

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Swallowcliffe P-7 School

Conducted in September 2020



# 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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Conradi, Review Principal.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant 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 representatives
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Swallowcliffe P-7 School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 39kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 467. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 419. The local partnership is Peachey.

The school has an ICSEA score of 890, and is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 16% Aboriginal students, 35% students with disabilities, 9% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 79% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 7<sup>th</sup> year of tenure. There are 7 members of the leadership team, including a deputy principal, 3 senior leaders and 2 coordinators.

There are 35.5 FTE teachers including 6 in the early years of their career.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Support all students to achieve at higher levels by using the most recent literacy and numeracy assessment information to inform future planning about the strategic implementation of evidence-based whole-school approaches.
- Direction 2** Increase the percentage of students demonstrating and sustaining the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by systematically analysing agreed assessment information to identify starting points for all students and to inform targeted teaching and learning design, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- Direction 3** Ensure the school's information and data management systems enable leaders, teachers and support staff to share data, analyse achievement patterns and track individual growth over time at all year levels.
- Direction 4** Enable all students to be engaged and empowered as successful learners by implementing congruent approaches that create and support safe conditions for rigorous learning from the early years to year 7.
- Direction 5** Raise student achievement by building teacher capacity through ongoing performance and development processes that are aligned with the school's priorities and supported by a planned approach to professional learning.
- Direction 6** Ensure that raising student achievement is central to the improvement processes in the school by articulating the evidence-based vision for teaching and learning from which decisions will be made.
- Direction 7** Engage the governing council and other parent groups in discussions about directions for the school, including strategies to enable more families to be involved as partners in their child's learning.

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

The current principal has been in the position for 7 years. Intentional actions were taken to address the previous ESR directions, including:

To address a whole-school approach to the learning design and assessment of literacy and numeracy, the school worked to engage the literacy and numeracy site improvement plan (SIP) priorities. Whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements were developed, and comprehensive intervention mapping/strategies implemented. A common learning design template is being trialled.

In relation to tracking and monitoring student growth over time, the school adopted an electronic data recording system which is accessible to all staff. Team meetings are dedicated to analysing data, and supported through literacy/numeracy chats with the deputy principal. A site-based student review team focuses on the intervention of Wave 2-3 students through dataset mapping, and uses data with identified staff.

Students are engaged and empowered by implementing appropriate conditions for rigorous learning, supported by the Berry Street social skills program. The development of the School Mission – Community Agreements and Pillars was evident and is actioned by staff and students.

Emphasis on Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation strategies – learning intentions, success criteria and transforming tasks – exists across the school, with strengths of action appearing in some teaching teams or classes. A statement of practice for literacy, numeracy and wellbeing for learners is regularly reviewed and refined. Building teacher capacity is done through ongoing performance and development (PDP) aligned to priorities/professional learning. A professional development and accountability calendar is evident, and clear line management structures and leadership roles and responsibilities now exist.

The governing council was involved in forming the directions of the school, including strategies to engage families.

Impact of the previous directions, from teacher comments, includes a change in thinking about interacting with students with a focus on building relationships. Shared planning through directed teaching and learning is valued. There is a greater understanding and action towards building a culture of learning that caters for a differentiated approach for all students.

Some elements of the previous directions are still to be addressed and actioned in conjunction with the strategies identified in the SIP and specific supplementary action plans.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

Improve Practice and Monitor Impact: How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The review panel recognised that the leadership team offers high levels of support and guidance for all staff, and regularly meets to discuss the progress of the curriculum in line with the SIP targets. Leadership team responsibilities are clearly defined, concentrating on managing all aspects of the improvement plan. Implementation of the teacher executive group provides a channel between the leadership team and teaching body, with the focus on teaching and learning. Staff recognise the level of accountability and acknowledge that changes in practice increased due to SIP achievement data, initiatives and their implementation. NAPLAN trend data over 2 review periods demonstrated low growth rates. The next steps to consider in the SIP review cycle may include adjustments to the targets and challenges of practice to ensure improvement.

A variety of organisational structures and systems observed improved the tracking, monitoring and analysing progress of achievement data for phonics and reading. Streamlining school services officers' (SSO) roles and responsibilities to conduct Wave 2 intervention support was successful. A whole-school approach in curriculum and wellbeing focus (phonics and Berry Street social skills) has been strategic in the planning and links with SIP priorities and challenge of practice. Staff agreements were reached collaboratively and consensually.

Leadership team members reported the improvement in teacher interaction and dialogue related to learning, along with a greater deprivatisation of practice amongst teachers across the school. Introduction of professional learning communities (PLCs) and PDP meetings that centre on improved teaching practices has been a catalyst for raising the profile of literacy through phonics, reading and writing initiatives.

The impact of SIP initiatives and actions include development of data-informed practice with changes actioned, and a collective and cohesive atmosphere amongst staff and growth in literacy achievement. The school is able to exert more effort on leaders working along-side teachers through professional conversations, observations and demonstration, to drive improvement. Consideration could be given to adopting a sprint model approach to ensure SIP targets and challenges of practice are regularly evaluated, and adjustments made to achieve the long-term SIP goals and success criteria is met.

**Direction 1     Strengthen the focus on improved student learning through quality school improvement planning with a particular focus on challenge of practice and success criteria.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

Effective pedagogy: How effectively are teachers using evidence based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

There is a diversity of learners within classes, and structures, systems and programs are offered to support the needs of all students. The common goal of literacy created good collaboration and commitment amongst the year level teams. Teachers recognised a proven phonemic awareness assessment program and a scaffolded writing approach (Seven Steps) as positive strategies in assisting with their teaching of literacy across the school. Regular evaluation of the programs' progress through a learning sprint model is to be considered.

The school began a comprehensive intervention program with a specific focus on support for Wave 2 and 3 students. Intervention practices are linked to the challenge of practice. This targeted teaching, using evidence-based, effective and explicit early literacy intervention programs (eg MiniLit and MultiLit) for individual and small groups, is conducted by both teachers and SSOs. The next steps to consider is expanding this support to Wave 1 student cohorts.

Differentiated teaching strategies varied according to year levels across the school with pockets of strength in some year level teams. A genuine bias towards differentiating teaching for intervention shows in some examples of extension work for mid- and high-level achievers. Examples provided included 'teachable moments' in early years' classes to formal programs such as the integrated 'Business Enterprise' work in the senior school. Sixty-three percent of teachers rated their ability to differentiate learning at a low to medium extent. This is an area for further development. The school should target differentiated learning to improve the standard of educational achievement and high-band achievement levels to support the learning stretch for all students.

Formative assessment processes varied amongst teachers. The use of learning intentions, success criteria and student learning goals were not consistent. Future plans for the school are to consider ways to ensure consistency of use of all elements of the formative process.

**Direction 2**    **To meet the learning needs of students, ensure that teachers consistently plan differentiated teaching opportunities that includes the formative assessment cycle with particular focus on student achievement through the related effect size growth for all students.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

At Swallowcliffe P-7 School the influence of previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. The school's planning processes are proven and targeted. Teacher and leadership practice is positively impacted by successful systems that build capacity. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning.

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

**Direction 1**     **Strengthen the focus on improved student learning through quality school improvement planning with a particular focus on challenge of practice and success criteria.**

**Direction 2**     **To meet the learning needs of students, ensure that teachers consistently plan differentiated teaching opportunities that includes the formative assessment cycle with particular focus on student achievement through the related effect size growth for all students.**

Based on the school's current performance, Swallowcliffe P-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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# 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 2019, 13% of year 1 and 32% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for year 1 and an improvement for year 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 55% of year 3 students, 52% of year 5 students and 50% 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 2019, years 3 and 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than and for year 7, within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 11% of year 3, 8% of year 5 and 16% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or 2 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 75%, or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 57% of year 3 students, 42% of year 5 students and 41% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within and for year 5, lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 9% of year 3, 4% of year 5 and 3% 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 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 1 out of 2 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.