



SCHOOL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Updated: 05/21

School number: 0326

School name: Palmer Primary School

School Profile: Palmer Primary School is a vibrant, small community school 73 kilometres from Adelaide. The nearest regional centre is Murray Bridge. Our current enrolment is 31 students, with a Reception-3 class, and a year 3-7 class. Palmer Primary School has three classroom teachers, a full-time finance officer, two SSO's who share classroom support and intervention, and a Principal with a teaching load. Our current index of disadvantage is 3. Out of our 22 families attending Palmer this year, only four families reside in Palmer itself, with the remaining families living in Mannum, Murray Bridge, Mount Pleasant, Springton, Mt Torrens and surrounding areas. Our priorities for 2021 are Literacy and Numeracy. Students continue to be involved in extra-curricular activities including SAPSASA and participating in the Murraylands Partnership priority, Student Learning Communities.

We continue to progress in our pursuit of Literacy excellence. In addition to continuing our 'Literacy loops' literacy block, staff have undertaken training and development in the 'Big six of reading'. This has seen an increased focus on early literacy skills in the JP class, including phonological awareness and phonics, as well as fluency, vocabulary and comprehension across the school. Student data supports our focus on this, with students in the early years making great gains in reading, especially in the Phonics screening check results. We implement Heggerty's Phonemic Awareness program daily and embed these skills across all literacy areas. Staff are highly dedicated professionals who have undertaken much training in the Science of Reading.

In Numeracy, we have our new Whole School Numeracy Agreement, a universal set of daily 'non-negotiables' in every Numeracy block. This has enabled consistency across classrooms and better transition processes between the junior and upper classes. We use the Big Ideas in Number assessments and student misconceptions to ensure that students are receiving timely intervention as needed.

We have invested in upgrading our IT opportunities for students. We now have two new 'Prowise' computers and students experience many ways to engage with this new technology. Students in the JP class especially enjoy the interactive maths and literacy games that allows for greater teamwork and collaboration and the opportunity to reinforce automaticity in an engaging way. Upper Primary students are now beginning to interact with the prowise through apps on the ipad, allowing for instant quizzes and surveys to be conducted at the touch of a screen. Students have a 1:1 laptop and ipad so they can become proficient using both PC and Mac platforms. Our involvement with the 3D STEM printing in schools project in 2018 allowed students to develop their designing and 3D creating skills, and then print these on our 3D printer, as well as a continued focus on coding.

Student voice is embraced through PSC- Palmer Student Council, as well as student leaders in the Partnership SLC, and opportunities for students to have input into their learning through five weekly goals and student-driven curriculum. We are working hard every day, to ensure that Palmer Primary School enacts our motto, 'Small School, Enormous Opportunities'.

1. General information

- **School Principal name:** Lauren Poole
- **Year of opening:** 1882
- **Postal Address:** C/O Palmer General Store, Palmer SA 5237
- **Location Address:** Olive Grove Avenue, Palmer, SA 5237
- **DECD Region:** Murraylands
- **Geographical location – ie road distance from GPO (km):** 73 Kilometres
- **Telephone number:** 08 85694050
- **Fax Number:** 08 85694124
- **School website address:** www.palmerps.sa.edu.au
- **School e-mail address:** dl.0326_info@schools.sa.edu.au
- **Child Parent Centre (CPC) attached:** N/A
- **Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) service:** No
- **February FTE student enrolment:**

| Year | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Reception | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| Year 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Year 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Year 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Year 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Year 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Year 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Year 7 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 28 | 28 | 28 | 31 | 32 |
| NEP Students | | | | | |
| A level | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| D level | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| I level | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| Aboriginal Students | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| School Card | 11 | 17 | 20 | 18 | 18 |

- **Student enrolment trends:** Numbers have increased steadily since 2016, with many new students enrolling mid-year from local schools.
- **Staffing numbers (as at February census):** There are two classrooms with 1 x 1.0 teacher, 1 x 0.8 and 1 x 0.2, 1.0 Principal, and currently 79.50 hours of SSO time incorporating a full time Administration/Finance Officer, SWD Support, intervention, classroom support.
- **Public transport access:** None

2. Students (and their welfare)

- **General characteristics**

Currently, 56% of the total school population hold a school card. A high percentage of the school's students come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

- **Student well-being programs**

Friday afternoon lessons focus on mindfulness, positive affirmation and developing learning resilience, taught by the Principal. Faye, our PCW, also supports students in their wellbeing.

Our schools became a 'Kids Matter' School in 2015.

- **Student support offered**

Students receive a large amount of classroom support through small class sizes and SSO support. Intervention programs offered include MiniLit, MultiLit and speech programs implemented with guidance from Speech Pathologists.

- **Student management**

In accordance with the Department for Education's School Discipline policy, we have developed our Behaviour Management Policy. Students are encouraged and praised for positive behaviour choices through a variety of ways including class dojo and 'Kindness Kid' and 'Powerful Learner' awards.

We have developed consistent whole school behaviour expectations and procedures for when poor choices are made. TRT's are familiarised with these prior to the day starting, so that students experience consistency at all times. TRT's are well supported through the presence and support of SSO's in the classroom and regular leadership presence.

Restorative practices are utilised wherever possible, and students on individual plans are catered for through learning and behaviour goals and incentives. This is constantly reviewed with the child and family involved.

We work collaboratively with Support Services including Disability Coordinators, Special Educators, CAMHS, Department for Child Protection and Third Party providers.

- **Student government**

Student voice is embraced through weekly 'PSC' – Palmer Student Council, meetings. During these meetings students are actively setting directions for school fundraising, learning programs, special interests and enacting our school values.

- **Special programmes**

Differentiation is one of our greatest strengths at Palmer Primary School, and we pride ourselves on consistently developing our engaging pedagogy. Some of the ways in which we cater for all students include:

- * Developing individual SMARTAR student learning goals with every student every five weeks.

- * Our Literacy Loops program enables teachers to listen to every student read, every day. This also allows for explicit instruction daily.

- * A strong focus on the Big Six of reading – embedded across R-7. Phonics is taught using Jolly Phonics and the associated Jolly Learning resources, and this phonics understanding is strengthened through the implementation of decodable readers.

- * Whole School Numeracy Agreement enabling students to experience real world, problematised situations and authentic and engaging learning opportunities.

- * our STEM focus is continuing to develop, with students encouraged to develop their problem solving skills across curriculum hours, as well as 'Genius Hour' - promoting the critical and creative thinking capabilities.

3. Key School Policies

- **Site Improvement Plan and other key statements or policies:**

Our 2021 School Improvement Plan details our priority areas for 2021 and beyond. This is available on our website.

- **Recent key outcomes:**

Since 2019 we have had a three year School Improvement Plan with three consistent goals. This relentless focus for three years has enabled a significant improvement in the goals we have set. In Numeracy, we developed a clear focus on embedding the Big Ideas in Number throughout reception to year seven. This diagnostic assessment enabled clear misconceptions to be identified, with explicit teaching to address these. As a result of this, the cohort of students we identified to track over the three years have demonstrated growth in annual PAT Mathematics testing, and students as a whole have demonstrated significant growth in PAT testing and in Big Ideas in Number assessments.

We have strengthened the way we teach reading across the whole school, since our immersion into the Science of Reading. We now implement Heggerty's phonological awareness program daily, and continue to use the sequence of Jolly phonics to explicitly teach phonics in a structured way. Our focus on implementing and embedding the big six components of reading has continued and is a prominent feature of daily literacy loops. This year we have started using 'Spelling Mastery' as our whole school approach to spelling years one to seven, and we look forward to seeing the impact this has had on student achievement in spelling. Student reading has recently been assessed using

Acadience rather than just running records, and this information has given teachers a wider understanding of the next teaching point for every student.

4. Curriculum

- **Literacy** – Our Literacy Loops enable all students to participate in guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, writing about reading, and word work in our daily Literacy Block. This is a whole school agreement so that teachers can hear every student read every day. This is vital to ensure that students are developing their reading comprehension skills as well as their decoding skills. We use Jolly Phonics as our structured synthetic phonics program, and implement Spelling Mastery in years 1-7 for spelling. Decodable readers are sent home with our JP students once they have mastered the taught graphemes so that they are given the chance to strengthen their phonics at home. Phonological Awareness is assessed and explicitly taught and then embedded across literacy areas. Heggerty Phonemic Awareness is taught daily. Assessment across Literacy includes ongoing assessment of reading using Acadience, phonics check, PAT reading, spelling and vocabulary, moderating writings samples and NAPLAN testing in years 3, 5 and 7.

Numeracy – Our whole school Numeracy Agreement has been developed throughout 2017 and 2018 to ensure that there is consistency in expectations and pedagogy in the teaching of mathematics. Our Whole School Numeracy Agreement is enacted to ensure all learners are provided with an engaging, differentiated, problem rich learning experience that fosters student resilience, creating powerful learners. Assessment across Mathematics includes ongoing assessment, PAT mathematics annually, moderation of student portfolios and NAPLAN testing in years 3, 5 and 7. We use the Big Ideas in Number assessments and misconception assessment from Tierney Kennedy's 'Back to Front Maths'.

- **Special needs** - Students are well supported at Palmer through the collaborative development of OnePlans, which we create using the 'team around the child approach'. Targeted intervention programs include MiniLit, MultiLit and speech programmes implemented by our SSO's under guidance from third party speech pathologists. Wellbeing, mindfulness and positive behaviour education programs are also implemented on an individual, small group or whole class basis and can include 'The way to A' and the emotional thermometer. We are also in the beginning stages of implementing the emotional and resilience toolbox.
- **Teaching methodology** – Differentiation is our greatest strength here at Palmer and we pride ourselves in this. ICT is used and integrated across learning areas to support, strengthen and deepen student's understandings. SSO's are employed to allow for small group tasks and learning opportunities. Our STEM focus has enabled students to develop their creative and critical thinking skills in authentic learning opportunities, developing 21st century learners.
- **Student assessment procedures and reporting** – We have developed our whole School Assessment and Reporting Policy to ensure that assessments are consistent

across the school and that students and parents are constantly kept informed about their learning. Written reports are sent home in terms 2 and 4, and interviews are held in terms 1 and 3. We report using the Australian Curriculum reporting guidelines and promote open communication between parents and staff through the use of class dojo, newsletters, emails, phone calls, meetings and our private facebook page for parents and staff.

5. Sporting Activities

- We implement the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education in both classes, as well as provide opportunities for students to participate in local SAPSASA events, and in our small schools combined sports day. We also regularly hold clinics of various sports throughout each year.

6. Other Co-Curricular Activities

We celebrate Book Week in term 3 of each year, Sports Day, Swimming lessons at Woodside, and host a variety of visiting artists and offer a variety of excursions linked to curriculum areas throughout the year.

7. Staff (and their welfare)

- **Staff profile** - We have two permanent teaching staff who are both 0.6 permanent. One of these works 0.8 in the Upper Class, the Junior class is also taught by a 0.4 contract teacher. The Principal has a teaching load of .4 providing NIT to both classes.
- **Staff support systems** - Staff are involved in setting the directions of our Site Improvement Plan and Operational Plan, and guide the focus for each term's professional development focus in staff meetings.
- **Performance Management** – This is documented each term and recorded onEduPortal, and follows our performance management policy. We believe that transparency, collaboration and consistency is the key to ensuring that students outcomes are achieved for all, and this is shared by all staff.

8. School Facilities

- **Buildings and grounds** – Our grounds are small but well managed. We have two classrooms, a library, an administration building and a general purpose room. Several sheds skirt the oval. Our upper primary classroom was built in 2005 with the Government BER funding. Recent upgrades have included the library being repainted and furnished with new furniture and fixtures in 2017, and the General Purpose room being repainted and getting all new benchtops, sinks and ovens installed at the end of 2017. Our new playground was installed at the beginning of 2019, with new laptops being purchased for every student and teacher in 2020.

9. Operations

- **Decision making structures** – Our Palmer Governing Council meet twice a term, and our Palmer Student Council meet every week. Fundraising by families is well supported and enables upgrading of facilities and resources.
- **Regular publications** – We publish our fortnightly newsletters on our school website, and also utilise our private facebook group for communicating with parents, which has been received positively. Our school website also has a parent handbook which contains all the necessary information needed.

10. Local Community

- **General characteristics** – Palmer is a very small town, with a population of just 80. The majority of employment is found outside of Palmer, with our working families seeking employment in a range of industries, including farms, production, and health services.
- **Parent and community involvement** – Parent and Community members support Palmer Primary through various fundraisers throughout the year.
- **Feeder or destination schools** – Students usually enrol here from either Mannum Kindergarten, Mt Pleasant & Districts Kindergarten or preschools in Murray Bridge. High School destinations vary, with students choosing between Birdwood High

School, Mannum Community College, Murray Bridge High School, or local private High Schools.

- **Commercial/industrial and shopping facilities** – The Palmer General Store is open Monday to Friday and provides students with lunch orders. Murray Bridge is the nearest large regional centre, being 34 kilometres away.
- **Other local facilities** – Opposite to the school is Collier Park, which has a local hall which students regularly use, as well as the Palmer oval.
- **Local Government body** – Palmer is part of the Mid Murray Council.