

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR BERRI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Steve Portlock, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Steve Freeman, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Berri 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 a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. The DECD logo needs to be attached to the school policy document. Staff folders have clearly laid out expectations of all staff in relation to attendance, monitoring and follow-up. The school works closely with the Riverland Attendance Officer and the ACEO. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 89.3%, which indicates a steady increase since 2010, but is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Berri Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 School in the Riverland area, approximately 240kms from Adelaide. The school has an onsite Special Class. The school has had a stable enrolment of approximately 325 students over the last five years. The school has an ICSEA score of 930, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population in 2014 includes 17% (57) Aboriginal Students, 13% (44) Students with Disabilities, 14% (47) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3 students under the Guardianship of the Minister, and 60% School Card recipients.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal, Deputy Principal and a School Counsellor.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning:	How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated? To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?
Effective Teaching:	To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?
Effective Leadership:	How well does the leadership facilitate the development of high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

The school has had a focus on improving Literacy achievement over a number of years and has identified Numeracy as a key priority area in 2014 and 2015.

The Principal of the school acknowledged that the number of students reaching the DECD Standard in Running Records and NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy requires attention. The analysis of the Running Records data indicates that 25% of students in Year 1 and 41% of students in Year 2 are reaching the SEA. The 2014 NAPLAN Reading data for Year 3 indicates that 64% of students are reaching the SEA (Band 3 or above) which is an increase from the previous year where 47% of students were achieving the SEA. There is an upward trend in Year 7, which indicates 71% of students achieving the SEA. There is a dip in Year 5 with 40% of students achieving the SEA. The 2014 NAPLAN Numeracy data indicates a similar trend, with 56% of the Year 3 students achieving the SEA, 38% at Year 5 and 59% at Year 7.

Evidence in the review indicates that the school is monitoring student achievement in Running Records, EALD, PAT-M, NAPLAN and student, parent and staff perception data. The data is collated and analysed by the Leadership Team but has not been in a form easily accessible for teachers to use to monitor student achievement and progress. The school has purchased a student learner management system to consolidate learner achievement data. Some staff are actively entering student achievement data and considering the implications for their teaching but this was not consistent across the school. The staff are aware of the students not achieving the SEA but there is not currently a whole-school approach to working with students just below the SEA to help them achieve the standard.

There was evidence in the review that whole-school agreements in Literacy (Jolly Phonics/Grammar, genre writing and assessment, Running Records) and Numeracy (Natural Maths) are in place but these need to be documented and strengthened in every classroom. Explicit directions about pedagogy must be clear. For example, all Natural Maths lessons should include mental routines, problematized maths, group work, open-ended tasks and reflection. It is timely to embed Jolly Phonics/Grammar and explore how it could link to a whole-school approach to Guided Reading.

The school is committed to student achievement data collection; however, it was acknowledged by the leadership team that the use of PAT-M and PAT-R data was not maximised to monitor student achievement and growth. Neither was data linked to the Quick Smart Maths, Multi Lit and Mini Lit intervention programs, in which data are not being fully interrogated. A coordinated approach to monitoring intervention at the individual and program level is necessary to ensure the resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.

The 2014 Annual Report acknowledged that achievement and growth is an issue and, in response, a range of strategies has been identified in the 2015 School Improvement Plan. Further refinement is required to the SIP to ensure the school uses the student achievement data and evidence, and translates these into targets and actions at the school and classroom level.

Direction 1

Increase the number of students achieving the SEA by refining the School Improvement Plan to include targeted actions aimed explicitly at improving student achievement.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

The data indicates that the number of students in Years 3, 5 and 7 in the higher NAPLAN bands in Reading is low (8% in Year 7 in 2014) and even lower in Numeracy (3% in Year 7 in 2014). The retention rate from year 3 to 7 is also low in both areas, with the retention in numeracy (15%) lower than Literacy (50%). During the review, students were not able to identify strategies used by teachers to support them to develop their problem-solving, risk-taking and critical thinking skills, even though these had been identified in a staff workshop as an issue. When students were asked how they were challenged when they had completed work, some said they were asked to read quietly, get another sheet or have free time. It is important for students to understand what they are learning and why, and to be able to articulate the next steps in their learning.

Students were asked if they liked Maths and if they felt they were being successful. Their perceptions varied, with some students saying they liked Maths and several saying it is their favourite subject. Others said they were "OK" at Maths but had lost interest. This matched parent perceptions with some parents saying their children were excited about what was happening in Maths at the school and they had noticed a real change in the relevance of Maths, and others accepting that their children were not good at Maths. The school conducts a student 'happiness' survey in Maths to monitor student attitudes. The school has acknowledged the importance of students developing the positive mindset required to be successful learners. The analysis of student perception data will help monitor and strengthen the school's focus on developing powerful learners.

Students reported that a significant amount of time was spent in Maths on number and operations, even though there is a whole-school agreement to implement pedagogies that apply students' knowledge in problem-solving situations. Students made statements like: "We did problem-solving early in the year but not much now". When asked how they were stretched in Maths one student responded: "We are given even harder long multiplication or long division." In the review, staff identified "developing problem-solving skills and challenging those who are achieving to deepen their knowledge" as areas for improvement. Consistent implementation of the agreed strategies identified in the 2015 SIP will 'stretch' students' thinking and their ability to apply their knowledge and skills.

Direction 2

Raise student achievement in mathematics, in the first instance, by implementing a whole-school approach to problem-solving and using higher order thinking skills, and monitor these using student achievement and perception data.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The review established that the Australian Curriculum is being implemented and students talked about History, Geography, Science, Maths and Literacy. The school had a TfEL Coach and a Numeracy Coach which was reflected in some students speaking about learning intentions, peer assessment, using a range of strategies to solve problems, and apply their knowledge in Maths. The review panel saw evidence of common assessment tasks in a number of classrooms.

The setting of goals and targets in the AET program supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is having a positive impact on their learning. Students in the program spoke confidently about

their learning, the next steps in their learning and the positive mindset required to be successful. Students in other classrooms said that teachers were clear about the learning intentions and helped students set learning goals. Goal-setting was not evident in all classrooms.

The panel noted that some teachers used assessment to provide feedback on their teaching rather than feedback on students' learning, describing mark books and test scores as key forms of assessment. Several students said that feedback on their work included comments like "well done, good effort" without providing specifics or identifying next steps. Other students described clear feedback and notes from the teacher outlining their next steps with specific feedback against rubrics and identified success criteria. The leadership team acknowledged that consistent, constructive and informative feedback to students is required to support learning. At the same time, further exploration of strategies to receive feedback from students as described in the TfEL Framework will support the learning program.

Direction 3

In relation to the Australian Curriculum, ensure a consistent approach to goal-setting, assessment and moderation, and quality feedback, both to and from students.

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

The school has a strongly supportive and welcoming culture valued by students and parents. In the review all parents interviewed stated: "Teachers are passionate, always accessible, open and nurturing. They continually upgrade their knowledge and skills". Members of the Governing Council were supportive of the school's vision and governance and felt decisions were made collaboratively, citing several examples of their active involvement in setting the school's direction.

Many of the pre-conditions for learning have been a focus in recent years. There is evidence of improvements in student behaviour as an outcome of a consistent and coherent approach to student behaviour management and wellbeing. Staff reported that students are increasingly resilient and able to self-manage their behaviour. However, there remain students who display challenging and problematic behaviours and these are managed using a team approach (teachers, counsellor and leaders) centred on students making positive choices.

The leadership team has a clear understanding of current educational research and has based changes to staff professional learning in response to the work of key educators. It was not clear from the review whether staff understood the links and that the changes outlined in the SIP required pedagogical changes based on research.

The Annual Report stated that the focus on the professional learning of staff is rigorous, meaningful and outcomes-focused. This was supported in discussions with staff who valued the cycle of PLCs, working parties and whole staff activities. There was evidence of PLCs being collaborative and focused on SIP priorities. The Principal commented that "the PLCs had become increasingly self-directed and now might be the time for them to be more structured with a stronger focus on data". Performance and development processes are regular and are linked to the National Standards for Teachers. The leadership team acknowledges that these processes require an increased focus on student achievement and the pedagogies that will impact positively on individual student outcomes. The school will benefit from the introduction of the learner management system, which will provide opportunities for PLCs to focus on student achievement through exploration of student achievement data. This will complement the moderation of work samples and the setting of common tasks and assessments in PLCs.

There was evidence of Teaching for Effective Learning strategies being used in some classrooms. A number of teachers described learning by design, formative feedback and learning intentions, but this was not reflective of all teachers.

Direction 4

Ensure the consistent implementation of curriculum and pedagogical agreements is monitored using the existing Performance and Development processes.


OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Opportunities for improvement are evident at Berri Primary School. Berri Primary School is committed to using a range of student achievement data to track students' achievement and their growth. The school is viewed positively by students and parents. The school has significantly improved the learning culture and its ability to manage students with a range of special needs in recent years. The school caters for its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in an exemplary manner with notable results.

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

1. Increase the number of students achieving the SEA by refining the School Improvement Plan to include targeted actions aimed explicitly at improving student achievement.
2. Raise student achievement in mathematics, in the first instance, by implementing a whole-school approach to problem-solving and using higher order thinking skills, and monitor these using student achievement and perception data.
3. In relation to the Australian Curriculum, ensure a consistent approach to goal-setting, assessment and moderation, and quality feedback, both to and from students.
4. Ensure the consistent implementation of curriculum and pedagogical agreements is monitored using the existing Performance and Development processes.

Based on the school's current performance, Berri Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Maria Rivera
PRINCIPAL
BERRI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson