

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Blakeview Primary School

Conducted in June 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 Grzeczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Paul Harmer and Brenton Hudson, Review Principals.

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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers

School context

Blakeview Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 29kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 689. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 579. The local partnership is Uleybury.

The school has an ICSEA score of 932, and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 12% Aboriginal students, 18% students with disabilities, 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 39% of students eligible for School Card assistance. The school has a Disability Unit.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 2nd year of tenure, and an executive leadership team consisting of a Deputy Principal and 2 Assistant Principals, while the extended leaders include 6 B1 leaders, 3 part-time with a focus on inclusive education, 2 wellbeing leaders and a leader of the disability unit.

There are 42 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 16 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Narrow the learning improvement focus and provide coherent cycles of change that link SIP targets, professional learning, the work of PLCs, coaching and performance development.**
- Direction 2** **Deepen student engagement in learning through effective learning design that enables agency in their learning and intellectual challenge for each student.**
- Direction 3** **Strengthen the effectiveness of teaching through the development of teachers as continual self-evaluators of the impact their practice is having on student learning.**

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 changes within the leadership team. Most areas within the initial directions are still current and pertinent to the school.

The school invested in numerous programs and approaches, but these have not resulted in embedded practice, which contributes to variance within the school. A historical focus on wellbeing resulted in strong staff/student relationships, where students are happy at school, but this has had little impact on achievement data.

The new executive leadership team is well-placed to build coherence across all classes, which will support teacher pedagogy and positively influence on learner outcomes. Staff expressed a desire to improve outcomes for students and are open to new learning and the concept of continually refining their practice.

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 newly formed executive leadership has a clear direction for the school and accesses support from the local education team and the Department's Literacy Guarantee Unit. Professional learning plans and performance development discussions are focused on the school improvement plan (SIP) and further supported through intentional professional learning opportunities. A recent shift to targeted in-house professional learning has narrowed the focus to allow teachers to directly connect learning to their practice; this was particularly seen in the junior primary team. Leaders have structured staff meeting times to allow Professional learning communities (PLCs) and groups of teachers in like-year groups to meet which is appreciated by staff.

Although the SIP is a comprehensive document, staff are not fully connected to it nor see it as the key driver for their practice. The decision to align goals to different sectors of the school has decreased whole-school ownership, with teachers only connecting to their section of the SIP. Most teachers collect and look at data for their own class or like-year levels. Providing opportunities for teachers to monitor and analyse data from all year groups will increase collaboration, assist staff to identify trends and patterns, and build whole-school ownership of students. Currently, leaders have an overview of and are monitoring the SIP. Providing robust self-review processes, which enable all staff to participate, will further connect staff to the SIP.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) were established with the intent of staff undertaking learning sprints to refine and improve their practice. The majority of staff report being unclear on the purpose of the PLCs and sprints, although a recent sharing day helped clarify their understanding, resulting in staff looking forward to continuing and refining the process. The lack of clarity around sprints is attributed to mixed messages from the wider leadership team. Leaders are aware of communication issues and are working to ensure communication is clear, succinct and consistent. Clarity of communication will deepen understanding of the purpose of PLCs. Strengthening processes and structures, which enable staff to connect and engage with the SIP, will provide a collective responsibility to deliver the improvement agenda.

Direction 1 Ensure staff have shared understanding, ownership and accountability to the SIP by introducing clear structures and processes which drive, connect and support the improvement agenda.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

Staff use their strong relationship with students to 'hook them' into learning and offer a variety of group, paired and individual tasks to support learning. Some teachers provide a mixture of verbal and written feedback, which enables students to progress their learning, whilst they are doing their work. Learning intentions are used in most classes and students talked of knowing what they were expected to learn, although this was often task-based. Most students know their reading level, but the difference in student goal-setting meant they lack full understanding of how they could improve their reading. A renewed focus on formative feedback, as opposed to marking, will further support student learning.

The physical separation of learning blocks means cohorts largely operate in silos, which resulted in a disjointed approach across the school. The junior primary has consistency with fluid groupings of students, providing explicit instruction aligned to student learning needs. Opportunity exists to develop this effective practice to provide a coherent whole-school approach to support students as they progress through the year groups.

Teachers talked a lot about 'programs', whereas the focus needs to be on the pedagogy behind the programs, as this will create sustainable change. The school has some highly effective practitioners, which provide opportunity for leaders to identify high-impact practice and allow these to be shared across the school to build capacity in others, refine practice and build a consistent pedagogical approach.

Staff track data to identify students, but there is variance in how it is used to inform differentiated student learning. Students are motivated to learn, with some of them asking to be challenged and given harder work to provide stretch. Teachers identified differentiation and giving students tasks to reach A and B grades, as areas for further support. Providing increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes will assist in improving and providing stretch and challenge for all students as routine practice.

Direction 2 Strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation and intellectual stretch to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.

Conditions for effective student learning

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

Staff support student learning through the consistent display of class expectations and zones of regulation displayed in all classrooms. Scaffolding learning prompts were seen in most learning spaces which students often refer to whilst on task. The Disability Unit provides a consistent approach which supports vulnerable learners and enables some students opportunity to join mainstream classes. All identified students have individual learning plans which are updated regularly, and parents praise the school for their strong regard to inclusivity.

Both teachers and students report that behaviour can affect learning. Staff are currently implementing a trauma informed practice, which provides strategies for teaching and learning, help teachers increase engagement of students with complex, unmet learning needs, and successfully improves all students' self-regulation, relationships, wellbeing, growth and academic achievement. It is imperative that leaders monitor implementation, and all staff deliver this consistently to enable it to become embedded practice.

Whilst students are happy at school, there is little evidence of them taking risks in their learning. The historical focus on wellbeing needs to shift to learning for wellbeing. Students referred to learning as 'getting a better score' or 'completing work', with little curiosity or inquiry into learning. The key to engagement and high expectations in learning, where students are self-motivated, and drive their learning, lies in teacher pedagogy, which allows students authentic voice in learning.

Currently, the student review team collect and review Aboriginal student data. Increasing staff data literacy skills, enabling collective disaggregation of data of high priority groups, such as Aboriginal students and students in higher bands, will further refine and sharpen teacher practice, resulting in increased aspirational goals and targets.

Drilling down and disaggregating data provides staff with the opportunity to interrogate data for identified groups of students and highlights patterns that can be hidden within aggregated datasets. Collectively evaluating how specific groups are improving, allows staff to consider their practice and pedagogy, informs planning processes and shapes the next steps for student learning.

Direction 3 Staff collectively analyse data for priority groups and individuals, particularly Aboriginal students, to monitor progress, identify trends, set aspirational targets, inform practice and interventions.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Students have a strong sense of pride in their school and value the relationships with adults who support their learning. A strong focus on wellbeing flows across the school and students are confident and happy. Parents find staff approachable and express satisfaction with student support and learning; both Governing Council and parents are supportive of the school. The school has a strong regard for inclusivity which is appreciated by parents.

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

- Direction 1** Ensure staff have shared understanding, ownership and accountability to the SIP by introducing clear structures and processes which drive, connect and support the improvement agenda.
- Direction 2** Strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation and intellectual stretch to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.
- Direction 3** Staff collectively analyse data for priority groups and individuals, particularly Aboriginal students, to monitor progress, identify trends, set aspirational targets, inform practice and interventions.

Based on the school's current performance, Blakeview 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 2020, 62% of year 1 and 49% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline in year 1 from the historic baseline average and an improvement at year 2.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 55% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students and 53% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 16% of year 3, 12% of year 5 and 8% 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, 54%, or 7 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 67%, or 6 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of year 3 students, 51% of year 5 students and 46% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 11% of year 3, 1% of year 5 and 5% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy 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 numeracy, 14%, or 1 out of 7 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 43%, or 3 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.