

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR COBDOGLA 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 Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sheree Mader, 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 Cobdogla 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 92.8%, which is marginally below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Cobdogla Primary School is a small rural school situated 221kms northeast of the Adelaide CBD in South Australia's Riverland. The enrolment in 2016 is 97 students distributed across four classes. In 2015, the enrolment was 94 students, steadily increasing from 70 students in 2012. The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score in 2014 was 946.

The school population includes 5.3% Aboriginal students, 7.4% Students with Disabilities, 18.1% students of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) background, ≤1% under the Guardianship of the Minister, and 33% of students eligible for School Card assistance, which represents an increase over the past five years.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his fourth year at the school.

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, 28% of Year 1 and 44% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result at Year 2 represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of Year 3 students, 75% of Year 5 students, and 100% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average and for Year 7, it represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards, from 100% in 2013 to 75% in 2015.

For Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading in 2015, the school achieved within the range of results of similar students and, at Year 7, achieved higher results than similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 47% of Year 3 and 33% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, no students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015 and no students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of Year 3 students, 88% of Year 5 students and 100% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline, and for Year 7 an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 has been downwards, from 100% in 2013 to 80% in 2015.

For Years 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy in 2015, the school achieved higher results than similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 47% of Year 3, 25% of Year 5 and 44% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 40% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on two key questions from one focus area of the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching:

- To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?
- To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

The School's Improvement Plan has specified over the past few years that teachers will differentiate the curriculum to ensure success for all in the two key priority areas: literacy and numeracy. Targets include specific achievement outcomes, data collection to track student progress accurately, and shared programming across the year levels. The school also has regular review processes in place to identify students needing extra support at each level of intervention and inform the allocation of resources. This was confirmed by parents, who spoke of students receiving the support needed and being able to approach teachers and the Principal any time to discuss issues or concerns.

On the basis of initial exploration, the Review Panel examined how teachers at the school differentiate their teaching by planning and designing learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students.

In support of achieving the SIP targets and outcomes, staff have been involved in a range of professional learning activities, over the last two to three years, with a focus on improving pedagogy, particularly in literacy teaching and, more recently, in the teaching of mathematics.

Teachers are generally willing to try new approaches to improve their practice and student learning, and the Review Panel was provided with evidence of some aspects of each of the professional learning approaches being integrated into classroom practice. Teacher reflections, for example, indicated they have adopted mental routines, real-world maths problem-solving activities, questioning cycles, and goal-setting strategies to cater for different student abilities within their classrooms.

In examining the students' work samples, and through discussions with them, the Review Panel also observed examples of these approaches being implemented. Middle and Upper Primary students, for example, were able to talk about complex maths problem-solving tasks they had undertaken, and shared

with the Review Panel some of their personal and learning goals. Students in the early years also shared work samples that suggested problem-solving and maths skills, based on contemporary pedagogical approaches, are being implemented in age-appropriate ways.

This initial implementation of various pedagogical approaches, drawn from evidence-based programs, provides a good foundation to further develop and embed rigorous learning into daily practice. In particular, the school will benefit from identifying one or two key priorities from the SIP for staff to explore deeply, individually and as a group, and embed fully into teaching and learning programs over a specified timeframe of one or more terms.

Furthermore, the co-construction of a conceptual overview or map of how each key focus strategy, such as formative assessment, goal-setting or questioning techniques, connect with and support other SIP-identified priorities and strategies, will enable staff to see the inter-relatedness of smaller elements within the bigger picture. Within this approach the school can also explore ways to:

- strengthen links between the SIP priorities and targets and teachers' PDP outcomes and targets, and
- develop links between SIP priorities and targets and student personal learning goals.

Direction 1

Build teacher capacity for the further implementation and embedding of key pedagogical approaches, and the achievement of SIP targets, by aligning Professional Development Plans with identified student learning outcomes.

The SIP also aims to assist students to be successful in their learning, articulate higher-order thinking and questioning skills, and use common language when discussing learning.

Students value their school and see it as a safe and enjoyable learning environment. They were enthusiastic about sharing their learning with the Review Panel, and generally expressed a good understanding of what the teacher expected them to do for specific tasks and classroom activities. Most students indicated they really enjoy tasks and activities that challenge them and view this as a positive learning process. Most students also reported finding the work they do as being 'easy' to 'just about right'.

In support of shared programming, and as there is generally only one teacher per year level, it will be beneficial for the school to increase the opportunities for staff to plan collaboratively and build collective responsibility and ownership of Reception to Year 7 programs and approaches. In particular, this applies to the development of higher-order thinking and intellectual challenge that the school identifies as critical to the development of higher-band proficiencies and effective learners.

A strategy the school has on its SIP to continuously improve teacher pedagogy is the de-privatisation of student learning through the engagement of teachers in regular peer classroom observations. The Review Panel view this as a highly effective approach within the school's context, as it will reinforce accountability and collective responsibility for taking action to address identified areas of improvement. As a constructive progression towards classroom observations that will stimulate change in supportive and collegial ways, the school may wish to consider allocating a dedicated session, once or twice a term, for everyone to share a successful strategy or teaching approach and to seek support or ideas for meeting a teaching challenge. The focus of these sessions could relate directly to the identified SIP priority being developed that term, and simultaneously aim to build the capacity of all teachers to create supportive, challenging and critically reflective classrooms in which students experience sustained, relevant and rigorous learning.

Direction 2

Further promote a positive culture of improvement by providing regular opportunities for teachers to share and collaboratively generate effective evidence-based approaches that promote rigorous learning environments for all students.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

In addition to the provision of summative assessments, the SIP specifies that teachers will 'provide and develop formative assessment through the use of rubrics, peer observation, evaluation and goal-setting' strategies.

Based on teachers' individual reflections and the discussion with staff about the concepts and implementation of summative and formative assessment, there is an opportunity for the school to unpack these notions further, and build capacity to utilise success criteria and assessment tools consistently across the school. Teachers, for example, spoke honestly of a lingering uncertainty when assigning A-E grades for student achievement against the Australian Curriculum standards. Consequently, parent and student groups also spoke of an A or B as being unattainable, not because they believe the child cannot do the work, but because what constitutes an A or B is unclear, and lacks transparent benchmarks to measure progress and improve personal learning achievements against the standards. All members of the school community, but particularly students, will benefit from seeing and knowing what the "A", "B" and "C" standard looks like in a specific learning task or activity, and how to achieve the desired grade.

This presents a real opportunity for the staff to build on discussions of moderation and create useful tools, such as continuums, rubrics and learning and assessment guides, that link explicitly with learning intentions, success criteria, and students' personalised learning goals.

Teachers currently provide an overview of what the expected learning is, and how the task should be completed. Student comments, however, suggest there is less emphasis on, or understanding of, why they are learning aspects of the curriculum. In other words, the relevance of learning is not clear to them. What this suggests is that sharing, developing, and negotiating the success criteria with students is a valuable next step that will help focus student attention on the relevance or purpose of their learning, and what they can do to improve their achievement grade within a particular task or unit of work.

In particular, the involvement of students in authentic ways in the design of assessments, and the development of any marking guides or rubrics that explicitly outline the purpose and success criteria, will support students in making informed decisions about where to put their time and energy for optimal achievement and progress. Further, it will enable students to monitor and evaluate their own progress towards higher standards and expectations, as well as providing a tool for teachers to apply A-E standards, and guidance for parents to support their child's improvement efforts.

Parents believe there is a good culture across the school built on respect and that the learning environments are supportive. The feedback observed in workbooks and provided to students verbally confirms that teachers promote the wellbeing of students through positive and affirming comments, such as, 'you worked hard', 'you are getting more confident', 'terrific job', prizes and stickers. Constructive feedback, together with affirming feedback, helps students know how to improve, and promotes intrinsic motivation. Within this context, there is an opportunity for the school to generate constructive feedback by engaging students in discussions about:

- their personal learning data, and
- how this can be used to set personal targets and goals for learning against standards.

This will increase student influence in their learning and move the school toward achieving the outcomes outlined in the SIP. That is, students being able to give, receive and understand explicit feedback in relation to their learning, and build their capacity to set realistic but challenging goals for personal learning and progress in collaboration with the teacher.

Direction 3

Increase student influence in learning by building the capacity of teachers and students to benchmark learning and achievement against the SEA, and engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes in supportive and explicit ways.

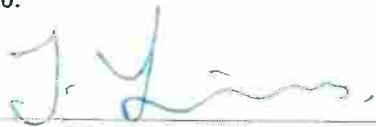
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Cobdogla Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. The school uses self-review processes regularly and strategically to determine the impact school strategies and practices have on student achievement, and effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and resourcing for targeted interventions.

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

1. Build teacher capacity for the further implementation and embedding of key pedagogical approaches, and the achievement of SIP targets, by aligning Professional Development Plans with identified student learning outcomes.
2. Further promote a positive culture of improvement by providing regular opportunities for teachers to share and collaboratively generate effective evidence-based approaches that promote rigorous learning environments for all students.
3. Increase student influence in learning by building the capacity of teachers and students to benchmark learning and achievement against the SEA, and engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes in supportive and explicit ways.

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




Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY


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.



Trevor Broughton
PRINCIPAL
COBDOGLA PRIMARY SCHOOL


Governing Council Chairperson