in that session, from 0-10, via a visual on the internal door. This gave the teacher an immediate overview of the students' perceptions of success which could then be followed-up with an individual student discussion relating to the learning.

The school is to be commended for their commitment to collecting and acting on student opinion and perceptions via whole-school surveys. In Term 3, through the engagement of the consultant in school improvement, the school elected to undertake classroom climate surveys from the perspective of the students. The classroom climate survey assessed student perceptions of the learning environment in the following areas: relationships, assessment and delivery. The survey also assessed student attitudes and self-belief. Results went directly to the classroom teacher and were not made available to anyone but that teacher. The school leadership was provided with feedback based on the means of all students involved.

The initial survey was administered as a pre-assessment, with the opportunity for staff to then focus on aspects of their choosing resulting from the survey, with a post-test administered eight weeks later. School leadership commented they were pleased that 75% of staff undertook the post-test to evaluate improvement over time. Overall gains were evident in the areas of involvement and cooperation. One teacher stated that her learning, as a result of the surveys, was that often what she thought she was doing was not what students saw or perceived.

The work undertaken via the surveys in Term 3 provided authentic feedback to teachers from their students. This work can be further developed with a strong focus on feedback to improve learning. Feedback for learning is strengthened through the inclusion of students having opportunities to view and discuss personal datasets with their teacher, and identify where next steps can be determined collaboratively. These next steps provide students with the knowledge of both how and what to focus on for improvement. They can then be transferred to specific and individual learning goals that are regularly reviewed.

Direction 2

Develop authentic student influence in their learning by supporting all students to engage with feedback, data and individual goal-setting.

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

The Leadership Team is to be commended for their commitment to ensuring the staff are provided with opportunities to engage and develop expertise in effective pedagogical practices. They commented that the school had previously had a reliance on a 'programs approach' to teaching rather than effective pedagogical practices. It was noted by leadership that, while results were showing an improvement, they were inconsistent and were more a reflection of the cohort than a targeted approach to learning.

Several Governing Council members indicated during the ESR that they believed there was a lack of rigour around learning and that students were not challenged enough in their learning. Leadership identified that the development of common understandings relating to effective pedagogical practices and subsequent implications for classroom practice are a priority for 2017.

In a survey conducted during the ESR, staff were asked to comment on recent professional development they had undertaken and the impact that it had on their teaching. Eighty-eight percent of responses referred to the learning they had undertaken around educational improvement. This learning was focused on teachers becoming researchers of their own learning environment through data interpretation, reflection and collaboration with peers. The next step was to transfer the learning to their teaching practice.

Teachers indicated that, as a result of training, their teaching practice had changed in the following ways: learning intentions were clearer, success criteria was shared and accessible for students and there was an improved focus on student influence and involvement, which now included discussing with students the *what* and the *how* to achieve. Another teacher indicated that they had changed their planning to ensure students had the opportunity to be stretched in their learning.

Staff, via the same survey, reported an increase in work output and an improvement in student

relationships as a result of higher levels of engagement and greater student control over their learning. Another teacher commented that students know what they are learning and now have a language for learning. It was also noted that verbal feedback indicated students had developed an understanding of how to excel. There has been a commitment to embed this work throughout the school, with five staff members now trained as cognitive coaches to support the learning around effective pedagogical practices for teachers in 2017.

Some staff reported that they had undertaken professional learning to meet the needs of students with specific identified needs. Teachers reported that this training had resulted in very positive outcomes for individual students and for themselves as educators.

The school leadership also worked with staff, focusing on an inquiry question of what it looks like to be effective in a classroom and, over time, staff developed common understandings of effective interventions for learning in this area. This work was then cross-referenced with the TfEL framework, documented, published and displayed in the staff room. The school leadership is to be commended for the pace and strategic manner in which they led staff through new learning that resulted in the alignment of this learning with the familiar DECD pedagogical framework (TfEL), which was then trialled through the process of classroom observations. The continuation of this work through cognitive coaching and observation cycles is a priority for the school in 2017.

The school established a Learning Committee that is representative of staff and Governing Council members and chaired by the Assistant Principal. The role of the Learning Committee is to monitor issues, trends and developments related to the quality of student learning. Governing Council members reported that the Learning Committee had really assisted in understanding the core work of the school and that the Assistant Principal was very supportive in the identification of what was realistic, and with providing possible directions for future action.

Staff are to be commended for their willingness to take risks in their own learning and build their personal capacity, thus, ensuring the students in their care have the opportunity to engage in a challenging and rigorous curriculum.

There is clear evidence of multiple approaches to fostering a culture of learning throughout the school. Implementation processes are comprehensive and engage major stakeholders at all stages. Next steps for learning are clearly identified and thoroughly planned. The school is now well-positioned to begin the work of moving from a perceived complacency amongst students to developing a culture where intellectual stretch and challenge for all students is embedded within all year levels and across all curriculum areas.

Direction 3

Embed a culture of learning through deliberate, planned and effective pedagogical practices that are consistently implemented by staff to engage, stretch and challenge all students.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

At interviews held during the ESR, teachers were asked to outline how they planned the learning using the Australian Curriculum. Responses included using a scope and sequence, and pulling from there what was useful, working with a curriculum plan developed by a colleague, and using a commercial online program for a specific learning area that was aligned against the Australian Curriculum. Another staff member indicated that they go through the content and map what they can integrate to address the learning needs of a composite class. The design of the learning is developed from the content and student assessments and the last stage in the planning is to design the sequence of the learning.

One teacher outlined that they planned using the Australian Curriculum and aligned the planning against appropriate year levels of students in the class. Students were shown expected outcomes for each year level. A further response indicated that in a composite class one teacher began with the lower year level for all students. Several staff indicated that at the beginning of the year they had very little information relating to the learning needs of their new class.

A high level of variance was evident amongst staff in the planning processes and tools that were used and in how the learning was aligned against year level expectations. Consistency in agreed understandings and expectations of what is to be taught across year levels and bands of schooling is essential for both students and staff, and this would be further strengthened by the consistent implementation of common, agreed, year-level datasets.

Teachers commented that, at the beginning of the year, a Curriculum Committee was established to look at how they could develop a scope and sequence that accounted for the needs of students in composite classes, whilst maintaining congruence with the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. Participants looked at a range of options and concluded that they would maintain the status quo for 2016 and look to developing alternate options for 2017. This will be very important work; a coherent curriculum from the perspective of the learner is essential as they progress through school.

Leadership indicated that they were developing class structures that would allow for like year levels to be paired and have the opportunity to work together, which would also be very beneficial for collaborative planning purposes to ensure curriculum consistency.

Developing consistency and shared knowledge of the Australian Curriculum, where all teachers engage collaboratively with colleagues and experts on curriculum understanding, design and implementation, is essential and necessary work for the school.

Direction 4

Develop and embed consistency in the planning and implementation of the Australian Curriculum and Achievement Standards.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Willunga Primary School's effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted intervention. The school works in partnership with parents and the community.

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

1. Embed self-review processes to strategically engage staff, students and the community in whole-school improvement, leading to improved outcomes in learning.
2. Develop authentic student influence in their learning by supporting all students to engage with feedback, data and individual goal-setting.
3. Embed a culture of learning through deliberate, planned and effective pedagogical practices that are consistently implemented by staff to engage, stretch and challenge all students.
4. Develop and embed consistency in the planning and implementation of the Australian Curriculum and Achievement Standards.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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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.

Ali Colbeck
PRINCIPAL
WILLUNGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson