

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Melaleuca Park Primary School

Conducted in March 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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Shelley Cameron, Review Principal.

School context

Melaleuca Park Primary School is located 435kms south-east of Adelaide in the city of Mount Gambier. The school was established in 2009 and has an enrolment of 188 students. The school has an ICSEA score of 911 and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 22% Aboriginal students, 9% students with a disability, 2.7% children in care, and 1.6% students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. Families eligible for School Card assistance total 59%. Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data shows an increase in vulnerability of students from 37% in 2012 to 68% in 2015.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the fourth year of her tenure, a Deputy Principal with a 0.4FTE teaching load and a Senior Leader with a focus on Powerful Learning. The school has elected to use the Counsellor's allocation to initiate two 'Nurture' classes, accessed by students whose Wellbeing data indicates vulnerability.

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:

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Effective Leadership: To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Prior to the External School Review (ESR), a number of documents were provided to the Review Panel. These included policies regarding expectations of pedagogical approaches across the curriculum, the teaching of literacy and numeracy, and practice in the Early Years. These documents were detailed and clear in their intent to raise student learning outcomes through contemporary practice. Also provided were documents that represented Improvement Planning Cycles and Action Plans. The Site Improvement Plan included expected outcomes against three Priorities: *Teaching Practice based on inclusive and challenging pedagogies*, *Establish an Early Years Learning Program* and *Establish a Wellbeing Centre to support students at risk*. Aspects of the Action Plans were documented as *suggested strategies*, *learner achievement targets* and *performance indicators* and included a research question. The Review Panel acknowledges the extensive and thorough documentation generated to inform priorities, practice and direction at Melaleuca Park Primary School.

Staff expressed varied understanding regarding processes used to identify the school's priorities and what cycles of self-review operate to enable improvement planning. When asked what systems exist to engage staff in collective analysis of data to determine the most appropriate direction and areas for improvement, responses were mixed and often unclear. Some staff discussed a collective approach that was driven by staff tabling their own ideas that were then collated and used to form plans. Other staff spoke about leaders presenting a proposal that was then discussed and implemented. A few staff were not aware of how directions were determined and no staff discussed the analysis of student achievement data as having informed the direction for the school.

During the leadership presentation, the panel was informed that the impact and influence of documented expectations on practice was varied. The literacy, numeracy and teaching and learning documents make highly apparent the expectations that leaders have of classroom practice. They are representative of contemporary and high-yield teaching strategies. However, there was uncertainty from staff as to how these documents had been generated and whether they are *agreements* or *requirements*. When discussing the Literacy Teaching expectations with teachers, some referred to the programs included, or organisational aspects of the document, rather than the pedagogical elements. A few staff spoke with clarity regarding the expectations within the numeracy document and how they influence classroom planning.

Data analysis made apparent a recent decline in percentages of students reaching Standards of Educational Achievement (SEA) in Literacy and Numeracy, when compared to the school's historic baseline averages. When asked how whole-school targets in literacy and numeracy influence classroom practice and assessment, one staff member referred to PAT data and discussed its place in informing planning, and another teacher discussed standards within the Australian Curriculum as her reference to measure success. There was limited understanding of, or reference to, school-wide targets for learning in literacy and numeracy.

The panel acknowledges the detailed and comprehensive documentation that exists regarding expectations of teaching practice across the curriculum. At the time of the ESR, it is apparent that an opportunity exists to develop improvement plans that are responsive to data and targeted to learner achievement. Collective analysis of data regarding student achievement will contribute significantly to mutual and shared understanding of, and commitment to, school priorities. Basing priorities on valid data provides a clear and accountable direction for the school.

Direction 1

Identify school priorities and agreements and establish measurable targets that inform strategic planning through cycles of self-review that facilitate collective analysis of achievement data.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

In 2015, a play-based approach to pedagogy was introduced to the Early Years (EY) at Melaleuca Park Primary School. Comprehensive professional learning and external partnerships have seen this initiative gradually embedded Reception to Year 2. During the ESR, the panel saw numerous examples of how this approach to learning has provided students with a possibility to discover and learn through experimentation and exploration. The panel saw evidence of teachers strategically designing learning opportunities that provided modelling, choice and application of skills. Almost all EY teachers expressed their commitment to this approach and its significance for students in the school's context. Whilst a little hesitancy was expressed by a few staff regarding the perceived lack of structure for students, on the whole, the panel was provided with evidence that this pedagogical reform has been strategically and successfully introduced in the Early Years.

The intent to broaden this approach across Years 3 to 7 was discussed by the Principal and supported by many parents with whom the panel met. Whilst aspects of the play-based approach have been introduced and promoted to all staff through professional learning and research documents, at the time of the ESR, there was limited evidence of this practice operating beyond EY classrooms. Staff with whom the panel spoke were not resistant to the concept or philosophy, however, perceptions were that adaptation to Primary and Middle Year classes was problematic in its current model. The principle of the approach: inquiry and engagement, is appreciated by Primary Years (PY) and Middle Years (MY) teachers, and dedicated time to explore this within their context and with reference to recognised frameworks may bring about the consistency anticipated.

The panel was presented with examples of student achievement data that had been generated across their years. This included data from spelling and reading levels and determined achievement against chronological age. The panel also accessed a separate dataset regarding Year 3 to 7 students' achievement in numeracy, generated from the Booker assessment. In almost every aspect of the ESR, the panel heard that student achievement data was used to identify students for intervention programs or to form ability

groups. Interestingly, the panel was told of the process conducted in Learning Conversations, where teachers work with their line manager to discuss planning for three students with varied learning needs, based on exploration of their achievement data. This strategic use of data provides a model that may influence differentiated planning for all students. The raft of data harvested by the school provides an opportunity for staff to engage in analysis of individual student data to identify strengths and miscues and to tailor teaching and set targets accordingly. Rather than forming ability groups in Literacy Blocks, an opportunity to design learning groups that address existing understandings or miscues is apparent.

Direction 2

Establish consistent pedagogical approaches across the school through exploration of recognised frameworks regarding practice that engages students of all ages in processes of inquiry and intellectual challenge.

Direction 3

Design learning opportunities that are tailored to the needs of each student through analysis of achievement data and the identification of individualised learning goals.

To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

During the leadership presentation, the panel heard that there are varied opportunities for staff to engage in processes designed to improve practice. Document analysis made apparent the leader's use of research to develop discussion papers for teachers to access and consider. The Review Panel highly commends the use of Intellectual Stimulation as a high-yield strategy designed to provoke reflective practice. To further progress this intent, two formal Performance and Development (PD) meetings are convened each year, staff engage in regular Learning Conversations regarding planning and design, and are also encouraged to take part in peer observations that are strongly scaffolded by detailed documentation. A few staff report the observations as having been of value, interestingly, from the point of the observer, rather than the observed. Many staff report that informal conversations with peers, on the run or when needs arise, are vital in supporting practice and sourcing ideas. The Review Panel members commend the leaders for having differentiated the opportunities staff have to reflect on and grow practice.

During conversations with staff and classroom walkthroughs it was apparent to the panel that teachers' capacity to use data diagnostically to design and then implement intentional teaching varies quite significantly. Some staff report not having used data to plan their teaching at all and discuss relying on observation of students and reference to the Australian Curriculum as their approach to planning. Other staff have accessed the data, but are not using it strategically to determine and address individual student needs; using data to identify a level reached, but not the miscues or strengths apparent. Some staff were frank in acknowledging data analysis as an area in which they can improve. The place of processes of Performance and Development and Professional Learning (PL) in building teachers' capacity to use data effectively cannot be understated.

Professional Learning in the EY represents the significant change that focused and targeted PL processes can achieve. Teachers involved in this opportunity were dedicated to one priority and all PL and PD aligned with this. Document analysis and conversations with staff made the Review Panel aware that provision of PL opportunities are numerous and varied, as the Term 1 staff meeting agenda represents. Staff referred to "many people coming in, with lots of different ideas". To achieve the school's intent that data will be used to *plan and design learning that reflects the differing needs of individual students*, the opportunity to draw from the EY model and to focus PD and PL on one aspect of improvement is apparent.

Direction 4

Build teacher capacity to use data analytically and plan strategically through processes of Performance and Development and Professional Learning that are highly focused to align with the school's priorities.

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 Melaleuca Park Primary School.

Pedagogical reform in the Early Years (EY) and systems that embed agreed practice were evident at the school. The philosophy and implementation of approaches that enable young learners to think, inquire, explore and investigate has been influenced by the EY staff commitment to reflect on and make changes to practice, leading to improved task design that engages students. The panel noted that teachers have strategically designed opportunities for young students to access learning that inspires and prompts thinking, enabling them to hypothesize and experiment. Of particular note, the systems of Performance and Development and Professional Learning have been designed strategically to enable this shift in practice. Evidence of this was verified through classroom walkthroughs and conversations with staff.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Melaleuca Park Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders within an improvement-focused culture, endeavouring to provide a coherent whole-school approach to learning and teaching.

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

1. Identify school priorities and agreements and establish measurable targets that inform strategic planning through cycles of self-review that facilitate collective analysis of achievement data.
2. Establish consistent pedagogical approaches across the school through exploration of recognised frameworks regarding practice that engages students of all ages in processes of inquiry and intellectual challenge.
3. Design learning opportunities that are tailored to the needs of each student through analysis of achievement data and the identification of individualised learning goals.
4. Build teacher capacity to use data analytically and plan strategically through processes of Performance and Development and Professional Learning that are highly focused to align with the school's priorities.

Based on the school's current performance, Melaleuca Park 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.



Lynette Corletto
PRINCIPAL
MELALEUCA PARK 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 Melaleuca Park Primary School has verified that the school is working towards compliance in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policy:

Aspect of Site Procedure, Item 1: Hazardous Chemicals; chemical register and Safety Data Sheets.

Aspect of Site Procedure, Item 2: Safety, Task and Action Reporting (STAR) system on-line documentation currency.

When the school's actions achieve compliance 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 89%.

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, 33% of Year 1 and 30% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline at Year 1 and little or no change at Year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 52% of Year 3 students, 32% of Year 5 students and 36% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools and below at Year 5.

In 2016, 4% of Year 3, 8% of Year 5 and no Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 40%, or 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016 and no 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 44% of Year 3 students, 32% of Year 5 students and 29% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 4% of Year 3, 4% of Year 5 and no Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 100%, or 1 student from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and no students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.