Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Orroroo Area School

Conducted in September 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Peter Kuss, 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:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

School context

Orroroo Area School caters for students from reception to year 12. It is situated 244kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 140 students and 12 preschool children, 152 in total. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 132 students with the preschool amalgamating with the school in 2017. The local partnership is Flinders.

The school has an ICSEA score of 972, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 20% of students eligible for School Card.

The district and school community have been in drought conditions over the last 2 years.

The school leadership team consists of a principal, in the 1st year of tenure with 3 coordinator positions in primary, middle and senior school.

There are 22 teachers, including 2 in the early years of their career, and 2 advanced skills teachers 2 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Evidence provided by the principal at the leadership presentation highlighted the impact of the previous External School Review (ESR) directions in the school's development. A strong partnership between the school, the student and parents is a key element in ensuring learner success. The school refined the '3-way conference' where students set goals for learning achievement, meet with parents and teachers to discuss ways of support. The school has developed a consistent and streamlined process with goals discussed in each reporting period and enhanced communication between teachers and parents. A coaching program to develop learners' ability to set goals for success has resulted in improved student connection to their learning.

Student agency and co-construction of learning were evident in STEM approaches to learning, student community projects, some subject learning tasks, the use of student planners for learning and organised school events. Professional development in visible learning (VL) and support from a VL coach built teacher capacity to develop effective strategies that engage and challenge learners.

Several forums, networks, agreements and resources were evident that supported collaborative approaches in building staff capacity:

- The VL professional learning program
- VL Google classrooms and support from a coach
- Literacy and numeracy whole school agreements
- Staff meetings and sector meetings
- Partnership networks and hubs.

From these and other opportunities, a culture of improvement and support has developed.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

The school has clearly articulated its improvement agenda as evident in the 2019-21 school improvement plan (SIP), with goals of improving writing, mathematics and growth in learning achievement. The documented challenges of practice and success criteria are aligned and student-centred. Data collection in Brightpath scores, PAT mathematics tests and student achievement GPA scores support the monitoring of progress towards agreed targets. Staff were aware of the SIP goals and challenges of practice and acknowledged that they had a role in enabling them. They described performance development plan (PDP) meetings, impact sprints, discussions in staff meetings and informal conversations with leaders allowing their input.

The leadership team presentation highlighted prominent use of a range of data in the collection and analysis for monitoring the progress of SIP actions towards agreed targets. Tracking and monitoring student progress and identification and allocation of intervention support is data informed. Teachers described the use of class data folders containing individual student achievement and wellbeing data. These were regularly updated, providing support for the planning of learning and transition conversations at the beginning of the year.

Leaders and teachers described several structures and processes that help them to reflect on the impact of their practice or actions on student learning. Leaders told how evidence-based discussions at partnership and staff meetings and end of year reviews helped monitor the progress of SIP goals towards set targets. Teachers described how they reviewed their impact through evidence-based impact cycles that were supported by a VL impact coach and buddy. They identified appropriate students in their class and negotiated strategies with their coach. Data collection methods allowed them to see if their practices had impact on learning. Planned impact cycles were reported back to staff meetings twice per term. The panel commends this evidence-based, reflective approach as it provides a supportive and scaffolded process to the improvement of practice. While sharing this information takes place at staff meetings, there was no clear indication of how this develops into agreements of best practice.

Teachers mentioned several other performance development processes within the Teaching for Effective Learning toolkit, but these were not consistent practices across the school and in some cases, only trialled. Strengthening evidence-based strategies that support teachers to reflect on and improve their practice is seen as an essential next step.

Direction 1   Strengthen reflective teacher practices (to know their impact on student learning) by clarifying and connecting existing performance development structures and processes that support evidence-based analysis and reflection, leading to agreements of best practice.

Effective teaching and student learning

Quality curriculum: How effectively are teachers using the Australian Curriculum and SACE to support and improve student learning?

Curriculum organisation was seen in curriculum overviews and scope and sequence documents. Teachers provided examples of scope and sequences or yearly plans, unit plans, assessment tasks and rubrics, which they used to ensure the demands of the curriculum. Documentation of the Australian Curriculum varied in its standard features and how teachers presented it to students. Learning intentions, success criteria, links to the curriculum standards and some aspects of development in literacy and numeracy were more common. SACE requirements standardise senior secondary learning and assessment plan documentation. Some teachers referred to learning progressions when talking about intervention. The general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, whilst not highly visible in documentation, were more prominent in discussions involving STEM learning, cross-curriculum units and community projects.

The panel cited whole-school agreements that guide teacher practice in literacy, numeracy and visible learning. These documents provided clarity in the use of highly effective pedagogies that were supported by targeted professional development. Additionally, a comprehensive data schedule of when data was collected and shared at staff and sector meetings supports consistency. Still in its infancy, a language of learning and an understanding of what the qualities of a successful learner are is evident in conversations between students and staff, and displayed in classrooms.

Past agreements and expectations in developing quality curriculum documentation that could be readily accessed and shared provided guides for teachers and leaders. Comments from teachers and documentation show these agreements have lapsed and need review. Some teachers described how documents were being stored in different locations as new technology was developed to share materials. In discussions with leaders, they commented that their primary focus in staff and sector meetings was developing aspects of the visible learning program, and embedding them into practice, while remaining focused on actioning the SIP goals. Teachers commented that they would value opportunities in sector meetings for the co-construction of curriculum documents and moderation activities to support consistency of task design and judgement.

An opportunity exists to revisit and update past agreements for the development, storage and sharing of curriculum documentation. Clarifying expectations and providing checks that maintain the quality of this documentation, will allow accessibility and reflect the current curriculum demands and school priorities.

Direction 2   Ensure curriculum consistency and coherence by renewing agreements that guide teachers in all aspects of curriculum planning, storage and review.

Effective leadership

Educational leadership: How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent, high-quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

Leaders described the school's vision of developing life-long learners and how the collaborative development of the school's values and qualities of a successful learner would support its achievement. They explained how professional learning and support from a learning coach influenced teacher practice to focus on developing learners.

The focus shifted from teaching a curriculum to learning. Many students were aware of what the characteristics of a successful learner were, and reported that many teachers were incorporating them into learning.

Leaders' descriptions of improvement work highlighted a significant presence of data to show progress in SIP priorities. Examples included writing progress of identified students using Brightpath scores, data analysis of student progress in literacy and numeracy intervention programs and achievement using GPAs. Several teachers and leaders described how evidence-based planning was a focus at the beginning of a year, when teachers revisited whole-school agreements, while reviewing student data-sets to inform their planning.

Leaders referred to receiving a 'school capability report' as part of the visible learning professional learning program. They explained that evidence of progress in the report and the school's internal data guided them in developing their future action plans. Teachers described taking part in targeted staff meetings twice per term, facilitated by the impact coach. Using impact cycles to plan, they reported back on progress in evidence-based investigations of their impact on learning. They were very positive in their comments about this process and the support they received from the impact coach. Release time provided by leadership to develop their practice was appreciated.

Staff described several other performance development processes used over time, as more informal options. Many viewed performance development planning meetings as a formal requirement in its documentation; however, when describing expectations of the process and the depth of discussion, there were varied views. There is a need to clarify and formalise expectations in these processes and move towards more robust evidence-based conversations linked to the improvement priorities of the school.

Direction 3   Ensure quality curriculum and highly effective teaching practices that address the needs of all learners, by developing effective and rigorous performance development processes that support the achievement of school priorities.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Orroroo Area School, the influence of previous directions is evident in the establishment of a clear roadmap for improvement supported by planning processes that are evidence-based and targeted to raise student achievement. Effective systems that build capacity are developing, positively influencing teacher and leader practice. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

Direction 1   Strengthen reflective teacher practices (to know their impact on student learning) by clarifying and connecting existing performance development structures and processes that support evidence-based analysis and reflection, leading to agreements of best practice.

Direction 2   Ensure curriculum consistency and coherence by renewing agreements that guide teachers in all aspects of curriculum planning, storage and review.

Direction 3   Ensure quality curriculum and highly effective teaching practices that address the needs of all learners, by developing effective and rigorous performance development processes that support the achievement of school priorities.

Based on the school's current performance, Orroroo Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.
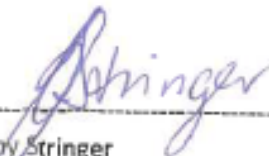
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Appendix 1

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, 65% of year 1 and 56% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline and little or no change respectively from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 1 has been upwards, from 56% to 65%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 64% of year 5 students, 80% of year 7 students and 86% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5, 7 and 9, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 27% of year 3, no year 5, 10% of year 7, and no year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 and none of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that   91% of year 3 students, 64% of year 5 students, 90% of year 7 students and 86% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents an improvement and for years 5, 7 and 9, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards and for year 9 downwards, from 83% to 90% and 100% to 86% respectively.

For 2019, year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 18% of year 3, no year 5, 40% of year 7 and 21% of year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 67%, or 2 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 and 40%, or 2 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2019, 108% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for February completers has been upwards, from 90% in 2017 to 108%.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2019; 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 92% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 100% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2019, 100% of grades achieved were at 'C-' level or higher, 40% of grades were at an 'A' level and 38% of grades were at a 'B' level. This result represents an improvement for the 'A' level grade and a decline for the 'B' level grade, from the historic baseline averages.

One hundred percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were no students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program in 2019.

In terms of 2019 tertiary entrance, 77%, or 10 out of 13 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score. There were also 1 student who were successful in achieving a merit.

In 2019, the school had a moderation adjustment of 0.