

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for East Para Primary School

Conducted in February 2021



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 Debbie Grzczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Michele Russell, 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

East Para Primary School caters for reception to year 7 children. It is situated 16kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 351 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 440. The local partnership is Montague.

The school has an ICSEA score of 983 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 40% students with disabilities, 12% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 25% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 5th year of tenure and a Deputy Principal on a short term contract.

There are 24 Teachers including 6 in the early years of their careers and 7 Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Establish structures and processes to enable professional collaborative learning and evaluation of pedagogical practices to build teachers' capacity.
- Direction 2** Develop a common agreement of high leverage teaching pedagogies and implement and embed these into daily practice.
- Direction 3** Strengthen the use of formative assessment and feedback to and from students to provide more targeted and tailored learning design for all students.
- Direction 4** Ensure regular self-review processes evaluate the effectiveness of programs and strategies.

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

The previous ESR directions guided school improvement planning but had reduced impact due to numerous staff changes. Most areas within the initial directions are still current and pertinent to the school. The area of significant shift has been on the explicit approach to reading which is known by staff, students, and the community. The consistent approach to reading has yet to be fully reflected in student achievement data.

Staff report that the refined school improvement model has had greater impact on improvement than the previous directions as it has created a narrow focus, been strategically responded to and provides a framework for monitoring and review.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

The site improvement plan (SIP) has a narrow focus on the components of reading which enables staff to go narrow and deep. Targeted professional learning and performance development processes are aligned to the SIP and support teachers to further refine their practice. The analysis of data and feedback led staff to collectively create a whole-school reading agreement which guides their practice. Leadership observations focus on the reading agreement and feedback is provided on how the agreement is embodied in classroom practice.

Staff formally review the SIP every term and monitor progress and the SIP is regularly referenced in staff meeting professional learning time. The monitoring of progress against student achievement data has resulted in the implementation of an evidence-based whole-class literacy program. This is aimed at providing students with the essential core knowledge and strong foundations to become successful readers and writers. Teachers track and monitor student progress and adapt their practice in response to the data. Data analysis has identified spelling as an area of concern and a planned approach has been created in response.

Whilst the SIP is a comprehensive document it is largely viewed by staff as predominately relevant to the early years, with middle and upper primary staff only beginning to connect with particular elements of it. It is imperative that all staff, including specialist teachers, see the SIP as their guiding document. The changes and improvements in teacher practice resulting from the SIP are not fully reflected in data as yet but greater consistency will assist this.

Some teachers are not fully confident they can analyse data and assess the impact of their practice, and indicated they would like to have more understanding, and hence more input, into self-review.

Monitoring of student progress is largely done in like year teams but teachers expressed a desire to look at whole-school data to identify trends and patterns. Conducting whole-school analysis of progression and achievement data will provide opportunities for sharing practice and promote collective ownership of students and the improvement plan.

Direction 1 Analyse data as a whole school, identify trends and patterns and collectively enhance improvement strategies to impact on student learning.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The narrow SIP focus has provided clarity in a site approach to reading. Professional learning and input from the local education team has supported teachers to use evidence-based pedagogical practices. A strong focus on learning intentions, success criteria and formative assessment is visible in most classes but is not consistent across the school.

Teachers use pre-tests and post-testing to track student progress and reading data informs learning. Students access a variety of individual, paired and group work within the classroom and for some activities, groups are formulated across several classes, enabling teachers to target tasks accordingly. A reading agreement has provided a common, consistency language of reading which is known, and used by students.

Data is used to access intervention with several evidence-based programs running across the school. From conversations with teachers, it was apparent that some view intervention as providing differentiated learning and there was a disconnect between some interventions and classroom practice. At its optimum, intervention is short term and supports and complements class learning. Most students had learning goals but these were predominantly set by teachers. Discussions with students found that whilst some teachers provided opportunity for authentic student voice in learning, this was in the minority.

Whilst there were pockets of highly effective teacher practice there is variance across classes. Several high impact strategies deployed by teachers are currently not being shared amongst all teachers. Developing clear structures and process which enable staff to share and connect their practice will help drive and support the improvement agenda.

Teachers need a collaborative understanding of high impact teaching strategies and often referred to 'stretch and challenge' in relation to high achieving students only. It is imperative for every student in every class to receive appropriate stretch and challenge in their learning. Increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would enable increased rigour, with stretch and challenge for all students, to become routine practice. Teachers highlighted differentiation, stretch and challenge as an area for further support. Supporting staff through focused observations, coupled with a renewed focus on learning design, will further strengthen capacity.

Direction 2 **Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate scaffolding, stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity in learning design.**

Effective leadership

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

Leaders support the staff and build common understandings around teaching of reading, resulting in increased consistency. Targeted professional learning supports the whole-school focus and is inclusive of all staff. A planned staff meeting schedule ensures professional learning is shared and knowledge extended.

The allocation of staff to support intervention and key programs has provided a smooth transition and positively impacts on student learning. Strategic timetabling allows the alignment of some non-instruction time which enables teachers to co-plan and share practice, continually building capability.

Staff view the leaders in a positive light and see them as supportive whilst providing a layer of accountability. Teachers and leaders discuss data and monitor student performance in performance development meetings. These professional conversations, and follow up support, help refine teacher practice. Leaders observe teachers as part of performance development but there is opportunity to increase regularity of feedback through frequent, focused classroom walkthroughs. Regular walkthroughs will help further refine teacher practice and enable explicit feedback on planning and its impact in the classroom.

Changes in staff have resulted in some high quality practices not becoming embedded. Collectively creating and publishing a statement of 'how we teach at East Para primary' should ensure such practices continue regardless of staff changes.

Currently there is no one person driving curriculum and pedagogy. Staff support each other and have various staff members to offer support. The canvassing of different responses could potentially dilute consistency of practice. Having one person drive pedagogy would enable staff sharing of good practice, develop whole-school consistency and ensure all curriculum areas are covered.

Direction 3 Identify a pedagogical leader to work collaboratively with LET to develop consistency and sustainable change in pedagogy and curriculum.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Students report a strong sense of pride in their school and value the strong relationship with the adults who support them. There is an explicit focus on reading across the school, which is supported by the leadership team who align staffing and resources accordingly. Parents find staff approachable and express satisfaction with student support and learning. The school maintains a strong connectedness to its local partnership which supports staff to refine and enhance their practice.

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

- Direction 1** Analyse data as a whole school, identify trends and patterns and collectively enhance improvement strategies to impact on student learning.
- Direction 2** Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate scaffolding, stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity in learning design.
- Direction 3** Identify a pedagogical leader to work collaboratively with LET to develop consistency and sustainable change in pedagogy and curriculum.

Based on the school's current performance, East Para Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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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).

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019, 48% of year 1 and 47% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 74% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

For 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019 30% of year 3, 25% of year 5 and 12% 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 in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 56%, or 10 out of 18 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 36%, or 5 out of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3 students, 73% of year 5 students and 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 26% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 7% 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 in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 40%, or 6 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 29%, or 2 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.