

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mulga Street Primary School

Conducted in February 2019



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Debbie Grzeczowski, 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 relating to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Mulga Street Primary School is located in the regional city of Mount Gambier, 460kms from Adelaide's CBD. The current enrolment at Mulga Street Primary School is 348; enrolment has been declining over the last five years. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 400.

The school has an ICSEA score of 954, and is classified as Category 4 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. Mulga Street Primary School forms part of the Blue Lake Partnership.

The school population includes 6% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 12 children/young people in care, and 42% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in her 2nd year of tenure, a deputy principal and a student wellbeing leader.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Improve student learning through staff learning team analysis of available data to differentiate their teaching to meet the varying needs and interests of learners.
- Direction 2** Create safe conditions for students and teachers to engage in learning that supports, challenges and extends the needs and abilities of all learners.
- Direction 3** Redefine a culture of high expectation for learning achievement within the school community for the benefit of all students.
- Direction 4** Increase the proportion of students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement through rigorous, engaging learning tasks planned by the year level teams using the agreed whole school developed sequences, assessment rubrics and team moderation.

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

Work on the previous directions has enabled the school to collect and interrogate data as an emerging part of whole school practice. The use of a central data collection program coupled with a data collection schedule has refined and produced some cohesion around data. Understanding and using data is becoming a gateway to improving pedagogical practice through learning design.

The directions have featured in the previous two school improvement plans (SIP) and their essence is highly visible in the 2019 improvement plan.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How well does the school use evidence from student achievement and growth data to inform relevant and high impact goals and targets for improvement?

The panel found that all teachers are engaging with achievement and growth data supported by a collection schedule and the use of 'scorelink' for central storage. Leadership assist the collective ownership of data by the creation of a reading data wall, which has opened up professional dialogue amongst teachers, and by allocating time and resources to interrogate a range of data.

Teachers analysed data and collectively engaged in the formation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) during a student free day. Staff worked together to produce goals and targets, which align with the school's vision. However, the panel found that whilst teachers know the SIP's overall focus of reading, only some teachers know the goals and targets for improvement. Support staff who engage with students to assist their learning were not involved in the creation of the SIP and were unaware of its focus on reading. The panel felt there is opportunity to review staff data literacy levels to enable all staff to be active participants in improvement planning, and the setting of ambitious goals and targets. Pulling together cohort data, such as Aboriginal student data and data for students with a verified disability, will further refine and inform practice.

The panel felt that leadership have a good understanding of what they want to achieve to improve outcomes at Mulga Street Primary School. The focus now needs to be on whole school ownership of the SIP. Clear structures and processes, such as regular leadership meetings, learning-focused staff meetings, professional development plans, team meetings and planned 'checking in' with the SIP will bring to the forefront the moral imperative for improvement and support a cycle of continuous improvement where everyone owns, and uses, the plan to improve student outcomes.

Direction 1 Refine processes to ensure all staff have shared understanding, ownership and accountability of the SIP by introducing structures and processes which drive and support the improvement agenda and provide continuous monitoring, evaluation and review.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The panel evidenced that teachers have good understanding of the Australian Curriculum with some teachers using pre-assessment to refine planning and post-assessment to track student growth. One teacher was actively seeking feedback from students and refining their pedagogy accordingly. All staff track data to identify students but the panel found little evidence of how this was being used to inform student learning.

Most students are aware of their reading level and some students had goals. The majority of goals were general, such as 'neater handwriting' or 'get better at maths'; few goals were explicitly linked to next steps in learning. Some students, with whom the panel spoke, indicated that their work was too easy but did not indicate this to teachers as they did not want to be given 'harder' work.

Students achieving in NAPLAN higher bands were identified and provided with lessons outside of the classroom by a teacher, to stretch and challenge their learning. The panel felt that increased opportunities to

moderate lesson design and outcomes with partnership colleagues would increase capacity to enable this to happen within the classroom and not through withdrawal. Data is used to identify students for intervention and quality programs are deployed to support these students.

The panel evidenced pockets of effective good practice where some teachers routinely share learning intentions, success criteria and goals aligned to next steps in learning but this was not evidenced consistently across all classes.

Direction 2 Strengthen student agency in learning and provide opportunities for all students to receive stretch and challenge through co-constructing the curriculum, setting of individual learning goals, and establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria which enable students to monitor and assess their learning.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

How effectively does the school leadership ensure a clear focus on improving teaching and student learning?

The leadership team have a clear vision for improvement at Mulga Street Primary School and demonstrate educational leadership by researching evidence-based practice and trialling success before presenting these practices to whole staff, as evidenced by the introduction of the partnership focus of 'learning sprints'. Professional development is clearly aligned to the SIP and some professional development plan goals are linked to the improvement focus. Time has also been allocated to support staff collaboration in teams through release time.

The panel evidenced pockets of good practice from various teams within the school but found there was no whole school consistency to support students as they move through year levels. The panel acknowledged the work behind the creation of a staff maths folder, which features some common agreements, but these common approaches were not evidenced in practice. Some students referred to the 'learning pit' and 'learning through mistakes' strategies which provide an opportunity to develop a consistent common dialogue across the school to further support their learning.

Having clear, documented whole-school approaches, which include a common language for learning and student influence, will provide cohesion and support student learning. Documents outlining the 'Mulga Street way of doing things' will further support the strong induction program for new staff which leadership have commenced. Having explicit guidelines stating elements of a literacy block and what guided reading looks like at Mulga Street Primary School will promote a common understanding of best practice to support the current focus on reading.

Direction 3 Develop, implement and monitor whole school approaches to literacy and numeracy which provide opportunities for authentic student influence.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Students at Mulga Street Primary School report being connected and safe at school and feel staff really care about them as individuals and this sense of pride is further reflected and amplified through community discussions. Students are confident in discussing their learning and most know their reading levels. Staff genuinely want to support students to do their best and are willing to embrace new learning. The principal is providing educational leadership and consistently engages and harnesses the expertise within the staff to support improvement.

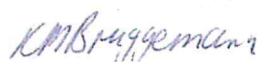
The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** Refine processes to ensure all staff have shared understanding, ownership and accountability of the SIP by introducing structures and processes which drive and support the improvement agenda and provide continuous monitoring, evaluation and review.
- Direction 2** Strengthen student agency in learning and provide opportunities for all students to receive stretch and challenge through co-constructing the curriculum, setting of individual learning goals, and establishing clear learning intentions and success criteria which enable students to monitor and assess their learning.
- Direction 3** Develop, implement and monitor whole school approaches to literacy and numeracy which provide opportunities for authentic student influence.

Based on the school's current performance, Mulga Street Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



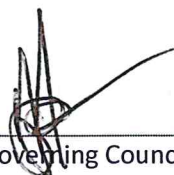
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PRINCIPAL
MULGA STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

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 2018, 30% of year 1 and 7% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2018, the trend for years 1 and 2 has been downwards, from 67% in year 1 in 2015 to 30% in 2018, and 63% at year 2 in 2015 to 7% in 2018.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 56% of year 5 students and 68% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 3, this represents an increase, year 5 a decline and for year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving above the results of similar students across government schools. For 2018, year 5 and year 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 38% of year 3, 17% of year 5 and 6% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 39% or 5 of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 20% or 2 of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 60% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, 66% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 5 this result represents an improvement and for year 3 and 7 little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 21% of year 3, 6% of year 5 and 6% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 and year 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 0 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and 50% or 3 of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.