

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Stirling East Primary School

Conducted in October 2019



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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Ros Frost and Paul Harmer, Review Principals.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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 Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Stirling East Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. The school is situated 18kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 550 students. Enrolment is steady since the previous ESR in 2016. The school is classified as Category 7 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1141. The local partnership is Mt Lofty.

The school population includes 1 Aboriginal student, 3% of students with a verified disability, 3% of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background and no students in care.

There are 20 classes, including 8 junior primary and 12 primary.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 6th year of their tenure at the school. The school has 2 senior leaders with responsibility for ICT and curriculum and student services. There are 30 teachers (26.3FTE) including 2 graduate teachers and 26 Step 9 teachers.

Previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Challenge and further inspire students in their learning by working collaboratively with parents, students and staff to articulate the aspirational skills and standards expected of all students as they progress throughout the school.
- Direction 2** Strengthen the focus of professional learning conversations in all PLCs by aligning performance and development goals and regular peer feedback with the appropriate career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- Direction 3** Establish processes and protocols to regularly analyse a range of reliable data and information to track significant growth, moderate teacher judgement and inform planning and instruction.

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

The school delivers and sustains high levels of student literacy and numeracy over time. The school is strongly collaborative within and between all groups of stakeholders and the community is deeply united around a core moral purpose that holds high academic student learning at its heart.

Staff work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that are structured around levels of schooling. These teams are supported with common non-instruction time (NIT) and co-location. This model of collaboration is very effective and facilitates improvement actions within these autonomous groups.

There is an inconsistent use of data within each PLC which informs actions for improvement. There are whole-school data protocols to track and monitor growth in literacy and numeracy, and to inform planning via Scorelink.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

To what extent have changes and improvements in teacher and leader practice resulted in improvements in student learning?

The school does not take its high literacy and numeracy achievements for granted. Staff are motivated and seek opportunities to improve. The PLC structure (based on like year-levels and including one for specialist teachers) and way of working is relied on as a strong enabler of this. The PLCs meet fortnightly and include SSOs. This structure is underpinned by a respect for the professionalism of each teacher, and each PLC has strong autonomy. PLCs shape improvement initiatives, drive the provision of quality, engaging curriculum, and results in strong collaboration in like year-level teams. Specialist teachers feel valued and included in the core business and work of the school. Leadership values and trusts the autonomy of PLCs, and in turn, teachers feel trusted by leadership. This is a particular focus in reading. The autonomy of PLCs is both a strength and an opportunity. PLCs are strongly involved in developing teachers professionally. The school uses a broad range of data to track and monitor student learning development. Management of the use of this is the responsibility of the Assistant Principal Student Services.

The school's data is extremely good. It is clear that teachers bring their judgement and their use of a wide variety of data to their student learning improvement work. However, learning would be further lifted through a more consistent approach to the use of data and to a more R-7 approach to the gathering and interrogation of this data. This would be particularly useful in informing future school improvement planning.

Staff and leaders work continuously and successfully to lift student learning achievement. Staff collaboration in autonomous teams is the key driver for this. There is an opportunity to add value to this work through a more consistent use of data, and formalising links between PLC work, performance and development and school improvement planning.

Direction 1 Use evidence of student learning to engage teachers in rigorous professional conversations regarding the impact of their practices on student learning, both in teams and in performance and development meetings.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

The panel was provided with quality demonstrations of student work in leadership, ownership of learning, deep applied learning with national and international impact, and real-life learning. All students were articulate and able to talk about learning. Some of these conversations were at a high, metacognitive level and included metaphor. Students know about learning standards and how they are going against these standards. Students value feedback from teachers. It is quality feedback that enables improvement. Students know and value that the school has very high standards for learning. They know that effort impacts success and the achievement of standards.

There is some use of rubrics in some year levels and learning activities, limited co-design of assessment, and some evidence of the use of learning data to engage and motivate students. Some teachers discuss achievement data with students, and teachers described ways they collect feedback from students about teaching. Some teachers referred to the use of learning intentions and success criteria. Parents value the focus in years 6 to 7 on students taking more responsibility for the organisation of and communication

about their learning. The Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) verified that the school strives constantly to develop students as critical questioners. There is an opportunity to develop a deeper, consistent reception to year 7 understanding of authentic student agency, and whole-school agreements about the consistent use of goal setting, and explicit regular statements of and reflection with students about learning intentions and success criteria.

The school is authentically ‘futures-thinking’ and engaging in contemporary learning with embedded use of technologies. Students are engaged in deep, higher order learning that is designed around their skills, interests and understandings. The development of student metacognition about learning is supported in varying ways in the school and could be strengthened through a more consistent, agreed, whole-school approach.

Direction 2 Increase the explicit, consistent development of student metacognition about learning through agreed whole-school practices.

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent do students perceive school to be a place in which they undertake purposeful and relevant learning?

There is deep pride in the school, and a profound shared moral purpose that is highly aspirational for academic learning. This permeates and informs the culture and methods of working in the school. Groups of stakeholders have high expectations of each other, including students for teachers and teaching. Students know why they come to school and the importance of schooling. Parents value the social competency of students, high quality teaching, levels of teacher collaboration, that teachers also reflect parent aspirations, the accessibility of teachers and leaders, provisions for students with special needs including higher intellect, and transition of students into the school. Students are rotated between teams of teachers to deliver high quality, challenging curriculum and the value of this is recognised by students and families.

PLC team work also facilitates differentiation of literacy and numeracy curriculum delivery. Specialist curriculum is delivered effectively and its provision is valued by families. The SLLIP has seen and values the collaborative focus in PLCs on stretch for each child, and continual striving for quality engagement for each child. However, teachers, families, leaders and students identified the lack of cohesiveness between points of transition from one unit to the next. Difficulties were highlighted by parents especially in the year 2 to 3 transition, and by students in the year 5 to year 6 and 7 transition. There is an opportunity for the school to work in developing a more seamless transition by reducing the differences in core teaching practices and organisational strategies between year-level units. By strengthening whole-school consistent practices and the development of individual teacher capacity, greater quality and consistency of teaching can be achieved.

The school is well-placed to build on an emerging recognition of the need for more reception to year 7 consistency in some core teaching practices. These include the explicit development of reading, writing and maths, critical and creative thinking, and personal and social capabilities.

Direction 3 Develop a whole-school staff commitment to and responsibility for the implementation of agreed practices that improve teaching and learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Stirling East Primary School, the demonstrated growth in student achievement is at or above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context. Effective teaching is consistently practiced and actively engages and challenges all students. There is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum.

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

- Direction 1** Use evidence of student learning to engage teachers in rigorous professional conversations regarding the impact of their practices on student learning, both in teams and in performance and development meetings.
- Direction 2** Increase the explicit, consistent development of student metacognition about learning through agreed whole-school practices.
- Direction 3** Develop a whole-school staff commitment to and responsibility for the implementation of agreed practices that improve teaching and learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Stirling East Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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 2018, 88% of year 1 and 79% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for both year 1 and 2.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7, this represents a decline, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 and year 5 has been upwards, from 93% to 96% and 85% to 100%, respectively. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 100% to 93%.

In 2019 year 3 and 5 NAPLAN reading, the school achieved higher than, and for year 7, within the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved higher in year 3 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 78% of year 3, 72% of year 5 and 65% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN literacy bands. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7, 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, 84%, or 47 out of 56 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 86%, or 19 out of 22 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 93% of year 3 students, 98% of year 5 students and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement and for year 7, this result represents a decline, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019 year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school achieved higher than and for year 7, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 49% of year 3, 39% of year 5 and 54% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 5, this result represents an improvement, for year 3, this represents little or no change and for year 7, this represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 65%, or 28 out of 43 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 94%, or 15 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.