EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR TORRENSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 2016
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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Paul Harmer, 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 Torrensville 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:

Part 6 Site Procedures: Item 1, point 14

Hazard checklist for the disposal of plant form: At the next WHS meeting, the school will ensure that the Hazard Checklist is incorporated into plant disposal procedures.

When the school’s actions achieve compliance 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 2015 was 91.6%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Torrensville Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 5 kilometres west of the Adelaide CBD and is part of the West Torrens local Partnership. The enrolment is 272 students. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school’s ICSEA score is 1026.

The school population includes 7.3% (18) Aboriginal students, 8.7% (24) Students with Disabilities, 20% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 45.1% (124) students of English as an Additional Language or Dialect background, and 3 students under the Guardianship of the Minister. In 2015, 13.2% (3) of Reception students were identified as developmentally vulnerable in the Australian Early Development Census. This has declined from 26% in 2009. Enrolment has declined over the last 5 years, from 332 in 2010 to 272 in 2016.

The Principal is in the 3rd year of his tenure at the school. The school has a Deputy Principal in the 2nd year of her second tenure and her 5th year at the school. There are 14.7FTE teachers, including one in the early years of her career, and ten Step 9 teachers. To support the significant proportion of Aboriginal students the school has 15 hours per week of Aboriginal Education Community Officer (ACEO) time and 0.2FTE of Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET) time.

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, 69% of Year 1 and 82% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average at Torrensville Primary School in both Year 1 and 2.
Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 2 Running Records has been upwards, from 29% in 2013 to 82% in 2015.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 70% of Year 3 students, 67% of Year 5 students, and 92% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools. For 2015 Year 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 27% of Year 3, 27% of Year 5 and 40% 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, 87.5%, or 7 of 8 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 100%, or 8 of 8 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years the trend of Year 3 to 7 upper band retention has been upwards, from 54% in 2013 to 100% in 2015.

**Numeracy**

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of Year 3 students, 61% of Year 5 students and 84% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved higher in Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 20% of Year 3, 15% of Year 5, and 4% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 has been downwards, from 21% in 2013 to 4% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 1 of 2 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 25%, or 1 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5 and Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In the last 3 years, the trend for Years 3 to 7 upper band retention has been downwards, from 86% to 25%.

During their presentation to the External Review Panel, the school leaders stated that the developmental focus of the site has been intentionally shifted from improving school culture to student learning improvement. The school has achieved strong reading growth through the development of evidence-based intentional teaching and intervention. The school's deliberate improvement attention is now on numeracy. Each teacher is a member of both a year-level Professional Learning Community (PLC) as well as a committee to support the development of one of four School Improvement Priorities (SIP). School Leaders are members of both PLCs and SIP committees. The 2015 roll-out of MARKiT across the school has made class data consistently accessible to teachers individually, in PLCs and in SIP committees. The PLCs are strongly resourced with discretionary release days, as well as 50% of staff meeting time. The Review Panel sought to evaluate the influence of these initiatives on teaching practice and student learning.
Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the Review 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: How well is formative assessment used to inform and refine planning?
School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

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

During the review, the panel was provided with strong evidence that there is high quality use of inquiry-based learning at the school, and high levels of staff competency in this pedagogy. This sophisticated inquiry approach, which became embedded at the school during the years when the school was accredited in the Middle Years International Baccalaureate, provides continual, appropriate intellectual stretch. The school is strongly positioned to use its existing capacity to extend the deep and consistent application of this inquiry-based pedagogy across the school, supporting all teachers to transform their understanding of intellectual challenge from being for ‘bright’ students to being for all students.

Teachers told the panel that they are aware of the decline in higher-band (HB) Year 7 maths achievement, and have self-initiated strategies to address this. Students verified that that the weekly ‘year-level maths’ lessons are helping them develop numerical fluency and skills and to be more confident in maths problem-solving.

The panel concluded that teachers have appropriate expectations of all students at Torrensville Primary School. Students and parents told the panel that they value the continuous productive struggle that teachers carefully provide. High-quality feedback for learning is consistently and regularly used in parts of the school. Rubrics are used in Years 3 to 7 to inform students on how they will be assessed. Rubrics are used regularly and consistently, but only in some parts of the school. Reception to Year 2 teachers are using the Top 5 strategy to identify maths learning intentions for students. In the special class, the panel was told that there is use of regular individual target-setting with students, and students verified this to the panel during the class walk-through.

Systematically and deliberately extending the provision of feedback to students across the school, from being about completion, compliance, accuracy, and neatness, to focusing on learning that will enable students to improve the quality of their work, will add great value to learning achievement at Torrensville Primary School.

The panel was told by school leaders that the school has a focus on developing the whole learner, with social and emotional learning qualities being developed explicitly and consistently across Reception to Year 7. Teachers and students told the panel about the work on growth mindsets that is being used explicitly Reception to Year 7 to foster positive learning dispositions. Students in the special class are being effectively supported to use basic skills for problem-solving for functional life skills. The Aboriginal Education team told the panel that Aboriginal students are strongly supported to achieve and develop resilience for learning beyond primary school. This was verified in evidence of learning and participation. Parents stated that the school has prepared their children well for high school. Teachers talked about the impact of training and development on their PLC collaboration and their classroom practice. The school is well-placed to ensure translation of training and development and performance and development into consistent and effective teaching across the school.

Direction 1

Deepen the intellectual quality of pedagogy in order to ensure all students are consistently experiencing challenging and engaging learning that is sustained over time.
How well is formative assessment used to inform and refine planning?

The panel concluded that intentional literacy teaching has been strongly developed through the use of a range of data, differentiation and explicit teaching at Torrensview Primary School. Teachers are working with data in the PLCs and making some learning design decisions based on its use. Some PLCs are making use of data to collaboratively problem-solve issues of student behaviour and wellbeing for learning. A next step for the school is to extend this diligent data-informed approach to numeracy.

It was clear to the panel in discussions with teachers and SSOs that data is used strongly and effectively to inform intervention (Wave 2 teaching). In Reception to Year 2 classes teachers are working progressively to collect and analyse numeracy data in the interests of the early identification of students with poor number skills and maths dispositions. The school is in a position to embed data use in PLCs more deeply to design Wave 1 teaching with the same excellence as used to identify students for intervention.

The panel confirmed through the documentation provided that the SIP priorities of Torrensview Primary School are strongly evidence-based. There is close tracking of the learning and wellbeing of Aboriginal students by Aboriginal Education staff, School Leaders and support services. Data for all students is triangulated and analysed at the whole-school level, which facilitates tracking of the learning growth of each individual student over time. A next step for the school is to use professional development and performance and development to upskill teachers in the systematic interrogation of data to identify actions needed to support individuals and groups in their classes and PLC cohorts.

Parents told the panel that they are very happy with the communication from the school about their children’s learning, both formally and informally. They believe that there is alignment between formal and informal reporting about children’s learning, and that teachers use differentiation and data in reports. Maths achievement was identified as an issue by parents that the school has begun to address.

During the review, the panel found evidence of a developed productively-collaborative culture. Teachers told the panel that they value the PLC and the quality of the resourcing they are given. From conversations with teachers, the panel could conclude that the nature of collaboration in the PLCs has deepened from a focus on content, scope and sequence planning, to a focus on the development of evidence-based quality pedagogy, and the school is now well-placed to ensure that this is happening consistently across the school.

Direction 2
Strengthen the use of data by teachers for intentional teaching in order to increase the growth in student achievement at or above the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement over time and as measured by several datasets.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

It was the conclusion of the panel that at Torrensview Primary School students value the close, supportive relationships they have with teachers and leaders. Students talked to the panel about this in multiple forums during the review. These quality student-staff relationships facilitate student voice and influence as students build confidence in speaking-up and out about issues of their own and each other’s learning and wellbeing.

The panel found examples of numerous ways in which students are given an authentic voice in their learning. All teachers mentioned goal-setting with students at the start of the year. The school is now able to consistently involve students in the regular setting of their own academic targets. It is a next step for the school to build on the start-of-year targets about learning dispositions with medium and short-term specific academic goals. Great value will be added to student learning growth if implied academic target-setting with students is made deliberately, consistently and regularly explicit.

The development of the cultural identity of Aboriginal students is strongly supported at Torrensview Primary School. A rich variety of strategies for this was described to the panel; students and parents
discussed how these programs and initiatives are valued by all in the school community.

Preschool to school transition is strong at Torrensville Primary School. Parents talked to the panel about the quality of this transition and the value to families of the close physical proximity between the school and Torrensville Kindergarten that has been resourced and supported by the school. Reception teachers described their regular collaboration with preschool staff.

The panel concluded that students have strong support to develop self-management skills for social and emotional regulation. This was apparent to the panel in conversations with students, parents, and in class walk-throughs. Teachers described the ways in which they regularly involve students in problem-solving about social and emotional matters.

Students in Years 4 to 7 can identify ways they have a voice in their learning, they informed the panel about regular and supported opportunities to give feedback to teachers about their teaching, and described how teachers respond to this feedback. These teachers told the panel that they reflect strongly about their own practice based on this feedback from students, and that this process also enables students to strongly reflect on their own learning. The panel confidently concluded that in the Middle School students expect to have a voice in learning design. Some students described to the panel examples of self- and peer-assessment. A next step for the school is to upskill teachers in the regular identification and description of learning intentions to students.

Direction 3
Sustain high expectations and a culture of improvement through the regular setting and review of learning intentions with students in order to increase student understanding of and security in learning.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

At Torrensvale Primary School there is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum. The school has developed a shared vision, strategic planning practice, actions and interventions that are data-informed and sustained over time. The school uses highly effective, regular and strategic self-review processes, which are evidence-based and standards-driven. Self-review findings are continuously acted upon.

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

1. Deepen the intellectual quality of pedagogy in order to ensure all students are consistently experiencing challenging and engaging learning that is sustained over time.

2. Strengthen the use of data by teachers for intentional teaching in order to increase the growth in student achievement at or above the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement over time and as measured by several datasets.

3. Sustain high expectations and a culture of improvement through the regular setting and review of learning intentions with students in order to increase student understanding of and security in learning.

Based on the school’s current performance, Torrensvale 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.

John McGlade  
PRINCIPAL  
TORRENSVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Anne-Mae Halligan  
Governing Council Chairperson