

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Coonalpyn Primary School

Conducted in May 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 Phil Garner Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Nicole Cawley Review Principal.

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

Coonalpyn Primary School caters for children from preschool to year 7. It is situated 163 kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 30 students. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 39 students.

The school has an ICSEA score of 945 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 12% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), no children in care and 32% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 6th year of her tenure, 4 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and no step 9 teachers. The school has two classes R-3 and 4-7.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Schedule all teaching staff to undertake training in the taking, and analysis, of Running records and establish a schedule for regular tracking of RR data.
- Direction 2** Increase students' levels of comprehension skills with a stronger focus on teaching inference, making connections and visualisation skills. Build on the Coonalpyn 2015 Skills Sequence document, to readily develop a ready checklist for year level appropriate skill sets and regularly review and evaluate student progress.
- Direction 3** Work with staff to develop whole-school agreements about the implementation of high quality literacy and numeracy practices which will continue to focus on raising student outcomes.
- Direction 4** Continue to focus on building the capacity of teachers to use formative assessment processes to support and inform students about their learning.
- Direction 5** Use data to identify benchmarks that determine when specific interventions will occur that support improved learner capacity and outcomes.

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

A process to ensure staff are trained in running records has been implemented with running records conducted as required, however as mentioned in the previous report it is recommended that the school develops achievement benchmarks across the early years as a guide to achieving the SEA in this assessment.

The school has a comprehensive skills sequence document that indicates which skills are to be taught at each level. Comprehension has been a focus for the school with literacy data results being used to guide teaching and learning. An online reading program has been implemented to focus on individual literacy skills.

The school has developed whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements that lists identified programs to be used and includes general expectations, however the level of engagement with these documents

is currently variable with the teaching staff in the early stages of developing an understanding of the Big 6 in Reading and Big Ideas in Number. The inclusion of strategic processes on designing and implementing high quality teaching and learning programs in literacy and numeracy would be the next stages in the development of these agreements.

The panel found little evidence of changes in practice around formative assessment with most assessment of student learning falling into the category of affirmation.

Intervention programs are used extensively across the school with a high percentage of students accessing the support. The school may benefit by identifying appropriate benchmarks to determine when specific interventions will occur to reduce the over-reliance on this form of instruction.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

To what extent has the school drawn on evidence of best practice to determine strategies and actions for improvement?

There is evidence of consultation and engagement with staff, including the collaborative analysis and reflection on student achievement data to identify challenges of practice. Teaching staff have shown commitment to the site improvement planning process and are committed to implementing its actions.

Both the literacy and numeracy challenges of practice have been carefully considered and based on the analysis of individual student learning needs and evidence of best practice. The literacy focus is specifically on improving phonics for R-2 students, however with long term, low levels of higher bands achievement in reading and writing in years 3, 5 and 7, there exists an opportunity to ensure that stretch and challenge in the primary years is a challenge of practice focus for year 3-7 teachers.

Actions for improvement, whilst related to the challenges of practice, can be considered to be mostly organisational. Actions that have a clear relationship to learning design, implementation and building teacher capacity will enable greater focus on quality teaching and learning, and raising student achievement.

With the staff engaging in performance development meetings with leadership throughout the year, there exists an opportunity to effectively connect the challenges of practice and AITSL professional standards for teachers that will provide continuity of professional learning and identify clear developmental outcomes for teachers.

Direction 1 Collaboratively review the Site Improvement Plan to ensure the planned actions focus on building teacher capacity to improve learning design and student achievement.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

The school analyses a comprehensive range of datasets that enables the identification of individual learning needs and the effective tracking of student progress. Evidence-based intervention programmes in literacy and numeracy are provided for those students who have been identified as needing support. Students receive 1:1 support in Multi-lit or Quicksmart with teachers acknowledging improvement and increased confidence in learning. These interventions provide students with additional targeted support to bridge gaps in their learning. It is important that students continue to participate in class based numeracy and literacy lessons and not miss out in order to receive the intervention. Analysis of student data prior to and

following the intervention will verify the effectiveness or appropriateness of intervention programs on student achievement.

The school has introduced an online literacy program, Lexia, which individualises literacy learning and provides students with immediate feedback on their progress. However while programs such as this may have a place in the learning process, care needs to be taken to ensure that it supplements whole group explicit teaching of reading and does not replace it.

There is some evidence of formative assessment strategies being used to gauge student understanding of learning and provide them with feedback. Monitoring of student progress is enabling teachers to deliver learning tasks that engage students in their learning journey.

Goal-setting is an embedded practice across the school with most students clearly able to articulate their goals. The majority of goals such as 'achieve 10/10 for spelling test' can be categorised as target goals but do not go deeply enough in identifying the learning that needs to take place in order to achieve the target. There exists an opportunity for students to analyse and engage with their assessment results to identify their next steps in learning. This would directly lead to improved goal-setting and give students greater direction, ownership and responsibility for their learning.

Direction 2 Collaboratively design and implement formative assessment strategies and learning environment cultures that inform the next steps in teaching and learning and provide students with opportunities to develop responsibility and ownership for their own learning.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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

Multi-year level classes have been arranged to cater for the learning needs of R-3 and 4-7 students. The Australian Curriculum is used to direct learning across all year levels with students able to identify their differentiated learning outcomes from those of other students in the class. Students could explain their learning and there is an expectation that the Australian Curriculum literacy and numeracy progressions are used to ensure continuity of learning and appropriate curriculum delivery to each student.

Rotational group activities are generally used to deliver the curriculum with students working independently on learning tasks that in most cases are repetitive and fluency related, or individual computer assisted programs. This pedagogical approach allows the teacher to explicitly teach one group at a time, however this limits teacher/student contact opportunities for others.

While problem solving opportunities are incorporated in numeracy lessons, these tend to be logic type problems. The inclusion of authentic problem solving including formulating, modelling, and the recording and solving problem situations will further challenge students in their learning. Students would benefit from the opportunities to engage with and develop their creative and critical thinking skills.

Regular principal walkthroughs occur with teachers receiving informal feedback reflecting positive affirmation. While teachers value this approach, they indicated a more formal observational process would be advantageous to their professional learning. Teachers also indicated the need for greater collaboration between teachers in other schools.

With dedicated teachers, and compliant and respectful students, the school is in a position to collaboratively engage in evaluating and implementing the most effective pedagogical approaches that have maximum effect on student learning and achievement.

Direction 3 Through a formal approach to professional learning and classroom observation, evaluate and embed quality pedagogical approaches that focus on high expectations, explicit teaching and engagement of students in their own learning that will improve student achievement.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

There exists strong links within the community and the school, with students being involved in many community events and initiatives such as the Yurt project, choir and community sports. There is a sense of belonging to the school with students articulating the school to be friendly, welcoming and safe: a 'great place to be'. Parents are supportive and happy with the school. Governing council value the professional way in which the principal keeps them informed and involved in the operation of the school.

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

- Direction 1** Collaboratively review the Site Improvement plan to ensure the planned actions focus on building teacher capacity to improve learning design and student achievement.
- Direction 2** Collaboratively design and implement formative assessment strategies and learning environment cultures that inform the next steps in teaching and learning and provide students with opportunities to develop responsibility and ownership for their own learning.
- Direction 3** Through a formal approach to professional learning and classroom observation, evaluate and embed quality pedagogical approaches that focus on high expectations, explicit teaching and engagement of students in their own learning that will improve student achievement.

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



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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).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for 2 reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Coonalpyn Primary School from 2014 to 2018.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2014 to 2018, 48% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2014 to 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students and 62% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

From 2014 to 2018, 21% of year 3 students, 21% of year 5 students and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2014 to 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students and 76% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2014 to 2018, 32% of year 3, 21% of year 5 students and 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.