

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

• REPORT FOR THE PINES SCHOOL

Conducted in April 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. 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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Pam Kent, 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 The Pines 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%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

The Pines School is located in the suburb of Parafield Gardens, twenty-three kilometres north of Adelaide. Since amalgamating in 2013, The Pines School is a Child-Parent Centre to Year 7 school with an Intensive English Language Program (IELP) for eligible students. A community child care centre is adjacent to the site.

The school has an ICSEA score of 968 and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. Forty-four percent of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

Currently there is a total of 616 children and students at the school. The enrolment is made up of 96 (16%) pre-school children in the Child Parent Centre (CPC), 435 (70%) students in the Reception to Year 7 mainstream classes, and 85 (14%) students in the IELP. There are 19 mainstream classes and 6 small classes of students in the IELP.

Throughout a school year, 20% of IELP students enrol as mainstream students at The Pines School. Currently, 41% of students are in the mainstream classes with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). The school population includes 24 (5%) Aboriginal students, 25 (5%) Students with Disabilities and seven students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM).

All members of the School Leadership Team are in their first leadership tenure at the school. The team consists of an experienced Principal appointed in 2013, an Assistant Principal, a Senior Leader in Literacy Improvement, and a School Counsellor. The Senior Leader: Intensive English Language Program (IELP) was appointed through an internal selection process for 2016.

Since 2013, the mainstream enrolments have increased by 10% and the IELP roll has increased by 60%. The school has a zone of right for enrolment and is nearing capacity.

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, 52% of Year 1 and 61% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Between 2013 and 2015, the improvement trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 46% to 52% and, for Year 2, from 49% to 61%.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students and 57% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages at Years 3 and 5 and little or no change at Year 7.

For Years 3, 5 and 7, the school is achieving within the range of NAPLAN reading results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, there were twenty-seven students in Year 3, four students in Year 5 and four students in Year 7 who achieved in the top two NAPLAN reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 25% (1 of 4) of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 67% (2 of 3) of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average for Years 3 to 5, and an improvement from Year 3 to 7. For the last three years the trend for Year 3 to Year 5 upper band retention is downwards, from 100% to 25%.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 65% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students and 57% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents an improvement at Years 3 and 5, and little or no change at Year 7 from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2015, seventeen Year 3 students, two students in Year 5 and two students in Year 7 achieved in the top two NAPLAN numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, no students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and no students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. These results represent a decline in the respective historic baseline averages.

Summary

The above results are an indication that student performance in the early years at The Pines School is on an upwards trajectory, as measured by Running Records. In the primary years, as measured by NAPLAN, there is good improvement in both reading and numeracy against the DECD SEA, especially at Year 3. The challenge for the school is to now sustain and retain positive rates of growth for all students from Reception to Year 7.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Student Learning: **How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?**

Effective Teaching: **To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?**

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

The Pines School Leadership Team provided a presentation for the Review Panel outlining the evidence-based improvement agenda undertaken since the school amalgamation in 2013. Over the past three years the Principal and the Leadership Team have developed a culture that places the collection and use of data and evidence as a key component of the school's improvement cycle.

The panel heard that since 2013 the school has moved from having little reliable data and no student learning database, to having a far-reaching set of data available to monitor and corroborate achievement, growth and engagement.

To track and monitor every student's growth, the school has devised and revised a data collection map to include essential aspects of literacy (for example, Big 6 in Reading; Language and Literacy Levels) and numeracy (for example, Big Ideas in Number), a range of information related to learner engagement, and records of the Australian Curriculum grades for English, mathematics and science. Information about speech and language ability and social and emotional vulnerability has also been included. Perception data is periodically collected, recorded and analysed at the class and cohort levels. In 2016, use of the database includes tracking growth over time, evaluating participation in intervention programs, and as a record for case management of students at risk.

The Review Panel heard that deliberate attention has been given to ensure that the data collected is *valid* and *reliable*. As the Principal said: "How can we work out what to do if we don't have proper information?"

One School Service Officer with data-management expertise has been deployed to an ancillary support position to ensure the school data records are valid and useful, and kept up-to-date with information frequently provided by teachers, non-teaching staff and school leaders. In 2016, the school has also introduced a web-based data-management system to complement the existing mainstream and IELC databases and to align with the decision of the local DECD partnership.

Mainstream teachers reported to the Review Panel that having class datasets available with 'just in time' capacity to request various individual or group reports, ensures that information is available when needed for tracking, planning and reporting purposes. The IELP database allows the staff to monitor English language achievement and growth for each individual student from one term to the next, while also recording significant milestones in between.

The amount of data available at the site enables the Leadership Team and the School Improvement Team (SIT) to interrogate information about the growth and performance of student groups and cohorts. For example, last year, thirty-one students exited the IELP with 97% of these students achieving Language and Literacy Levels on target or above. Another example was demonstrated in an amended School Performance Report (SPR) summary. In the school's summary, the Principal demonstrated that at Year 3, for example, the proportional results for mainstream students were 20% higher than in the SPR, with 89% of the mainstream cohort achieving the SEA in reading and 83% in numeracy.

The Leadership Team has also worked together to make sure the school's data is *reliable*. This process has included ongoing training in administration of testing procedures; discussion about the purposes of each collection; valuable modelling of data analysis; and support to develop data literacy skills.

Staff were pleased to see and know from the data how well students are progressing in essential literacy and numeracy skills. They also knew that while tracking and responding to growth can accelerate achievement towards year level-appropriate standard, the challenge is to also ensure that effective teaching is supporting

all students to raise and sustain their achievement levels, from one year to the next.

The Review Panel concurred that the high expectations of the school could now include an intensive approach to monitoring and evaluating the extent to which students are developing the higher-order skills and conceptual understandings inherent in the Australian Curriculum (AC).

Teachers said that, to date, they valued all staff and team meeting discussions that included dialogue about coherence in the design of assessment tasks, quality of student work, the evidence base for A-E grading, and the importance of consistency in teacher professional judgement. Crucial to the school's ongoing improvement will also be the development of criterion-referenced processes to reach a shared understanding about what is required as evidence of any AC achievement standard.

The Review Panel found that the school is positioned to embed moderation as a strong strategic presence in collaborative teamwork, at and across year levels and programs. A shared commitment to develop, trial and reflect on processes will enable teachers to find effective ways to elaborate assessment criteria, develop shared understandings with each other and parents, and transform tasks to ensure that all students are engaged, progressing towards and achieving the SEA and beyond.

Direction 1

Increase and sustain the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards by working collaboratively to develop, implement and evaluate successful moderation processes.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The Review Panel undertook a survey at a meeting of staff to gather evidence about the impact of teaching and learning initiatives implemented in recent times. A wide-ranging number and type of practices were identified, including information about the positive outcomes resulting from: the focus on learning the big ideas in number; the support of the numeracy coach; the writing and the guided reading aspects of the English agreement; increased collaboration between IELP and mainstream teachers; and the promotion of student self-regulation through powerful learning and growth mindsets.

Staff responses to 'what has been the impact on student learning' were constructive, including: "teachers are enthusiastically implementing the changes and students are responding and engaged", "the data indicates that students are improving", "in my classroom I notice that the students' understanding is more developed". Teachers also said that when they differentiate now, "the students get a chance to show us where they are and what they really know, it shows in their assessment".

Mentioned in the surveys, and by all staff who spoke with the Review Panel, was the ongoing impact of the site-based embedded professional learning. The emphasis on the importance of school-wide adoption of well-understood and well-implemented teaching approaches is regarded as essential at The Pines School. The staff said they felt well-supported by the Leadership Team, the teacher mentors and coaches, and through the collaboration with their year level learning teams. The expertise of the IELP staff is valued by mainstream teachers as is their preparedness to share expertise about language learning, planning and programming.

Staff said they value the ongoing quality learning opportunities provided by the Leadership Team. The Review Panel heard that each staff meeting includes an evidence-based professional learning component, that regular workshops are held at other times on topics of interest (e.g. functional grammar) for teaching and non-teaching staff, and that pupil-free day programs are practical.

The school also provides extended courses for staff. One ongoing course is the series of 'assessment for learning' modules delivered at the school by volunteer staff facilitators. The twelve interactive professional learning modules are run as 'Formative Assessment PLCs'. This example of focused professional learning is one of several highlighted by staff as evidence of the support received to improve links between assessment and curriculum planning and instruction.

Late last year professional learning was also introduced to focus on 'transforming tasks' so that students are supported and challenged to demonstrate higher performance. Teachers found they are now increasingly providing multiple entry and exit points, and with pre- and post-assessments more intellectually challenging.

The Review Panel heard that a range of diagnostic assessments is also being used to support differentiated group teaching in literacy and numeracy. The gradual release of responsibility model is the core (Wave 1) teaching process for all students. Targeted teaching groups are then formed with students across two or three classes of the same or similar year levels, for fixed-term skill-based learning (Wave 2).

A bespoke teacher opinion survey has been used with staff over the last two years. Both surveys show strong support with almost 100% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with all aspects of the school's improvement plan, including formative assessment and implementation of agreements. Eighty-nine percent of teaching staff and 100% of non-teaching staff reported that 'leadership staff support my work'.

Governing Council members and other parents interviewed during the review were very positive about the 'focus on learning' at the school. They said they thought teachers were passionate about their teaching and that 'all kids who need support get it'. They felt the teachers had a good idea about where their children were up to in their learning. One parent thought there were better handover processes in place because 'this year the teacher knew the data behind my child'. Other parents said they found the use of assessment information had helped teachers talk to them about their children at parent interviews.

Students, young and old, were articulate about what teachers did that was helping them to improve and some could talk about what they could do to help themselves. They like opportunities to work in differentiated groups because they feel 'they can fit into the work'. They liked it also when they got individual help and found it most helpful when teachers explained things and 'help us understand'. Students were able to give examples of the language and concepts of being a powerful learner, having a growth mindset and making 'our brain muscles stronger'. The range of age-appropriate strategies being used to engage students in self-directing and self-assessing their own learning is gaining 'lift-off' across the school. As one of the Year 7 students said: "Learning at this school is about getting better results".

Staff appreciate that the Principal has brought new thinking and is seeing ongoing work through to fruition. Ideas introduced about best pedagogy have been trialled and then agreed upon. The ongoing development of formative assessment processes that support student goal-setting and guide learning design are significant priorities on the improvement agenda at The Pines School.

Direction 2

Ensure that the gradual release of responsibility for learning, at any year level, is supported by rigorous formative assessment processes that engage students as powerful learners and guide planning and instruction.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

The Pines School has developed a culture of improvement with clear direction and high expectations. Student achievement data is well used to make data-informed judgements about learning and school improvement.

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

1. Increase and sustain the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards by working collaboratively to develop, implement and evaluate successful moderation processes.
2. Ensure that the gradual release of responsibility for learning, at any year level, is supported by rigorous formative assessment processes that engage students as powerful learners and guide planning and instruction.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Cherie Collings
PRINCIPAL
THE PINES SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson