

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Ridgehaven Primary School

Conducted in February 2020



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 Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mark Vincent, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Aboriginal Education Team
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Ridgehaven Primary School caters for students from preschool to year 7. It is situated 17km from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 259 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 286. The local partnership is Tea Tree Gully.

The school has an ICSEA score of 985 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 6% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 29% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the second year of their tenure and two senior leaders.

There are 16 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 6 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Build on work already occurring to engage students in higher-order thinking, particularly through the use of authentic learning tasks.
- Direction 2** Increase the capacity of teachers to continuously track the progress of students, and refine and modify their teaching plans in response to formative assessment data and information.
- Direction 3** Increase all students' interest and motivation in learning, and their empowerment as learners, through regular discussion about learning intention and success criteria, and engagement in the design of learning and assessment.

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Direction 1

Professional learning has focussed on building the capacity of teachers to engage students in critical thinking and high impact literacy teaching strategies. Transference of learning to classroom practice and the design of learning is providing students with opportunities to engage in deeper learning. Students and parents acknowledge improved levels of challenge and greater engagement.

Direction 2

The school is engaging in deeper analysis of student achievement data in literacy and numeracy providing teachers with an improved understanding of where students are in their learning journey. Tracking of student progress is an embedded practice with some teachers using student achievement data effectively in the design of learning and in the provision of targeted individual and group learning tasks.

Direction 3

The inclusion of learning intentions and success criteria in the teaching and learning cycle is still in the developing stage. Although evident in most classes, students shared with the panel their difficulties in understanding and applying them to their learning. Increasing the involvement of students in the design of learning will enhance their understanding of the learning process and lead to improved learning outcomes and high levels of student achievement.

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?

A comprehensive analysis of student reading and numeracy assessment data has enabled staff to identify student growth over time and evaluate the effectiveness of Site Improvement Plan (SIP) actionable strategies. Multiple measures of data, relevant to the stages of learning, have been analysed and critically influenced the review and evaluation process. Intensive staff consultative processes and collaboration has resulted in explicit directions that include:

- Specific actions and strategies that will need to be implemented in order to achieve the goal
- Clear and precise roles and responsibilities for both leadership and teachers
- Updated and challenging, yet achievable, student achievement targets.

Teaching staff indicated higher levels of involvement, commitment and ownership of the review cycle and shared their determination to ensure consistency of implementation and to hold each other accountable.

Students across the school are unaware of the school's improvement plan or the concerted efforts to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The review panel has identified this as an opportunity for students to engage with, and authentically influence the achievement of these goals. Including student voice in the implementation and review of the SIP will add an interesting dimension to the improvement agenda.

While the analysis of student achievement data has influenced the review and evaluation cycle, the majority of students have limited understanding of their learning achievements and what they need to do to improve. Including students authentically with their achievement data can provide an important layer of accountability, responsibility and commitment to the achievement of the SIP goals and targets.

Direction 1 **Actively involve students in their learning by providing opportunities for authentic engagement in the school improvement planning process, the analysis of their achievement data and their next steps in learning.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The implementation of high impact teaching strategies across the school has galvanised the teachers in a collective and collaborative approach to the teaching of reading across the school. Reciprocal reading, close reads and question/answer relationships are some of the strategies that are having a positive impact on student engagement, challenge and improvement of reading skills.

Learning intentions and success criteria have been a recent focus for the school. However, at this stage, they are not impacting significantly on student learning or improvement. Many students could not articulate what they were learning or how to improve apart from “working harder and staying on task”.

The effective use of student learning goals to improve student learning is variable across the school. Some students have an awareness of their goals but are not positively engaged with them. Whilst, some middle school students clearly articulated their learning goals and how they were going to achieve them.

There are a variety of approaches to differentiation of learning across the school. The most common approach is differentiation by outcome with teachers analysing the next steps in learning as a result of the assessment of a completed task. Literacy grouping in some classes caters effectively for students with similar learning needs. However, the panel observed a number of lessons with no differentiation of learning and the same learning task for all students. Some students struggled to understand the task and high achieving students completed the same task with ease and without challenge.

There are varying degrees of understanding and implementation of formative assessment and feedback strategies across the school. Some students reported improved feedback and support this year with teachers providing formative feedback about their learning, indicating the strengths and what they need to do to improve. However, while the panel evidenced, in some classes, feedback that clearly focussed on next steps in learning, there were other classes where the learning had yet to be assessed.

Direction 2 Provide students with the opportunity to improve their achievement by differentiating the learning and providing formative feedback on learning tasks.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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

Professional learning has focussed on implementing high impact teaching strategies and developing a year level team approach to their implementation. During 2019, the literacy coach guided the learning and supported teams to trial these evidence-based teaching strategies in the teaching of reading. Staff experienced significant improvement in pedagogy, a positive impact on student learning and the use of a common language of learning across the school.

The quality and depth of the teacher Professional Development program (PDP) plans and review feedback varies considerably. Some staff commented on the inconsistent commitment and approach by the leadership team and the ineffectiveness of PDPs as a tool for building their capacity. A consistent and valued approach to professional development planning is a powerful way of ensuring the focus is on school and personal improvement, building teacher capacity, responsibility and accountability.

Leadership observations during 2019 were highly valued by teachers as opportunities to receive constructive feedback on their effectiveness in the teaching of literacy. Staff are keen for the introduction of peer-to-peer observations as a collaborative approach to improving their capacity as teachers. The inclusion of the preschool director in the professional learning program of the school has provided valuable opportunities for Early Year's collaboration.

Year level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have become the vehicle for effecting positive change within the team and are highly valued by staff in building collegiality, collaboration and consistency in professional learning. However, there exists a desire by staff to develop greater awareness of effective practices across the school and foster a preschool to year 7 approach to professional collaboration.

There are examples of excellence in pedagogical practices and engaging and challenging learning across the school. With a committed and professional staff, the school is well placed to develop a culture of collaborative learning and a consistent approach to building teacher capacity across all classes.

Direction 3 Establish a consistent whole-school approach to teaching and learning through the development of a collaborative culture of professional learning and improvement for all staff.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

The Aboriginal Education Team has a strong understanding of student data and student progress. Their collaborative approach has enabled the development of close, effective relationships with Aboriginal students and their families. The team understand and know their students well and are providing effective learning and wellbeing support for them both in and out of school.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** Actively involve students in their learning by providing opportunities for authentic engagement in the school improvement planning process, the analysis of their achievement data and their next steps in learning.
- Direction 2** Provide students with the opportunity to improve their achievement by differentiating the learning and providing formative feedback on learning tasks.
- Direction 3** Establish a consistent whole-school approach to teaching and learning through the development of a collaborative culture of professional learning and improvement for all staff.

Based on the school's current performance, Ridgehaven Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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, 77% of year 1 and 66% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 students, and a decline for year 2 students from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 93% of year 3 students, 79% of year 5 students and 74% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement, and for years 5 and 7, this represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 61% of year 3, 33% of year 5 and 24% 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, 62%, or 8 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 58%, or 7 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5, this represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 41% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 6% 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.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 5 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 20%, or 2 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.