

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Hallett Cove South Primary School

Conducted in September 2018



Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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 Grzeczowski, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Nicole Cawley, Review Principal.

School context

Hallett Cove South Primary School is located in the southern coastal suburbs of Adelaide, approximately 25kms from the CBD. The school has experienced declining enrolments and currently has 126 students.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1040, and is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 25% students with disabilities, 7% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), no children in care, and 25% of families eligible for School Card assistance. The school includes 2 special classes: a reception to year 2 and year 3 to 7 class.

The school leadership team consists of a principal contracted to the end of 2018 and a student wellbeing leader.

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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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

Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

School Community Partnerships: How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?

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

Students at Hallett Cove South Primary School report a strong sense of belonging and feel supported by staff; they appreciate the small size of the school, as it provides a sense of community with everybody knowing each other. There is a high percentage of part-time teachers, which provides a challenge for consistency of pedagogy for students' learning.

The review panel asked students how they knew how they were going with their learning; common responses showed a reliance on their teacher to tell them, or finding work easy. Most students stated they receive verbal feedback rather than written, of which the panel found little evidence in student workbooks. Students commented that they are not confident in knowing how they are tracking, and all stated they would like to be more informed on the 'next steps' to improve. Students identified with a disability had clear, individual learning plans, which were collaboratively constructed.

In the special classes the panel observed teachers shared and referred back to clear learning intentions. Lessons were individualised to support each learner, and each student had their own learning goal. Teachers and support staff collaborated effectively and worked as a team to support the learning needs of students. There were clear expectations of behaviour and explicit questioning to assess and guide teaching. The panel saw integration of some students from the special class into some mainstream

lessons; there were also examples of a reverse integration process. There is opportunity to explore pedagogy evidenced in the special classes to provide a coherent approach across all classes.

In the upper primary class there is a strong focus on critical and creative thinking, which supports students by providing an engaging curriculum through project and inquiry-based learning in an integrated curriculum delivered through Google Classroom. Students enjoyed the connected learning opportunities and felt their ownership of learning tasks is helping them prepare for high school. The teacher provided clarity of task and clear outcomes for self-assessment through the use of rubrics. Students enjoyed the opportunity to assess their own work as it provided motivation and a reference point that continually linked to the task. Whilst the panel viewed this as an area of strength, there is great opportunity to further develop student influence by co-constructing tasks and assessment rubrics with students.

Staff reflected that they wanted to provide more stretch and challenge, but felt that behaviour was interfering with teaching and learning within the classroom. This was a recurring theme reported regularly throughout the external review process. Staff felt this was further exacerbated by the number of part-time staff. There is an opportunity to collaboratively review behaviour strategies, providing a consistent approach to behaviour and firmly shift the focus onto learning.

Students wanted more stretch in their learning, and believe their teacher could assist this by providing more strategies, setting more challenge and letting them work through and problem-solve. Student influence and ongoing development of a language for learning for all students will further strengthen student learning dispositions.

During lesson observations the panel found little consistency of practice in literacy and numeracy across the school. There were pockets of good practice where students were aware of clear learning intentions and lessons with multiple entry points, but this was not demonstrated regularly. Most lessons lacked differentiation and had little opportunity for stretch and challenge. There is a possibility of developing a cohesive approach to explicit teaching, providing scaffolded learning for all students, and reducing the reliance of worksheets in some classes. Staff are involved in a partnership moderation process, and further opportunities for staff to work collaboratively on moderation will build teacher confidence and provide rigour.

Direction 1

Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students.

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Conversations with students made it clear that older students were aware of their learning goal. Of these older students, most reflected that the goal was made early in the year and had not been changed. Students reflected that goal-setting was an individual process, which occurred without teacher conferencing. Examples of goals were: "put my hand up more and challenge myself", "speed up my writing" and "finish my stories". Many students who the panel conversed with were not aware of how they could achieve their goal or how staff could assist them.

The use of data to track and monitor student progress informs quality teaching and learning. Staff indicated that they need to provide more stretch and challenge. This was corroborated by students who met with the panel. Eighty percent of students who spoke with the panel reported their work was 'just right and provided no stretch', 15% said their work was 'too easy', and 5% said they were challenged in

their learning. Consistent and rigorous data analysis would assist staff to identify and provide stretch and challenge to all learners, as long as growth targets linked to learning and were owned by every student.

Teachers were asked about their understanding of intellectual stretch and challenge and what it looked like in their classroom. They predominately talked about open-ended tasks and level of questioning, with little articulation of surface-to-deep learning and setting of challenge points. There is opportunity for a consistent and strategic whole-school approach of building common understandings and practices of intellectual stretch, which will strengthen student achievement.

There was some evidence of teachers planning opportunities to reach an 'A' or 'B' grade. However, teachers said that they found it difficult to assess A-E grades. The Partnership focus on learning design, assessment and moderation will further build teacher understanding. Staff have the opportunity to work with Partnership colleagues as well as engaging in professional development at a site level.

Teachers reported that they were not actively engaged in self-review processes, which affects their use of data. Staff have looked at NAPLAN data, but thought this was not related to any outcomes. Work currently being undertaken to review the site improvement plan has provided a renewed focus on data analysis, and provides opportunity to review current practice and track individual student cohorts. The school does use data evidence-based decisions to support intervention, which the panel believed could be widened to support growth of every student in every class.

Students in some classes were aware of their reading data, but this was not consistent across the school. Some teachers talked about pre and post-testing informing future learning, but the panel found little evidence of how this data was used to inform teaching on a daily basis. One teacher stated that they had moved away from testing and was finding more authentic ways of showing understanding. When asked how teachers track and monitor student learning, teachers said they reviewed data constantly as individuals, rarely as a learning team and never as a whole school. There is great opportunity to collaboratively produce a data collection schedule and provide regular opportunities to review data in learning teams and as a whole staff. Triangulating data such as PAT, NAPLAN and A-E grades by teachers can assist in building a consistent assessment profile of a student, and reflect on curriculum planning and learning design, and implications for students.

Direction 2

Strategically strengthen each teacher's capacity to more independently collate, analyse and respond to a range of data at the individual, cohort and school levels, to more effectively impact on planning for the varying learning needs of students.

How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?

During the review the panel met with 4 parents from governing council, who reported that the current principal had made a positive impact on the school, and fully explained the role of council members in the context of local governance. Members reflected an obvious attachment to the school and were keen to increase their involvement in decisions to support student learning. Communication was identified as an area for improvement, with parents reporting that better communication on school decisions and staff absences would further support students. Parents also expressed concern over the number of part-time staff and how this supports learning and continuity for students. Governing council believe there is a disconnect between the special and mainstream classes, which was corroborated by leadership.

Although physically separated, there is opportunity for staff to collaboratively investigate the explicit teaching and individualised learning occurring in the special classes, which will further develop cohesive relationships.

All students who are identified with a disability have a clear negotiated education plan. Leadership invite parent input into these plans, and have built positive relationships with parents and communicate regularly. The school has recently made connections with local churches who are keen to support the school, providing potential to increase the current pool of 15 volunteers. Prior to the review panel visit, the school had a working bee where students, parents and members of the wider community worked together on the school garden. This was a well-supported event which gave a strong community feel.

At the time of the review, all students across the school were working on 'sizzling starts' to stories ready for an evening exhibition of student learning called 'Sparks and Stories'. Students were excited by the coming community event and readily shared their 'sizzling starts' with the panel.

Students consistently demonstrated a pride in their school and felt that staff supported them and their families. They respect their teachers but wanted more influence over their learning. There are beginnings of student influence in some classes, which students thought was a positive move forward. Most students looked towards the upper primary class as the area where students had most impact on their learning. All students who spoke with the panel wanted to know their data and have goals to challenge their learning. They wanted timely and targeted feedback from teachers and more authentic voice in their learning. Teachers identified increasing student influence and receiving feedback from students as an area for development. Restoring the school's pond area and surrounding garden for STEM activities provides an ideal opportunity to gather student input and provide authentic influence to link this area to their curriculum.

Direction 3

Strengthen the learning-power capacities of students by providing them with authentic opportunities to influence their own learning: what they learn, how they learn and how they demonstrate their progress.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice contributing significantly to school improvement at Hallett Cove South Primary School.

The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. Effective practice in engaging parents to work in partnership with staff was evident at the school. The sense of community has been influenced by parents' ongoing support for the school leading to improved school community partnerships. In particular, the panel noted the recent working bee of staff, students, parents and wider community and the redevelopment of the garden area have opened an authentic avenue for students to influence their learning. Evidence of this practice was verified through discussions with the principal and student forums.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Hallett Cove South Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders, and has demonstrated growth in student achievement that is at or 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. Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all students.
2. Strategically strengthen each teacher's capacity to more independently collate, analyse and respond to a range of data at the individual, cohort and school levels to more effectively impact on planning for the varying learning needs of students.
3. Strengthen the learning-power capacities of students by providing them with authentic opportunities to influence their own learning: what they learn, how they learn and how they demonstrate their progress.

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



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Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 89.4%.

Appendix 2

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 2017, 89% of year 1 and 45% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a significant improvement at year 1 and little or no change at year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 64% of year 3, 75% of year 5, and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 5 and 7, this result represents improvement, and for year 3, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 36% of year 3, no year 5, and 18% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50%, or 1 of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 57% of year 3, 63% of year 5, and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, for year 5, little or no change, and for year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, there is a decline at year 3 from 73% to 57%, at year 5, there is a decline from 92% to 63%, and for year 7, there is an improvement from 57% to 82%, respectively.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 14% of year 3, and no year 5 or year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, the 1 student at year 3 did not remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017.