

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

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR REYNELLA SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in May 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Beth Walsh, Review Principal.*

### Policy compliance

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

The Acting Principal of Reynella 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 policies:

Part 1 Governance: Item 8

The school will report site bullying data/trends/initiatives to update the Governing Council twice a year.

Part 4 People and Culture: Item 3

The school will implement the DECD Performance and Development Policy.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Acting 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 2015 was 90.5%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### School context

Reynella South Primary School is located approximately 23kms south of the Adelaide GPO. It has a current enrolment of approximately 135 students. The school has experienced a decline in enrolment over the past 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 964, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% (5) Aboriginal students, 14% Students with Disabilities, 30% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1% (1) student under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 27% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of an Acting Principal in her first term in the role, Deputy Principal (0.4FTE) and School Counsellor (0.6FTE). The school is in the process of appointing a new Principal from the beginning of 2017.

There is a school-based preschool located on-site with a current enrolment of 20 students.

### 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 is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 48% of Year 1 and 50% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The Year 1 results are within the school's historic baseline average, while the Year 2 results are above the school's historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of Year 3 students, 93% of Year 5 students and 61% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3 and 5, the results are higher than the school's historic baseline average, but show a decline in Year 7.

For 2015 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system. For reading at Year 5, the school is achieving above the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In relation to students who achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN reading bands, there were 25% of Year 3, 47% of Year 5 and 22% of Year 7 students. For Year 3, this result is higher than the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 8 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 6 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result is within the school's historic baseline average. Of the 4 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is below the school's historic baseline average.

### **Numeracy**

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% of Year 3 students, 73% of Year 5 students and 57% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 5, this result is above the school's historic baseline average. For Year 3 and 7, the result shows a decline in performance compared to the school's historic baseline average.

From 2013 to 2015, the NAPLAN numeracy results for Year 3 show a downward trend pattern against the SEA, from 78% in 2013 to 50% in 2015.

In 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving below the average results of similar students across the DECD system. The Year 5 and 7 results are within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In relation to students who achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN numeracy bands, there were 17% of Year 3, 13% of Year 5 and 4% of Year 7 students. For Year 3, this result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average.

From 2013 to 2015, the NAPLAN numeracy results for Year 3 show a downward trend against the SEA.

Of the 3 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 student remained in the top two bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows little or no change compared to the school's historic baseline average. Of the 2 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, 1 student remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is within the school's historic baseline average.

During the review, the Acting Principal described the improvement work that is currently underway as described in the 2016 Site Improvement Plan (SIP). This improvement work has continued despite a period of leadership change at the school.

The current Leadership Team has been strategic in deciding the priorities that will impact positively on the learning and wellbeing of students. The Leadership Team reinforced that the SIP is 'owned' by staff and this plan for change will be refined through the use of data throughout the improvement process.

The Leadership Team was clear that the key actions in the next phase of work involved the analytical use of learning data to inform planning, design of learning and the implementation of agreed teaching practices consistently across the school. The team was clear that the development of 'growth mindsets' and aspects of engagement (cognitive, behavioural and emotional) were integral to learning success and needed to be taught and reinforced explicitly within the formal academic program.

As a result of the above data and the Leadership Team's presentation, the Review Panel explored the three Lines of Inquiry as per below.

## Lines of Inquiry

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

**Effective Teaching:** How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

**Effective Leadership:** How does the leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

**Improvement Agenda:** How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

## How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The school-based preschool offers an enriching play-based start to the children's learning journey. Parents with children who have experienced learning in the Early Years commented positively about their children's connection to the school through a strong start and effective transition from preschool to school. Meetings with parents confirmed the culture of the school as 'caring and nurturing'. Parents also commented that there was a higher level of understanding of curriculum initiatives in the Early Years.

It was verified that the school is focusing student engagement at 3 levels: cognitively, behaviourally and emotionally, to positively impact improved outcomes in learning. The school has established a number of *Kids Matter* committees to build safe conditions for learning across the school. The school has recently introduced learning walks to audit cognitive engagement from students. These walks include focused questions seeking student feedback about the three dimensions above.

A whole-school agreement exists for teachers to build cognitive engagement with/for students. This was developed in 2015. Two aspects that are identified for implementation across the school, the Learning Pit analogy and the reinforcement of Growth Mindsets, were not clearly evident in discussions with students or parents. Some artefacts used to scaffold this thinking for students were evident in several classes.

Class walk-throughs by the Review Panel verified that some teachers had actively sought to make intentions for learning clear to students at the beginning of lessons or units of work. In the preschool, the 'Power of Yet' was used to support this concept. In some classes, the acronyms of WALT (We are Learning To), WILF (What I'm Looking For) and TIB (This is Because) were used with students to clarify what teachers were looking for as outcomes in their learning.

Evidence of student engagement within the learning program is demonstrated through the improved attendance rates over time. An upward improvement in attendance was verified over the previous two years: 88.4% in 2014 and 90.5% in 2015. There was evidence of the school's commitment to improve attendance in documented strategies used by key staff at the school.

Parents were varied in their comments about the identification and support for students who required extra assistance with their learning. The Review Panel verified the establishment and implementation of Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) through parent meetings and documentation.

It was evident through meetings and staff written documentation that there have been a number of recent teaching strategies introduced into the school, including goal-setting with students, student-led conferences with parents, development of growth mindsets and student feedback to teachers. The school Leadership Team, staff and parents expressed an aspiration to achieve consistency of practice across the school as a way to achieve improved outcomes. In response to these recent improvement efforts, there was a general verified perception that the school should consolidate the agreed improvement strategies to a deeper level. This sentiment was accentuated in one teacher comment: "Our heads have been all over the place." This was not stated as a negative comment, but rather a reflection of the improvement agenda that has been underway over time.

Staff, parents and students are mindful that these strategies are important aspects to be implemented consistently. It is important that this advice is valued and followed to ensure further evidence-based improvement in learning like that attained in reading over time.

**Direction 1**

**Embed agreed teaching strategies consistently across the school to deliver higher levels of student engagement and challenge.**

**How does the leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

The Acting Principal presented a 'leadership story' that described a period of discontinuity over time. Despite this context, there was evidence that the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and experienced staff have maintained the focus on improvement work throughout this period. This perception was reinforced by parents and students. The Acting Principal has been strategic in prioritising the key actions in curriculum and teaching to maintain the current improvement agenda. Evidence of this planning was presented in documentation and in interviews with Governing Council members.

Parents and teachers demonstrated an understanding and ownership of the SIP, and the work being undertaken by the professionals at the school. The reading data, presented in the School Performance Overview section previously, presents evidence of the school's capacity to improve learning over time. The influence of a Reading Support Teacher, Literacy Coach and staff focusing on teaching comprehension skills has realised effective student outcomes.

The staff members have engaged in professional learning linked to the identified priorities in the SIP. These include: Literacy, Numeracy, Attendance and Cognitive Engagement through Increased Wellbeing for Learning. Documentation shows that staff learning is undertaken both within and external to the school. Staff agreements have been established in the above priority areas to support a connected approach to teaching and learning across all classes.

Parents commented about the impact of leadership changes on school processes and agreements. They also commented on the impact of consistency in learning when changes occur with class teachers. These comments indicate an important need to document and embed the agreed curriculum and pedagogical approaches through strategic leadership actions that ensure rigour in delivering a high quality program that is sustainable. Parents noted differences in approaches and expectations between teachers with respect to communication, homework, goal-setting and reporting.

Staff confirmed that there has been an increased focus on improved teaching practice across the school, and it has been supported through staff professional development and tri-school moderation opportunities closely aligned to the SIP. They also indicated that a more consistent approach to performance and development linked with feedback from classroom observations will further support their development as professionals.

Evidence collected through staff, parent and student interviews indicates that there is still work to be done in achieving high-level consistency and connectivity between all classes at the school. There was evidence presented that staff are united in their commitment to the students, school and community. There was evidence of examples of highly effective teaching practice being implemented within the school. It is important that staff embed the agreed approaches across all levels of schooling, and that the Leadership Team support and challenge this improvement effort. The Review Panel verified the early work undertaken in data use and analysis, performance and development and staff teamwork, as strategic leadership actions to raise improvement. It is critical that these leadership actions operate at a more rigorous level.

**Direction 2**

**Strategically build leadership actions and strategies that support and challenge staff to build a connected and coherent teaching and learning program to raise levels of student achievement.**

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

The school is beginning to establish more extensive systems and processes to collect, analyse and use data strategically to make informed judgements about student learning at the site, class and individual student level. Documentation of a data collection schedule was provided as evidence of this planned process. A school database (Scorelink) and a data wall located in the staffroom were in the early stages of establishment to support this level of interrogation.

Analysis of learning data was undertaken by staff at the beginning of the school year. Reading comprehension strategies and problem-solving approaches in numeracy were identified as key aspects to be delivered through the learning programs. These were verified as key strategies in the SIP. One staff member commented on the importance of consistency in approach saying: "The SIP is shared and known, and the whole-school agreements have made things a lot clearer about what we need to be doing." Governing Council members confirmed that they had opportunity to engage with the NAPLAN data presented at meetings and with 'snapshots' of practices implemented in classrooms.

Teaching staff verified that an important piece of perception data to be harvested to make judgements about the impact of student learning is that of authentic student voice. It was verified with students that they are presenting to the staff team about the importance of providing them with specific and timely formative feedback during learning. The Review Panel verified this as the genesis of highly effective practice to be developed further at the classroom level.

Teachers made comment about the need to use data to inform conversations amongst themselves to further build a culture of continuous improvement. Staff confirmed that the Acting Principal has been proactive in encouraging staff to engage more deeply in reflection and conversation about how data informs their teaching. Staff confirmed that this needs to be progressed more frequently and formally to raise student learning growth and achievement.

The Review Panel noted that the percentage of students reaching SEA in the Running Records data has not changed over time, and requires further investigation by leadership and staff in the early years to determine evidence-based actions to rectify this pattern.

#### **Direction 3**

**Use multiple measures of data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the agreed teaching and engagement strategies on student growth and achievement.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Reynella South Primary School is progressing and improving student learning as is evidenced in the reading outcomes. The school is student-focused and is continuing to establish a nurturing culture where student and parent voice is valued. There is evidence of strong positive intent by all staff to make a positive difference to the learning and lives of students at the school.

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

1. Embed agreed teaching strategies consistently across the school to deliver higher levels of student engagement and challenge.
2. Strategically build leadership actions and strategies that support and challenge staff to build a connected and coherent teaching and learning program to raise levels of student achievement.
3. Use multiple measures of data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the agreed teaching and engagement strategies on student growth and achievement.

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



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Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

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Jo Meredith  
PRINCIPAL  
REYNELLA SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson