

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Littlehampton Primary School**

Conducted in September 2018



## Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mark Vincent, Review Principal.

## School context

Littlehampton Primary School is situated in the Adelaide Hills, 35kms from Adelaide. The school has experienced increasing enrolments over the last 5 years, with a current enrolment of 468.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1045, and is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 7% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), no children in care, and 12% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of tenure, an acting deputy principal and an acting assistant principal.

## Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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

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

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

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

Littlehampton Primary School is in the second year of a Visible Learning cycle, which is part of a wider Partnership focus, and follows a previous focus on positive education. The school collaborated with stakeholders to develop a shared language by identifying 6 characteristics of an effective learner. The characteristics of being 'gritty', engaged, connected, self-aware, creative and brave, are displayed throughout the school and are celebrated through assemblies and certificate awards.

Students routinely used the 6 effective characteristics to describe themselves as learners. They were also reflected in student goals, with 1 student wanting to be a 'gritty learner' and not giving up when in the learning pit. Students reported that it was positive to receive a certificate for the way you learn, as this was seen as important as achievement. Students presented as articulate and engaged learners.

Students expressed high-level connectedness to the school and were supported by staff who wanted them to do their best. Parents acknowledged the additional work and time staff voluntarily gave to the school and felt this strengthens relationships and supports students with their learning. Parents appreciated the range of specialist subjects on offer, with music being seen as a core component of the school.

Visible Learning was evident throughout the school and the panel commends achievement in this area. Students reported that all lessons have clear learning goals displayed and the provision of success criteria. This was corroborated by the panel who noted that some success criteria were general in nature, whilst others were explicitly linked to the task. There was some evidence of self-assessment rubrics being used,

predominately in the older year groups. Feedback to students explicitly related to the next steps in learning was evidenced as being consistent and a strength by the panel.

All students had individual goals; some were directly linked to learning, whilst others focused on learner dispositions. Not all students knew their goals and not all parents were aware of their child's goals. Parents reported that communication around learning and goals depended on the individual teacher, with the mode and level of communication differing across classes. There is opportunity to provide a consistent approach to goal-setting and coherence in communication with parents.

As part of the review, the panel conducted a pedagogical survey with all teaching staff investigating the areas of differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge, feedback for learning and moderation. Staff identified feedback from students, formative assessment and moderation as areas for improvement. Teachers were using the Australian Curriculum which was referenced in planning and used to determine report grades. Teachers have been involved in some moderation processes, but further opportunities for staff to work collaboratively on moderation will build teacher confidence and provide rigour.

During the interview, older students indicated that around 55% of their work, over any given week, was 'just right', whereas younger students estimated 50% of their work was 'too easy'. Students said teachers could help them improve by providing harder and more challenging work. The panel found some evidence of differentiation, but this was not consistent, and provides an opportunity for teachers to further develop their practice. Current work on task design will build on teacher understandings and enable the planning of activities, which provide stretch and challenge for all students.

A verified strength of the school is the use of student leaders to run student forums. Students value the opportunity to use their leadership and influence to drive forum work. The panel found that although there are strong examples of student influence and leadership within the forums, this is not reflected in student learning. When choices were given to students, they were predominately 'teacher' choices. Some teachers ask for feedback from students and use this to help shape classroom practice; however, it is not consistent practice. Given students can articulate a common language of learning and view themselves as powerful learners, the panel believe there is great opportunity to allow students to have ownership of, and engagement with, their learning as a key factor in maximising potential success.

#### **Direction 1**

**Strategically increase student influence to allow opportunities for feedback to teachers, working collaboratively to co-construct the curriculum and jointly develop self-assessment criteria.**

### **How well are students achieving over time?**

Littlehampton Primary School's current engagement with Visible Learning provides a clear focus to drive, lead and refine pedagogical practice. Staff have high expectations for all learners and teachers, and support staff work collectively as a team, supported by a high number of volunteers. Staff report that recent increases in class size due to the school's increasing enrolments impact on learning in terms of behaviour issues and lack of physical space.

Whilst the panel viewed a consistent approach to Visible Learning as a strength of the school, they did not experience the same level of consistency in the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. Teachers indicated that elements of previous agreements were no longer followed, with some teachers unclear about a whole-school approach. Both literacy and numeracy documents are in the process of review, which provides opportunity for staff to collaborate and provide clarity of a consistent approach to support students as they move through year groups.

There is a skilled group of school services officers (SSOs) who work closely with teachers and are integral members of the teaching team. All students identified at risk of not achieving access evidence-based intervention programs in the form of MiniLit, MultiLit, QuickSmart and TooSmart. All verified students receive support targeted to their individual needs. Leadership support students by providing time for teachers and support staff to meet weekly and discuss individual students and refine support. These meetings were a proactive means of supporting student learning and tracking progress. The school has also created their version of 'one plan', with all verified students and Aboriginal students having clear and concise learning plans with short and long-term SMARTAR goals. Work achieved in this area will provide a smooth transition for the school when they move to using the department's template next year.

SSOs discussed supporting students in the end of year transition process by meeting with the next year's teacher. Teachers talked of informal information sharing, which was successful if the student was remaining within the current teacher learning team. By formalising transition processes, the school can support students by enabling them to move seamlessly from one year to the next.

Following the purchase of Sentral to enable the storing and tracking of student data, leadership report a noticeable increase in the collection and analysing of data. Teachers also report that the Visible Learning focus has made them more 'aware of looking at what the data is telling us'. Some teachers are regularly reviewing data and using a traffic light system to highlight growth and areas of concern, which informs future teaching and learning. Although there has been a sizeable shift in the use of data it was not seen consistently across all classes; this view was corroborated by leadership staff.

A useful element for school improvement is the effective use of student achievement data to monitor and evaluate how successfully students are achieving over time. In addition to teacher-collected data and learning team data, another integral element is staff involvement in an ongoing self-review process, where a range of data is continuously monitored and evaluated, linking into the school's annual review, planning and reporting cycles. Staff reported a disconnect between their role, the site improvement plan and self-review processes. The panel felt that the new leadership provides opportunity to review current practice and promote thorough understanding by involving all staff.

## **Direction 2**

**Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed cycle for rigorous self-review which shapes ongoing improvement.**

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

Recent Partnership focus on Visible Learning is evident throughout the school. This builds on, and has strong links with, a previous focus on positive education. Support staff are included in professional learning and accessed explicit training to deliver targeted intervention. Staff show a deep commitment to improving their own practice and undertaking new learning and are developing and refining their practice. To support this, staff collaborate in learning teams and meet 3 times a term to investigate their practice and share their learning. Leadership facilitate this process by allocating staff meeting time to learning teams. Staff value learning teams as a time for collaboration, planning and interrogating data. Through conversations with teachers, the panel identified that learning teams were operating as silos and had an organisational focus. Some teams have focused on moderation, which links with a recent student free day focus on moderation and task design. By strategically planning a learning team focus there is great opportunity to link practice to the site improvement plan and form a critical part of a continuous self-review cycle.

All staff completed the departments new performance development plan (PDP), and have linked their goals to the site improvement plan. However, some plans were only recently created, not everyone has had their initial PDP meeting, and plans have yet to be reviewed. This was attributed to changes in the leadership team this year. Staff who had participated in a PDP meeting report being listened to and felt the meeting created a platform for an open exchange. Staff feel supported by leadership, but changes with the team have left some staff unclear on the roles and responsibilities of each leader; a clear published roles and responsibilities statement will assist and provide clarity.

As part of the Visible Learning focus, the school leadership team are 'impact coaches' who work and support teachers reflect and improve their practice. The changes to the leadership team this year have impacted on moving forward in a strategic and consistent manner. Although the panel saw great potential in this process, walkthroughs and coaching operate on an invitational basis and are restricted to a few staff. There is opportunity to widen the number of impact coaches by allowing key teachers to step into the role, increasing leadership density and capacity, and all staff to accessing the coaching model.

The panel found that staff are not connecting their practice to the PDP, the SIP and self-review. To create effective, tangible school improvement, all staff with a responsibility for student learning should be involved in the design, development, and implementation of the SIP. Learning team foci should be linked to the SIP with accountability reinforced through performance development processes. The department's performance and development guidelines ensure all staff are supported by ongoing performance planning, feedback and review. Aligning and enacting performance development with school and system priorities will strengthen staff connectedness and provide opportunities for collaboration to increase capacity.

### **Direction 3**

**Collectively work together to provide a robust culture of continuous improvement using self-review practices, which strategically link site improvement planning, professional development processes and teacher practice.**

## **What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?**

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Littlehampton Primary School:

- The coherent approach on Visible Learning and its empowering impact on student dispositions.
- The engagement and deployment of volunteers within the school.

Effective practice in school community partnerships was evident. Parent engagement has been influenced by the high number of volunteers, leading to improved outcomes in student learning. In particular, the panel noted the use of volunteers, and reduced student-to-adult ratios led to high levels of engagement and learning in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program.

## **Outcomes of the External School Review 2018**

**Littlehampton Primary School demonstrates growth in student achievement at or above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context, and works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.**

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

- 1. Strategically increase student influence to allow opportunities for feedback to teachers, working collaboratively to co-construct the curriculum and jointly develop self-assessment criteria.**
- 2. Collaboratively develop, implement and embed an agreed cycle for rigorous self-review which shapes ongoing improvement.**
- 3. Collectively work together to provide a robust culture of continuous improvement using self-review practices, which strategically link site improvement planning, professional development processes and teacher practice.**

**Based on the school's current performance, Littlehampton Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.**

# Appendix 1

## Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 93.7%.

# Appendix 2

## 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 2017, 90% of year 1 and 85% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 2 has been upwards, from 75% in 2015 to 85% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of year 3 students, 79% of year 5 students, 89% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 75% in 2015 to 90% in 2017.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 44% of year 3, 34% of year 5, and 25% of year 7 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 60% students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 83% students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

### Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 85% of year 5 students, and 86% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents an improvement, and for year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 44% of year 3, 31% of year 5, and 18% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75% students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 75% students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.