

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Plympton Primary School

Conducted in October 2020



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 Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Steve Freeman, 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 group
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Students
 - Teachers

School context

Plympton Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 368. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 335. The local partnership is West Torrens.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1072, and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 17% students with disabilities, 47% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 17% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of an acting principal, a deputy principal with a teaching and learning focus and a senior leader in wellbeing and engagement.

There are 22.2 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career and 14 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Increase the proportion of students who achieve higher levels, as measured by NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards, by identifying and promoting differentiated teaching practices.**
- Direction 2** **Implement a more rigorous and ongoing performance development process for all staff to provide teachers with regular feedback and direction related to their progress in implementing the school's improvement agenda.**
- Direction 3** **Identify and implement strategies to strengthen the engagement of parents from all cultural groups in the school, with a focus on improving student learning outcomes.**

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

Plympton Primary School made good progress against the previous directions. One significant improvement identified, is the strengthening of inclusivity practices and the engagement of parents from varied cultural groups within the school. The school's development and implementation of a 'building cultural competence strategy', facilitated the shift. Students report that there is no racial bullying at the school and everyone is accepted for who they are.

Performance development processes include regular feedback to teachers, performance meetings, and 'learning walks' that have been introduced this year. Teachers work collaboratively together in teams to implement whole-school expectations.

An English as an Additional Language and Dialect (EALD) strategy, has been another main driver of the change agenda. EALD teachers are allocated to each teaching unit and support the implementation of the teaching and learning cycle. Teachers report a positive impact across the school and value the support they receive from leaders, key people and their colleagues. Building cohesion and consistency through whole-school agreements, programs and pedagogical practice drives the improvement work.

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?

Teachers engage with a wide range of achievement and growth data, often supplied by a leader. They have dedicated time through staff and team meetings and release days, to work collaboratively interrogating data of year-level cohorts. Teachers value these opportunities to share resources, ideas and plan together to meet the needs of students. Building consistency of effective practice across the school was intentional work of leaders. Teams are well-developed, providing the foundation required to deepen the implementation of effective pedagogical practice. This can be achieved by initiating critically evaluative processes of trialing, reflecting and adjusting practice, to further enhance student outcomes.

Teachers could clearly articulate the expectations from the school improvement plan (SIP) and their work within it, while school service officers (SSOs) and parents had less clarity of the improvement agenda. Leaders intend to establish SIP priority groups inclusive of all staff, to further foster collective responsibility. Performance development plans, professional learning and team release days are focused on the SIP. Whole-school agreements in English, mathematics, teaching and learning are in place. Key teachers work in a coaching role alongside their colleagues, for both English and mathematics, to improve teacher practice. Staff report feeling supported in their work.

Self-review processes use a traffic light system to track the actions undertaken. Teachers indicated in a staff meeting survey a varied response about their involvement in self-review processes and knowing the impact of their actions from the SIP. Engaging all staff in regular authentic self-review processes, using identified measures of impact, linked to the success criteria in the SIP, is an essential step. This will ensure all actions result in desired student outcomes.

Many datasets for Plympton Primary School are indicating improvement over time. Leaders and teachers are mindful that increasing the number of students achieving in the higher bands, continues to be an area for growth.

Direction 1 Increase the number of students achieving in the higher bands by ensuring self-review processes regularly monitor the impact of SIP actions and teacher practice on student outcomes.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

A strength of the school in recent years has been EALD teachers coaching their colleagues in the implementation of an EALD teaching cycle. While EALD teachers use a 'gradual release of responsibility' model when coaching, there is still limited transference of these skills across other curriculum areas. A next step for the school is to reinforce teachers' skills in implementing effective teaching and learning cycles of data-informed rich task design, assessment and review, using learning intentions and success criteria to stretch student learning.

Teachers use the teaching and learning cycle, look at data, group students, and provide multiple entry and exit points in tasks to differentiate learning. They also offer students examples of what higher-level work looks like and encourage students to use the schools' 'learner assets' to be successful. Classroom environments are engaging and teachers actively support students during learning. Learning scaffolds are also displayed to support students with further support.

All teachers routinely share learning intentions and success criteria to support learning; however, this practice differs across the school. This resulted in some students having little understanding of learning intentions and success criteria, through to examples where students are effectively using them to stretch their learning. This higher level of engagement is most successful when teachers co-construct success criteria with students. Consistently embedding learning intentions and success criteria at a deeper level, by ensuring students understand and utilise them throughout tasks and by differentiating them to extend student outcomes, is continuing work for the school.

While teachers genuinely aim to provide engaging and differentiated tasks to improve student outcomes, students do not feel stretched in their learning, and would like more challenge in tasks. Parents believe that the needs of their children are met; however, they would like them to be challenged more regularly. Inconsistencies in teacher practice between classes is also noted by parents. While this indicates clear areas for growth, positivity from parents and students about learning at Plympton Primary School is high.

Direction 2 Strengthen teachers' capacity to design learning experiences that ensure differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge are an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students, by deepening the implementation of the teaching and learning cycle.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

While analysing and using data for planning learning improved over time, using data for intentional teaching to meet individual student learning needs continues to be an area that could be further improved.

Exemplary practice that encourages students to be self-managers of their learning exists across the school. For example, some early years' students use a writing continuum displayed along a wall to compare their effort to the samples provided, in order to work towards achieving the next stage. Other opportunities for students to self-assess and improve their work included co-designing success criteria, using examples of work that is of a higher standard, rubrics and peer assessments.

While these practices are in place, students still have little understanding of the next steps in their learning without the teacher's guidance.

Students report that they sometimes know their scores in a test, but not necessarily what they got wrong or why. Sharing assessments and explicit feedback with students, as part of formative assessment practices, is essential to build student understanding of what they know and what they need to know. This knowledge will help students set explicit learning goals which continuously stretch their learning. Student goals were noticeable in some classes; however, they are not monitored and reviewed as part of a continuous cycle in learning.

A strategy in the assessment 'of' learning is reflection at the end of a lesson, described by teachers and students. Formative assessment and feedback 'for' learning, during the task, where students receive explicit feedback that moves their learning forward, motivates them to continuously improve. Feedback to students is mostly verbal, with very little written feedback other than ticks or praise. Time to reflect and act on feedback is key to enhancing learning as written feedback provides future reference points. Teachers receiving feedback, enables them to adjust their teaching for best outcomes. Fostering this reciprocal feedback is an area in which the school could further improve practice.

Direction 3 Ensure stretch and challenge by embedding quality formative assessment and feedback loop processes between students and teachers, to impact on students' capabilities and self-drive to improve.

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, 62% of year 1 and 83% 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 increase for year 2.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 1 has been downwards, from 81% to 62% and the trend for year 2 has been upwards, from 76% to 83%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 91% of year 5 students and 84% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5, an improvement, and for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been downwards, from 89% to 87% and the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 77% to 91%.

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

In 2019, 55% of year 3, 49% of year 5 and 30% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading 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 reading, 69%, or 9 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 4 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 91% of year 5 students and 76% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement, and for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 71% to 91%.

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

In 2019, 23% of year 3, 20% of year 5 and 27% 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, 44%, or 4 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 60%, or 3 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Plympton Primary School has established a positive culture of learning and inclusivity, which is valued throughout the community. Staff are dedicated professionals, enthusiastic in their roles and committed to continuous improvement. Students are articulate about their learning and report feeling safe and happy to come to school. The school effectively uses data to inform its improvement journey and is focused on achieving higher outcomes for students.

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

- Direction 1** Increase the number of students achieving in the higher bands by ensuring self-review processes regularly monitor the impact of SIP actions and teacher practice on student outcomes.
- Direction 2** Strengthen teachers' capacity to design learning experiences that ensure differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge are an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students, by deepening the implementation of the teaching and learning cycle.
- Direction 3** Ensure stretch and challenge by embedding quality formative assessment and feedback loop processes between students and teachers, to impact on students' capabilities and self-drive to improve.

Based on the school's current performance, Plympton Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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