

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ORROROO AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016



**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.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Steve Bennett, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Orroroo Area School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 2015 was 92.2%, which is marginally below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Orroroo Area School is located in the southern Flinders Ranges, approximately 300kms north of the Adelaide GPO. The school caters for approximately 130 students from Reception to Year 12.

The student cohort consists of approximately 2% (3) Aboriginal or Torrens Strait Islander (ATSI) students, 1.5% (2) students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, 7% students with a disability, and 10% of families eligible for School Card assistance. There is one student currently enrolled in Flexible Learning Options (FLO).

The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 983.

The school Leadership Team comprises an experienced Principal in his third year of tenure at the school and three Year Level Coordinators.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the lower numbers represented in some of the student cohorts at the school.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 5 of 10 (50%) Year 1 students, and 9 of 10 (90%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The Year 1 results are within the school's historic baseline average, and the Year 2 results are above the school's historic baseline average. The Year 2 results, from 2013 to 2015, show an upward trend in achievement from 50% to 90% at the SEA.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that all 7 (100%) Year 3 students, 9 of 11 (82%) Year 5 students, 10 of 11 (91%) Year 7 students, and 4 of 6 (68%) Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. The Year 3, 5 and 7 results are above the school's historic baseline average. The Year 9 results are below the school's historic baseline average. For Year 9, there has been a downward trend (from 100% to 67%) in demonstrated achievement from 2013 to 2015.

In 2014 and 2015, for Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 29% (2 of 7) of Year 3, 18% (2 of 11) of Year 5, 36% (4 of 11) of Year 7, and 33% (2 of 6) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result is above the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 3 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 student remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows a decline compared to the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 2 students in the top two bands in reading at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result also shows a decline against the school's historic baseline average. Finally, of the 3 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2009), taking into account arrivals and departures, 2 students remained in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that all 7 (100%) Year 3 students, 8 of 11 (73%) Year 5 students, all 11 (100%) Year 7 students, and 4 of 6 (67%) Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, the results are higher than the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5 results are within the school's historic baseline average, however, the Year 9 results are below this average.

From 2013 to 2015, there is a downward trend evident for Year 9 Numeracy (from 100% to 67%). There are no discernible patterns for Years 3, 5 and 7 throughout this period.

For 2015, in Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, 43% (3 of 7) of Year 3, 46% (5 of 11) of Year 5, 36% (4 of 11) of Year 7, and 33% (2 of 6) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result is above the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 4 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 3 remained in the top two bands at Year 5 in 2015. Of the 4 students who achieved in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. Of the 3 students who achieved in the top 2 bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2009), 2 students remained in the top two bands in 2015 at Year 9. The Year 5 and 7 results are above the school's historic baseline average.

SACE

In terms of 2015 SACE completion, all 7 Year 12 students who had the potential to complete their SACE did successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average.

In the 2015 SACE Stage 2 results, all 31 allocated grades achieved were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average.

The Principal's presentation focused on the improvement journey undertaken at the school over time. There has been a strategic attempt to reduce the number of priorities to raise the 'efficacy' of change with reduced staff numbers and alignment with DECD and Partnership priorities. The current improvement priorities are: Literacy, Numeracy and Wellbeing. The Principal is highly conscious of the need to implement effective evidence-based strategies to a point where such approaches are embedded across the school. About this, he stated: "Great schools row as one". He emphasised the need to "hold the line" with the priorities, use the Growth Mindsets focus to improve, and facilitate progress through staff collaborative endeavour.

The school has collected a range of learning data and made decisions about emphases to be covered in the curriculum. The school is able to track and monitor students at an individual level using this data and staff judgement. A number of initiatives have been implemented in response to the emerging patterns and knowledge of student needs. These include: Writing Road to Reading (WRAP), Coaching for Success, 3-Way Interviews and a student intervention team approach. The Principal described the importance of having students engaged and challenged in their learning, and providing authentic opportunities for students to influence learning in their classes.

As a result of the above data and the Leadership Team's presentation, the Review Panel explored the Lines of Inquiry below.

Lines of Inquiry

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Student Learning: | How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process? |
| Effective Teaching: | How effectively are teachers using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice? |
| Effective Leadership: | How well does leadership facilitate effective and efficient change processes to realise a focused approach to improvement in teaching and learning? |
| School Community Partnerships: | How authentic is the influence of students on their learning throughout the school? |

How well do teachers work with students to set goals and targets and review their progress as a continual process?

The school staff comprises a profile of experienced teachers delivering a range of effective teaching strategies positively impacting student learning. There is a consciousness amongst the staff to support not only the academic needs of students but also their wellbeing needs. The school staff are mindful that wellbeing has impacted on the capacity of some students to successfully complete their study requirements and various adjustments have been made to support learners. These have included interventions, Negotiated Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans and case management approaches.

The DECD data and the school-based data collected about student learning at Orroroo Area School indicates that results, as measured against the SEA across all year levels, Reception to Year 12, are generally affirming an improvement focus. Certainly, the perceptions of staff, parents and students collected before and during the review confirmed a level of satisfaction with the performance of the school. The school has correctly focused its attention towards raising rigour and challenge through the design and delivery of teaching and learning.

The local Partnership of schools and preschools has been influential in broadening the perspectives of Orroroo Area School students in aspects of their learning. With small cohort numbers in local schools, the opportunity to link students to others in similar year levels has, according to some staff, “Opened up students’ eyes”. The Principal views this as an opportunity to create ‘higher expectations’ for learning outcomes. This cultural shift will be further strengthened by the introduction of ‘Growth Mindsets’ across the school, where growth and challenge need to be designed as behavioural norms for students and staff alike.

Parents of younger students attending the school were effusive about their children’s positive connection to the school, and commented positively about the Principal. They described him as open, approachable and caring – a leader who is focused on building “a very forward-moving school”. Some parents described some secondary staff as having an overly academic focus, which presented some challenges for those pursuing trades. This was not raised for the purpose of being critical, but rather to focus on the diverse needs of all students. The Review Panel viewed the ‘Coaching for Success’ model, Year 10 Personal Learning Plan (PLP), and 3-Way Interview as effective processes to personalise ‘challenge and engagement’ in learning no matter the learning pathway chosen by individual senior students. The school does have the capacity to address this parent feedback.

Students spoke positively about the learning opportunities afforded to them at Orroroo Area School. When asked about the extent to which they were ‘engaged and challenged’ in their learning, the students cited strategies such as: inquiry, group work, independent work, personal encouragement and reminders about

work required. Interestingly, the students did not cite goal-setting, personal reflection or personal growth targets as a natural part of this process to build 'engagement and challenge'. The explicit link between these approaches and why the school has adopted them should be made for the students. Governing Council parents viewed the re-location of Year 7 students into the secondary learning spaces as a positive initiative to raise student expectation about learning and associated demands for learning independence and personal achievement as they progress secondary pathways.

Interviews held early in the school year involving students, parents and staff have been a recent effective strategy to elicit a stronger partnership between key stakeholders. Goal-setting has been a feature of this process and it has served to present an opportunity for student voice in learning. The Review Panel verified through staff conversations, further opportunities for students' voices to be more prominent as this initiative progresses. Parents and staff interviewed spoke positively about this initiative. One parent stated: "I think it has made a difference, particularly for my older child".

The teaching staff use learning data to construct the conversations in 3-Way Interviews. The process has largely been teacher-driven to this point, and there is greater prospect for students to interact with the data to bring greater relevance and connection to goal-setting. In turn, this will lead to greater parent understanding and support for the goals being established. The Principal acknowledged that for students at Orroroo Area School, targets at SEA "...were a logical and reasonable expectation". In this context, the Review Panel verified there was capacity to personalise the learning goals based on knowledge of individual students and the analysis of the learning data available to teachers.

It was clearly evident that the awareness and prominence of students' goals with staff, students and parents, was raising the profile for personal 'stretch and improvement'. Goals were visible throughout the school – in classrooms, in diaries and conference planning sheets. Evidence was provided of goals being reported again in end-of-year written reports.

Parents interviewed acknowledged that the interviews at the start of the year were invaluable. Some parents expressed a view that another such interview would be beneficial, possibly in Term 3, as a point of reflection against the goals and as an opportunity to intervene, if necessary. Parents were somewhat critical of the Term 4 reports with respect to the quality of personalised information provided in them, while also appreciating the time taken by teachers to produce these reports.

Secondary staff verified the knowledge base built-up over time about the academic and personal needs of students, through the 'Coaching Young People for Success' process introduced at the school. A consistent process now occurs across the school in readiness for the 3-Way Interviews. Teachers are discussing student needs with teachers from previous years; focused discussions about goals are occurring in pastoral care groups, including reflection on goal achievement; and parents are influencing the quality information by raising new information as it 'comes to light'. Staff and parents confirmed that follow-up meetings are conducted if students are not meeting their intended goals.

Staff confirmed that the 3-Way Interviews had engendered more interest from parents with some staff commenting that parents had been pleasantly surprised at some of the perspectives provided by staff – some that they were unaware of, as parents. Exemplars of completed planning sheets used with students were provided as evidence of this effective practice.

Direction 1

Further refine aspects of the 3-Way Interview process that connects goal-setting, reflection and reporting between all parties at strategic points throughout the year; schedule and implement these key components over the course of a school year to validate the importance of this process to academic and personal improvement.

How effectively are teachers using the DECD pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teaching practice?

The Principal acknowledged that any change to teaching pedagogies needs to be well-founded in research and proven effectiveness before any such change is implemented. The learning data presented above confirms that, generally, the students are successfully meeting the standards required in their learning. However, the Principal and staff have been mindful of the need to pursue the question: “Are we truly stretching ourselves and the students with whom we work?”

The staff developed a ‘key directions document’ with literacy and numeracy as a foundation through all subject areas. This document was deemed ‘important’, by the Principal, to ensure that as a staff, “We’re all on the same page”. The Writing Approach to Reading (WRAP) was one such strategy implemented to address foundational literacy requirements to enable students to achieve success in all curriculum areas. A staff commitment to training ensured the sustainability of this literacy approach. This will need some further strategic planning as the future staff profile changes due to staff movement, changes, etc.

The WRAP strategy has now been in operation for approximately five years from Reception to Year 8. It was verified that the impact of this approach is being monitored through the school data. Indications confirm that improvement in literacy levels against such measures as NAPLAN, PAT-R and Running Records is occurring. The Review Panel directs staff attention to the Year 9 Reading data pattern over time, as a reliable way to measure impact. Parents interviewed confirmed that WRAP has made a positive difference to improved levels of literacy with their children. Some parents indicated an interest to hear more about WRAP and how they could provide support at home.

Numeracy has been a relatively recent focus for staff, with an initial focus on professional learning for teachers from Reception to Year 8. This professional learning incorporated numeracy strategies such as, mental routines, journaling maths concepts and planning open-ended tasks. The Principal acknowledged that from a human resource perspective, it has been challenging to maintain continuity in maths provision across senior secondary year levels.

The numeracy strategies outlined above, along with other teaching approaches, are documented in a one-page statement. This statement is pivotal in clearly articulating for all staff the expectations for effective maths teaching at Orroroo Area School. To ensure connectedness in these approaches to maths, it is critical that staff professional learning, team meetings and performance development structures operate strategically to align the agreed effective pedagogical approaches across the school. Visits to a number of primary classes verified that agreed approaches are being implemented to a level of consistency in those classes. Teachers reported that some sessions had been conducted in connecting with the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) Framework. This work with the Framework must continue as the school pursues changes in teaching practice to a high level of coherence across the school, in an endeavour to further challenge students in maths, and other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers and secondary students verified that staff hold high expectations for student achievement at the school. On the other hand, parents commented that they felt the degree of expectation for student achievement varied amongst the teaching staff. However, one student added: “Teachers do support you the whole way through”. Teachers confirmed opportunities for setting and monitoring high expectations through ‘home group’ discussions, the Year 10 PLP process, small class sizes and vertically grouped classes where modelling from older students supports aspiration in others, particularly in the secondary year levels.

Some of the secondary teachers commented on the use of high grade exemplars (A and B standard) with students to explicitly show them the requirements to achieve such a standard. This was used with lower secondary and senior secondary students in a variety of subjects, and is evidence of highly effective practice. This is but one of many approaches being employed across the school. The next phase of improvement is to share and connect these strategies across the school, in developmentally appropriate ways.

Direction 2

Engage and challenge all students to aspire to improve their learning by implementing relevant coherent teaching strategies that encourage the co-design of learning across the school.

How well does leadership facilitate effective and efficient change processes to realise a focused approach to improvement in teaching and learning?

The school collects and analyses various learning datasets over the course of the school year. This data is used to set the strategic directions for the school and to monitor school performance in relation to whether or not it has achieved the targets set for improvement. The Leadership Team and staff make conscious decisions about the strategies that need to be applied to address emerging patterns in the data. This is evident in the '50 day' planning approach used to monitor the effectiveness of interventions in learning through WRAP and MultiLit. Some staff confirmed that the Principal uses data in their performance discussions with them.

Evidence presented through student and parent discussions and classroom observations clearly demonstrated that the students value and enjoy their learning opportunities at Orroroo Area School. One parent used the fact that her child 'loved going to school' as the yardstick for determining the quality of the learning program offered. The parents acknowledged some of the challenges of curriculum provision in a small country setting (that is, PE in the primary; languages; and others), but indicated the school was doing its best to provide pathways for students. Where students were challenged with studying subjects through Open Access they appreciated the in-school support and advice provided by staff at the school.

The parents interviewed are fully supportive of the Principal's leadership for improvement and accountability. They verified that he holds high expectations for the school and that these expectations are generally translated to most staff. Where parents raised relevant classroom issues with the Principal they felt confident they would be followed-up. However, what they did want to see was the 'closing' of the communication loop in terms of the outcome, action or agreement reached.

The school operates with such structures as: 3 Professional Learning Communities (curriculum-focused); 3 Year Level Teams (Reception to Year 6; Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 12) and whole-school staff meetings. Curriculum and pedagogical statements have or are being developed to describe the improvement work to be done. Strategies to support professional learning, performance and development, curriculum implementation and improved teaching practice are evident in the school. To support teaching staff with the change strategies there needs to be a rationalisation of structures and processes to consolidate the teaching practices in a connected and enduring way, from Reception to Year 12.

The school has the requisite resources to design and deliver improvement in curriculum and pedagogical enhancement. The Review Panel verified the presence of many components for school improvement, but determined that some refinements to these will assist in building seamless and connected approaches to this work to be evidenced in all classrooms. Staff commented on the influence of the Partnership in connecting students and staff for designing and sharing learning; for example, moderation of work, Growth Mindsets, maths learning design and moderation practices.

Direction 3

Strategically align effective and efficient staff structures that are clearly connected, purposeful and understood by staff to facilitate collaborative endeavour, capacity building, and to sustain an improvement culture.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning throughout the school?

Students interviewed confirmed that negotiated learning occurs in practical activities in Years 8 and 9, Technical Studies (in the design brief – 'more hands-on'), HASS, Agricultural Science, Home Economics and Year 12 Physical Education. Some primary students confirmed having choices in selecting inquiry questions in integrated topics, for example, the Olympics, or using iPads to make their own movies on negotiated themes.

Differentiation and varying levels of student choice were evident in classroom visits. Students in some primary classes developed their own inquiry questions to learning in science and history topics. Other classes offered students choice in maths problem-solving, opportunities to learn from/with each other in

small groups or pairs, extension opportunities in biology and choices of tasks within English Literature, based on personal interest or choice of text type (genre) for work completion.

Students generally described the teachers as 'encouraging'. When asked about the concept of Growth Mindsets, the younger students had not yet connected with the language associated with building the relevant dispositions for personal success. The concept of developing such dispositions that foster resilience, persistence and striving for personal best has emerged through the local Partnership of schools and preschools. Certainly, 'perseverance' is identified in the 'Middle Years Development Instrument' and the school's 'Student Wellbeing Report' (dated 11 November 2015) as an aspect to be addressed further through school programs and student support practices. Parents verified that the students have a supportive relationship with the Pastoral Care Support Worker, which is important to their wellbeing.

Developing Growth Mindsets as a strategy to raise student efficacy towards learning improvement will be an important adjunct to the school practices of goal-setting and student reflection. Equally, these dispositions can be modelled and reinforced with students through staff modelling as they implement and refine their teaching practices to raise levels of engagement and challenge with students, and engage students in co-designing learning opportunities. Students interviewed and observed during the review period were positive about learning at Orroroo Area School. This was encapsulated in one student comment: "We can pursue a future here, no doubt". It is critical that strong alignment is built between the language and behaviours associated with Growth Mindsets so that 'striving for improvement' and 'personal best' is a cultural norm supported by all stakeholders.

Direction 4

Establish a common language and school culture fostering Growth Mindsets across the school, and encourage the application of these dispositions in students and staff alike as they confront new challenges in learning and teaching respectively.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Orroroo Area School is performing well in providing an effective teaching and learning program for students from Reception to Year 12. The school has the leadership and teaching capacity to continue to achieve positive outcomes for its students. The school monitors its performance regularly and implements approaches to continue to improve as a school. The school links well with other Partnership sites in this work. Its work to further engage students and parents in goal-setting/target-setting at the individual level is commended.

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

1. Further refine aspects of the 3-Way Interview process that connects goal-setting, reflection and reporting between all parties at strategic points throughout the year; schedule and implement these key components over the course of a school year to validate the importance of this process to academic and personal improvement
2. Engage and challenge all students to aspire to improve their learning by implementing relevant coherent teaching strategies that encourage the co-design of learning across the school.
3. Strategically align effective and efficient staff structures that are clearly connected, purposeful and understood by staff to facilitate collaborative endeavour, capacity building, and to sustain an improvement culture.
4. Establish a common language and school culture fostering Growth Mindsets across the school, and encourage the application of these dispositions in students and staff alike as they confront new challenges in learning and teaching respectively.

Based on the school's current performance, Orroroo Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



.....
Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



.....
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.

.....
Paul Pitkin
PRINCIPAL
ORROROO AREA SCHOOL

.....
Governing Council Chairperson