EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Brinkworth Primary School

Conducted in March 2017

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Lissa Hutter, Review Principal.

School context

Brinkworth Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 150kms from the Adelaide CBD. The current enrolment is 23 students, averaging 27 students over the past five years. The school has an ICSEA score of 955, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2 (8.7%) Aboriginal students, 3 (13%) students with disabilities, no students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), no children in care, and 3 (13%) families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 1st tenure.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and challenged in their learning?

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

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

To what extent are students engaged and challenged in their learning?

Approximately 60% of students surveyed indicated to the Review Panel that they were surprised by the grade allocation they received at the end of the 2016 school year. When asked by the Review Panel during the ESR why they were surprised, explanations included the following: "I was surprised because I thought I would get Ds as that's what I got before"; "I was kind of surprised because I don't usually get Bs"; "I got mainly Bs, usually I only get 3 or 4 Bs"; "I got Bs in subjects that I'm not very good at". Student responses indicated a perception that grade allocations were almost a predetermined outcome with an acceptance that they would receive the same grade each semester. Students also indicated that they saw effort, that is, working harder, as the key to improving grade allocations.

Several students said they were not surprised; one student stated: "I got the usual, but I don't know why I get those grades". One student stated that they received As for subjects that they liked; another student indicated that they were not surprised by their grade allocation as they had been working at an average level and could have achieved more if they had improved their work output.

The school has worked to promote students' reflections about themselves as learners; this includes a detailed review by each student about themselves in their individual student report. The personal reflections via the report, however, were not mentioned to the Review Panel by any student during the ESR. Further work in this area will strengthen and support student ownership of their learning and provide opportunities for students to fully engage in all areas of learning. The regular collection, collation, sharing and review of perception data regarding student engagement can be a powerful tool to progress this work. The Teaching for Effective Learning (TƒEL) surveys and compass would be valuable in progressing and embedding perception data as a tool for learning.

Over 50% of students interviewed indicated that most of their work was easy; students overall identified that learning a language and maths were the most challenging areas of learning. Staff indicated during the review that intellectual stretch and challenge was mainly initiated by students themselves around their areas of specific interest. The staff stated that they had worked hard on encouraging students to develop an understanding that making mistakes was a valuable part of learning, thereby beginning the building of

student resilience and perseverance. Staff also indicated that developing a culture where students were always confident to 'have a go' and to take intellectual risks was an area for further development. The school has begun some work in the area of Growth Mindset. Strategic planning across the school calendar to embed this work will support student learning dispositions across the school.

Staff identified a strategy to improve intellectual challenge: for all students to have an individual learning plan developed collaboratively with the student, parent and teacher. The staff stated that each plan would focus on areas of interest specific to each student, thus building challenge from a strengths perspective, thereby providing students with more control over their learning and what they need to do to achieve their stated outcomes. This may well be a positive entry point for staff and students.

It was stated that individual learning goals for students were set with the Principal and then teachers supported students to enact them. Staff stated that they were looking at introducing weekly organisational targets and goals in the classroom. Learning goals and targets were discussed as potential areas for development in mathematics.

Research has indicated that students who set their own goals for learning and targets tend to achieve more than when working on goals set for them by the teachers. Individual learning goals and targets motivate students to become more active participants in the learning process, they can identify what is important to them and they can become independent learners.

Having only two class teachers (1.0FTE junior primary and a 0.8FTE upper primary) in 2017, the school is now well-placed to develop a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch and challenge through the development of transforming tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points. Further work on the strategic implementation and embedding of goal-setting for learning will strengthen student learning dispositions across the school.

It is important that this work is carefully planned, all stakeholders are consulted, expert support is sourced and the work is embedded over time, irrespective of staff turnover. Small schools often face high rates of staff turnover resulting in effective pedagogical practices being addressed but not embedded. Students will benefit from an ongoing, whole-school approach to this important work.

Direction 1
Develop congruence regarding effective pedagogical practices including the use of TfEL to strengthen and embed a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch, challenge and student influence on learning.

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The Principal reported that being a small site, staff constantly self-review both formally and informally. She stated that it had been a challenge to engage and involve all staff in data collection, analysis and feedback to students. This was further complicated through having three part-time permanent teachers appointed to the school, which resulted in the two upper primary teachers working at alternate sites for varying amounts of time, thus providing challenges to consistency and congruence in communication and decision-making.

The Principal was committed to using data to inform instruction and, subsequently, provide feedback for learning and, thus, began undertaking the assessments of students herself. However, on reflection, she determined that staff saw this as a disruption and they did not own the data or the feedback.

Opportunities were then provided for the teachers to engage in student assessment by releasing them to directly observe the students as they were undertaking assessments. Teachers were provided with additional time to work through the assessments with the students within a short space of time following completion. Teachers made observational notes which were then stored in the students' assessment folder.

Next steps included releasing two teachers to attend professional learning around the assessments and the resources that would further assist student learning and build teacher capacity to provide timely and relevant feedback.

The concentrated and strategic approach to this aspect of assessment for learning has resulted in a significantly high percentage of students achieving at a very high level in both assessments. The observations also resulted in providing adjustments that reflected the specific learning needs of several

individual students.

The school allocates a pupil free day at the end of each year to follow-up on review processes undertaken throughout the year and to complete an in-depth review of individual student growth over twelve months. A strategic approach by the Principal has been the inclusion of the Australian Curriculum Coordinators and the Coordinator, Primary Australian Curriculum (CPAC), to provide additional perspectives and insights to data and subsequent planning implications. Students across the school were mapped using the following criteria: no growth, backward growth and forward growth. This process supported staff to identify priority areas for action.

Staff ownership of self-review processes could be further strengthened with teaching staff undertaking responsibility for the implementation, documentation and management of assessments for the students in their care. When teachers and students discuss results from assessments, common understandings of learning priorities are developed and students are provided with authentic feedback for learning.

It is evident that the school has a high commitment to self-review and is using data to inform instruction with considerable success. The current self-review processes may benefit from the mapping of priority aspects for review throughout the year. In this way, formal monitoring and self-review becomes a cyclic and embedded practice. Priorities from self-review processes can then become the focal points for the Site Improvement Plan (SIP). It is especially important in a small school that strategic priorities resulting from self-review processes are clearly identified, agreed to and achievable within a given timeframe.

Direction 2
Strengthen staff capacity and ownership of self-review processes through active involvement and participation at all stages of implementation and review, including the management of individual student datasets.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Teachers, via a survey conducted during the External School Review (ESR), and reflecting on a unit of work, indicated that feedback for learning was the aspect they were least confident in. During teacher interviews held throughout the ESR, staff commented that they sit with students and go through their work, and indicated that feedback was frequently written and could be found on almost every page.

Observations from staff indicated that students did not appear to retain feedback provided, or remember feedback on that same aspect of learning from the previous year. Staff stated that, while a range of review tools were used, they had observed that when student work was returned, the first thing the students did was to go to the end to see what grade had been allocated. Teachers determined that it would be necessary to 'break the culture of flicking for the grade'.

Staff also discussed the possibility of developing rubrics as a pre-assessment tool where students work with the teacher to develop the assessment criteria prior to the task. Students who know and understand the learning intentions, and are actively involved in self-assessment processes at all stages of learning, are then able to become active partners in their own learning. In this way, students will be well-positioned to understand why they receive a particular grade and know what they need to do to improve.

During the staff meeting run by the Review Officer as part of the ESR, staff analysed the triangulation of literacy datasets, which included NAPLAN Reading and Writing, PAT-R, A-E Grade allocations in English, and Running Records datasets.

Discussions included the identification of apparent anomalies between the datasets and A-E allocations. Staff determined that future work in the allocation of grades needs to include processes that involve moderation of work samples and triangulation of data.

Staff then discussed specific challenges for staff in small schools where they are often teaching four year levels in the one classroom. For many small schools this can mean that there are only one or two students at a specific year level. The possibility of regularly working with peers in neighbouring schools who are in similar circumstances was discussed. It was noted that it would be beneficial to develop common understanding, so that moderation processes resulted in students at one school receiving the same grade allocation as a student in a neighbouring site for similar work samples. The Partnership has time allocated

for moderation throughout the year; this could be a very useful starting point for strengthening common understandings across similar sites.

Effective moderation is underpinned by teachers knowing and understanding the requirements of the Australian Curriculum Content and the Assessment Standards. Every student has the right to access the curriculum pertinent to their year level, thus, careful planning to meet the diverse learning needs of students in small schools is both essential and complex.

Planning for multi-year level classes across the Australian Curriculum is an area for development across the school. It is important that the curriculum is coherent from the perspective of the learner as they progress through the school. This work may be further strengthened by working collaboratively with like schools and seeking support from DECD personnel in the design, development and implementation stages.

Direction 3
Develop effective planning processes for multi-year level classes across the Australian Curriculum and provide opportunities for staff to develop consistency in moderation with like schools.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Brinkworth Primary School.

Brinkworth Primary School has high levels of school community engagement. Effective practice in School Community Partnerships was evident at the school. The commitment, engagement and support of the community have been influenced by the strong relationships the school has built with the community. In particular, the panel noted the high level of commitment from a range of people within the community who donate their time and skills to provide access to learning opportunities that enrich the curriculum. Examples include: an SSO working with students, supported by a community member, in the development and maintenance of the front garden; parents donating their time and resources to ensure the students have the opportunity to participate in Wakakirri; the community fundraising to maintain the school swimming pool and ensuring pool safety compliance requirements are met. Evidence of these practices was verified by the Principal, students, parents and staff during the ESR process.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Brinkworth Primary School is to be commended for the manner in which it has developed a culture of improvement across the school; the recent PAT-R and PAT-M results have demonstrated growth in student achievement above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context.

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

1. Develop congruence regarding effective pedagogical practices including the use of TfEL to strengthen and embed a whole-site approach to intellectual stretch, challenge and student influence on learning.

2. Strengthen staff capacity and ownership of self-review processes through active involvement and participation at all stages of implementation and review, including the management of individual student datasets.

3. Develop effective planning processes for multi-year level classes across the Australian Curriculum and provide opportunities for staff to develop consistency in moderation with like schools.

Based on the school's current performance, Brinkworth Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Heather Grace

Heather Grace
PRINCIPAL
BRINKWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Brinkworth 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:

- Parent Complaint Policy
- Child Protection Curriculum
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Performance Development Plans
- Volunteer Policy
- Work, Health and Safety Part 6 (1)
- ICT Security Policy.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the 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 2016 was 89.8%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Brinkworth Primary School from 2012-2016.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2012 to 2016, 80%, or 12 of 15 Year 1 students, and 68%, or 13 of 19 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

From 2012 to 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 65%, or 13 of 20 Year 3 students, 62%, or 13 of 21 Year 5 students, and none of the 3 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

From 2012 to 2016, 35%, or 7 of 20 Year 3, and 29%, or 6 of 21 Year 5 students, and none of the 3 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 2 of 2 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 for the years 2014-2016.

Numeracy

From 2012 to 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 70%, or 14 of 20 Year 3 students, 62%, or 13 of 21 Year 5 students, and 1 of 3 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

From 2012 to 2016, 30%, or 6 of 20 Year 3, 19%, or 4 of 21 of Year 5, and none of the 3 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 2 of 2 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in years 2014-2016.