EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Naracoorte South Primary School

Conducted in March 2017

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 Ros Frost, Review Principal.

School context

Naracoorte South Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 334kms south east of the Adelaide CBD in the town of Naracoorte, and is part of the Tatiara-Wrattonbully Partnership. The enrolment in 2016 was 208 students, and has stabilised around this number. The school is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 926.

The Naracoorte South Primary School student population includes 4.8% (10) Aboriginal students, 5.1% (11) students with a disability, 28% (59) students living in families eligible for School Card assistance, 19.2% (40) students of EALD background, and 1 child in care.

The Principal is in the second year of her tenure at the school. Other school leaders include a Deputy Principal and a School Counsellor. There are 18 (14FTE) teachers, including 4 in the early years of their career and 6 Step 9 teachers. Fifteen hours per week of Pastoral Support Worker time supports student welfare.

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: To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

Effective Teaching: To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

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

To what extent does the school monitor student achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

During the Principal's presentation the panel was told that in the last 2 years there has been a deliberate re-badging of academic learning improvement as the school's core business. Prior to this, the focus was school culture and the wellbeing of students. During the External School Review, the panel sought evidence from stakeholders about the effectiveness of this refocusing of endeavour for improvement, and was able to conclude that there is a shared and owned vision to move the school forward in learning. Leaders identified to the panel that the focus of improvement work with teachers is now to use data, not just to plan and teach, but to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching.

Parents told the panel that they know about and support the improvement cycle that is in place. The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has been brought from outside the work of teachers to being central for them. All teachers spoke to the panel about how they use the SIP to frame their individual and collective planning. Work has also been done with students and families to give them ownership of the SIP. Students and families spoke to the panel in ways that indicated that they now rely on the SIP to make sense of learning. Teachers and students set targets that connect the SIP priorities to classroom work. All groups of stakeholders told the panel about this target-setting with students.

The Leadership Team organises and manages the work of teachers to enable coherence for them in improvement. The school deliberately aligns teacher training and development, SIP targets and strategies, performance and development 'pro-chats' with a mentor, and the coaching work that has begun through observations. Common NIT times are scheduled to informally facilitate teacher collaboration. Staff collaboration is formalised at various levels, including staff sharing at meetings, PLCs and year-level groupings. There has also been some cross-partnership work; namely, the middle years maths group.

Whole-school programs have been established through cycles of improvement; for example, the *Daily 5* has been collectively implemented in all Reception to Year 3 classes as a structure for explicit, regular, differentiated literacy instruction. There has been some moderation facilitated with the support of the Senior Leader Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP). Teachers validated the leader observation to the panel about a need for more and consistent moderation of student work in the interests of quality student achievement.

The school has taken steps to embrace the developmental benefits of classroom observations. Teachers have been able to observe classroom practice and give and receive feedback with a peer. There has been both self-selection of the peer and deliberate parings of each teacher with a 'mentor' (lead teacher). Release time is provided for these pairs of teachers to meet to discuss the observation. There has been both self-selection and targeting of topics for the observation, such as differentiation for the teaching of reading. There has been a focus through the Partnership on developing the coaching skills of middle managers. Observations are seen by teachers to develop teacher ease with each other and comfortable collaboration. A next point of development for the school is to shift the observational focus from teaching to learning that is, in evidence, a result of the teaching that is taking place. This will enhance teaching capacity at the school more directly.

The school has a history of delivering play-based learning. In order to make this play-based teaching practice more intentional and linked to *Foundations* and *Australian Curriculum,* a new play-based learning model has been resourced (a teaching and learning approach). The school has developed flexible investigative learning spaces inside and outside of classrooms. Teachers verified that outcomes, for early years students, of this more intentional, investigative, play-based pedagogy, include improvements such as: literacy, social/emotional self-management risk-taking in learning, decision-making, problem-solving, happiness as learners, and collaboration with peers. These outcomes were supported by leadership and verified by parents who said the investigative approach makes their children happy, excited learners.

Another major whole-school focus has been the deepening of the quality of student leadership at the school. Teachers scaffold authentic student leadership opportunities for students. The panel found evidence of the success of this initiative, including strong positive feedback about the success of 'intention assemblies', which are run by some of the student leaders and reinforce the school's social and behavioural norms that are informed by *Play is the Way*.

Play is the Way was consistently validated to the panel by stakeholders as a valuable whole-school program to teach social and emotional problem-solving to students. Traffic Light data validates *Play is the Way* as an important program.

The school is positive and cohesive. This culture was verified by leaders, parents and staff. Generally, home-school communication is viewed positively and the Governing Council is exploring an electronic means to enhance this. The school responds positively to parent requests for information; for example, a parent reading workshop was provided after a request from a parent about how to support student reading at home. The parents value and trust the Principal and her leadership abilities, and the intentional development of teacher quality.

School Services Officers (SSOs) feel valued and included by the school. They take part in some teacher training and development, and provide training workshops for each other, as well as run their own PLC. They feel involved in the strategic self-improvement work of the school. The effectiveness of SSO student support and the professionalism of SSOs would be further strengthened by more individualised and frequent performance and development, more regular SSO meetings, and by formally allocating time for teachers and SSOs to regularly communicate about student support programs.

Teachers identified the strengths of the school as staff cohesion and morale, approachable and supportive leadership, and strong student wellbeing for schooling which, in itself, supports staff wellbeing, and there is strong whole-school support for student engagement in learning.

Teachers list the following actions by the school as supportive of developing teaching practice: 'sharing time' in staff meetings in which a teacher shares some learning from an observation by a colleague; adding resources to a common electronic drive; common NIT times; PLCs (one for each SIP priority); development of teacher data literacy; and having whole-school agreements and practices, to name a few.

The panel concluded that an improvement culture that is underpinned by quality improvement processes is in place at Naracoorte South Primary School. The school's arrangements for self-review are rigorous, systematic and transparent, and are owned and understood by all stakeholders. Teachers have been supported to use evidence-based collaborative planning and to use a common, agreed set of effective pedagogies. The next leverage point for the school is to focus its strategic improvement work on learning outcomes, to develop teachers as effective

self-evaluators of their daily practice. Teachers should seek more and regular feedback from students about the impact of their teaching, and the school must support teachers to focus their improvement attention on the learning that is happening, as a result of their teaching, rather than on the act of teaching itself.

Direction 1
To further enhance learning outcomes of students, develop teachers' use of multiple assessment modalities to evaluate the impact of their teaching.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The panel found evidence that deliberate work has been done at the school to develop the data literacy of teachers. Teachers have timely access to training and development to support the development of their data literacy. Structures are now embedded to regularly collect, triangulate and analyse various types of school data (achievement, perception, demographic and process) at multiple levels, including class overviews, against the SEA, class reports, and item question analysis. Data tracking is facilitated through *MARKiT.* Both leadership and teachers know their students well, anecdotally and through an evidence-base of data.

Students are supported to set a variety of goals, in line with SIP targets, personal goals, and from within *Play is the Way*. There is some scaffolding to support students to set these goals. All teachers commented that they are learning from this initial goal-setting process, and they know that more refinement and scaffolding for students is needed. Making more use of data to set targets for learning with students is a point of development for the school.

Data is used to inform teaching and learning to monitor learning growth and to organise students for levels of instruction. All teachers are data-literate and, in some aspects of their work, drill down into the data to inform differentiated teaching. For example, worded and multi-step problems have been identified as a teaching focus in upper primary maths. Reading comprehension development is monitored alongside and beyond fluency, through *Fountas and Pinell* assessments until the end of Year 7.

Teachers use data to stream students between classes for literacy and numeracy. This is initially evidence-based. Teachers then use informal means to move children between groups, for example, by observing the ease with which they can do things and if students can transfer skills to other learning contexts. Teachers understand the need to develop more formal evaluation processes for their ongoing streaming decisions. Streaming is practised widely for numeracy (upper primary) and literacy (middle and junior primary). For example, streaming for *Jolly Phonics* is proving successful across junior primary classes. Currently, streaming is working in a positive way, but parents cautioned that it could become negative if children become sensitive about their ranking in the grouping system. Parents support the streaming, but would like to be informed about the placement of and logic for their child's placement within it.

Teachers use data to identify students for intervention referrals, both academic and social/emotional. Interventions are timed and reviewed and, if unsuccessful, further actions are taken, such as consultation with support services or the provision of a different type of intervention. Feedback about the effectiveness of intervention programs in relation to their success and compatibility with individual student needs is sought and attended to. SSOs who support students with intervention programs report that they are being more strongly supported by teachers. Teachers are taking more responsibility for explicit program direction for the work of SSOs with students. The more structured intervention programs are more targeted and appropriate to student needs.

The school monitors and tracks wellbeing through a 'Traffic Light' system that aligns literacy and numeracy with behaviour, emotional wellbeing and external factors, which is effective.

At Naracoorte South Primary School, the panel determined that teaching effectiveness is continuously foregrounded, relevant and contemporary, using a strong evidence-base. Teachers collectively have sound curriculum knowledge, skills in the application of pedagogies for engagement, make formative use of summative assessment, and differentiate teaching. They know their students well and work collaboratively to make sound decisions about what next and how to teach groups of students. A next logical step for the school is to engage students and their families more deeply with this evidence-base. Parents said they get little information about how their child's learning is growing against a standard. There is little use of data outside of the parent-teacher interview to inform parents about student learning growth against a standard. Teachers rarely use data to inform student goal-setting. Students do not use data to judge their own learning growth. One teacher expressed a

reluctance to grade student learning too highly: "You can set yourself up for failure". A key next step for the school is to more confidently apply the skills teachers have in evidence-based understanding of their students to raise expectations of student achievement, and to harness the agency of students and their families for higher levels of learning by nuanced sharing of data with students and parents.

Direction 2
Improve teacher confidence and skill in the use of an evidence-base (student achievement data) to confidently report student learning growth to parents, and to use student achievement data with students in order to raise expectations.

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

Key components of learning engagement and challenge include challenging learning tasks, higher-order thinking, critical and investigative inquiry, and activating the agency of students in their own and each other's learning through feedback and meta-cognitive understanding of the learning process.

The panel found that at Naracoorte South Primary School there is awareness of the significance of these components, and of the need to focus more explicitly on higher levels of academic achievement for all students.

The 'stretch' of students is by streaming. The school has now explicitly targeted higher bands students with more intentionality.

The school has a teaching and learning approach of structured and intentional play-based learning that provides for strongly developing investigative project-based work beyond Year 3. The teaching and learning approach has made play-based learning practices more intentional and it links play-based learning to *Foundations* and *Australian Curriculum*.

There has been a successful strengthening of student voice in the school. The roles for student leaders have been made more explicit; student leaders can generate their own projects and mechanisms, such as the 'intention assembly', providing ways for younger students to see older ones leading. Students value the leadership opportunities, they aspire to them and willingly give up play breaks to perform their roles. The student voice initiative seeks to develop powerful learners who can become 'can-do people'.

Aboriginal students are tracking well and are strongly supported through intervention as needed. The ACEO meets weekly with the Principal to monitor this and also strongly supports Year 7-8 transition.

Parents verify that the school positively disposes their children to learning. Students value homework, however, they told the panel that the quality and uniformity of homework is not consistent. There is a need for teachers to construct more intentional homework tasks to harness students' work ethic and motivation to achieve. Parents reported that the primary school prepared their children well academically, socially and emotionally for transition to high school. SSOs report that the students they support are more confident, more willing to take learning risks, able to transfer learning skills between learning tasks, and more confident to participate verbally and socially in their learning and the life of the school.

The panel was provided with evidence that teachers activate student agency in learning through techniques such as: investigative learning; utilising student knowledge funds; involving students in the design of investigative learning; challenging students to build lateral thinking into learning design; student goal-setting (personal, *Play is the Way* and SIP individual goals); learning intention work (use of 'What Are We Learning To' – WALT, and 'What I'm Looking For' – WILF); pre-topic brainstorming; negotiating assessment rubrics; making the *Australian Curriculum* explicit to students; making real-life connections to maths topics; and seeking student feedback about teaching.

Collectively, these strategies are strong and sophisticated; however, they are not used consistently across the school or in all aspects of the learning program. The panel concluded that there is a gap between teachers knowing about student agency in learning and consistently putting this knowledge into practice.

Leaders said that teachers are setting learning intentions in classes, however, this was not verified by what teachers or students told the panel, with students not being able to identify what learning intentions and success criteria are. Stating learning intentions and success criteria that are related to student goal-setting is done inconsistently and rarely across the school, dependant on individual teacher style and strengths. Students do not

rate having learning goals as helpful in improving learning; some students can see they could be, but only if the goal was 'achievable'. Teachers recognise there is work to be done to connect student goal-setting to improving achievement.

Some teachers recognise the different value of summative and formative feedback to students: "It's going to take time to move the focus of feedback from a score to feedback about individual skills". One or two teachers make some use of data to inform their students and activate their agency in learning. Several teachers use student surveys to get feedback from students about their learning The panel found that there is some transparency for students about the scope of the curriculum in the upper primary.

The panel established that at Naracoorte South Primary School students are interested and motivated to learn. They are keen to be challenged and value school as a place in which they undertake relevant and purposeful work. A next point of leverage for the school is to strengthen the setting of goals with students through short-term targets that are reviewed as a continual process. Additionally, work can be done to improve the quality of feedback to students to better support and motivate them in their learning, make feedback explicit about how to improve learning, link feedback to stated learning intentions and success criteria for every lesson, and link feedback directly to student goal-setting.

Direction 3
Provide quality feedback to students, which supports and motivates them in their learning and develops self-management in their learning process.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Naracoorte South Primary School.

Support and opportunities are provided to students to develop and demonstrate leadership. A review of standard practices for enabling student voice and developing student leadership (school captains, class meetings and SRC) identified that these measures had become tokenistic and were no longer authentically valued and respected by students. In 2016, the school revitalised student leadership. The intent was to engage and meaningfully connect students to the community of the school, and to provide authenticity to the leadership work that they do. Senior students now apply for a specific leadership position that has an explicit title and role statement. Students address socially ethical and community spirited essential skills in their applications. There are more explicit roles (for example, school photographer and environmental officer), and the tasks of each role have been translated into real, valued actions throughout the school year that also regularly ensure the modelling of leadership behaviours to younger students who then become aspirational themselves. Student leaders can also generate their own projects. The success of this work was widely reported to the panel by students, teachers and parents, and is genuinely empowering students as learners and citizens in the community of the school and beyond.

Students are engaged in critical and creative thinking to develop their general capabilities. With the specific intent of deepening student engagement in learning, the school has proactively added value to the student learning benefits of its long-standing culture of and focus on play-based learning. A teaching and learning approach has been adopted by the school in order to bring intentional educational rigour to play-based practices in the early years. This has firstly involved creating interesting inviting spaces, both inside and outside. With the support of the community, 'nature play' spaces have been created quickly and economically, and have had a significant positive impact on student yard behaviour. In addition, based on the principle of 'learning happens when it's interesting to children and it's just happened', investigative learning is intentionally facilitated for all junior primary students four times each week in classrooms. These investigative learning times are carefully planned and implemented in accordance with set protocols, which include linking this learning to other more formalised learning throughout the day. The school intends that this program will be extended this year into primary classes where it will be underpinned by, and reinforce, research-based investigative pedagogy. This regular investigative pedagogy develops the general capabilities of all learners, fosters critical and creative thinking, educationally engages and motivates, and influences student transfer of learning skills across learning areas.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Naracoorte South Primary School has a shared vision, strategic planning, actions and interventions that are data-informed and sustained over time. Highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes, that are evidence-based and standards-driven, produce findings which are acted upon. This results in the evaluation of programs and strategies to determine their effectiveness on student achievement and growth.

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

1. **To further enhance learning outcomes of students, develop teachers' use of multiple assessment modalities to evaluate the impact of their teaching.**

2. **Improve teacher confidence and skill in the use of an evidence-base (student achievement data) to confidently report student learning growth to parents, and to use student achievement data with students in order to raise expectations.**

3. **Provide quality feedback to students, which supports and motivates them in their learning and develops self-management in their learning process.**

Based on the school's current performance, Naracoorte South 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.

Kirsty Lush
PRINCIPAL
NARACOORTE SOUTH 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 Naracoorte South 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 policy:

- Camps and Excursions. The school is currently reviewing its processes.

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 92.6%.

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, 45% of Year 1 and 31% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 35% to 45%.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 81% of Year 3 students, 53% of Year 5 students, and 67% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline 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, 35% of Year 3, 16% of Year 5 and 4% 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. There is an upward trend from 9% to 35% in Year 3 from 2014 to 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 40%, or 2 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016. These results represent little or no change in the historic baseline average for Years 3 to 5, and a decline for Years 3 to 7.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3 students, 63% of Year 5 students, and 78% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 31% to 63%.

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

In 2016, 31% of Year 3, 16% of Year 5, and 7% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy 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 numeracy, 17%, or 1 of 6 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. These results represent little or no change in the historic baseline average for Years 3 to 5 and a decline for Years 3 to 7.