

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR WAIKERIE 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Deb O'Neill, 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 Waikerie 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 Parts of the DECD policy:

- Part 5 Safety Item 2: all staff and volunteers have trained in RAN.
- Part 5 Safety Item 3: all employees and volunteers working with children and young people have been screened as per DECD policy.
- Part 5 Safety Item 4: the school will implement a Volunteer Policy before the end of 2015 that accords with DECD policy.
- Part 5 Safety Item 5: the school will implement a Cyber Safety Policy before the end of 2015.

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. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 91.8%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Waikerie Primary School is located in the Riverland of South Australia and has an enrolment of approximately 248 students, catering for students from Reception to Year 7. The enrolment has been relatively stable over the past 5 years with a slight downward impact due to the Same Day Start policy introduced in 2014. The school has an ICSEA score of 980, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% (16) Students with a Disability, 7% (17) Aboriginal students, 1% (3) students under the Guardianship of the Minister, approximately 4% (9) students are recognised as English as a Second Language or Dialect learners, and approximately 33% (80) are eligible for School Card assistance. Punjabi is the First Language Mother Tongue (FLMT) program offered at the school.

The leadership consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Coordinator, Australian Curriculum (AC) all in their first year of appointment to their respective roles. A School Counsellor is also in her first year of appointment to the school.

### Lines of inquiry

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

**Student Learning:**                      **How well are students achieving over time?**

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

### How well are students achieving over time?

Analysis of reading achievement (based on Running Records) through Years 1 and 2 from 2011 to 2014 indicates that an average of 48% of Year 1 students achieved the expected DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), and at Year 2, 75% achieved the SEA. Assuming that a high proportion of students move from Years 1 to 2 at the school, the data indicates an increase of 25% achieving the SEA from 2011 to 2012 (from 56% to 81%), 34% increase from 2012 to 2013 (from 37% to 71%) and a 29% increase achieving the SEA from 2013 to 2014 (from 46% to 75%).

The reading achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), generally shows an average of 79% of Year 3, 75% of Year 5, and 77% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The Year 3 achievement at the SEA has risen over time from 74% in 2011 to 84% at the SEA in 2014. The Year 5 data shows a slight decrease in achievement from 2011 to 2014, from 73% to 68% at the SEA. The Year 7 cohorts show consistent achievement of approximately 80% at the SEA over the same period of time.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher reading bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last 7 years, there was, on average, 42% at Year 3, 31% at Year 5 and 28% at Year 7 in the top two bands. For those students who achieved in the top two bands in reading at Year 3, approximately 75% of the tracked students remain in the upper two bands through to Year 7.

The numeracy achievement over the last seven years (as measured by NAPLAN), generally shows an average of 79% of Year 3, 75% of Year 5, and 80% of Year 7 students at the SEA. The Year 3 achievement at SEA has risen gradually over time from 74% in 2011 to 78% in 2014. The Year 5 result has gradually dropped over the same period of time from 83% at SEA in 2011 to 65% at SEA in 2014. The Year 7 results show a steady rise in achievement at the SEA from 82% in 2011 to 92% in 2014.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher numeracy bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the last seven years, there was, on average, 27% at Year 3, 29% at Year 5 and 25% at Year 7. For those tracked students, who achieved in the top two bands in numeracy at Year 3, approximately 80% of them were retained in these bands through to Year 7.

The task for the school is to retain students in the upper two bands for reading and numeracy as they progress through school. Of note, is that the school has a proportion of students (average 8% in 2014 across the school) who are withdrawn from the NAPLAN tests which influences the school's performance, as they are regarded as not meeting the SEA. When the Principal was asked about these students she knew who these students were and the reasons for their absence. She also described each student's capacity to achieve against the SEA.

#### Direction 1

**Improve reading and numeracy achievement, growth and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of effective pedagogical approaches.**



The Principal's presentation cited a number of school initiatives to improve student achievement within the school context at Waikerie Primary School. These initiatives emerged from data analysis undertaken by the leadership team and staff. They included: reading comprehension and oral language development, mathematical vocabulary and approaches to multi-step problems through the Australian Curriculum (AC) framework and improved teaching practices that make learning more visible and explicit for students. The Principal presented multiple data sets that supported the strategic directions of the school. The Principal also acknowledged the work of the local Partnership in developing growth mindsets of learners and made the comment: "We want to pursue it here at Waikerie."

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel pursued the following line of inquiry.

### **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

The school has effective data collection and analysis processes to guide decisions about directions, resources, professional learning and teaching practices to impact improvement in student learning. The Principal presented a one-page data summary that connects data to the work undertaken by all staff at the school. The role of the leadership team was described as one of leading curriculum and pedagogical practices as they relate to the AC and Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework through a number of in-school and external processes. The School Counsellor's role is multi-faceted but is focused on positive student mental health and the development of growth mindsets of learners (as identified across the Partnership).

The school is modifying its approaches to the improvement work undertaken by working on 'multiple fronts' rather than implementing initiatives as separate entities. This will require a mindset shift for staff in implementing key curriculum initiatives through an integrated approach, delivered by consistent evidence-based effective teaching practices. Professional collaboration, professional learning, teaching observations and performance and development should all align to deliver improved achievement and growth in student learning.

This current mindset was reflected in the mixed comments from staff such as: "I think some people have got it with respect to the Australian Curriculum but some haven't"; "Now I'm asked to teach this, now I'm asked to teach that"; "I can see the connections between history, numeracy, literacy and cross-curricula perspectives." As a result of this mixed commentary, the leadership team is approaching these disparate views in the following way: "We don't want teachers to think: Oh, this is an extra thing we have to do. This is about connecting and sharing and being accountable to one another."

#### **Direction 2**

**Use the Australian Curriculum and TfEL to deliver an agreed, consistent and connected learning program across all classes to ensure learning continuity for all students.**

There was evidence that the school undertakes annual self-review and reflects on the achievements as they translate to student learning. The school monitors its achievements against National and Partnership standards. There is evidence that school and system data is collected, analysed and acted upon to identify areas for improvement. Data is mapped over the year and entered into a school database. The self-review processes involve staff, students and parents and accurately define the scope of the improvement agenda described in the current Site Improvement Plan (SIP). Staff investigate what the data is telling them about curriculum aspects to strengthen at Waikerie PS. The school has an established purpose, vision and values that drive the priorities of reading, numeracy, oral language and quality teaching identified in the Site Improvement Plan (SIP).

A comprehensive range of student learning data is provided to each class teacher to assist in their planning and programming to meet student needs using a 'Wave' model approach. Reflective conversations are held between leadership team members and teaching staff throughout the year. These conversations cover the implementation of teaching practices described in the SIP, programming and planning to meet learning needs and student work samples to verify learning improvement. Student intervention is mapped for

individual students and documents programs, differentiated approaches and anecdotal information. ATSI student progress is also monitored, supported and documented over time.

The Australian Curriculum (AC) Coordinator works with staff to plan learning through an integrated design approach. Staff are encouraged to share their teaching approaches through staff meetings with a view to propagating effective practice and developing shared accountability for improvement. The school established three documents that encompass expectations about quality teaching across the school. Whilst commendable, it would be beneficial for the staff to consolidate these documents and define the teaching practices that, if enacted consistently across the school, will support engagement, achievement and growth in learning.

### **Direction 3**

**Raise engagement and achievement levels in learning by delivering agreed, consistent and evidence-based teaching practices in all classes.**

The staff recently commenced classroom observations undertaken by peers focusing on levels of engagement shown by students during lessons. These observations are followed up with professional conversations between staff to provide constructive feedback. Members of the leadership team and teachers cited a 'buzz' of enthusiasm following these initial observations. Written feedback aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL) and the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) is documented and discussed with each teacher through the performance and development process.

Teachers confirmed their involvement in the development of a school rubric that was used in peer observations and as a personal reflection tool. There was evidence that there was a clear focus on numeracy learning and, in particular, the practice of developing mental routines (Top 5) with students and asking students to explain their processes to solve problems using mathematical thinking and terminology. When asked about the relevance of peer observations one staff member commented: "Nobody's perfect and we can all learn from each other." Examples of professional feedback to staff with accompanying suggestions for improvement was evident in documentation provided to the Review Panel.

The Review Panel undertook classroom observations and verified a range of strategies in numeracy that aligned to recent staff professional learning. Students were given opportunities to share their learning (e.g. using hovercam), accept challenges, use strategies to solve problems encountered and to 'be brave' in working problems through. This latter component related to the dispositions for learning implemented through the DECD Partnership as an aspect of developing growth mindsets with students. One class display had positive mindsets framed in terms of old language and new language with an overarching header: 'Change your words to change your mindsets.'

Staff engage in a range of professional learning opportunities presented during pupil free days and after-school staff meetings. Strategies related to numeracy learning (e.g. mental routines) are shared in a strategic way at the beginning of staff meetings. The Principal commented that she wanted to rid the use of maths 'blackline' master sheets from the school in an effort to develop students' mathematical vocabulary and capacity. This was verified by staff with one commenting: "We are looking for ways to get away from worksheets." In a later conversation with students the Review Panel asked what noticeable change had occurred in school recently. The student reply was: "The number of worksheets given to us."

The AC Coordinator monitors the maths and numeracy progress across classes by using a number of strategies. These include: monitoring the progress of a small number of identified students in each class, observing the implementation of agreed strategies, monitoring pre and post-testing data, monitoring DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) data and using moderation activities to determine reliability and consistency of assessment.

Learning intervention is effectively delivered across the school through the support of a skilled SSO team. The available data sets are used to identify, monitor and track students as they progress across the school. Teachers are required to undertake Running Records screening each term to track progress. Comprehensive data sets are given to all teachers at the beginning of each year (blue folders) and then

updated each term. Every student at the school has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) in place with clear goals for improvement evident. Members of the leadership team discuss the needs of students with each class teacher and support the delivery of intervention where this is identified. This approach had one parent comment positively about a class teacher: "I feel she knows every single child in her class." The effective tracking of intervention was verified by parents.

Whilst goal-setting was undertaken by every child at the beginning of each term as an aspect of being a reflective learner, its value was questioned by some staff, students and parents. Staff questioned the usefulness of having students set broad goals for themselves; for example, read more books. Rather, staff saw benefit in making the goals more specific for each student; for example, consistently use agreed decoding skills in reading. Some students were critical of setting goals and not going back to reflect on them at the end of the term.

Students did appreciate the opportunity given by some teachers to provide feedback about how they felt during some lessons. The staff surveyed all students in 2014 to seek feedback about what they considered important in their learning. As a result of data analysis, teachers are attempting to connect the learning program to build upon prior learning and student interests. Staff and student comment indicated that this is "still an area for growth."

The staff are attempting to make the learning more explicit for students by making the learning intentions clear at the start of lessons or units of work. The Review Panel saw variations of this concept being introduced in classes. These ranged from introducing the Top 5, goal-setting and outlining the tasks to be completed. These are commendable, however, the school should revisit these initiatives and consolidate the practices of goal setting, learning intentions, formative assessment and the use of success criteria as consistent practice across all classes.

#### **Direction 4**

**Make learning intentions and success criteria clear for all students and provide opportunities for them to achieve high standards through differentiated approaches.**

The parents interviewed commented that the leadership team is approachable, open and actively involved with the students. Issues are always dealt with directly and there is an emphasis on using the school values to develop the dispositions of students beyond 'reading, writing and arithmetic.' Parents commented that students received awards at assemblies for demonstrating school values and academic performance. Parents appreciated the change of assembly time and knowing ahead of time if their child was getting an award. This has had a positive impact on parent attendance at assemblies.

Class awards for attendance are also acknowledged at assemblies. One parent heard a young student saying to another in the yard: "Make sure you come to school tomorrow." This comment is an indication of the school's increased emphasis on maximising student attendance to raise outcomes in student learning. Parents and students also verified the emphasis on the school values through school assemblies and they cited the 'Wheel of Choice' and 'Play is the Way' initiatives as supporting personal development and responsibility, as an important part of the broader learning program at Waikerie Primary School. Charts displaying the values are on display throughout the school. Student comment to the Review Panel reinforces that they considered respect as being the most important value to them.

Reporting on student achievement happens both formally and informally. Interviews and written reports are provided to parents each year. Some teachers send text messages to parents with accompanying photos of their children's work. Other teachers have posted student work on the school Facebook page. Parents commented that the teachers contact parents for both positive achievements and areas of concern. In relation to learning intervention, one parent stated that her child's teacher has: "...organised more learning hours for my child. She jumps on things instantly." With respect to such intervention one parent stated: "We've got awesome School Services Officers here. They go above and beyond the call of duty."



Parents had noticed a move to more personalised comments from class teachers about their children in written reports. In particular, parents appreciated the reflective comments from their children included on the reports. This was reinforced by the following parent comment: "I find the learning is now more individualised – a focus on every child."

Parents stated that they got information about the learning program through a variety of sources. They received class newsletters at the beginning of each term, which helped them know what to talk to their children about with respect to their learning. Parents were aware that bully audits were undertaken with the students and the results placed in the newsletter as part of developing a positive school and safe school community, with positive student mindsets at the centre of the work being implemented by the School Counsellor.

Students generally felt confident that they could approach the leadership team to talk through presenting issues. The students did not hold this perception for all staff. The perception of fairness and being listened to without judgement by their teachers was expressed as an aspect for improvement by some students. This issue was also identified by the Principal in the 2014 Waikerie Annual Report from analysis of the student opinion survey data.

#### **Direction 5**

**Develop consistent and agreed classroom management processes, based on the school values, which enable all learners to engage in the learning tasks with positive mindsets about being successful.**



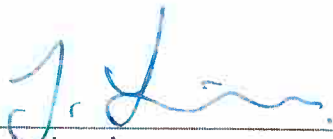
## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Waikerie Primary School is performing well. The school has comprehensive data available to guide school direction-setting and monitor achievement, growth and wellbeing. The school has a demonstrated capacity to self-review effectively and plan strategically for improvement using the analysis of this data. The leadership team demonstrated its capacity to lead curriculum and pedagogical change in accordance with the directions it has established. Interventions are targeted, resourced and tracked over time. The school works in partnership with the parents and community.

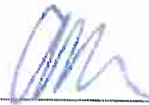
The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Improve reading and numeracy achievement, growth and retention in upper bands across the school through the consistent implementation of effective pedagogical approaches.
2. Use the Australian Curriculum and TfEL to deliver an agreed, consistent and connected learning program across all classes to ensure learning continuity for all students.
3. Raise engagement and achievement levels in learning by delivering agreed, consistent and evidence-based teaching practices in all classes.
4. Make learning intentions and success criteria clear for all students and provide opportunities for them to achieve high standards through differentiated approaches.
5. Develop consistent and agreed classroom management processes, based on the school values, which enable all learners to engage in the learning tasks with positive mindsets about being successful.

Based on the school's current performance, Waikerie 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.



Belinda Krollig  
PRINCIPAL  
WAIKERIE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson