Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Gawler Primary School

Conducted in July 2019

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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzeczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lorna Fenech, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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 groups
                       School Support Officers (SSOs)
                       Student groups
                       Teachers

School context

Gawler Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 55kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 194 students. Enrolment has been steady over the past 5 years. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 191.

The school has an ICSEA score of 978, and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, 10% students with a verified disability, 27% of families eligible for school card assistance, 1% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background and 4 students in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 1st year of their 2nd tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal and a literacy improvement coordinator. There are 12 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   Develop a consistent whole-school approach to the development of students' understanding of learning that supports their engagement in quality conversations about personal learning, progress and achievement.

Direction 2   Build the capacity of teachers to develop and advance the implementation of whole-school agreements and key pedagogical approaches by aligning Professional Development Plans and SIP priorities.

Direction 3   Build the capacity of staff and students to participate authentically in the design of assessment, determining the associated benchmark measures and establishing success criteria in ways that motivate students to achieve their personal best.

Direction 4   Promote constructive feedback loops between teachers, students and parents across all classes and year levels that support the school and families to work together to maximise student learning.

Direction 5   Explore and implement approaches that integrate and embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour effectively into daily classroom teaching and learning.

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

The previous ESR directions have guided the school improvement agenda since the last review with a tight focus on literacy and numeracy. Significant professional learning has been a feature at the school in the last three years, with all staff accessing professional learning linked to the previous directions. Staff participation in whole-school numeracy training has built teacher capacity and understanding with its methodology reflected in maths lessons. The appointment of a literacy coordinator further supported school improvement.

Work on the previous directions has enabled the school to collect and interrogate data as part of whole-school practice. The use of a data collection schedule and a data wall has refined and produced cohesion

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around data. The increased interrogation of data has enabled students to be identified and supported through evidence-based interventions.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

The panel found that all teachers are engaging with a wide range of achievement and growth data, supported by a published data collection schedule. Leadership have aligned staff meeting structures to facilitate the opportunity for staff to meet regularly and interrogate data as part of ongoing practice.

Staff reviewed the previous Site Improvement Plan (SIP), analysed data and collectively engaged in the formation of their current plan. Staff had opportunity to revisit and unpack the plan in term 1, which also supported new staff to the school.

Although membership of the leadership team has recently changed the panel felt there is a collective and clear understanding of what they want to achieve to improve outcomes at Gawler Primary School. This was further evidenced through conversations with community members and staff. Professional Development program (PDP) plans are linked to the SIP for both teachers and support staff, and professional learning supports the SIP goals in each PDP plan. Teaching staff have self-assessed their practice against the SIP as part of a comprehensive cycle of monitoring and review.

The panel evidenced varying degrees of staff connectedness with the SIP with some staff unclear of the focus. Some staff are not connecting the current focus of oral language and 'jolly learning' to the wider SIP goals. Although PDP's are linked to the SIP, not all staff have had an observation or associated feedback observations, which the panel felt would provide further opportunity to link teacher practice directly to the SIP. Given the high percentage of early career teachers at the school, the panel felt a coaching model would support this work.

The focus needs to be on clear structures and processes to strategically connect teachers to SIP goals. Monitoring and observing teacher practice, explicitly linked to the narrow focus of the SIP, in conjunction with a coaching model, will provide rigour and support a cycle of continuous improvement which will positively impact classroom practice.

Direction 1   **Build staff capacity and connectedness to the SIP through a strategic coaching model which provides focused observations and feedback for improvement.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

The panel evidenced that teachers had a good understanding of the Australian Curriculum with most teachers using pre-assessment to refine planning, and post-assessment to track student growth. All staff track data to identify students but the panel found little evidence of how this was being used to inform student learning as differentiated lessons were not evidenced as consistent practice. All students have been assessed using Big Ideas in Number to identify gaps in learning and structured intervention groups to address individual needs.

Whole-school consistent and embedded practice in wellbeing enables a strong focus on learning which was evidenced through observations and discussions with staff, students and the community. This shift of focus onto learning has contributed to growth outcomes in NAPLAN reading and numeracy. All identified students have a current individual learning plan to support and direct their learning. SSOs deliver a mix of in-class and group support as well as providing quality, evidenced based intervention. A record book captures support for each identified student and is used for communication with staff and evidence for funding accountability.

Most students are aware of their reading or Lexile level but the panel found little evidence of explicit individual learning goals across all classes. A few classes used goals well but in other classes, where goals were evidenced, they were of a general nature of 'don't be distracted by others' or 'finish work', and did not provide the next steps in learning. Half of students, with whom the panel spoke, indicated that their work was 'too easy' and felt they needed to be challenged and given harder work to push and stretch their learning. Tasks evidenced in bookwork and through discussions and observations provided limited opportunity to achieve higher grades. Jolly Learning is currently streamed across the school which provides a level of differentiation, however, the heavy reliance on worksheets indicated that lessons were of 'one-size- fits-all' within the different groupings.

The panel felt that increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would enable stretch and challenge for all students to become routine practice. Supporting staff through a strategic coaching model would further strengthen capacity.

Direction 2   **For all students to receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge, strengthen teachers' capacity in learning design and use of data for intentional teaching.**

CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

To what extent does the school provide conditions for effective student learning?

Students report a sense of being safe, having pride in their school and value their strong relationships with staff, reporting that staff care about them and see them as individuals. Governing Council representatives reflected that staff care about all students. The panel evidenced a strong culture of learning which was verified and supported by a community who commented on a historical shift in this area.

Students are supported within classes by clear visual prompts. Some classes are using 'bump it up' walls to show students aspirational examples of quality work. Students reported finding these examples useful as it demonstrated how they could improve their work. The panel felt there was opportunity to make this an expectation of practice across all classes.

Gawler Primary School has structured opportunities for student leadership but this predominately of an organisational nature. Implementing and embedding processes which provide all students with regular opportunities to input into their learning will deepen their ownership, and promote their sense of themselves as learners. The panel evidenced pockets of good practice where some teachers share learning intentions and success criteria but this was not consistent across all classes.

Students report wanting more ownership of their learning and articulated the need for success criteria to help them monitor their progress and inform them of their next steps in learning. A few teachers are using assessment rubrics but not all of these explicitly showed the next steps in learning. Some students report valuing teacher feedback, and conferencing whilst engaged in a task improved their outcomes, but this was not evidenced as consistent practice and was identified by some staff as an area for improvement.

Students at Gawler Primary School have the opportunity to become partners in their own learning by being provided with consistency and clarity in what they are to learn, the purpose of their learning and how they can be successful. When teachers discuss and collaboratively develop success criteria with their students, and provide targeted and timely feedback, then impact on learning is heightened.

Direction 3   **Enable all students to monitor and assess their learning through conferencing to set individual learning goals, establish clear success criteria and receive targeted and timely feedback.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Whole-school consistent and embedded practice in wellbeing enables a strong focus on learning which was evidenced through observations and discussions with staff, students and the community. Students feel a strong sense of belonging at Gawler Primary School and report excellent relationships with staff. A consistent approach to behaviour has resulted in few incidents reported. Students are confident learners and display a strong sense of pride in the school.

The principal is highly visible within the school and works closely with the Governing Council to build and further strengthen the positive culture.

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

Direction 1   Build staff capacity and connectedness to the SIP through a strategic coaching model which provides focused observations and feedback for improvement.

Direction 2   For all students to receive differentiated learning with appropriate stretch and challenge, strengthen teachers' capacity in learning design and use of data for intentional teaching.

Direction 3   Enable all students to monitor and assess their learning through conferencing to set individual learning goals, establish clear success criteria and receive targeted and timely feedback.

Based on the school's current performance, Gawler Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.

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PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
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GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

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 2018, 42% of year 1 and 36% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and a decline for year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of year 3 students, 79% of year 5 students and 69% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change, and for year 5, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 57% to 79% respectively.

For 2018 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 29% of year 3, 32% of year 5 and 15% 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 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 75%, or 6 out of 8, students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 25%, or 1 out of 4, students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 3 students, 62% of year 5 students and 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 21% of year 3, 9% of year 5 and 15% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 67%, or 2 out of 3, students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 100%, or 1 out of 1 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.