

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR SUTTONTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in May 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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and June Goode, 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 Suttontown 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 2015 was 92.7%, which is just below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Suttontown Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 432kms south-east of Adelaide on the outskirts of Mt Gambier. The current student enrolment of 91 students is grouped into four classes. Over the last five years, the enrolment has fluctuated between 88 and 105 students. The school has an ICSEA score of 966 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes one Aboriginal student and 7% Students with Disabilities. There are no students who have English as an Additional Language or Dialect and no students under the Guardianship of the Minister. There are significantly more boys than girls, with boys being 63% and girls 37% of the student cohort. Twenty-one percent of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of her tenure.

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, 87% of Year 1 and 64% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 73% of Year 3 students, 58% of Year 5 students and 71% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and for Years 5 and 7, 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 2015, 9.1%, or 1 Year 3, 25%, or 3 Year 5, and 14.3%, or 1 Year 7 student achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 66.7%, or 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50%, or 1 student from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 36% of Year 3 students, 50% of Year 5 students and 86% 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, and for Year 7, this result represents an improvement.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 has been downwards, from 86% to 36%, and for Years 5 and 7, has been upwards, from 36% to 50% and from 72% to 86% respectively.

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

In 2015, 0% of Year 3, 0% of Year 5, and 14.3%, or 1 Year 7 student achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Suttontown Primary School was guided by the support of one Principal for over 30 years up until the end of 2013. Since then there has been a high degree of instability in leadership, which has limited the development of an ongoing improvement agenda. Teachers shared the view that the recent whole-school focus on professional learning has prompted them to review teaching practices and strategies and contributed to a feeling of having “found direction.” The school is working towards building teacher capacity in effective pedagogies through professional learning and performance and development processes. Teachers were clear that the improvement strategy of building consistency across the site by focussing on doing a few things well and monitoring whether they made a difference over time was appreciated and valued.

Data from 2015 regarding student assessments, including Running Record levels, reading fluency, PAT-R, PAT-M, the Single Word Spelling Test, as well as NAPLAN achievement bands, has been collected and recorded on a whole-school spreadsheet organised by year level. Reviews for students with Negotiated Education Plans are held regularly and are data-informed. Teachers indicated that such data is now being used to identify students for the Mini-Lit, Multi-Lit and Quicksmart Numeracy whole-school intervention programs that are run by trained School Services Officers (SSOs). Running Records data is used to monitor the success of the Mini-Lit program. These programs have been introduced to the school by the current Principal in the past year.

The Principal prepared an analysis of 2014 and 2015 NAPLAN data that has been shared with staff, highlighting the numbers of students meeting the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) and identifying those students who had not. There was reference to the SEA concerning students in higher bands (at all year levels) and data presented about higher band retention. The Review Panel heard that teachers were in the early stages of engaging with such data. There was limited evidence of analysis of data by teachers to identify trends and patterns of cohorts, as well as individual growth and tracking over time,

or triangulation of different datasets. The Review Panel observed that the correlation between teacher judgement about student achievement, as demonstrated by the allocation of A-E grades and other measures, such as NAPLAN and PAT-R and PAT-M, was not strong.

As Suttontown Primary School is a small school, the responsibility for each year level is taken up by one teacher, limiting the opportunity for teachers to support each other by collaborating in like year-levels. A consensus of staff believed that sharing and moderation of student work samples with another school would support the development of successful assessment practices. The school is involved with emerging Results Plus networks with other schools and these connections can be built on to broaden the professional learning community to include others outside the school. This could be managed in ways other than reliance on face-to-face meetings.

Parents reported that teachers are accessible, work hard and are available to talk about their child's learning and progress. The Review Panel observed staff willing to focus on improvement, and the Principal reinforced that staff are open to engaging with change and are committed to the school and students. In 2015, the school implemented opinion surveys for students, parents and staff for the first time in several years. Building understanding of the student cohort by analysing perception data, as well as achievement and wellbeing data, available through the use of surveys such as the Middle Years Development Instrument, will support all educators in tailoring their programs to specific learners. There is opportunity for the staff to engage more deeply with data to target teaching, to determine starting points and next steps for students in their class and to continuously monitor student learning growth.

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.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Teachers were asked about how the school supported the needs of students with learning difficulties and differences. They reported that there are specific interventions for students, such as Mini-Lit for Year 1 and Multi-Lit for students in higher year levels who were challenged with reading, as well as Quicksmart Numeracy for students experiencing difficulty in mathematics. These students are often provided with additional support from SSOs and this is highly valued. Discussions with parents verified the work of the School Services Officers and acknowledged the dedication of all staff in supporting students by "not giving up" and "going above and beyond." A number of anecdotes reinforcing this support were shared with the Review Panel. Students corroborated support for learners having difficulty with comments such as: "The people who aren't so good at maths go out with an SSO".

Some teachers expressed a view that the students who were below the expected standard of achievement were more closely monitored than those who had the capacity for higher levels of achievement. All teachers acknowledged that there was a need to reduce the number of students who were identified as eligible for the intervention programs.

Some students reported that teachers gave them feedback to help them know what to do next. Sometimes this was in the form of a sticky note or through written comment on their work. There were occasions when feedback about how students were going was given to the teacher during the lesson using thumbs up or down signals. Both students and teachers indicated that there was a high reliance on teachers telling students what to do. Some teachers reported planning for specific groups who needed extending, and others indicated that students who were most able had been catered for through one-off events, with an acknowledgement by some that expectations may need to be raised.

In numeracy, numbers of students achieving at higher standards, as measured by NAPLAN higher bands, have been low over time and there is a decline at all year levels against historic average. The current School Improvement Plan (SIP) has a priority to *Improve student outcomes in mathematics*. There is opportunity to further build the interactions between teachers and students into motivation for higher student achievement by using specific feedback that is task-related and questioning strategies that encourage

students to think more deeply.

Many teachers were positive about the use of consistent language across the school through the focus on growth mindsets. Using this in a discipline-specific way by applying it to the mathematics learning area, would enhance the impact of this whole-school approach on student learning outcomes.

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.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

All teachers are engaging with the Australian Curriculum to plan units of work for students relevant to their year level. The use of the Understanding by Design planning process online is supporting teachers in sharing their planning and in considering big ideas and transferable learning goals. There was consensus amongst teachers who all spoke positively about the sharing that had occurred through being able to look at colleagues' programs and the additional professional conversations that had been prompted.

All classes at the school are composite year levels and students are clear about learning tasks being related to year-level expectations. There was an indication that, at times, students are working on tasks set for the year-level above. Some students reported that they looked at the curriculum when the teacher explained why they needed to know something.

The Review Panel met with groups of students from Years 2 to 7 who represented learners with a range of capabilities, dispositions and aspirations. Students were asked to bring along a sample of learning that they were proud of or that they considered was an example of their 'best'. When asked why they had selected this piece, most student responses were related to effort, presentation of the product or enjoyment. Students felt proud because "I put a lot of effort into it"; "I took my time"; "It's the biggest piece of work (writing) I've done"; "I tried to do my neatest writing"; "It's one of the things I'm good at" and "It was easy".

Examples of assessment rubrics were shared with the Review Panel, but when prompted to describe their learning, most students did not articulate understanding about success criteria or being motivated to engage with more challenging tasks. Student conversations were weighted towards talking about getting things finished rather than what they had learnt. Some teachers shared the perspective that many students have a limited view of what they can and can't achieve. The whole-school focus on growth mindsets is considered to have the potential to address this concern.

The Review Panel specifically asked students what happens when they complete a set task. Students across the school reported that they might be directed to get another sheet or do silent reading or draw or finish off other work. They liked to get an iPad and sometimes worked on 'Mathletics', although one student commented that "everyone likes to oppose everyone else and you are not looking at the maths side so much as the points side".

There is opportunity to further the collaborative engagement with planning to preference a learning design that focuses on expecting students to demonstrate deep understanding through applying their learning in new and authentic contexts. Learning tasks designed with multiple entry and exit points will engage and support the needs of a range of learners and build high expectations.

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.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Suttontown Primary School is advantaged by a strong sense of community. Students spoke positively about their teachers and relayed that children at this school were happy; this was universally agreed. Teachers also commented about the students being happy to come to school, and the Review Panel observed this when students were playing in the yard.

The group of parents who met with the Review Panel reported high levels of satisfaction with the school and the opportunities that their children had to learn and to grow there. Parents felt that the size of the school contributed to an inclusive and personalised environment. This was succinctly put by one parent who commented that: "No student is a number here". Parents commented that the school was supportive of all students' needs and encouraged respectful relationships: "Kids are more accepting of difference." The 2015 Parent Opinion survey reinforced this view from families with all but one area having an average response of at least 'agree'. These views indicate that the school is well on the way to achieving the targets and aims of the *Improving student engagement and wellbeing* priority of the SIP.

In terms of influence in learning, a few students reflected that, at times, they might be asked to 'rate' another student's work or use a rubric for peer assessment. When sharing examples of their learning, students were not confident in articulating the purpose of the learning task or the criteria for success and, in some cases, students shared the perspective that they were not aware of assessment criteria prior to the teacher making a judgement. Student involvement in authentic learning is enhanced when learning intentions are made explicit to them, and they are able to monitor and provide feedback collectively and individually about their own and others' progress towards achieving the aims of the learning. Sharing the intentions of particular lessons that teachers have planned, as part of the learning sequence in the unit of work, and then collaboratively reflecting on them, is a way of supporting students in developing the language of learning.

As teachers develop their own data literacy, the opportunity for students to develop ownership of their learning by engaging with data and evidence that shows them where they are and where they need to or could be on the learning continuum, will be enhanced. Students enjoyed using the iPads in various learning tasks, and such technology could be harnessed to support students in documenting evidence of their learning. The continued and improved use of transparent criteria or rubrics will help students in knowing what is expected of them. Students reported that they enjoyed being part of the three-way interviews that were held with families once a year, as did parents. Involving students as key stakeholders in the learning process will strengthen the partnership between students, families and school staff, and improve learning outcomes.

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.

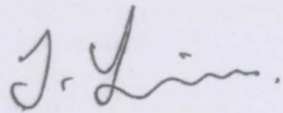
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Suttontown Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. The school is using student achievement data to inform decisions and actions, and effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions.


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

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.
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.
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.
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.

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

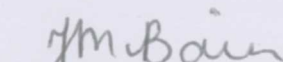


Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Josie McBain
PRINCIPAL
SUTTONTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson