

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Noarlunga Downs Primary School

Conducted in August 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Angela Falkenberg, Review Principal.

School context

Noarlunga Downs Primary School is located 30kms south-west of the Adelaide CBD. Enrolments have been declining from 150 in 2014 to 122 in 2017. The school has an ICSEA score of 890, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 13% Aboriginal students, 21% students with disabilities, 12% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 90 families are approved for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal, Senior Leader and School Counsellor. The Principal and Senior Leader share the Principal role and responsibility in a 0.5FTE position for both. The Principal also has a 0.5FTE Results Plus position, whilst the Senior Leader has a 0.5FTE SLLIP position.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Educational Leadership:	To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?
Student Learning:	How well are students achieving over time?
Effective Teaching:	How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

The school's vision is *Aim High Achieve Together* with professional practice contributing to the school realising its vision. Currently, Noarlunga Downs Primary School has a shared Principal arrangement. Each Principal has other responsibilities within DECD and works part-time in the Principal role.

The Review Panel spoke to members of the Governing Council who indicated that the newsletter contains useful information for parents about upcoming school events, school priorities and acknowledgement of students for their work and contributions to school. The Governing Council spoke positively of the work by teachers. They spoke about the focus on learning in classrooms, beginning with the preschool. Parents commented on the ease of transition and that the skills children are developing at preschool support them when they commence Reception. From the 2016 annual survey, 33 families responded, with 97% agreeing that "teachers at this school expect my child to do his/her best" and 91% agreeing that "teachers motivate my child to learn".

The communication with the School Counsellor and teachers for students on a Negotiated Education Plan was described as an effective process, with parents commenting that they know the goals teachers are supporting their children to develop. However, parents requested more information on new topics that help them understand what their child is involved in.

Student behaviour management and, in particular, bullying, continues to be a concern expressed by parents and students, as highlighted in the 2016 opinion survey. Currently, the school is developing strategies, such as Kids Matter, Restorative Practice, and the Friendship Program, to further reduce poor student behaviour and bullying. Follow-up of incidents, issues and complaints needs to be managed comprehensively and efficiently, with a focus on effective communication with the relevant stakeholders. It is a shared responsibility of leaders, while teachers continue to work to develop and maintain safe and successful classroom learning environments.

The performance management system, which involves leadership observing teachers, and giving informal feedback, could be further enhanced with structured review meetings and discussions where pedagogy and planning is a focus.

A sound foundation of collaboration between teachers, with a focus on their students, was observed. However, greater consistency of engagement in aligning the strategies in each classroom would lead to greater improvement for all students.

Direction 1

Ensure every staff member is focused on the agreed school improvement priorities and that these are enacted in each classroom.

How well are students achieving over time?

In the 2017 NAPLAN test, the proportion of students meeting the DECD Standards of Educational Achievement (SEA) appears to be declining.

The Review Panel was keen to inquire into teachers' practices to find out how students are being supported, engaged and stretched. There was some variation in the instructional strategies used by teachers. This was verified through students' description of what teachers do to provide challenges, through the classroom walkthrough by Review Panel members, and in interviews with teachers.

During walkthroughs, the Review Panel sighted students engaged in varying activities for literacy learning. A lesson to support students to develop their writing skills involved a high-quality activity which required students to transfer their thinking from one context to another. Another task was 'reading to self', which supported students to read independently.

It appeared that, in some classes, there was a level of compliance rather than high student engagement. Some students commented that some days can be boring unless they have a practical NIT lesson to look forward to. There was evidence of worksheets and rubrics being used, and their use could be further enhanced by aligning them to the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards. Students talked about the Growth Mindset, although their understanding and application seemed to be at a fairly surface level.

The school is tracking student achievement using a range of assessments and datasets. The collated information is shared and displayed, including recognising the growth being made. Continued enhancements in the use of data to inform practice would be helpful.

School Services Officers (SSOs) provide intervention for students identified as being below the Standard of Educational Achievement or who have a verified disability. Students are provided additional support in the class and/or withdrawn from the class.

Intervention support should be relatively fast-paced, with activities focused on repetition and practice, especially designed to support students with working memory challenges or related to NEP goals. Appreciation of the work of SSOs was genuine; although the Review Panel was concerned there is an expectation by some teachers that this support should replace the 'mainstream' learning tasks, rather than enhance students' learning needs through differentiation in Wave 1 teaching.

The Review Panel noted a high level of student engagement happening in the Special Education class. Students were involved in problem-solving during a hands-on activity in mathematics. The responses to the activity indicated a high level of reasoning and understanding.

In conversations with staff, all reported they had high expectations and a belief that students will improve. Class numbers at Noarlunga Downs Primary School are intentionally low; therefore, the expectation is that teachers design learning experiences and tasks that enable multiple entry and exit points. There was evidence of students choosing activities in many classes, however, less evident was the rigour for students to be challenged and stretched through inquiry and quality questioning.

In a survey conducted as part of the review, staff members were asked to reflect on a recent unit of learning they had designed for their students. They were asked what they would have liked to improve; teachers indicated to get better at programming and managing differentiation and intellectual stretch.

The relationships and level of collaboration between teachers at Noarlunga Downs Primary School are very strong. There is an opportunity to learn from each other on how to design learning in a way that caters for the full range of students within the classroom. This requires teachers' programming and instructional strategies to support those students not yet meeting SEA, as well as providing intellectual stretch. More collaboration and

focus on learning design will strengthen the level of coherence and consistency, Reception to Year 7. There is an opportunity for staff to explore ways to scaffold authentic learning challenges that offer greater complexity and deeper understanding of concepts, and make learning meaningful and relevant for all students.

Direction 2

Through collaborative professional sharing, develop and implement learning design and instructional strategies with a focus on ensuring more differentiated and multi-entry learning support.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Review Panel asked students how they knew how they were going with their learning; common responses showed a reliance on their teacher to tell them. Some referred to the feedback they get: “Well done” and “You’re on track”. Most students stated they receive verbal feedback rather than written, unless it is a project. The Review Panel saw examples of feedback comments in workbooks and annotated in samples on display. Students commented that they are not confident in knowing how they are tracking and all stated they would like to be more informed on how they are going.

In the survey conducted as part of the ESR, teachers indicated they wanted to get better at providing quality feedback as students progress through a unit of learning, rather than at the end of the unit. This practice is commonly known as formative assessment or assessment as learning. It is a powerful practice, especially when students understand what is expected of their work, the success criteria, and are also involved in both formative and summative assessment processes.

In a few classes, teachers outlined strategies that support individual student progress and provide ways for students to show their understanding of new learning. These teachers are experimenting with less teacher-directed classroom learning, and enabling more student-led inquiry-based learning.

When students are involved in co-constructed or, at a minimum, deconstructed assessment success criteria (such as rubrics), it deepens their understanding of what is expected. This is further enhanced when the learning intentions are clear, and there is purpose and relevance to the learning. Some students really benefit by seeing exemplars of quality work, and are provided with explicit teaching of why it is a quality piece. Furthermore, students show greater ownership and motivation when they are involved in the assessment process, and can see the progress in their conceptual understandings and skills.

Direction 3

Build teachers’ capacity to involve students in learning and assessment processes and to provide timely and effective feedback as they are learning.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Noarlunga Primary School.

The staff members are very supportive of each other; they want to do their best by their students and work in close partnership with their students’ parents. They are willing and open to learning from each other, and ‘have a go’ at new initiatives. There is a desire to provide coherent and consistent approaches to teaching and learning. This strong foundation is critical to the school in making changes to professional practices in order to achieve more rigour and differentiated support for students.

Evidence of this practice was verified by interviews with teachers, meeting with the Governing Council, a survey conducted for the ESR, and the 2016 Annual Opinion survey results.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Noarlunga Downs Primary School has a strong collaborative culture between teachers, with a preparedness to share and learn from each other. There is willingness to plan together and openness to improvement.

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

1. The Leadership Team is to ensure every staff member is focused on the agreed improvement priorities, and that these are enacted in each classroom.
2. Through collaborative professional sharing, develop and implement learning design and instructional strategies with a focus on ensuring more differentiated and multi-entry learning support.
3. Build teachers' capacity to involve students in learning and assessment processes and to provide timely and effective feedback as they are learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Noarlunga Downs Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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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.

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Gaynor Steele
PRINCIPAL
NOARLUNGA DOWNS PRIMARY
SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Noarlunga Downs Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Part 6-site procedures-injury and incident reporting. Review of current process to ensure reporting is completed within the timeframe required.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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 2016 was 85.4%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 58% of Year 1 and 18% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For Year 1, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 2, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 6% in 2014 to 58% in 2016. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 2 has been downwards, from 45% in 2014 to 18% in 2016.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 58% of Year 3 students, 50% of Year 5 students, and 50% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2016, 25% of Year 3, 10% of Year 5, and 12% of Year 7 students 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, 33%, or 1 of 3 students from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of Year 3 students, 45% of Year 5 students, and 33% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3 and 5 and 7 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 lower than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 25% of Year 3, 5% of Year 5, and 4% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy

bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 8% in 2014 to 25% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 1 of 1 student from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 1 of 1 student from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.