



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Macclesfield Primary School

Conducted in April 2017



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.

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and David Manuel, Review Principal.

School context

Macclesfield Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 41kms south-east of the Adelaide CBD in the town of Macclesfield, and is part of the Heysen Partnership. The enrolment in 2017 is 71 students, which is down from 96 in 2013. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1046.

The Macclesfield Primary School student population includes 4.2% (3) Aboriginal students, 7% (5) students with a disability, 15% (11) of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background, and 2 children in care.

The school Principal is in the second year of her tenure at the school. There are no other school leaders. There are 6 teachers (4.6 FTE), including 2 in the early years of their career, and 4 Step 9 teachers.

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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

Effective Teaching: How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?

Effective Leadership: To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

The School Performance Report indicates that student reading and numeracy achievement at Macclesfield Primary School is generally high. Whilst there are some variances in year levels and cohorts, these levels of achievement are being sustained over time. In order to identify the leverage points for the school, the panel explored the ways in which teachers are using an evidence-base to guide learning design for continuous improvement in student learning.

At the staff meeting, teachers told the panel that they collect many types of data and that they use it for a range of purposes, such as to set tasks, diagnose teaching points, set groups, identify children for intervention, and to plan programs. A range of common assessment tasks has been documented in a school agreement. Teachers, whilst collecting some datasets in common, analyse and apply the information from this data individually. By using data collaboratively to assess-plan-teach for targeted improvement a greater impact of this work will be realised. This will lift the assessment literacy of teachers to a higher-order and increase teachers' skills in the formative use of summative assessment.

The panel looked at some samples of student reports that were written in 2016 using a new reporting format. A point of development is for teachers to use data to form a consistent professional judgement about student achievement against the Australian Curriculum Standards. This will support teachers to translate relatively high levels of student fluency in literacy and numeracy to A and B grades across the Australian Curriculum.

Recently, the school had some success in increasing the use of data to report to parents, in parent-teacher interviews and with students, to engage and motivate them in learning. Parents and students told the panel that sometimes some teachers use data to show them how a student's learning is progressing. Students told the panel that the school pushes them in learning, and they value it. Students could tell the panel about how teachers support them to reach a higher standard in learning, but this was not consistent

amongst all groups of students. The uses of data with parents and students should be made less ad hoc and more consistent across the school. This would assist students to develop a deeper understanding of their own development as a learner, and parents' need for more frequent and detailed information about student learning (a need that was expressed to the panel) would be satisfied.

The system for tracking student learning using agreed datasets over time has been recently updated at the school to make it more individualised. Each student now has their own excel record, a hard copy of which is kept by the current teacher. It is important for the school to explore the value of the *Data Dashboard* to deepen and streamline this tracking of student learning growth even further. This would ensure the triangulation of student achievement data with demographic and perception data, and the flagging of 'at-riskness' in learning.

During the site visit, some parents told the panel that there have been recent improvements at the school in the identification and resourcing of students with additional needs. Since 2016, 2 staff meetings each term are held to review and discuss student learning using the individual data tracking sheets. Teachers and School Services Officers (SSOs) are then released to meet to plan interventions based on the discussions at these student review meetings. Short-term goals are set for intervention for identified students, and it is planned to follow-up and review these goals.

SSOs are now involved in professional learning alongside teachers. This values their work as co-educators and contributes to a coherent, whole-school approach to differentiated learning improvement. Some parents told the panel that this year their child's additional needs are better differentiated for in the classroom by the teacher. However, some parents still have concerns about the timeliness, effectiveness and amount of intervention provided.

In the early years, routine screening of all students when they begin school in phonological awareness, oral language and comprehension will enable the school to identify and intervene with targeted strategies from an earlier time in children's schooling.

Quicksmart has been resourced as a numeracy intervention program. Parents told the panel that this has improved their children's levels of numerical fluency, and has gone some way to alleviating their concerns about their children's lack of progress. The school should consider the value of other remedial literacy programs to those students whose skills continue to lag.

Improving student writing has been identified as a whole-school priority. NAPLAN data indicates that students do less well in writing than in numeracy and other aspects of literacy. A genre map has been developed and agreed to by teachers, in order to ensure types of writing are covered in a curriculum scope. Oral language has been identified as a learning issue in the early years and an initial screening trialled. Oral language and vocabulary are directly connected to issues with writing. The school needs to ensure that its efforts to improve oral language and writing at the school are underpinned by professional learning to develop the capacity of teachers to teach writing effectively, through oral language, at all levels of schooling.

The school has resourced two whole-school approaches to developing student social and emotional self-management at school – *Growth Mindset* and *Play is the Way*. Teachers report that these approaches have traction, and positively influence student behaviour at school and in relation to learning. Relationships between children are seen as a strength of the school. This was stated by teachers, parents and students. The panel found some evidence that Growth Mindset concepts are taught in the context of academic learning; for example, one teacher was observed using positive self-talk during a maths lesson.

The panel concluded that the engagement and intellectual challenge of students at Macclesfield Primary School has been explicitly attended to in recent years. Teachers use some form of data to inform the decisions they are making to design learning opportunities for students in order to intentionally move them forward to the next appropriate steps in their learning. It can be said that teachers have become more data-literate and are making better use of data to bring an evidence-base to their teacher judgement. The next step for the school is to further develop the data literacy of teachers. Teachers must become consistently more systematic in their use of data and evidence to plan their lessons and next steps in learning. This will positively impact the tracking of student growth in learning; the identification of students for interventions and the provision and review of interventions; reporting student learning growth to parents and students; and the disaggregation of data to identify the effectiveness of teaching.

Direction 1

Improve the engagement and intellectual challenge of the full range of students by developing the collective assessment literacy of teachers so they consistently gather, collate, and analyse a range of valid and reliable data in the interests of continuous improvement in teaching effectiveness.

How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?

During the site visit, the panel explored the ways that students are being empowered as learners through feedback from the teacher, in addition to the panel exploring the depth of understanding teachers have about the value of feedback from students towards improving the effectiveness of teaching.

Having knowledge of learning intentions and success criteria is an indicator of the agency students have as learners. A class walkthrough demonstrated to the panel that all students spoken to could verbalise the learning task, and 75% of these students could identify a learning intention. Some teachers talked about the value to them of clarifying learning intentions with students: "You notice a change in students. They understand the learning intention and how you will judge success". Teachers told the panel that they sometimes provide students with success criteria. However, students were unable to tell the panel any success criteria for a learning task. There is a need in the school to build into the structure of every lesson the language of learning for students (learning intentions/success criteria). This will develop student capacity to see themselves as learners and to understand what a good learner is and does.

Students talked to the panel about judging the quality of their learning by test results, teacher praise, getting stickers and awards, moving up in groups, getting harder work, doing work at a higher year level, and using diagrams and hints. However, students did not tell the panel that they receive instructional feedback to assist their learning growth.

Teachers told the panel that they give written and verbal feedback to students. Some teachers discuss the concept of 'mastery' with students. They use electronic programs in reading and maths to build and scaffold students to mastery. These programs provide summative feedback to students. The panel found that feedback is less explicitly about the ways to improve the quality of the learning and is generally generic and value-based ('good' or 'bad').

There was considerable teacher talk to the panel about seeking and mediating students' emotional responses to learning tasks and about the ways students are interacting socially in the learning environment. Students are asked "what did you like?", "how well did you work together?", "what did you enjoy about the lesson?" Students' comments that they "have fun", and "the teacher is not calm in the lesson", further indicate this emotional quality of the way feedback is understood at the school. Feedback is not always learning-specific. It is more 'of learning' than 'for learning'. Even when it is of learning it is more reflective of social and emotional personal capabilities than academic endeavour and quality.

The panel asked teachers how they use feedback about student learning to design next teaching opportunities. Teachers told the panel that they rely on informal teacher observations and judgements about how students go in a lesson. Few teachers systematically analyse student work in order to identify next intentional teaching points. There is a strong reliance on teacher judgement and informal uses of feedback.

One teacher provides regular feedback to students about learning (instructional feedback). This teacher gives timely verbal feedback, uses a conferencing style, and systematically uses a discussion model. The feedback this teacher provides is frequent, actionable, specific and timely (FAST). This teacher also uses strategies to regularly make success and learning criteria explicit to students. Parents reported satisfaction with their children's learning in this class, and said that improvements were very evident for their children.

However, teachers generally lack clarity about the importance and value of providing explicit feedback to students, which details how to improve learning. One teacher said: "I don't like to give them corrections". This reflects the view that feedback is a value judgement and it should never 'upset' students, indicating a lack of understanding about the difference between feedback and criticism. Praise is being confused with effective instructional feedback.

One teacher also uses *Assessment For Learning* strategies and understands the purpose of seeking feedback from students in order to judge the effectiveness of teaching. Overall, there is no embedded understanding amongst staff of the role of regular feedback from students in improving the effectiveness of teaching.

There are examples of team and pair teaching. Teachers involved in these pairs talked to the panel about the professional development and capacity building that comes from having increasingly deep conversations about teaching. There is an opportunity for the school to formalise peer observations by teachers to develop teachers and evaluators of their own practice.

The panel concluded that, whilst there is some expertise on staff in the provision of instructional feedback, there is overwhelmingly a need to develop teachers' understanding about and practice of intentionally providing and seeking explicit feedback. Feedback to students needs to be richer and more meaningful. It needs to be about the learning, the process and the task of learning, and to contain information for the student about how to make learning better. Praise and feedback to enhance social and emotional self-regulation for learning do not constitute instructional feedback, nor are they a substitute for it. Moreover, teachers need to explore and understand the need to regularly seek feedback from students in order to judge and continuously improve the effectiveness of their teaching practice. In this way, teachers will come to rely on student feedback in order to evaluate the impact of their practice and enhance their effectiveness and capacity.

Direction 2

Improve student learning by enhancing the quality of feedback that teachers provide to students and enhancing the responsiveness of teachers to feedback from students about their pedagogies.

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

Until 2016, there was a long-standing Principal in the school, as well as long-standing staff. 2016 brought a new Principal and a new teacher, the first change of staff for many years. Despite long-held ways of doing things, the current Principal has found that teachers and support staff are very willing to take on new learning about practice and to give new things a try. One teacher has requested support from the Principal to take up new maths practice. This teacher has voluntarily given up NIT time to enable team teaching with the Principal during maths lessons.

The school has committed to partnership work on Visible Learning over the next 3 years. An impact coach has been identified from within the school staff. The Principal and teachers talked positively to the panel about the potential of this work, and they are making links to previous learning (prior to 2016) around *Assessment for Learning* strategies. The Principal sees that this Visible Learning work has the potential to inform strategies to achieve the school's learning improvement targets in maths and writing. The potential of Visible Learning work to assess the effectiveness of teacher pedagogy is also recognised by the Principal and some teachers. The Principal, in collaboration with the coach, will soon use the Visible Learning matrix tool to identify the starting focus for this work.

The Principal has worked to shift to a focus on evidence-based learning at the school. The 2017 SIP has targets based on 2016 data. The report format has been updated to be more evidence-based.

Structures at the school have been changed in order to keep the focus on the agreed SIP priorities. Such changes include the staff meeting structure to ensure coherence and regular consideration of the SIP targets, the structure of the Principal's report to Governing Council, and the introduction of a weekly SSO meeting, in order to improve coherence and whole-school focus on learning improvement targets.

Teachers told the panel that the following recent whole-school strategies have positively impacted their practice. This includes making teaching more intentional, the structure of staff meetings that includes training and development time, student review staff meetings, and common planning time for teachers and SSOs. The school is small (4 classes) and teachers regularly work together. Teachers value this collaboration and spoke proudly to the panel about their cooperation and sharing. However, the panel found that the nature of teacher cooperation is comfortable, but not deeply collaborative. Teachers are not regularly using an evidence-base to analyse the effectiveness of their practice. Their collective work is

collegiate and focused on curriculum content and coverage. This work is more 'content' and less 'intent' focused. And there is inconsistent uptake by staff of school improvement initiatives.

There is some student voice at the school through student and school leaders. Students told the panel that, whilst there are no class meetings, the school and student leaders have met twice this term. The panel concluded that student voice in the school is less than optimal.

Parents and students value the friendliness and community sense. It is 'small', which means everyone knows and looks out for each other. Some parents report that there has been recent improvement in the school's response to issues raised by parents. Parents say that the reasons they stay at the school are because of the quality of relationships they have with each other, and also because of the student-to-student relationships.

The panel was concerned that there is currently no agreed school vision. It is the panel's view that it is urgent work for the school to work with its community in order to focus the direction of the school and develop a clear agreement about the moral purpose of Macclesfield Primary School. This work should be co-led by the Principal and the Governing Council and include student voice.

The panel concluded that there is common goodwill for and about the learning of students within all groups of stakeholders. However, there has been some fracturing of connectedness between groups of stakeholders, in particular, staff and families, and, to a lesser degree, staff and students. It is critical and timely for the school to develop a whole-school vision, for groups of stakeholders to consult with each other and agree on a moral purpose for the school. The process through which this is done is as critical, if not more critical, than the outcome. It is through this process that groups of stakeholders can be re-connected with each other and unite in a common understanding about for what and whom the school stands and why. This will harness the collective goodwill of the community and make coherent their collective endeavours in the interests of the learning of current and future students at Macclesfield Primary School.

Direction 3

Develop a shared moral purpose for the school by uniting all stakeholders in developing and stating a common, agreed vision for student learning.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Macclesfield Primary School.

The school uses community resources very effectively to complement teaching programs. In 2010, the school opened its *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program* with the support of its immediate community, and sponsors from the broader SA community. This program has operated in its entirety since then, with all students having access to garden and kitchen lessons weekly. This program develops global competencies of communication, collaboration, character, citizenship, critical thinking and creativity. Its pedagogical characteristics include: personal and collective relevance, group and cross-age learning, literacy and numeracy in action, and active learning. The program engenders in the school and its local community a sense of pride, and draws on the skills of the broad local community.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

At Macclesfield 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 leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning.

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

1. Improve the engagement and intellectual challenge of the full range of students by developing the collective assessment literacy of teachers so they consistently gather, collate, and analyse a range of valid and reliable data in the interests of continuous improvement in teaching effectiveness.
2. Improve student learning by enhancing the quality of feedback that teachers provide to students and enhancing the responsiveness of teachers to feedback from students about their pedagogies.
3. Develop a shared moral purpose for the school by uniting all stakeholders in developing and stating a common, agreed vision for student learning.

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



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.



Lynne Noll
PRINCIPAL
MACCLESFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of Macclesfield Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

Cyber Safety Policy: School to implement.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

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 2016 was 91.8%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 76% of Year 1 and 100% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline for Year 1, and an improvement for Year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of Year 3 students, 71% of Year 5 students and 89% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 72% of Year 3, 71% of Year 5 and 67% of Year 7 students 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, 83%, or 5 of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 5 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 89% of Year 3 students, 71% of Year 5 students, and 100% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 78% in 2014 to 100% in 2016.

In 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 33% of Year 3, 14% of Year 5 and 44% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 22% in 2014 to 44% in 2016

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 1 of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 3 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.