

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Modbury School P-7

Conducted in August 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Gael Little, Review Principal.

School context

Modbury School P-7 caters for children from preschool to year 7. The onsite preschool is managed by the principal. The school is situated 16kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Modbury Partnership. The enrolment is 176, and has been steady over the past 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 986 and is classified as Category 4 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 11% Aboriginal students, 14% students with disabilities, 47% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 3% children in care, and 45% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 1st tenure, a deputy principal (0.6FTE) in their 1st tenure, and a wellbeing coordinator (0.4FTE), also in their 1st tenure.

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 3 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?

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

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

The principal reported that she was appointed for 2 terms in 2016, and stated that the school had undergone significant change, including ongoing leadership changes and experiencing a series of ongoing incidents over several years. The beginning of 2018 saw the appointment of all leaders in tenured positions.

A significant focus has been to create a culture of trust and collaboration with staff, parents and students. The appointment of a staff member to the position of deputy at the end of 2016 provided consistency and stability for the community.

Building on this work, the next focus was on improving and embedding collaboration across the site. The development of professional learning communities (PLCs) was instrumental in strengthening collaboration where staff were provided with time to share, understand and 'own' the school learning data. It was noted that collaborative work in PLCs became a significant lever for improvement, with staff acknowledging that site learning data indicated the need for changes in practice.

Leadership established processes for staff to build their capacity through professional learning. The English as a second language or dialect (EALD) teacher worked alongside peers to support teachers in strengthening their practice. The deputy principal worked with the special educator in a similar capacity. The school elected to employ ancillary staff (known as co-educators) in every classroom. The co-educators are a significant and integral component of the learning teams, who provide professional learning for co-educators after school as required.

A new site improvement plan (SIP) has been collaboratively developed with staff, students and parents providing input, thus developing a strong sense of collective ownership. In 2016, the literacy SIP was completed, and the numeracy SIP was completed in 2017.

The school was committed to ensuring that key actions in teaching and learning were prioritised and developed within a continuous cycle of review and improvement. Structures were developed, including an annual operational plan and community plans (sub-school groups) that were reviewed each term. There is an expectation for each community to identify and document next steps. It was noted that this expectation also ensured accountability for all parties.

PLCs were provided with 50 minutes release each week, where each community operates independently with an understanding that the allocated time is focused on deep learning.

Performance and development processes to support personal growth and improve accountability were also reviewed, resulting in all teachers and co-educators using the same format for performance and development. A further expectation that all targeted professional learning would be aligned to the SIP was established.

Whole-school use of data was reviewed; an electronic data tracking system has been implemented, providing consistency in the storage and review of datasets from a range of perspectives. The school has also established a common platform for sharing web-based documents; staff reported this has been a significant strategy in connecting and supporting professional collaboration.

The school has worked strategically and collaboratively to shape and sustain improvement across all aspects of the school. Careful and considered leadership has ensured that a strong culture of continuous improvement is now an embedded component of teaching and learning across the site.

At the staff meeting held during the review, staff worked in their PLCs to review their community plans from the perspective of strategies that were 'on track', 'in development' or 'not started'. PLCs were also asked to identify next steps. High levels of engagement and commitment were apparent as staff worked through their respective plans.

Analysis of the documents indicated that many of the priorities were on-track. A collation of 'next steps' by the review panel identified a diverse range of strategies to be actioned, with very little congruence across communities. Careful consideration needs to be given to finding a balance between individual community and whole-school priorities, if whole-school improvement is to be sustained.

Specialist staff indicated that they would appreciate the opportunity to operate as an independent PLC. Some staff identified that communication across PLCs would be beneficial in developing consistency and congruence across the site. Observations from other staff indicated that each time a group of students moved from one community to the next, students were expected to learn and use new terminology for the same concept or learning disposition. Staff reported that congruence within and across communities would support the development and implementation of a common language for learning across the site. The school is well-placed to undertake and embed consistency across all communities.

Developing closer alignment between the SIP and community plans, through the inclusion of agreed targets aligned to the standards of educational achievement (SEA), will further strengthen consistency for all learners as they progress through school.

Direction 1

Strengthen and shape improvement through the establishment of a representative management team to oversee consistency and congruence within and across the site's planning processes.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The panel observed a very strong commitment from all staff to improve student learning across the site. Teachers are highly committed and work collaboratively within their specific PLC. The school has strategically implemented a process whereby 2 high-achieving students, 2 students achieving at benchmark and 2 students below benchmark are the markers for differentiating learning. The 2+2+2 process has provided a framework for differentiation within each class, and is now an embedded practice across the site.

Teachers use the 2+2+2 process to ensure that different entry and exit points are provided within the same task, thus providing targeted scaffolding for students. During interviews, teachers, when reflecting on their effectiveness to differentiate learning, rated themselves at a 4 on a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 being embedded practice. Staff identified that further work in supporting students to apply their skills and understandings in different contexts was an area for ongoing development.

In 2017, only 21% of 1 year students met the standard for Running Records; this represented a significant decline from previous results. At the staff meeting held during the review, staff discussed that they had investigated this apparent anomaly and consequently decided to assess Running Records progress more frequently. A five-weekly assessment and review cycle was implemented; this has resulted in 69% of year 1 students achieving the SEA benchmark at the time of the review. Progressive Assessment Tests (PAT) are also used to inform teaching in the early years.

The school has provided evidence of regular tracking, monitoring and sharing of learning outcomes with students, strongly supporting and building a culture of continuous improvement.

Eighty-three percent of staff indicated that the clarity of learning intentions was achieved to a medium and high extent in a survey on a recent unit of work. In the same unit of work, staff indicated that no students had understood the learning intentions to a high extent.

In the same survey, 25% of staff indicated that clarity of success criteria was achieved to a high extent, with 75% of students understanding the success criteria to a medium or low extent. Teachers again indicated that no students understood success criteria to a high extent.

Learning intentions describe explicitly what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of the teaching and learning. The explicit development of success criteria that is clearly linked to the learning intention within identified areas of study will support students to act powerfully in their own learning. There is a recent body of work that indicates learning intentions without success criteria will have limited impact on student learning outcomes.

Clarity of success criteria needs to focus on what the students are to learn not what they are to do. Learning intentions and success criteria are most effective when students are provided with an example of the intended product that is expected of them before they undertake the task. Examples of the

intended product are most effective when clearly displayed in the classroom, thereby visually scaffolding the learning for all students.

The collaborative development of processes to embed common understandings and clarity of learning intentions and success criteria from the perspective of the student, is significant important work for the school to undertake.

NAPLAN results over time indicate that the percentage of students achieving in the higher bands in reading has decreased; conversely, most students from years 3 to 7 indicated during interviews that reading was either 'just right' or 'too easy'. Conversations with staff and students indicated that there was no consistent approach to the assessment of reading for students who achieved level 30.

The implementation of a comprehensive tool to assess and monitor the fluency and comprehension for all students who have progressed beyond Level 30 will provide a consistent framework for feedback to improve reading. Analysis of these assessments will provide diagnostic evidence of next steps for individuals, inform group structures for guided reading, and provide opportunities for students to sustain and increase higher-band achievement across the school.

Direction 2

Embed consistent understandings and practices in effective pedagogy with a specific focus on learning intentions, success criteria and assessment of reading beyond level 30.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Interviews held with teachers during the review indicated diverse strategies for feedback for learning currently in place across the school. They included but were not limited to: observations, written comments via a shared electronic platform, and YouTube clips that included peer feedback.

Staff reported being able to determine if feedback was successful when they saw students attempt new work independently, noting that the feedback has been adopted, and observing that students were confident to work independently as a result of the feedback provided.

When asked how they could improve feedback, teachers mentioned providing more summative assessments, formalising the use of data with students to identify next steps, and sharing individual successes with the whole class.

It was also reported that peer feedback to each other was strongly embedded within and across some classes; for example, where an upper primary group, after working with younger students, emailed feedback to the younger students. Other suggestions included allowing more time to provide individual feedback to students. A survey conducted during the review regarding feedback provided to students indicated that 66% of staff believed that feedback provided to students to know how to improve was achieved to a medium extent. When students know how to improve they are skilled to engage in regular, planned opportunities to be challenged in their learning.

All students wanted to improve in their learning. Many students from years 3 to 7, when identifying a subject that they could improve in, indicated that they did not know what they needed to do to improve, while other students provided effort-based responses, that is, do more and practice more. Some students indicated that ongoing feedback ensured few surprises when they received their recent school reports. Other students, when commenting on the recent school reports, said they were not surprised with the

grades received because they had received B and C grades. Student perceptions included that they should be receiving A grades, but that this was not possible as these were not administered.

Making explicit the criteria for grade allocations across year levels and subjects will provide clarity, and support students in becoming equal partners in their own learning. There are varying perceptions from students regarding feedback for learning. Embedding common understandings relating to effective feedback across the school will strengthen feedback for learning for all. Feedback received from students included: "I challenged myself", "as I practice I get better", as well as students seeking feedback from the teacher.

One teacher reported actively seeking feedback from students, including consulting with students using 'plus, minus and interesting' as a framework. The teacher reported that they act upon the feedback provided by students. Modelling feedback to improve practice from a teacher's perspective is a very powerful strategy in embedding feedback as an integral component of effective learning for students.

Feedback is used in a variety of ways and across many areas of learning to provide students with ongoing advice to improve learning as it is happening. The school has established a culture of feedback for learning, and is in a position to further enhance this important work by ensuring that feedback is a two-way process, and is implemented across all aspects of student learning.

Students at all year levels benefit from opportunities to be active participants in their own learning, sharing data, discussing reports, providing opportunities for students to know the 'what' and 'why' of grade allocations, giving students real and explicit evidence about themselves as learners. Feedback for learning provides students with the strategies to know how to improve.

Students can become equal partners in their learning journey, develop awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement and, with assistance, are able to set achievable goals. Learning goals are most effective when they are targeted, short-term and regularly reviewed. Students at all year levels benefit from the opportunity to have authentic influence on their learning. The school is well-positioned to undertake this important work.

Direction 3


Strengthen authentic student influence for learning across all learning by sharing and embedding the language of learning and intellectual stretch and challenge across the site.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Modbury School P-7.

There is strong commitment to sustaining and improving school community partnerships across all aspects of schooling. This includes cultural inclusivity, where Kaurna language and culture are acknowledged in a variety of ways across the school. The school phone is answered in Kaurna with the greeting Nina Marni (are you well?). The student leadership group is known by the Kaurna word Wakwakurna (children).

A governing council member reported that the school displayed and embraced differences from both cultural and learning perspectives, stating this was the right school to host a special class where students were respected and supported. They also reported that their own children were safe to speak about their culture and religion.



Other parents reported that the school had established morning teas for EALD parents, which was seen as a significant factor in connecting these parents and ensuring that they were welcomed and encouraged by all sectors of the school community. The school reported that a community garden is in development, where parent representatives from diverse cultural groups have offered to establish and manage the garden.

The school has also undertaken a strategic and comprehensive upgrade of learning areas to provide effective, flexible learning spaces for all students. Opportunities for students to work collaboratively within and across classes have been carefully designed to ensure maximum productivity. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) space has been designed to provide multiple learning spaces for both student and staff learning.

Through strategic and inclusive leadership, a strong and embedded culture of respect now provides a quality, caring learning environment where staff, students and families are valued and focused on collectively developing a centre of excellence.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Modbury School P-7 a culture of improvement characterised by effective leadership has provided strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing professional learning.

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

1. Strengthen and shape improvement through the establishment of a representative management team to oversee consistency and congruence within and across the site's planning processes.
2. Embed consistent understandings and practices in effective pedagogy with a specific focus on learning intentions, success criteria and assessment of reading beyond level 30.
3. Strengthen authentic student influence for learning across all learning by sharing and embedding the language of learning and intellectual stretch and challenge across the site.

Based on the school's current performance, Modbury School P-7 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 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



Mary Ttikirou
PRINCIPAL
MODBURY SCHOOL P-7



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 91.8%.

Appendix 2

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 2017, 21% of year 1 and 88% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average for year 1 and an improvement from the historic baseline average at year 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 52% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students, and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, for year 5, little or no change, and for year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 19% of year 3, 20% of year 5, and 23% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50%, or 4 of 8 students from year 3, remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 3, remain in the upper bands at year 7.


Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 48% of year 3 students, 60% of year 5 students, and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline, for year 5, little or no change, and for year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for years 3 and 5 has been downwards, from 95% in 2013 to 48% in 2017, and from 78% in 2014 to 60% in 2017, respectively.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 9.5% of year 3, 20% of year 5, and 38.5% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.



For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 2 of 4 students from year 3, remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 75%, or 3 of 4 students from year 3, remain in the upper bands at year 7.

