

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ANGASTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in October 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Katherine Holman, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Angaston 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 policies:

1. Aspects of Governance
As part of the 2015 annual reporting process the Principal and Governing Council will discuss school achievement data and targets.
2. Aspects of Teaching and Learning
Professional learning will be undertaken in 2016 to support the development of practices reflecting the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework.
3. Aspects of School Organisation
The Attendance Policy documentation was being updated at the time of the external review.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 94.4%, which exceeds the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Angaston Primary School is located in the Barossa Valley, 85 kilometres north of Adelaide. The school has a national ICSEA score of 1022 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

There are 290 students in the school, which is an 11% increase in enrolment since 2012. Students are placed in eleven classes. The school population includes 13 (4.5%) Students with a Disability, and 3 (1%) Aboriginal students. 11% of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The Principal is in the third year of his five year tenure, and the Deputy Principal is in the third year of his second tenure at the school. The school's human resource profile includes a mix of experienced teachers and graduate teachers who work collaboratively together and with non-teaching staff.

Angaston Kindergarten is adjacent to the Angaston Primary School.

The school is aware that the challenge ahead is to firstly, sustain the high performance being achieved over recent years from Reception to Year 2, and into Year 3 and, secondly, redress the pattern of fewer students retaining gains made in the early years and at higher levels overall from Year 3 to 7.

Raising and sustaining learning for every child in any school requires a commitment to the development of collective responsibility for all students to achieve their full potential.

Direction 1

Increase the proportion of students achieving higher levels of learning over time by establishing processes for groups of teachers to regularly consider the progress of students against the standards and act together to improve teaching and learning across the school.

The Principal shared with the Review Panel a comprehensive collection and analysis of recent and over time learner achievement data sets held by the school. The well-presented booklet showed growth charts, positive and negative bell curves, cohort spikes, and recent trends. The document also included early diagnostic, strength and weakness analysis and other commentary about student performance.

Consequently, the Review Panel explored one further Line of Inquiry about how effectively the school is currently using data and other information to improve planning and instruction across the school.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

The Review Panel heard that the Principal has introduced a deliberate focus over the last year or two to support staff to use whole-school, class and individual achievement data to improve teaching and learning. The aim is to make the use of information about student learning (e.g. NAPLAN; Progressive Achievement Tests; formative assessments) a part of fundamental practice underpinning the way the school is building teacher capacity and leading continuous improvement.

An analysis of data sets in 2014 led to the 2015 focus on developing a school-wide approach to improve the way mathematics is taught across the school. This year, the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is presented as a flow chart to capture the stages of this strategic intent, trusting that one professional learning focus will have greater impact than a number of priorities and additional strategies.

The SIP includes the detailed actions required by all staff to implement the focus, with accountability for the actions linked to the third part of the SIP: i.e. each teacher's own performance and development plan.

The SIP's Mathematics Action Plan has four stages: analyse class trend data and the progress data of 1:1:1 (three) identified students; evaluate the mathematics action plan and adapt the strategies to suit identified students; document three related pedagogical goals in individual performance and development plans and meet with line manager to look at class data sets, the progress of identified students and to share the class teaching and learning journal.

In discussion with the Review Panel, staff members were unanimous in endorsing this single focus on mathematics. They said they wanted to do one thing properly rather than be overloaded with different priorities: "We are interested in helping children to achieve in higher bands. We want to do that". Staff reported that they valued the fact that all teachers, and some non-teaching staff, were engaged in 'good' professional learning together, either as a year-level representative at off-site Partnership programs or through the on-site opportunities.

The Review Panel heard teachers talk about a range of practices they were trialling and evaluating including: implementation of a common teaching sequence; use of a mathematics journal; use of open-ended activities and 'flipped' tasks with achievable entry points and 'challenging twists'; vocabulary word walls; and tasks designed for pre- and post-assessment.

The teachers said that the outcome of designing lessons and tasks in this way was helping them to "better understand what students already know and what they need", and that this was influencing their planning

and programming. Some teachers also used observation strategies, and attitudinal and disposition surveys to learn more about the students as learners. They felt that student needs were better met when problematized situations supported and challenged the children to go further in their learning.

To ensure continuous improvement teachers reported they were identifying the targeted outcomes for each unit of work (e.g. Top 5), and said they found themselves modifying and reviewing against these expectations after each lesson.

This model of teaching, with formative assessment integral to learning, is gaining positive support from staff. Some teachers reported that they were now transferring this intentional approach to other areas of learning with success, so much so that one teacher said: "I've been excited about what we're doing!"

The Review Panel found that the focus on mathematics and the use of summative and formative data and other information is providing the school with a clear focus to progress learning for all students. Most importantly, the focus on using data to improve pedagogy and inform teaching is explicitly connected to what happens in each classroom for every child.

Teachers reported that when they see patterns emerging in a test or in the class, the range of learning needs can be addressed; they can target the learning for high achievers and provide particular support to students who are struggling with something new. In the early years, where developmental data is collected for every student, they can monitor growth and respond accordingly to give all students a great start.

The Review Panel found that the staff has the will and capability to now ensure that what is evaluated as effective teaching and learning is evidence-based and can be applied across the curriculum.

Direction 2

Raise and sustain higher levels of learning for all students from one year to the next, by strengthening the capacity of staff to engage in the analysis and use of student performance data and formative assessment, initially in mathematics, and then, increasingly over time, in all subject areas.

The staff members are pleased with the progress to date and would like to consolidate what is working well this year. They said they valued the way the SIP was constructed and related to 'our' teaching. They saw benefit in the link with performance and development processes, and those who had managed to engage in peer observation reported positive experiences. All students had completed a Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) survey earlier in the year, which has provided the school with very positive and useful baseline data to guide development and inform decision-making.

Feedback from students, along with professional feedback from peers and leaders, is an essential source of evidence in school improvement. Additional use of reflection and feedback was supported by staff.

Direction 3

Continue to engage teachers in professional reflection and observation as part of the SIP and performance and development processes, and ensure feedback from students is regularly used in class to monitor the impact of teaching on learning.

The Review Panel also heard that teachers have been working with the students to increase their engagement to achieve at higher levels. The students said when they used success criteria or rubrics they knew where they were in their learning because these 'helped them to get to the next level'. They said they liked feedback that helped them know what to do next and they liked being challenged: "The teacher makes sure we understand so we know what to do to improve". The students also liked making links in mathematics lessons to everyday situations because it helped them understand. Some students said their teachers had explained the Mathematics Australian Curriculum and the achievement standards.

The Mathematics Action Plan includes the moderation of work samples and portfolios across similar year levels to ensure consistent grading. However, when looking at the mid-year 2015 distribution of grades, the Review Panel found that the spike of 'C' grades remains in mathematics and all other subject areas.

The current work related to the design of assessment tasks in mathematics could well be a wider discussion about how to enable and support students to apply their knowledge and skills in new contexts.

Governing Council members had a good understanding of their role after completing a training program in 2014. They knew about the 'bigger picture' of the school and were aware of the school's NAPLAN data analysis. Parents reported that they were interested in knowing more about what the curriculum standards are, what is expected, and what is 'average', 'cruising' or 'doing ok'. Talking about what is taught and what is expected is a good example of a future 'big picture' discussion topic for the Governing Council.

Parents are very supportive of the school, describing the Principal and staff as approachable and proactive. They said teachers worked well together and children get extra help when they need it. The Parent Opinion Survey conducted in 2014 endorses this range of positive comments, with 89% of respondents saying they agree or strongly agree that they are 'proud to send our children to Angaston Primary School'.

As an additional set of evidence, each team of teachers offered examples of the improvement work they had initiated themselves in response to their analysis of a cohort's performance data aligned to the Australian Curriculum. For example, one group of teachers designed and used an evidence-based grammar curriculum, another had trialled and evaluated a new approach to teaching spelling, another rotated classes for science, and yet another group had introduced a targeted reading program. The Review Panel found that these initiatives are further examples of the positive culture of improvement in the school. While having a single focus in the SIP is supported by the staff, the school may wish to also consider ways to ensure that the good that comes from these evidence-informed initiatives also undergoes systematic evaluation so that any and all gains made by students are not lost when they could have been sustained.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Angaston Primary School is focused on raising achievement of all students across the school from Reception to Year 7. The current improvement work in the area of mathematics aims to improve pedagogy to realise and sustain higher levels of learning.

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

1. Increase the proportion of students achieving higher levels of learning over time by establishing processes for groups of teachers to regularly consider the progress of students against the standards and act together to improve teaching and learning across the school.
2. Raise and sustain higher levels of learning for all students from one year to the next, by strengthening the capacity of staff to engage in the analysis and use of student performance data and formative assessment, initially in mathematics, and then, increasingly over time, in all subject areas.
3. Continue to engage teachers in professional reflection and observation as part of the SIP and performance and development processes, and ensure feedback from students is regularly used in class to monitor the impact of teaching on learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Angaston Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Samuel Lawrence
PRINCIPAL
ANGASTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson