Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Suttontown Primary School

Conducted in March 2021

Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

The purpose of the External School Review (ESR) is to support schools to raise achievement, sustain high performance and to provide quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in government schools.

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

This report 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.

We acknowledge the support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Rebecca Pears, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Sue Mittiga, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
    - Governing Council representatives
    - Leaders
    - Parent groups
    - School Services Officers (SSOs)
    - Student representatives
    - Teachers.

School context

Suttontown Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 432kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 96. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 91. The local partnership is Blue Lake.

The school has a 2019 ICSEA score of 971 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 36% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of tenure.

There are 7 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1	**Improve the monitoring and evaluation of student learning growth by developing a whole-school approach to the use of multiple measures, including moderated student work samples, that develops consistency in assessment and understanding of standards of achievement.**
Direction 2	**Raise student achievement levels by building the capacity of staff in the use of feedback to motivate students to improve, and in developing questioning techniques that differentiate learning.**
Direction 3	**Engage and challenge students to think critically and creatively by strengthening the emerging collaborative planning processes to design learning and tasks that support the needs of a range of learners.**
Direction 4	**Improve student ownership and achievement in learning through developing understanding of learning intentions and supporting students to engage with data and evidence to develop goal setting for improvement in personal learning.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
There is a data collection schedule to ensure data is collected and reviewed. Writing samples are moderated by all teachers in narrative, persuasive and information report. Teachers have started to use the writing moderation to develop individual writing goals to identify next steps in learning for students. From 2017 to 2018 teachers moderated work samples with other partnership schools, this was however discontinued. At the end of 2019 professional learning communities (PLCs) were formulated with the Small Schools Learning Improvement Cluster to further develop learning design, formative assessment and to moderate A-E grades. Unfortunately, this did not proceed in 2020 due to COVID-19.

There has been a significant change in staff and this has had an impact on the implementation of the previous directions. In 2018 teachers participated in a book club process on 'Embedding Formative Assessment' by Dylan William. This involved professional discussions on implementing formative assessment strategies. The Principal reported that this has been an area that has been continually revisited as teachers demonstrated an understanding of the principles of formative assessment but at times, have struggled with the practical aspects of embedding some strategies into classroom practice. Staff have also used the reference text 'Teaching Student Centred Mathematics" to deepen their own knowledge of topics and tasks that offer more opportunity for differentiation.

In 2016 the Quicksmart numeracy intervention program was implemented as only 22% of students achieved SEA in year 7 numeracy and by 2019 100% of students achieved SEA. The principal has reported that changes in teacher planning, pedagogy and task design has led to continued growth in student achievement and reduced the number of students requiring intervention.

Teachers have used the 'Understanding by Design' process to plan unit outlines. These were shared online to provide the opportunity for staff to access each other's planning. Online sharing has since ceased due to technical issues experienced. In 2020 teachers developed teaching sprints in mathematics based on learning from 'Teaching Student Centred Mathematics', Van de Walle et al. This resulted in a shift in pedagogy from teacher directed, worksheet-oriented tasks, to using concrete materials and developing more challenging learning tasks. In addition, staff were involved in teaching sprints related to the school improvement plan (SIP) writing goal.

From 2016 to 2018 teachers engaged in professional development and evidence-based texts related to developing learning intentions and success criteria. These provided the opportunity to develop strategies for using success criteria with students and developing student confidence in talking about their learning.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Teaching staff demonstrated consistent, whole-school understandings of the current intent and content of the SIP priorities. School Services Officers (SSOs) demonstrated a sound understanding of the SIP focus and directions. To help with the implementation of the SIP teachers have collaboratively participated in professional development and reading. They have implemented learning sprints which involve trialling new practices and then reflecting on these pedagogical changes to determine their impact on student achievement. These changes to practice were aligned to and helped enact the SIP goals. There has been a significant change in staff and therefore some aspects of the site improvement actions will need to be revisited to ensure a common understanding.

Leadership provides planned opportunities for staff to engage with research-based best practices to ensure SIP priorities are comprehensively addressed. Performance and development processes are aligned to the SIP to enable the plan to be enacted. The implementation of the SIP and the outcomes achieved are communicated with the governing council. A literacy agreement has been developed to help create consistency. Staff acknowledged that the development of a numeracy agreement and a writing genre scope and sequence would be beneficial and help support coherent practices.

Students are being individually tracked and monitored to ensure progress in their learning. The initial SIP was created after staff analysed student data and identified the main priorities to be included in the plan. The implementation of the plan is consistently reviewed and consequently in 2020, the challenge of practice was changed after site self-review processes, utilising the department's guidebooks. The change in staff will require teachers to collaboratively revisit prior learning to ensure consistency of practice. COVID-19 impacted on the opportunities for teachers to collaboratively analyse multiple measures of data in 2020 and therefore, further opportunities for all staff to engage in the collaborative analysis of data would be beneficial.

Direction 1   **Embed the collaborative use of multiple measures of data to inform, monitor and evaluate the impact and consistent implementation of the School Improvement Plan.**

Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

Teachers were providing some opportunities for students to be involved in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning. For example, teachers were considering student interests when designing some tasks and at times, allowing students to decide how to present work. Although teachers respond to feedback from students it would be beneficial to provide more structured opportunities for students to provide feedback. Teachers acknowledged that involving students in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning is an area that requires further development. Enabling students to have a more extensive influence in their learning would allow students to become engaged and motivated to improve their achievement.

Teachers have been involved in assessing writing using a consistent assessment tool and participating in professional development in mathematics. These opportunities are helping to create a more consistent language for learning across the school. Continuing to strengthen a coherent language would help deepen student's understanding and enable them to discuss their learning and identify next steps with a range of different staff.

Individual student goals for writing are being determined by teachers based on the analysis of student achievement data. Some students had goals in writing and were able to articulate them. Other students articulated a whole-class goal that they were trying to achieve. One teacher had writing and mathematics goals, developed by students, displayed in the classroom. Providing opportunities for students to engage with their own achievement data and regularly determining individual aspirational goals in a range of learning areas across the school, is an area for further development. Visual displays of goals in the classroom would support student's ability to monitor and review their progress. A whole-school approach to students regularly monitoring and reviewing their own learning goals would improve students' ownership of their learning and help improve student achievement.

Direction 2   **Collaboratively work with students using achievement data to determine aspirational learning goals which are regularly reviewed and monitored.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

The early years teachers have implemented an evidence-based phonics literacy program to ensure explicit teaching and to cater for the diverse learning needs of students. This has resulted in significant improvement in the year one phonics achievement results. Teachers are providing feedback to students, particularly in a verbal form. There is evidence of students receiving some clear information about what they need to do to improve. Teachers identified that they need to be more consistent in providing students with explicit feedback to support them in understanding their next steps in learning. Providing more opportunities for students to give peer feedback would also be beneficial.

There are consistent literacy programs implemented in both the early years and the primary years. There was evidence of some effective evidence-based pedagogical practices being implemented. Teachers have used mentor texts to model expert writing and to deconstruct text. Concrete materials are being used to engage and deepen student understanding in mathematics. SSOs work effectively in classes to implement effective intervention programs to support students with learning difficulties.

Teachers have participated in professional development and completed professional readings to provide open-ended maths tasks to stretch and challenge students. As a result, teachers have recently changed their pedagogy and are implementing more open-ended mathematics tasks and providing less mathematics worksheets. There was evidence of staff differentiating student learning in literacy and mathematics. However, embedding the use of differentiated learning tasks particularly in relation to ensuring students are challenged in their learning, is an area for further development. During student forums, some students identified that reading, writing and mathematics tasks were too easy and not challenging enough. Teachers acknowledged that they need to continue to develop their ability to stretch and challenge students in a range of subject areas. The provision of regular, challenging learning experiences and transformed tasks will enable students to consistently demonstrate learning at higher levels in a range of curriculum areas.

Direction 3   **Embed pedagogical practices and task design that enable differentiated learning and transformed tasks to ensure that all students are challenged.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The school is to be commended for their commitment to continuous improvement and a collaborative culture. Staff have been involved in professional development, extensive reading and consequently implemented effective pedagogical practices. The increased use of open-ended and problem-solving tasks is supporting students to develop higher order thinking skills. Parents reported that the school is very supportive, communicates with parents effectively and that Suttontown Primary School is very much a 'community school'.

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

Direction 1   **Embed the collaborative use of multiple measures of data to inform, monitor and evaluate the impact and consistent implementation of the School Improvement Plan.**

Direction 2   **Collaboratively work with students using achievement data to determine aspirational learning goals which are regularly reviewed and monitored.**

Direction 3   **Embed pedagogical practices and task design that enable differentiated learning and transformed tasks to ensure that all students are challenged.**
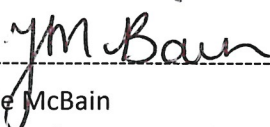
Based on the school's current performance, Suttontown Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.
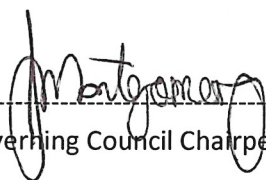
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Appendix 1

School performance overview

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

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019 53% of year 1 and 71% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 was downward from 91% to 64%. For year 5 there was an upwards trend from 73% to 100% and in year 7 there has been an upwards trend from 64% to 100%.

For 2019 years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 36% of year 3, 55% of year 5 and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 75% or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 0% or 0 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 73% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 55% to 100%. For year 7 there has been an upwards trend from 64% to 100%.

For 2019 year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools. For years 5 and 7 the school is achieving above the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 36% of year 3, 27% of year 5 and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 18% to 36%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100% or 2 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5.