

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

On-track evaluation report for Swan Reach Area School

One-year return conducted in November 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3-year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the External School Review report is available on the school website.

In some cases, when the review panel finds cause for concern about the levels of achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school will be advised that they will be visited again in a year.

Schools with a 1-year return are assisted during the intervening period by the education director and other department staff to ensure they receive coordinated, targeted and systematic support. Intervention is concentrated on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement.

During this process, which occurs 12-15 months after the initial visit, a review panel determines the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's priority improvement plan was the main document used as the basis for this review.

The review visit was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Robins, Review Principal.

This On-Track Evaluation report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Swan Reach Area School in May 2017.

Directions from the External School Review report

May 2017

1. **Implement a rigorous and focused improvement cycle at the school and classroom levels using agreed multiple measures of data to plan, deliver, monitor and report the impact on the school's identified priorities over time.**
2. **Establish and maintain a whole-school culture of high expectation and relentless improvement in implementing the school's improvement agenda, through the systems and structures designed to build staff capacity.**
3. **Work collaboratively and collectively as a staff team to implement planned and agreed pedagogical practices to a high degree of coherency and effectiveness across the school for the benefit of all learners.**

Additional information about the school context

Since the External School Review (ESR) there has been an amalgamation with Swan Reach Area School and the local kindergarten. The kindy governing council dissolved at the end of 2017. The school's governing council (GC) nominated and elected several former kindy councillors at the 2018 AGM. The GC is looking to amend the constitution to lessen the number of councillors needed due to a decline in enrolments.

A number of staff changes have occurred, with leadership staff reducing from 2 Band B leaders, to an assistant principal. The school has welcomed 5 new staff to cover staffing movements, which include retirement and changes in time. The majority of the school's staffing is stable.

Other notable changes are the recent completion of an outdoor learning space and review of the behaviour management process to provide clarity, consistency with clear tracking of students.

Enrolments are declining, with 83FTE students in 2018, which includes kindergarten children.

Development of a priority improvement plan

The principal advised that a first draft priority improvement plan (PIP) was forwarded to the Director of Review, Improvement and Accountability and local education team in July 2017. A second draft was submitted in November 2017, with a close to final version created in December 2017. In term 1 2018, further conversations between the education director (ED), principal consultant (PC), Learning Improvement division (LID), systems improvement and principal, took place about the report and its intended direction. Following this meeting, the final copy of the PIP was completed and forwarded for approval to the Executive Director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools in March 2018.

Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

The principal has advised that support from the ED, PC and LID was valuable. Regular meetings with the principal consultant assisted the school to stay on track, build leadership capacity and ensure all staff are familiar with the ESR directions and PIP success criteria.

Staff have accessed professional learning from LID, which assisted with analysing PAT data and constructing a draft Literacy Agreement.

Both EDs from the new school's current and previous portfolio have supported the transition. The early childhood leader has provided ongoing support, advice and documentation through amalgamation and setting-up the Early Learning Centre to align with the National Quality Standards.

The Department's People and Culture division has been supportive about the recruitment and selection of 5 new staff.

Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the priority improvement plan

Direction 1

Implement a rigorous and focused improvement cycle at the school and classroom levels using agreed multiple measures of data to plan, deliver, monitor and report the impact on the school's identified priorities over time.

On-track evidence

The four focus actions identified to address Direction 1 are:

- (1) review the school operation plan (SOP) to ensure ownership from all stakeholders
- (2) develop an agreement on and scheduling of datasets
- (3) development of individual learning plans (ILPs), and
- (4) utilise data to inform planning, assessment and reporting.

The PIP actions, conversations with staff, relevant documentation and the principal's presentation indicate the following work has been undertaken during 2018:

- Staff have refined the SOP with literacy, numeracy and wellbeing, as the key priorities with explicit connections to the PIP. The SOP identifies key curriculum strategies, specific achievement targets and appropriate professional development for staff. The SOP actions are reviewed each term and, as commented and confirmed by the teachers: "It provides clarity for our professional learning, meeting agendas and PDP and is purposefully connected to the site priorities".
- Successful introduction of a strategic leadership planner that sets out timelines, staff responsibilities, and governing council involvement to track, monitor and report on student achievement data.
- All teachers access the data dashboard to analyse the NAPLAN, PAT and Running Records achievement data. Teachers stated that the data analysis has enabled them to reflect, plan and differentiate their teaching approaches for individual students.
- There is a consistent approach to using a traffic light system to measure student achievement, enabling teachers to track and monitor student learning growth and share results with students and parents. Secondary students referred to the traffic light system as allowing them to see 'where they were at' and what they have to do to improve. This system will be introduced across the school in 2019.
- The introduction of the ILP for all students was appreciated by staff as a useful tool in recording and monitoring student achievement. Parents appreciate the ILP process as it gives them a more accurate measure of their child's abilities and growth potential, empowering them to support their child.

- A three-way interview process uses ILP records as a platform for discussion between the students, teachers and parents. The success of the program was evidenced by 87% of parents attending the interview, which is an increase of 30% from the estimated participation rate based on previous data.
- Use of data dashboard and the tracking and monitoring student achievement has validated A-E grading and reporting.

Review panel evaluation

The panel recognised that the principal's work, supported by the LET and department specialists, in leading the PIP directions and SOP actions, has been conducted in a strategic and logical manner to enable a comprehensive approach from all stakeholders. Regular meetings and sessions have been undertaken over the past 11 months involving all school staff.

The collective decision from all staff in narrowing the school priorities and refining them to 3 curriculum areas created the opportunity to focus on a more rigorous process of school improvement.

The principal's presentation highlighted the development of a systematic approach to the strategic operation of the school, which included developing staff understanding and use of data as a tool for student improvement. The use of a simple measuring process (for example, traffic lights) has enabled teachers, students and parents to monitor and share the learning growth of the students. Complementing this is the strategic and successful use of detailed ILPs for all students, as a process to support all learners, inform practice and communicate with parents.

The school has made significant advances in establishing a platform for the school to work from, to continue to refine the improvement cycle to achieve the school priorities.

Direction 2

Establish and maintain a whole-school culture of high expectation and relentless improvement in implementing the school's improvement agenda, through the systems and structures designed to build staff capacity.

On-track evidence

The focus actions identified to address Direction 2 included:

- (1) deprivatisation of classroom practice, and
- (2) building teacher capacity through professional learning.

The following has been undertaken during 2018:

- Staff meeting schedules are now focused on professional learning as the main agenda item and supported by the PC, senior leader learning improvement primary (SLLIP) and LID personnel. Professional learning is SOP-related and addresses teacher use of data in their planning and reporting. Teachers commented on the value of using external support and networking to build capacity.
- Curriculum professional learning committees (PLCs) were developed and aligned to the SOP and PIP objectives. PLC work has provided a shared focus for teachers, with staff commenting on how the work of each group is linked to the work of the 3 committees.
- An enacted professional development program was a significant change in 2018. The principal gained common and shared understanding of what professional development looks like across the school. Teachers appreciated the sharing of common professional goals and the link with the SOP action of deprivatisation of practice.

- Formal and informal classroom observations were successfully introduced in term 2. Feedback provided translated into a change in classroom practice in areas such as questioning techniques and modifying teaching strategies in mathematics. Teachers are unanimous in continuing this practice.
- The concept of high expectation is inconsistent across the school, although parents acknowledge that teachers are enthusiastic, and expect the best from all students.
- The school is involved in combining student free days with the learning design and moderation (LDAM) project with partnership schools and neighbouring schools (for example, Secondary Alliance and Mannum connections). Staff value these connections, as it allows for the sharing of common teaching practices, moderation and classroom issues.

Review panel evaluation

The principal has worked tirelessly to develop structures and processes to manage in-servicing of staff through staff meetings and PDP processes. Working in partnership with the assistant principal, LET and LID personnel, the school has developed a culture of professional learning that is collaborative and focussed on pedagogical improvement.

The PDP processes established are a catalyst for staff to develop a personal and collective ownership of professional learning that invokes challenge of practice through a positive and collegiate environment. Further work in developing teacher expertise in LDAM, which incorporates *formative* assessment strategies, student agency, matched with a collective understanding of what high expectations look like, are the next steps for the school to consider.

The school has begun creating an environment that promotes the building of staff capacity with a focus on student learning. With ongoing support from appropriate support personnel, the school will be able to continue a focused approach on sustainable improvement in teacher practice and student outcomes.

Direction 3

Work collaboratively and collectively as a staff team to implement planned and agreed pedagogical practices to a high degree of coherency and effectiveness across the school for the benefit of all learners.

On-track evidence

The following work to address this direction has been undertaken:

- The school, supported by the PC, has developed a three phase strategy to address the SOP priorities of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing to address consistency of understanding and practice across the school. Formation of PLCs enabled the development of whole-school agreements in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. PLCs were further supported by LID.
- Students interviewed named several different learning approaches used in class, such as questioning in reading (QAR), Lexia, Daily 5 literacy, maths task sheets and problem-solving activities, which are elements from the literacy and numeracy agreements. Teachers are using some of these strategies, but were unsure of whether there was a whole-school approach to this.
- Teachers acknowledged that the literacy agreement is being implemented and continually reviewed; the numeracy agreement is a draft yet to be reviewed.
- The wellbeing agreement references the 'we matter and you can do it' frameworks as a platform for teachers to work from. Teachers schedule specific times in their program to explicitly teach wellbeing strategies, evidenced by students' use of the wellbeing language. Senior students reported that strategies discussed in class helped them balance their studies with emotional wellness.

Review panel evaluation

The panel commends the collective approach the school has taken in developing the school agreements. All school staff are committed to developing a consistent approach to learning for all students.

The work conducted by the PLC groups and the agreements are still going on through a refinement process, as teachers implement strategies and make adjustments accordingly. The opportunity to develop student agency through the curriculum and wellbeing agreements would be helpful for the school to pursue, to support collective responsibility and action.

The review panel believes that the school is poised to further develop the pedagogical coherence of all educators within the school and strengthen the effectiveness of practice to benefit all learners.

Outcomes of the on-track evaluation

Based on the evidence provided, Swan Reach Area School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions.

Student achievement data and other evidence (e.g. multiple measures) is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning. A culture of improvement characterised by high expectations of students is now apparent. Self-review processes are regularly and strategically used to determine the impact school strategies and practices are having on student achievement.

The principal will continue to work with the education director to implement the External School Review directions:

1. Implement a rigorous and focused improvement cycle at the school and classroom levels using agreed multiple measures of data to plan, deliver, monitor and report the impact on the school's identified priorities over time.
2. Establish and maintain a whole-school culture of high expectation and relentless improvement in implementing the school's improvement agenda, through the systems and structures designed to build staff capacity.
3. Work collaboratively and collectively as a staff team to implement planned and agreed pedagogical practices to a high degree of coherency and effectiveness across the school for the benefit of all learners.

Based on current performance, Swan Reach Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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