

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR EAST TORRENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in March 2016



**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 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.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Susan Hart-Lamont, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of East Torrens Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 2015 was 89%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

East Torrens Primary School is located in the eastern suburbs of Adelaide and is an active member of the DECD Campbell Local Partnership. The school has an ICSEA score of 1040 and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. In 2016 there are 312 students in the school, allocated to one of eight mainstream classes, two small Special Education classes and six Intensive English Language classes. The student learning needs are diverse and complex.

A DECD Intensive English Language Program (IELP) is provided for students newly arrived in Australia as refugees or migrants. The program supports 76 to 90 students with twelve to eighteen months of intensive intervention before exiting to mainstream classes either at East Torrens Primary School or their local school. **Eighty percent of the school population has a** non-English speaking background.

There are 41 (13%) Students with Disabilities (SWD) in the school. Nineteen of these students are eligible for placement in one of the two special small classes. In addition to the SWD, there are 75 (24%) mainstream students identified in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) who require an educational adjustment to assist them to participate in schooling on the same basis as other students.

The IELP and the Special Class students are transported daily by DECD between home and school.

The school population also includes six Aboriginal students and three students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM). There are approximately 106 families eligible for School Card assistance.

There is also a high level of transience within the school. In 2015, there were 206 students who moved **in or out of the school** during the year, in addition to those starting Reception and those graduating at Year 7. Last year, six of the twenty-two mainstream Year 7 students were at the school in Year 3 or earlier.

The Leadership Team consists of an experienced Principal in her second year at the school, and the Assistant Principal: Pedagogy who was appointed in 2011 and is in the last year of her first tenure at the school. The School Counsellor was appointed in 2014 and is also in the last year of her first tenure at the school. The Senior Leader: IELP is acting in the position for 2016. The Leadership Team works collaboratively leading all aspects of school improvement.

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 2015, 24% of Year 1 and 43% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational

Achievement (SEA). While these results represent a decline at Year 1 and an improvement at Year 2 from the historic baseline average, the school believes them to be more accurate than previous collections. An analysis of previous patterns revealed there had been no consistent process for taking Running Records.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of Year 3 students, 52% of Year 5 students and 74% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. At Year 5 the result represents a decline from the historic baseline average of 60%.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 is downward, from 67% to 52%. There is no trend at Years 3 and 7. For 2015, students in Years 3, 5 and 7 are achieving within the range of results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 28% (8 of 29) of Year 3 students, 30% (7/23) of Year 5 students and 21% (4/19) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 1 of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 2 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change at Year 5 and an improvement at Year 7 from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students and 60% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. These results represent little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 is downwards from 65% to 60%. For 2015, students in Years 3, 5 and 7 are achieving within the range of results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 17% (5 of 30) of Year 3 students, 21% (5 of 24) of Year 5 students, and 10% (2 of 20) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 1 of 1 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 1 of 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Summary

Overall, at Year 3 and Year 7, 75% of students achieved the SEA in Reading in 2015. This result is an improvement over time. At Year 5, the result of 52% is indicative of a decline over time. In Numeracy, on average across Years 3, 5 and 7, 58% of students achieved the SEA with few students in the higher bands.

Raising and sustaining a higher level of learning across the school for all students requires that each teacher knows, understands and responds to each child's starting points as learners. The Review Panel selected the following Lines of Inquiry to discuss the school's capacity to develop a whole school approach to supporting teaching and learning for all students from one year to the next.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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| Improvement Agenda: | How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning? |
| Effective Teaching: | How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning? |
| Effective Leadership: | How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity? |

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

The Review Panel heard that the Principal has led an explicit improvement agenda since first being placed at East Torrens Primary School at the start of 2015, and subsequently being appointed on merit mid-year. The Leadership Team reported that from the first self-review stages of 2015, it was agreed that the 'restart button be pressed' to support teachers and SSOs to engage in the development of a whole-school approach to improvement. Staff participated in various consultation processes to develop the positive culture that now exists, along with the belief that improvement is achievable by "doing things together".

A significant student-centred outcome of this process has seen staff developing shared understanding of what 'putting faces on data' means for their professional practice. According to one staff member: "The biggest shift has been bringing data into the dialogue". To achieve this, the Leadership Team has shared overviews of achievement data, provided professional readings, and time to review and further develop assessment schedules. To build expertise in how to consistently administer agreed assessments teachers were provided with training to ensure data validity. For example, all staff were trained in 2015 to take Running Records in a consistent way and to use the formative assessment information to support reading accuracy, fluency, and self-correction. Records are now kept until Level 30 from Reception to Year 7.

Further to this positive beginning, all teachers have recently established a range of student-centred 'data walls' in their classrooms to begin the process of engaging students in goal-setting and tracking their own learning improvement. Students reported that they liked the data walls because "you can see how you are improving; we know our weak and strong points; and the teacher can see what she can do to help us".

It was explained to the Review Panel that historically there has been little or no whole-school data and assessment analysis undertaken by staff across the mainstream classes. On the other hand, in the IELP, the teachers use a systematic and collaborative approach to learning design resulting in data-informed judgements being integral to the teaching cycle. The IELP is now experienced in drawing on a set of mandated curriculum overviews along with agreed assessments to plan for, monitor and report progress.

The Senior Leader and other staff explained that clear expectations and constant rigor are central to the success of their work. The IELP staff provided sound evidence that they have in place a consistent process for assessing, tracking and monitoring student progress as 'part and parcel' of the lesson by lesson differentiation that is a feature of the program. The Review Panel saw examples of this dynamic process, using learning continuums, checklists and plain language rubrics, all aligned with relevant literacy levels and the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

A similar approach to using data is now required to support core learning and intervention for all mainstream and special class students. The identification and use of evidence-based practice needs to support higher levels of learning. Two immediate areas for attention in mainstream are reflected in the 'dip' in Middle Primary reading results and in the slow rate of growth in the early years.

In particular, the changing needs of the youngest students in the school must be well-understood by all staff in order to build strong foundations as learners and for learning. The recent Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) indicated that 61% of Reception students were identified as vulnerable on one domain or more, with 42% of these students at risk as early learners in the areas of communication and general knowledge. Information from anecdotal, diagnostic and developmental assessments must be made accessible to support skill development and finely track early learning growth.

Finally, on a practical point, the school has recently implemented an electronic data management system. This will replace the data stored in the 'grey folder' of information that has been part of the annual manual handover at the start of each year for Year 1 to 7 students. A new 'real time system' will support the development of a process to make data available for use during the year in a manageable form. Capacity for data analysis at the whole-school, cohort, class and individual level will soon be set up.

Therefore, a next important step for the school is to develop procedures for the collection and use of both summative data and formative assessment information. When the staff begin to use multiple measures at points in time to inform decisions about where students are up to in their learning, they can confidently target their teaching and monitor the progress of all students. At future intervals, the bank of achievement data can be used to make evaluations about school and program effectiveness.

Direction 1

Monitor and moderate student progress against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards, by developing a coherent whole-school approach to the use of summative and formative assessment.

Direction 2

Ensure all students are well-supported to achieve the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by utilising an agreed suite of diagnostic assessments to design intervention strategies and track progress.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

East Torrens Primary School has a strong commitment to developing and sustaining the pre-conditions for learning for all students. The Review Panel heard from parents that they were happy with the school, and thought that the changes being made place children ‘at the centre of everything’. They said their children felt safe at school: “There is no bullying here ... everyone is integrated”. They are appreciative of the work the teachers do and value the fact their children are settled and want to come to school. The teachers are respected.

Governing Council membership has increased this year, including representation from EALD and IELP parents. Parents said they felt part of the ‘team’ at the school. The Parent Opinion survey conducted in 2015 indicated that 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in all eleven areas surveyed. The Annual Report identified that for 2016 the school wants to move the percentage of parents ‘from agree to strongly agree’ in the area of ‘teachers at this school expect my child to do his or her best’.

The Review Panel heard from students that the school is a place where they have fun and like choices. Student Opinion Surveys are conducted regularly to monitor bullying and other wellbeing issues. To ensure a safe yard, there is a successful system of yard duty and staff deployment that ensures all students, including those with complex needs, have a range of active choices each playtime and before school. Regular additional time in the gym is popular, as is the weekly ‘wheels day’. Since 2014, the provision of this wide range of outdoor and indoor activities, along with clarity related to behaviour management processes, has had a significant impact on reducing inappropriate behaviour and increasing positive experiences. This productive approach has been especially supportive for new IELP students and for children with challenging behaviours, in assisting them to enter groups and build relationships. In 2016, there is a planned focus on strengthening student voice to identify more strategies for engagement.

The school also has a number of strategies in place to support improved attendance, including follow-up with parents and reminders to students. Some classes of students have analysed their own attendance data as part of their mathematics lessons and reflected on the implications for their learning. A daily Breakfast Club is provided to encourage students to arrive early, socialise before lessons start, settle into the school environment and for some, practice self-regulation in the transition from home to school.

The school is rightly giving ongoing attention to implementing pre-conditions for learning at a whole-school level in order to build positive identity for students and ensure a sense of belonging with the school.

The next step is to involve students at the classroom level in the intentional design of a supportive class learning culture that includes opportunities for students to influence their own learning.

Older students were very articulate about their needs and aspirations as learners. They said that from their experiences, how well they learn or enjoy learning does depend on the teacher. They valued teachers who explained things clearly, who gave specific feedback about “what we need to do to improve”, who let them work with peers, and who provide challenging work “not just more of the same problems”. The newly introduced data walls are a step in the right direction. Other examples mentioned by students included: letting the students know how to achieve an A; use of peer support and feedback strategies like ‘ask three before me’, tracking own progress against goals; and utilisation of digital devices to show evidence of learning over time. Younger students were less forthcoming about what helped them to learn and how they could improve. Introducing the vocabulary and the language of learning will be a significant step for all students in the implementation of formative assessment processes.

As time goes on, teachers, students and parents will have more information to share with each other about progress. Increasing the use of pre- and post-assessments, supported by units of work and lessons that

make learning intentions clear, will become the norm. To achieve this outcome, the school could start to explore digital applications to share learning and support frequent home-school communication.

The Review Panel saw draft documentation that places *Student Motivation, Engagement and Achievement* at the centre of the Leadership Team's strategic thinking and planning. 'Supporting teachers to improve the quality of instruction' is a significant component in the realisation of this plan for *Powerful Teaching + Powerful Learning = Results Plus*. The Review panel feels that building partnerships simultaneously with students and parents will also be essential for the 'power' and the 'plus' to be achieved.

Direction 3

Build strong partnerships for powerful learning by ensuring teachers, students and parents share expectations, set goals and work together to support improved learning outcomes.

How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

Improvement in any school relies on teachers responding to the individual and the complex needs of their students as learners. This requires leaders, and teaching and non-teaching staff, to be learners too. As is the case at East Torrens Primary School, in order to be responsive to student needs, professional learning is linked to the Site Improvement Plan priorities and mostly undertaken on-site and as part of teachers' work.

Since 2015, all staff meetings have a professional learning component, with whole-staff learning also occurring at various Pupil Free days. Optional weekly workshops are run by staff to share current practices. The recent focus has been on literacy, numeracy and Results Plus.

In Term 4, 2015 the Leadership Team led discussions with all staff about what the DECD priority of Powerful Learners might look like at the school. These discussions included focus questions like: "What words would you use to describe a Powerful Learner; how does being a powerful learner relate to the development of literacy and numeracy; and what changes would you need to make to classroom practice to further develop Powerful Learners?"

Early in Term 1 2015, the teachers were also introduced to the use of a three-tiered response to intervention in order to support differentiated teaching, including tracking the progress of each child.

These professional learning topics are illustrations of some quite "big ideas" for improvement and they will require deep knowledge, understanding and time to be implemented effectively and consistently. The challenge for leaders (and teachers) is to therefore not complicate an improvement agenda by wanting to do too much or too much too soon, over too short a timeframe.

Given the evidence found during the review, prioritising strategies that have formative assessment as the driver will assist the school in supporting more students to achieve the SEA sooner rather than later.

The Review Panel heard from teachers that they value any opportunity they have to work together in year-level teams (PLTs), acknowledging that there is good expertise that can be shared in a collaborative way to ensure all students are well-supported to achieve higher levels of learning.

Such collaboration was observed by the panel at a staff meeting that focused on moderating samples of work. The regular use of feedback from such professional learning activities is valued by the Leadership Team as a way to inform their ongoing planning. At this particular session, staff provided feedback that they would appreciate more opportunity to work in like groups and to learn from the expertise of peers on staff. They said that they value professional conversations with interested others; they see benefit in sharing professional readings and developing common understandings; they want more time in similar year-level PLTs to look at work samples, relate the scope and sequence, and plan together (especially in mathematics).

In relation to mathematics, several teachers felt that using the scope and sequence for assessment and planning for differentiated teaching (for intervention and extension) would also help staff to be more confident in their own mathematical abilities. This sentiment would be supported by those students and parents who said they felt there were some students who were not fully challenged in their mathematics

lessons.

During staff interviews, mainstream teachers talked about an increasing range of literacy needs evident in any class of students. While all teachers were clear that explicit teaching with scaffolded learning (step-by-step) was essential, the challenge is to align the differentiated teaching to accountability for outcomes. Teachers were honest and said they knew now that they 'need to be on the same page' and 'move away from doing their own thing.' The IELP team uses a Teaching and Learning Cycle as integral to their work. Support to facilitate this level of planning in the mainstream is another example of the expertise available.

Further evidence of the staff members' capacity to work collaboratively was seen in Staff Psychological Health survey data from 2015, which is published in the Annual Report. All protective factors increased from Term 1 to 3 across all aspects of the survey, while all hazard factors decreased. By Term 3, 100% of staff reported that 'role clarity' and 'goal alignment' were now in place at the school and 92% of staff felt 'employee development' was effective. These are significant results in such a short period of time.

The leadership provided at the school was described as being authoritative and respectful. The Review Panel heard that there is a clear focus on making an impact on learning through the development of effective teaching practice. Along with this focus has been a commitment to high expectations and high support. The school's performance and development processes can now be extended to ensure there is high and reciprocal accountability supported through the work of each professional learning team.

Direction 4

Transform the collaborative work of staff by ensuring professional learning teams (PLTs) are used to build the school's capacity to focus on learning improvement as a shared endeavour.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

East Torrens Primary School has established a focus on *high expectations and high support* in order to realise the desired outcomes of a new improvement agenda. There are strategies in place to improve literacy and numeracy results. In addition, the school is aspiring to see all students achieving at significantly higher levels. All staff want to work with focused collaboration in their teams to ensure effective teaching and learning meets the needs of all students Reception to Year 7.

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

1. Monitor and moderate student progress against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards, by developing a coherent whole-school approach to the use of summative and formative assessment.
2. Ensure all students are well-supported to achieve the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by utilising an agreed suite of diagnostic assessments to design intervention strategies and track progress.
3. Build strong partnerships for powerful learning by ensuring teachers, students and parents share expectations, set goals and work together to support improved learning outcomes.
4. Transform the collaborative work of staff by ensuring professional learning teams (PLTs) are used to build the school's capacity to focus on learning improvement as a shared endeavour.

Based on the school's current performance, East Torrens Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.