

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR STURT STREET COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Conducted in October 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Rebecca Read, 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 Sturt Street Primary 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 93.1%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Sturt Street Community School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 1km west from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 176 students and has fluctuated over the past five years. The school has an ICSEA score of 1102, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 4% students with disabilities, 47% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1% children in care, and 7% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of his tenure, a Deputy Principal in the second year of her tenure with responsibility for intervention and shared responsibility with the Principal for curriculum. An Early Childhood Director in the first year of her tenure is co-located on the site.

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 2015, 91% of Year 1 and 84% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under 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 little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Years 1 and 2 has been upwards, from 64% in 2013 to 91% in 2015.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 95% of Year 3 students, 84% of Year 5 students, and 92% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 79% in 2013 to 95% in 2015. Over the same period there has been a downward trend at Year 5, from 94% to 84%.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved within the results in NAPLAN Reading in Years 3, 5, and 7, relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 74% of Year 3, 32% of Year 5 and 42% 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. There is a downward trend from 53% in 2013 to 32% at Year 5 in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 44%, or 4 of 9 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 63%, or 5 of 8 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Year 3 to 5 upper band retention is downwards, from 75% to 44%.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of Year 3 students, 79% of Year 5 students, and 92% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2015, 26% of Year 3, 26% of Year 5 and 50% 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. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 0% in 2013 to 50% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75%, or 3 of 4 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 80%, or 4 of 5 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Effective Leadership: To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

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

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

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

The school leadership is to be commended for their strong commitment to ensuring that staff are supported to access professional learning.

Teachers indicated via a survey conducted during the External School Review (ESR) that a total of 24 different Professional Learning Opportunities were accessed in the first three terms of 2016. The Professional Learning opportunities were undertaken as part of school and Partnership priorities, as well as personal interest and professional learning aligned to specific student needs.

The professional learning related to the following areas: literacy, maths, wellbeing, pedagogy and science. All areas, with the exception of science, are focus areas of the Site Improvement Plan, which is strategically aligned with the Partnership Plan.

Teachers responded via the survey that professional learning had supported them to change their teaching mostly in the area of assisting students to develop positive learning dispositions. One teacher reported: "I have implemented more oral and group work with a focus on building independence and self-management, understanding how people learn and the need to persevere". Other responses included: "I am more explicit about the learning intention and making connections to learning and improvement". Another teacher wrote that students were taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Several teachers stated during ESR year-level interviews that they are now seeing how the professional learning is interconnected. One teacher stated that, for her, Growth Mindset is the connector between Play Is The Way (PITW) and Natural Maths. Another teacher stated that they could now put the learning together, that it was very practical, and had made maths more accessible for her.

The staff outlined a range of performance and development processes that are implemented across the school. Staff document their performance development plan, which includes goals linked to the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and their professional learning. They also nominate a peer to observe them on an aspect selected from the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL). Staff indicated that, initially, they selected someone they were comfortable with, but they are now gradually working with a peer they don't know so well. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) are included within the development plan. Performance development meetings are held with each teacher at the beginning and end of the year.

The staff are very committed to improving their own learning, and strategically align their professional learning with performance and development processes.

During the staff meeting run by the Review Panel, staff looked at the triangulation of the following datasets: NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, A to E mid-year grade allocations, and PAT-M, PAT-R data for Years 3, 5 and 7. NAPLAN Writing data was provided as additional information when comparing A-E allocations in English. It was noted that the writing data did not appear to be as strong as reading or numeracy. Closer analysis indicated that from 2014 to 2016 at Years 3, 5 and 7, there were consistently higher percentages of students not meeting the DECD minimum standard for writing when compared to reading, and significantly lower percentages of students were in the higher bands across all year levels.

Interviews with students indicated a wide range of responses regarding what constituted a good piece of writing. Some students spoke about neatness, spelling and handwriting, other students were very clear about themselves as writers, and were able to describe the specific aspects of individual genres and areas for development. Other students reported that they did not have an allocated regular writing time. Many students indicated that selecting a topic was the hardest part of writing. There was strong evidence of some teachers implementing strategies from the recent professional learning they had attended in writing.

The Principal noted that the allocation and moderation of language and literacy levels indicated that not enough students were reaching expected year-level targets. At Sturt Street Community School, 47% of the population are EALD learners. Discussions with staff indicated that there is an opportunity for mainstream teachers to undertake professional learning relating to specific and effective pedagogical practices that support EALD learners. Developing and embedding confidence, proficiency and excellence in writing across a range of genres for EALD learners is often very difficult without an understanding of the practices that provide the strongest levers for success. The explicit nature of these strategies also strongly supports students with learning difficulties.

There is clear evidence that the staff are highly motivated learners who actively seek professional learning opportunities to inform and improve their practice, and this is strongly supported and encouraged by the leadership. Consistency and congruence across classes in effective writing pedagogical practices that are aligned to the specific needs of the student population are areas where professional learning could further build teacher capacity and, subsequently, be validated through performance development processes.

Direction 1

Embed effective pedagogical practices by developing common understandings of EALD learning perspectives through whole-school professional learning and performance development.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

When reflecting on a recent unit of work via a survey during the ESR, 17% of teachers indicated that they had supported students to a high degree in the areas of effectiveness of pedagogies used, effectiveness of learning design, and provision of feedback to students to help them know how to improve. The remaining 83% of teachers indicated that they believed they had supported the students to a medium extent in these areas.

Students, when asked about feedback received during writing, provided a wide range of responses. Some classes provided evidence that demonstrated explicit teacher feedback to improve learning; for example, “the content may need a twist in the middle, the teacher’s feedback is always helpful” and “it always tells us how to improve”. Some students reported that they have opportunities to give each other feedback, or they go to a ‘good’ writer for help. Other students were able to articulate what made writing hard for them, but did not have the strategies to work through it. Several students provided effort-based responses, for example, “to improve, you need to do more at home”, while some students did not know how to improve, stating: “I’m not sure how to find out what I need to improve”, “I’m not good at handwriting”, and “I think I’m at my year level standard”. Many responses related to the mechanics of writing.

An analysis of student perception data undertaken in Term 1 this year using the TfEL compass identified that student feedback about their learning in maths was predominately provided by their teacher in their books. Some students indicated that they didn’t really understand the process of feedback. Other students stated that their teacher focused on positive and constructive feedback, and that the teacher was focused on helping them improve in maths. The summative statement of the analysis identified that feedback for learning was an area to strengthen.

There was a wide range of responses from students regarding feedback for learning; some students were able to identify the purpose of feedback, articulate what that looks like for specific learning areas and could demonstrate how it supports their learning. Other students did not make the connection between feedback and improvement for learning. Students and teachers will benefit from a whole-school approach to feedback for learning that is underpinned by common understandings that feedback is a two-way process, and essential to providing the next steps for learning. The school is to be commended for their commitment to a continuous improvement agenda; the next steps in supporting students in their learning are to embed feedback for learning across all areas of the curriculum and in all classrooms.

During an interview, the teacher in charge of intervention identified that providing classroom teachers with regular opportunities to meet with the SSO and a member of the Leadership Team would support the learning of vulnerable students. The teacher in charge of intervention manages the planning, documenting and review of Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs), Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), and provision of support options for vulnerable students. Currently, the processes in place include NEPs and ILPs written in Term 4 being given to the new teachers at the beginning of the next school year, and parents invited to come to a meeting at the beginning of Term 4 to review the goals of the NEP/ILP. The teacher in charge writes the NEP/ILP in consultation with the classroom teacher, and sets up the learning program for the SSO to implement.

Currently, the classroom teacher and the SSO do not have an allocated planning time where specific learning strategies for identified students, together with feedback for all parties, can be developed, monitored and reviewed. Research has shown that response to intervention, combined with collective teacher efficacy, has a very high effect size on learning outcomes.

The teacher in charge discussed the benefits of the classroom teacher being a partner in the planning, implementation and review of learning programs for vulnerable students. The learning of the most vulnerable students has a greater chance of continuous improvement when the significant educators receive regular feedback and have common understanding of the learning needs, plans and processes for the student.

Direction 2

Strengthen student learning through whole-school processes that support vulnerable students, and provide all students with regular and timely feedback for learning.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

The school is to be commended for its strong commitment to providing a diverse range of opportunities for students to be engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning. The school leadership indicated that students don't like to fail, thus, the school is supporting students to take risks in their learning through the emerging work on Growth Mindset (GMS). This work is now evident throughout the school, visual phrases are on display in corridors and classrooms, students could be observed using GMS language, and very young students were able to articulate when their work was challenging. They were able to describe when they are in the 'Learning Pit' (stuck with their learning). Young students identified thinking as a very important goal. Older students reported that they focus on goal-setting in their 'brainology' sessions.

Through interviews it was evident that some students believed they are challenged once or twice a week in literacy or maths. Several students identified specific strategies they used when learning was difficult. Students also reported that even when they got a challenge it was easy for them. A common response was that difficult learning was also an area they least enjoyed, which affirmed a fixed mindset and the need for ongoing work in GMS.

The school leadership has strategically supported student growth in intellectual challenge and engagement, with careful planning. Students from Years 3 to 7 have all undertaken an online course in mindset and brain theory from an international university. This, together with the regular implementation of Play is The Way (PITW), and TfEL pedagogical practices (specifically using student voice to inform teaching practice), will strengthen the work of GMS across classes and learning areas. The school has also been part of the 'Scientists In Schools' program where scientists from a local university work with students on how the brain works. School leadership members have noted that the language of GMS is becoming embedded across the school. This work will assist students in developing skills to persist, and know that risk-taking, along with making mistakes, is an important part of learning. The leadership have identified opportunities for teachers to work with their passion. This has included, but is not limited to, Robotics, 3D printing, 3D chess, animation, *makers empire* and enterprise education. Teachers report that students display high levels of engagement and intellectual challenge in these lessons.

The school has been fortunate to be part of the Adelaide-Prospect PILOT Partnership Professional Learning Community (PLC). The project is aimed at improving mathematics through a PLC teach-on model for professional learning. Two teachers, four students and a member of the Leadership Team meet twice a term with representatives from other schools in the Partnership and the PILOT leader. Students work with teachers to co-design learning tasks to increase intellectual stretch, using strategies from the TfEL Transforming Tasks module. A student involved in the project stated: "we go to conferences where the main idea is to transform tasks into activities that are open-ended, they have different skill levels, and people can challenge themselves". Another student stated that transforming tasks was good to learn as a concept. Students also reported that they now understood learning occurs best when they shared their ideas with other people.

Staff reported that the work on transforming tasks had really shifted their personal thinking from very narrow activities to multiple tasks that are now broad and open. One teacher commented they see the students in the PLC reinforcing the stretch in the classroom, and that the class had really responded to being supported by their peers. It was also reported by a staff member that a culture of fairness and respect towards the student mentors as learners had developed within the peer group. A staff member stated that students involved in the PLC had been instrumental in helping design Transforming Tasks from a student perspective, and were able to give constructive feedback on the design. Next steps for the teacher included working with students in small groups that would be rotated to ensure all students had the opportunity to be involved in the planning of tasks. The teacher had observed that when students were involved in planning, they had a greater chance of engaging in the process.

There is clear evidence that the school is strongly committed to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to be engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning. The task now is to ensure that this work becomes embedded within classes and across the school.

Direction 3

Embed engagement and intellectual challenge across the school through strategic implementation of transforming tasks utilising the expertise of student and teacher mentors.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Sturt Street Community School is a unique school located in the inner CBD with strong community support. The school is to be commended for its commitment to achievement and perception data to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole school levels. The demonstrated student growth is within what is expected of other schools in similar contexts.

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

1. Embed effective pedagogical practices by developing common understandings of EALD learning perspectives through whole-school professional learning and performance development.
2. Strengthen student learning through whole-school processes that support vulnerable students, and provide all students with regular and timely feedback for learning.
3. Embed engagement and intellectual challenge across the school through strategic implementation of transforming tasks utilising the expertise of student and teacher mentors.

Based on the school's current performance, Sturt Street Community School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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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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Darrin Briggs
PRINCIPAL
STURT STREET COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson