

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Port Wakefield Primary School

Conducted in August 2020



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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Belinda Krollig, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

School context

Port Wakefield Primary School is a reception to year 7 school, located 98kms north of Adelaide. The enrolment in 2020 is 43 students accommodated in 3 classrooms. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 76. The local partnership is Lower Mid North.

The school has an ICSEA score of 926, and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational disadvantage.

The school population includes 12% Aboriginal students, 16% students with disabilities, 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 5% children/young people in care and 52% of students eligible for school card assistance.

The school leadership consists of a principal in her 3rd year of tenure at the school. There are 4 teachers at the school.

The previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1: Engage learners and provide challenging tasks by consistently deepening the intellectual quality of all teaching in all classrooms.**
- Direction 2: Improve and sustain student achievement at the school by building teacher capacity through a coherent school-wide approach that is planned, implemented and evaluated.**
- Direction 3: Record and use student achievement data, and other measures, to continuously track individual student learning growth over time and to design differentiated teaching for all students.**

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

The previous external school review was held in 2016 and the above directions provided to the school for implementation. The current principal has been at the school from the commencement of the 2018 school year. There was limited evidence that the school has worked systematically over this four-year period to implement these directions with vigour or intensity.

Teacher engagement in professional learning aspects of literacy and numeracy over the past 2 years to establish an understanding of the need to impact learning in these vital areas of the curriculum was limited. This included online courses, 'Big Ideas in Number', Orbis courses for numeracy, and work with maths consultants. In literacy, the junior primary teacher engaged in early reading strategies connected to the 'Big Six' with a focus on oral language development.

Preliminary signs of teachers planning for engagement and challenge, through task design linked to new concepts or units of work, were visible. Implementation of a broad range of differentiated strategies in classes to connect and engage learners with varying needs, was at different stages of development.

Over the past 2 years, there has been some engagement in strategic improvement planning. The plan is accompanied with 'statement of practice' documents for reading and maths. Together, they have the potential to influence teaching practice in a planned and coherent way. This will require staff to gain clarity about the work to be implemented, so that students experience a seamless approach to learning as they move across the year levels and classes. This aspect is in the early phases of implementation.

The school has an abundance of learning data for aspects of literacy and numeracy. Whilst learning data at the school level provides access to overarching patterns and trends, it is critical that teachers collect and scrutinise reliable and valid 'growth' data associated with individual students. In a small school, it is important that each student is tracked and monitored at the individual level using measures that consider growth over time. Learning growth of at least 'one year or more' should be the goal for every student at the school.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Consistent implementation of high-yield practices across the school is limited. Approaches to address the goals defined in the SIP vary greatly between classes. This perception was also confirmed by members of the governing council.

Staff have engaged in professional learning in relation to oral language development, as a foundational skill for reading, and 'trusting the count' for numeracy improvement. Professional development, as it relates to the school improvement focus, needs to involve opportunities for staff to trial, to review and to refine their classroom practices in implementing 'new learning.' There are opportunities to engage in understanding proven practices and research. However, it was clear that not all staff go the next step, and implement required changes, or embed them with any fidelity to have a positive impact on students' achievement.

Setting of individual student learning goals was undertaken to some degree; however, these were somewhat broad and disconnected from summative and formative assessment data. Generally, students could not recall their goals, nor could they remember when they were last revisited. Those students who could recall their goals described very broad and behaviour-orientated reminders rather than targeted, specific goals that would result in improvement.

Using learning intentions and success criteria to make learning visible and accessible to students was not evident in every class. 'We Are Learning to' (WALT) and 'What I'm Looking for...' (WILF) strategies to increase engagement and challenge were sighted in one class. Students interviewed commented on their opportunity to influence topics, or who they worked with, as ways to influence their learning. These strategies are relatively low level and low-impact ways of engaging and challenging students.

A staff survey conducted during the review indicated that staff still see themselves in the 'developing' phase in regard to engagement and challenge practices. The 'statements of practice' recently developed by the school are an important initiative for teaching staff to understand and collaboratively implement.

The overriding conclusion by the review panel relates to concerns about the school culture and level of teacher efficacy. These concerns are addressed in Direction 3 of this report.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Multi-age classes demand that differentiation occurs as a regular feature in teachers' programming as well as their classroom practices. Curriculum concepts become more complex as students progress through year levels. Only one class exhibited designing of their program to take account of different year levels and learning needs. In one class where differentiation was observed, teachers incorporated reading, word study and school services officer support.

The school produced multiple examples of summative assessment data which is analysed by staff at the school level. There was little evidence of data analysis to identify patterns of 'misconceptions' and 'learning gaps'. The principal acknowledged that it is important not to collect data for 'data sake' and started to discern with staff which datasets add diagnostic value to planning for targeted learning improvement. Effectiveness of this data collection and analysis on planning, programming and targeted teaching at the cohort or individual levels within classes was minimal. Instead, summative data was mainly used for selecting students for intervention support programs.

Formative assessment in classrooms in the form of pre- and post-testing, activating prior knowledge, guided reading with the teacher, verbal questioning and feedback and some written feedback, were present. There was little proof of teachers gathering student feedback related to their teaching, or implementation of school-initiated approaches in reading, oral language or maths. Regular, systematic formative assessment and feedback helps guide learning for students, enabling teachers to assess that students are 'on-track' with learning.

Discussions with students and parents about learning data, progress, next steps or learning goals was minimal. The available data, summative and formative, should drive improvement for every child at an individual level. A shift from knowing whether students are at, above or below year level standards to one of knowing and delivering targeted teaching for each student's needs is required.

Expanding the concept of data beyond 'learning data' and testing is important to evaluate what difference they are making. The principal is beginning to consider this as an important part of ongoing monitoring. For example, the 'success criteria' recently expanded by the staff could serve as valuable progress data to ensure students are 'on track' with their learning in reading and maths. Fine-tuned for each student and assessed in terms of what they say, do, write and make at year level standard, they will serve as effective guides for individual progression in these learning areas.

Direction 1 Differentiate curriculum planning and instruction based on the provision and analysis of formative and summative data from multiple measures.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on each student's learning?

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

How well does the school's strategic leadership support and sustain a culture of learning and improvement?

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Through the review process the review panel determined that above 3 lines of inquiry were interconnected and relate to the culture of the school. To provide clarity for the school and community the findings have been combined.

The principal's appointment to Port Wakefield Primary School was in 2018. The review enabled a 'time of reflection' for the principal.

Developing the school improvement plan (SIP), with the support of the Local Education Team, helped refine the strategic focus for improvement across the school. Importantly, teacher participation in professional learning to influence their pedagogical practice has been a key strategy to build staff understanding of contemporary effective teaching practices. There is some evidence to indicate this focus on improvement is translating into some classrooms, but not to any embedded or consistent extent at this stage. This concept of embedding evidence-based initiatives to a 'deep' level to foster improvement is compulsory on all staff to work as a team.

A collaborative, trusting culture is a foundation for improvement. The prevailing culture amongst staff was not centred on working together as a committed team to drive school improvement through combined efforts and positivity. In order to make a positive difference to learning, as a fully united staff team, staff disagreements would be professionally and transparently addressed.

A 'culture of learning' is an aspect requiring improvement, and it is important that every teacher holds high learning expectations for every student. All staff need to be committed to the principle that all students can learn despite socio economic status, ethnicity or learning needs. The concept of student 'growth' over time will be an appropriate and effective way to measure progress at the school. A year's growth in learning, no matter the individual starting point, could be the best way to track and monitor progress over time.

The principal has yet to fully expand opportunities to connect performance and development with school improvement. Whilst plans and meetings are key components of staff performance there are other aspects such as focused observations and feedback, peer observations, video analyses and student perceptions, which can be undertaken within a culture of trust and collaborative learning. This leadership strategy applies equally to non-teaching staff at the school.

A positive and highly collaborative staff team, including school services officers, is needed to deliver the change agenda being sought by the principal. Professional learning and participation in actioning the SIP, including the 'challenges of practice' is a must, with the highest standards of professionalism and accountability. It will take the deliberate and concerted effort by all to deliver at least a year's 'growth' for every learner at Port Wakefield Primary School.

Direction 2 **Develop a collaborative culture and greater teacher efficacy to implement agreed evidence-based teaching practices and regularly monitor and track the students' progress to provide more responsive instruction.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

The school has demonstrated a limited response to the directions provided through the External School Review undertaken in 2016. Through support from the Local Education Team, the school now developed a plan that defines the improvement work that must be progressed as a matter of urgency. School improvement must be considered as an ongoing process, not as an annual event. Agreed evidence-based teaching practices must be monitored and reviewed for impact against 'success criteria' and this must happen in shorter cycles of self-evaluation.

The principal and all members of staff must work as a highly collaborative team with improved student learning in the defined priority areas as the focus of this work. Classrooms must reflect the improvement work that is being undertaken in supporting students. Student guides, scaffolds and other artefacts that create a positive classroom culture of learning was not displayed in all classrooms. This is somewhat symptomatic of the current school culture where effort, energy and pulling together in a united way has been less than expected of an improvement-focused school.

The principal is required to consider improvements and enhancements to the following organisational structures to support the work being undertaken. These include: timely and effective communication and follow-up with all stakeholders, consistent behaviour management practices, and formal performance and development opportunities for all staff.

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

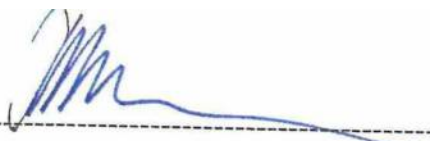
Direction 1 Differentiate curriculum planning and instruction based on the provision and analysis of formative and summative data from multiple measures.

Direction 2 Develop a collaborative culture and greater teacher efficacy to implement agreed evidence-based teaching practices and regularly monitor and track the students' progress to provide more responsive instruction.


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




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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

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 two 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 Port Wakefield Primary School from 2016-2019.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2016 to 2019, 33% of year 1 and 66% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 61% of year 3 students, 60% of year 5 students and 59% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 25% of year 3 students, 10% of year 5 students and 15% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2016 to 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 44% of year 3 students, 58% of year 5 students and 78% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 6% of year 3 students, 13% of year 5 students and 11% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.