

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Noarlunga Downs Primary School

Conducted in June 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 Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Anne Rathjen, 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

Noarlunga Downs Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 33kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 122. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 122. The local partnership is Beach Road.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 936, and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 21% Aboriginal students, 37% students with disabilities, 9% 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 their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of tenure and a Deputy Principal in a one-year contract position.

There are 9 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 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.**
- 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.**
- 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 impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

**Direction 1:** The school has focussed on staff content knowledge, understanding of best teaching practice and individual and collective ability to transfer this knowledge into learning opportunities for students. Introduction of departmental improvement planning processes and explicit direct teaching methods are leading to greater consistency across the school.

**Directions 2:** The establishment of structures and processes, such as team meetings, allowed staff to discuss and reflect on their professional practice/s as a community of learners concentrated on continuous improvement for every child in every classroom. The implementation of differentiation and multi-entry learning support continues to be a target for development. Refer to line of inquiry 2 and 3 in this report.

**Direction 3:** This continues to be an area for development. Refer to line of inquiry 2 in this report.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The school collaboratively identified the need to centre early years learning on synthetic phonics and vocabulary development, and improvement of writing skills for reception to year 7. There is a strong focus on implementing consistency across all classes with the statement of practice providing guidance and clarity in the teaching and learning of reading. The school is commended for the improved levels of student achievement in phonics and Running Records.

Student achievement data in writing is extracted from the moderation of writing tasks. This data is used effectively to identify whole class explicit teaching, for example, punctuation and functional grammar. The moderation process is yet to be personalised to identify next steps in learning for individual students.

The school collects and records student achievement data in literacy and numeracy each term. This provides a general overview of class progress, how students are progressing, and the identification of students requiring intervention. The next steps will be to identify how this information can be used to differentiate the teaching and learning and how it can guide the individual improvement journey of all students.

The review and evaluation of the school improvement plan (SIP) identifies whether the challenges of practice and actions have been achieved. However, a number of actions require greater clarity of purpose to be effectively used to measure success.

Student progress and consistency of practice in reading is showing improvement, particularly in phonics and phonological awareness and vocabulary. The school is well placed to strategically review and evaluate this focus by developing and implementing a literacy statement of practice, scope and sequence that encompasses the literacy general capabilities. Reviewing and evaluating actions against their impact on student learning will provide clear evidence of success towards addressing the challenges of practice.

**Direction 1     Develop and implement an ongoing review and evaluation process that measures the impact of actions on individual student learning and ensures differentiated learning opportunities for individual students.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

The introduction of explicit direct instruction strategies provided teachers with a teaching and learning framework that has resulted in improved consistency of practice. Students mentioned greater predictability, consistency and routines across classrooms.

Most teachers identified differentiated learning as an area for development. Intervention groups are effectively catering for the individual learning need of identified students. The design of learning tasks with multiple entry and exit points will ensure all students are being effectively challenged in their learning.

Students are not given opportunities to engage with or analyse their achievement data. They were unable to describe where they were in their learning or what they needed to improve. Some teachers indicated that identifying next steps in learning for each student is an area for further growth. As a result, there is no whole-school approach to student goal-setting.

Early years formative feedback is mostly offered at point of need and delivered verbally to students. Using individual whiteboards across the school is a valuable and effective way the teachers are gauging student understanding of concepts. The panel noted little evidence of formative feedback provided on learning tasks in some classes.

The use of rubrics as a success criterion was trialled in the upper years; however, students indicated that this is only used as part of the summative assessment process by the teacher. Providing opportunities for students to engage in the design of the success criteria and self and peer assessment of the learning tasks, will enhance student ownership of their learning.

The school has a positive and supportive culture, with passionate staff that aim to produce the best outcomes for the children in their care. Most teachers are in the early stages of their career and are continuing to refine and hone their teaching skills. Most teachers acknowledged the need to develop their understanding of quality teaching and learning and evidence-based pedagogical practices, to provide students with the best opportunity to be engaged, challenged, improve and achieve.

**Direction 2 Enhance every student's understanding of their learning journey by providing opportunities to analyse their data, identify next steps, set individual goals and engage with targeted formative feedback and assessment processes.**

## Effective leadership

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

Focused professional learning and a comprehensive induction process are given to new and early career teachers. This ensures consistency of implementation of agreed practices. Teachers are provided with professional learning around the SIP goals, and travelled interstate as a team to observe exemplary practice in teaching and learning. The school also engaged external advisors and mentor/coaches to support professional learning.

Teachers have opportunities to build their leadership skills with school leadership supporting and encouraging their development towards highly accomplished teachers.

Improving the professional practice of SSOs has been a strategic aim for the school. They are included in all professional learning and are highly respected paraprofessionals. Time is provided for learning task and student progress discussions.

Teachers participate in team meetings twice per term. These are professional learning meetings usually connected to the SIP. While discussion is designed around sharing of practice and professional reading, committed actions to trial any shared practices or new strategies are not apparent. Collective agreement to actions would enhance accountability and improve performance.

While there is no formal process of observation, leadership are cognisant of spending informal time in classes identifying the pedagogical needs of teachers. This is an effective way to identify the individual learning requirements of teachers, especially when formative observational feedback is part of the process.

While teacher PDPs have connections to the SIP challenges of practice, it is important to identify goals that are related to student outcomes, are achievable, measurable and stretch learning. Connections to professional standards for teachers and the school's challenge of practice, will focus the professional learning and achievement strategies.

The panel identified the need for most staff to concentrate on further developing their pedagogical skills. The Brightpath/writing direction presents opportunities to incorporate many of the evidence-based pedagogical practices that are not apparent or still developing. It also presents opportunities to introduce 'learning walks' or 'instructional rounds' that focus on one aspect or strategy to review and evaluate across the school.

**Direction 3**     **Improve the quality of teaching and learning through a collective and collaborative teacher mentoring, coaching and observation process that focuses on developing and embedding high-impact pedagogical teaching strategies in every class.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The leadership team are passionate about creating a culture of shared learning, respect, collegiality and belonging. Having all staff members, including SSOs and administration staff, involved in all professional learning is strategic and inclusive. The school and the on-site preschool have developed close relationships and strategically linked the preschool quality improvement plan and the school's SIP enabling continuity of improvement and learning for all staff and students.

With a mixture of experienced and early career teachers, the school can continue to work together in investigating and implementing high-impact teaching strategies that challenge, engage and stretch students in their learning.

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

- Direction 1**      **Develop and implement an ongoing review and evaluation process that measures the impact of actions on individual student learning and ensures differentiated learning opportunities for individual students.**
  
- Direction 2**      **Enhance every student's understanding of their learning journey by providing opportunities to analyse their data, identify next steps, set individual goals and engage with targeted formative feedback and assessment processes.**
  
- Direction 3**      **Improve the quality of teaching and learning through a collective and collaborative teacher mentoring, coaching and observation process that focuses on developing and embedding high-impact pedagogical teaching strategies in every class.**

Based on the school's current performance, Noarlunga Downs Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Governing Council Chairperson

# 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, 82% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2018 and 2019, the trend for year 1 has been upwards, from 53% to 82%, and for year 2, upwards from 57% to 65%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 54% of year 3 students, 79% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 43% to 75%.

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

In 2019, 15% of year 3, 36% of year 5 and 33% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 67%, or 2 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 2 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 46% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, for year 5, an improvement and for year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 50% to 71%.

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

In 2019, 15% of year 3, 7% of year 5 and 17% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been downwards, from 13% to 7%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 1 out of 3 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 67% or 2 out of 3 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.