

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Evanston Gardens Primary School

Conducted in September 2017



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.

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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Cheryl Ross, Review Principal.

School context

Evanston Gardens Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 School located 40kms from Adelaide and near the township of Gawler, and is part of the Greater Gawler Partnership of sites, within the Gawler Portfolio. Enrolments at the school have been gradually increasing over time, from 95 in 2010 to the current 144 in 2017. The school has an ICSEA score of 941, and is classified as Category 3 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% (7) Aboriginal students, 11% students with disabilities, 3% (4) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 2% (3) children/young people in care, and approximately 51% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the fifth year of her first tenure and a School Counsellor.

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 intellectually challenged in their learning?

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

Effective Leadership: How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

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

Evanston Gardens Primary School uses the Positive Education approach to support the wellbeing of students. At the time of the on-site visit, all teachers and some School Service Officers (SSOs) have undertaken intensive professional learning in the approach. During the on-site visit, the Review Panel met with a group of six Governing Council members, a group of six parents and carers, representing the broader community, and heard that staff are approachable and friendly, in addition to the school having an ethos that, regardless of what had happened, every day is a new day. Positive student relationships with peers and others is a key outcome of Positive Education. Parents talked about the school as "having a strong community vibe" and "pulling together during tough situations". The DECD Survey of Wellbeing and Student Engagement undertaken by nineteen Year 6 and 7 students in 2016, showed higher levels of wellbeing for friendships and engagement with adults at school, reinforcing the value of relationships.

The school believes "that wellbeing is critical to students' ability to learn and to grow" (Evanston Gardens Primary School Wellbeing Framework DRAFT). The panel met with 18 students in focus groups, as well as having conversations with others in classrooms and the yard. In focus groups students were asked to nominate the best thing about the school and many students cited 'learning'. The panel saw that analysis of student achievement data identifies achievement for the school, for cohorts and groups of students and for individuals. Collated Progress Achievement Tests in Mathematics and Reading (PAT-M and PAT-R) data is used to determine numbers of students who have met the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Data, such as Running Record (RR) levels and NAPLAN data, as well as PAT information, are used to select students for small group interventions such as *MiniLit* in Reading and *Quicksmart* in Mathematics, and to provide a measure of growth. SSOs talked of using observation and anecdotal evidence to monitor student learning in interventions and the classroom. The panel can verify that the school, through its leaders and staff, demonstrates a very strong commitment to supporting the progress of every child.

There are positive trends in literacy and numeracy achievement over time at the school. Using Running Records, there is a trend of increasing percentages of students achieving SEA in both Year 1 and 2 between 2014 and 2016. The 2016 Annual Report highlighted progress in NAPLAN Reading over the same period, with 93% of students in the middle to upper progress group for Years 3-5, and 83% of students in the middle to upper progress group for Years 5-7. PAT data provided to the panel during the on-site visit showed evidence of a trend of improving student achievement in Maths for all Years 3-7, and a general improvement in reading over time for all Years 3-7, using percentages of students meeting SEA. The data shows that, in 2017, of the 74 students across Years 3-7, including 15 with NEPs, who sat the PAT-M test, 45, or 61% achieved SEA and, of the 66 students across Years 3-7, including 10 with NEPs, who sat the PAT-R test, 44, or 67% achieved SEA.

Improving student achievement in numeracy is an aim of the current School Improvement Plan (SIP) and, together with supporting high levels of student achievement, as evidenced by achievement in the higher bands of NAPLAN, is an ongoing challenge. This challenge is reinforced through examination of A-E data provided to the panel. In the two reporting periods in 2016 and for the first semester in 2017, no students were allocated an 'A' grade in either mathematics or English in any year level from Years 2 to 7. During the staff meeting, teachers shared student work samples from recent learning, including their judgements in comparison to standards and expectations. Some staff commented that the sharing of student work at the staff meeting and hearing teachers talk about evaluation was a positive experience, particularly as all teachers were able to contribute, relative to their context.

Use of collaborative moderation by teachers is in its very early days and, at this stage, has been carried out at Partnership level this term. Tasks shared with the panel, and student work samples indicate, that there is opportunity to develop more tasks that are open-ended. In the main, students who were judged as achieving at A or B level had often gone beyond the task of their own volition, and without prompts. Students who were judged not to have met the standard had usually not attempted or not completed the task. During conversations with students, the panel heard that they weren't clear about what was to happen to a task once completed. The most common response to being asked what would happen when they had finished the story, found the answer to the question, or recorded their opinion was "show it to my teacher". Motivating students by designing tasks with authentic audiences and involving students in building meaning through learning conversations will enhance learning experiences and outcomes. Consistently providing opportunities for students to achieve beyond the standard will support all students in developing their thinking and improve achievement.

Direction 1

Raise student achievement by strengthening learning and task design situated within units of work that use dialogue and provide authentic audience.

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

During classroom walkthroughs, classrooms were observed to be safe, orderly and productive. In conversations, students referred to teachers as being friendly, helpful and "there for you". These observations are supported by responses from the 2016 student and parent satisfaction surveys. All students surveyed agreed that 'My teachers expect me to do my best'; and all parent respondents agreed that 'Teachers at this school expect my child to do his or her best'; 'Teachers at this school treat students fairly'; and 'My child feels safe at this school'. Parents, with whom the Review Panel spoke, commented that they felt able to talk with any staff member about their child, and that students felt comfortable seeking support from all teachers.

Student achievement data is being entered onto *Scorelink* for later reflection, and student achievement is compared from year-to-year to identify trends and patterns. The panel heard from teachers about using data to target teaching for individual students, and some teachers are co-planning and looking at assessment outcomes of differentiated tasks. One teacher spoke of talking about PAT data with students to develop the mathematical proficiency of reasoning and some teachers, including specialist teachers, talked about using the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards in discussion with students.

In discussion with the panel, most students had difficulty reflecting on their own learning and sharing this verbally. Students in a range of environments showed a willingness to please and 'do the right thing'. In the

main, students didn't have the language of learning that would enable them to play a critical part in the learning process. This accords with the view expressed by some staff that students have developed the confidence to be articulate about their opinions but not yet about learning. Further reinforcement was heard from several students who referred to the school as being one where they could express their own opinions. The school has recognised this concern, and is working on developing the vocabulary of students to engage with thinking about their own learning and sharing this with others. Some teachers reported that they were at the very early stages of supporting students with the language of reflection to underpin engagement with such things as assessment rubrics. One example students shared was a proforma with three questions: *What is my goal for the lesson? How will I know when I am successful? What do I need to do next?*

During focus groups, the panel asked students questions that were broad and open, emphasising finding out what students think, rather than what they know. The panel heard from teachers that the Principal asks students about their learning, and how they knew how they were progressing during regular classroom walkthroughs. Practices such as this, will help students think more explicitly about their own learning. The panel heard from students about working in pairs and groups, and there was some evidence of the use of digital learning tools at the level of substitution, but not yet creatively across the curriculum.

Students shared a number of work samples with the panel, many being examples of writing. The panel noted that teachers had made some corrections on the work, and students referred to this process as 'marking' rather than feedback. Some students spoke of seeking advice from peers about how to improve their work, but this was not shared with the panel as a practice that was common or formalised. Teachers spoke highly of the professional learning undertaken in formative assessment, through participation in the two-year professional development course, written by Siobhan Leahy and Dylan William, conducted at the school. Teachers working collaboratively and systematically to implement these processes will enable students to develop the language required to achieve agency in their own learning.

Direction 2

Empower students with the language of learning by developing consistency across the school in using formative assessment processes, such as shared learning intentions, transparent success criteria and feedback routines from, to and between students.

How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?

Over the last several years, the school has been supporting improvement through a values-based approach. Demonstrating the school values of *Respect*, *Perseverance* and *Problem-Solving* has meant that there is a strong regard by everyone in the community for each other. Many parents talked about the school being a school of choice, with word of mouth providing a positive view of the school in the community. The open approach by the Principal, her ongoing communication with the Governing Council, and willingness to listen and act with regard to parent concerns and issues are viewed as positive aspects of the school.

There was verification from a number of sources that the behaviour of students at the school, which had earlier been a barrier to focusing on learning, was much improved. The school provided the panel with specific data about incidents and responses to challenging behaviours over the last 3 years that verifies that the school is now in a position where learning is 'the main game'. The panel recognises that deliberate and diligent strategies have been applied and expectations raised, in order to support this change. The draft version of the Evanston Gardens Primary School Wellbeing Framework is tightly aligned with the DECD Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework (2016) and illustrates the use of Positive Education as a key improvement lever in the development of positive relationships and behaviours at the school.

The staff are a positive, cohesive and passionate group, and teachers reported getting together before and after school and during the holidays for sharing and co-planning, indicating keen commitment to their role. Some teachers reported that, on occasion, they are supported through 'release time' to collaborate on shared tasks. Teachers reported that performance development processes at the site include professional conversations about their Performance Development Plan, observations by the Principal and, sometimes, peers, and written feedback and review. Staff are provided opportunities to develop leadership capability

and teachers showed capacity for leadership to a range of levels.

The panel heard of a number of initiatives and interests which have recently been or are currently being introduced into the school to varying degrees. These include the use of Kimochis to support communication and understanding of feelings, Growth Mindsets, the *Thinking Maths* program for some staff, a focus on Oral Language using the Sheena Cameron resource book, as well as involvement in a Partnership-driven Speech Pathology Project, and the *Seven Steps to Good Writing* process being implemented by some. Training of key staff in the *MacQLit* intervention has been undertaken prior to its planned implementation; Big Ideas in Number is being implemented through a focus on Trusting the Count; LETR, a literacy program originating in the United States, is being used in one class; and one student talked about using DeBono's hats to discuss an article in writing. The panel understands that work using the Thinking Hats has begun in some classes in Term 3. The school has committed to working through the online Jo Boaler courses to improve teaching and learning in mathematics, and a school-wide social skills program is under consideration. There is a shared leadership approach at the school, with individual teachers taking the lead in aspects of particular learning.

In discussions with staff, the panel heard a lack of clarity about the school improvement processes, although teachers talked about having collaborative input into reviewing the SIP. Focusing on this many things concurrently has meant that professional learning appears to be, at times, fragmented, without ongoing strategic focus for the whole staff, clarifying the purpose linked to the SIP. Teachers are enthusiastic about trying new things, and the school is well-placed to build a culture of de-privatised practice where professional sharing, experimentation and critique can flourish. 'Schools are most effective in the short and longer term when their key improvement strategies are:

- Clearly focused
- Firmly grounded in research evidence and the findings of their self-review
- Strategically aligned to local and DECD priorities' (ESR Framework).

Ensuring an ongoing focus that is narrow and deep over time will support embedding the strategies that work best at Evanston Gardens Primary School.

Direction 3

Implement a systematic approach to school improvement by using data to determine a small number of key focus areas for sustainable action that builds coherence between Site and Partnership Priorities.

Direction 4

Build teacher capacity in using evidence-based practices through whole-school targeted professional learning that trials, reviews and embeds agreed and precise school-wide pedagogy.

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 Evanston Gardens Primary School.

Effective practice in Effective Teaching was evident at the school. The school provides differentiated and personalised support for students through a number of strategies. The Review Panel heard and saw that when extra support is needed, it is tailored to the needs of the individual. The two school leaders share responsibility for working with teachers and SSOs, families, support staff and other agencies to support individual students with varied needs. Strategies can include individual timetabling, yard support and connecting families with organisations such as Dyslexia SA. Teachers are clear about using the Wave approach to intervention and differentiating learning during Wave 1 classroom instruction. Conversations with parents reinforced the school's willingness and ability to support individual students with behavioural or special needs or learning delays. The panel heard that when students have multiple considerations, the school works hard to get the balance right between support and challenge.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Evanston Gardens Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. The school has high expectations for students, and student achievement data and other evidence are used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student and class levels.

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

1. Raise student achievement by strengthening learning and task design situated within units of work that use dialogue and provide authentic audience.
2. Empower students with the language of learning by developing consistency across the school in using formative assessment processes, such as shared learning intentions, transparent success criteria and feedback routines from, to and between students.
3. Implement a systematic approach to school improvement by using data to determine a small number of key focus areas for sustainable action that builds coherence between Site and Partnership Priorities.
4. Build teacher capacity in using evidence-based practices through whole-school targeted professional learning that trials, reviews and embeds agreed and precise school-wide pedagogy.

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



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Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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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.

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Libby Clift
PRINCIPAL
EVANSTON GARDENS PRIMARY
SCHOOL

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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 Evanston Gardens 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 2016 was 86.8%.

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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 57% of Year 1 and 75% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average for Year 1 and an improvement from the historic baseline average for Year 2.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 1 and Year 2 has been upwards, from 41% in 2014 to 57% in 2016 at Year 1, and from 43% in 2014 to 75% in 2016 at Year 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of Year 3 students, 50% of Year 5 students, and 50% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, for Year 5, little or no change, and for Year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for Year 7 has been downwards, from 75% in 2014 to 50% in 2016.

For 2017 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2017, 13% or 2 of 15 Year 3, 8%, or 1 of 12 Year 5, and 25%, or 2 of 8 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

The student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2017, and both students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 47% of Year 3 students, 33% of Year 5 students, and 50% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change, but for Year 5, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 39% in 2015 to 47% in 2017.

For 2017 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools and for Year 7, within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2015 and 2017, the school has consistently achieved lower in Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2017, 7%, or 1 of 15 Year 3 students, none of the 12 Year 5 students, and none of the 8 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

The 1 student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy from Year 3 did not remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2017, and there were no students from Year 3 in the upper bands in 2013 to be tracked through to Year 7 in 2017.