

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Palmer Primary School

Conducted in October 2021



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 (ESR) 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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Rebecca Pears, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Byron Stuu, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Palmer Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 73kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 32. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 28. The local partnership is Murraylands.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1001 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 16% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 58% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in their 6th year of tenure.

There are four teachers including two Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Embed common understandings and agreements around intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.**
- Direction 2** **Strengthen and embed the whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback process reception to year 7.**
- Direction 3** **Improve and personalise student engagement in learning by strengthening the role of student agency in the learning process.**

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

Staff have a more common understanding of the need to provide differentiation, intellectual stretch, challenge, and rigour and this has led to an increased number of students taking risks and becoming challenged in their thinking, leading to higher intellectual stretch.

Whole-school assessment processes are now agreed upon and embedded. Feedback has been a focus for the last three years, with students taking on the mindset that we all can always do better, and that one or two drafts is not enough – we can always improve. Student awareness and appreciation of improving work using feedback has occurred.

Student engagement in learning has been improved by strengthening the role of student agency in the learning process. Staff have further developed their understanding of the importance of activating prior knowledge in students, spending more time unpacking what students already bring and how they can be the experts in the classroom. The teaching for effective learning (TfEL) student voice tiles have been used to help embed these strategies. Students also have increasingly been given the opportunity to provide more input as to how they will demonstrate their understanding. For example, teachers will explain what knowledge/understanding they are looking for, students are then able to decide what format, method, style, technology etc. they will use to demonstrate their understanding and seek feedback from teachers and peers throughout the process.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

The school has a very collaborative culture focused on improving student achievement from R-7. Teachers have a clear understanding and ownership of the school improvement plan (SIP). Student achievement data is collaboratively analysed by teachers to identify the SIP goals, challenge of practices and actions. Teachers have also utilised the Department for Education Guidebooks to help determine the challenge of practice. The school has strategically accessed the local education team (LET) to help guide the plan's formation and it is discussed in governing council meetings. Teacher performance and development goals are related to the SIP.

The Principal regularly observes teacher practice both informally and formally and teachers receive written feedback from these observations. Teachers have changed their classroom practice to implement the SIP actions. For example, Big Ideas in Number (BliN) activities have been incorporated into mathematics motions; weekly grammar lessons are scheduled across the school; decodable books are used as homework readers and a new phonemic awareness program has been introduced. Teachers are also using a scope and sequence in mathematics and in teaching agreed text types across the school to support coherent practices and ensure continuity of learning. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the SIP actions is occurring at staff meetings. A range of achievement data is analysed to determine the impact of school improvement initiatives. School improvement planning processes could be strengthened through further involvement of the school service officers (SSOs).

Some actions on the SIP have not been enacted to ensure new learning is consolidated. The reading goal, challenge of practice, actions and success criteria do not clearly align. The school is well positioned to work collaboratively to identify success criteria, clearly related to the challenges of practice and goals for improvement that specify what students will be able to know, do and understand through the implementation of the plan. It will be imperative that the effective practices introduced are sustained, and processes and procedures are implemented to ensure they become embedded and continued even in the context of staff changes.

Direction 1 Collaboratively develop success criteria, which clearly align to the SIP goal, challenge of practice and actions, enabling staff to assess their impact.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

Staff are to be commended for their knowledge of individual students and their commitment to improve learning outcomes for all. Teachers have implemented and participated in professional learning in a range of evidence-based practices. Learning is differentiated through using small groups in both literacy and numeracy. Mathematics motions and literacy loops occur in every class and the panel observed high levels of student engagement in tasks. The groupings are fluid with students consistently assessed to ensure tasks are based on students' next steps. Teachers scaffold tasks to cater for a diverse range of learners. Guided reading and mathematics lessons occur every day to provide small group instruction and immediate verbal feedback for all students.

In the early years, concrete materials are used to help cater for student's learning needs. Students have reading, writing, mathematics and personal goals which are reviewed every 5 weeks. The use of goals could be strengthened through the introduction of more explicit specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time bound, agreed upon, reviewed (SMARTAR) goals that identify strategies for achievement. An assessment companion is adhered to by staff ensuring the consistent use of assessment tools across the school. This companion is currently being reviewed to remove assessments that are no longer useful. Student achievement is being closely tracked and monitored. Assessment data is colour coded to help teachers quickly identify the rate of growth. Some students were able to discuss their own achievement data and their next target through identifying the next colour they are trying to achieve.

Students were not able to articulate what learning intentions or success criteria are. Rubrics are used on occasions, but students have limited involvement in co-constructing them. Developing a whole-school approach and common vocabulary in relation to the effective use of learning intentions and success criteria that are co-designed and shared with students would support their achievement. The provision of visible learning intentions and success criteria that explicitly outline the requirements for high achievement, would provide stretch and challenge along with opportunities for students to have ownership of their learning.

Direction 2 Embed whole school consistent language and practices in designing learning intentions and success criteria, that ensure students are challenged and assessing their own learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Parents reported that their children have been very happy and are progressing well in their learning at Palmer Primary School. They discussed the open, friendly, and approachable way staff communicate with them. Staff are very responsive and work hard to ensure they are catering for children’s individual needs.

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

- Direction 1 Collaboratively develop success criteria, which clearly align to the SIP goal, challenge of practice and actions, enabling staff to assess the impact of the plan.**
- Direction 2 Embed whole school consistent language and practices in designing learning intentions and success criteria, that ensure students are challenged and assessing their own learning.**

Based on the school’s current performance, Palmer Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



Kerry Dollman
Director
Review, Improvement and Accountability



Anne Millard
Executive Director
Partnerships, Schools and Preschools

Lauren Poole
Principal
Palmer 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).

In considering the data below there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students. The data below represents a summary of the aggregated data from Palmer Primary School from 2016-2021.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2016 to 2020, 40% of year 1 and 26% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2021, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 71% of year 3 students, 57% of year 5 students, and 71% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2021, 19% of year 3, 36% of year 5 and 24% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2016 to 2021, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 57% of year 3 students, 57% of year 5 students, and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2021, 14% of year 3, 7% of year 5, and 18% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.