

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR POONINDIE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE

Conducted in April 2016



**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.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Gaynor Steele, 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 Poonindie Community Learning Centre 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 reported an attendance rate for 2015 of 93.2%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Poonindie Community Learning Centre, located 18kms north of Port Lincoln, caters for approximately 80 students from Reception to Year 7. The student cohort consists of approximately 10% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students, 6% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 8% Students with Disability, and 22% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 1000.

The Principal has been tenured at the school since 2009. The school has the leadership capacity to support the Principal in the identified school improvement agenda described in the Site Improvement Plan (SIP).

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD 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 caution is raised 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 aggregated data from Poonindie Community Learning Centre over the years 2011 to 2015.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 8 of 14 Year 1 and 12 of 17 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 6 of 7 Year 3 students, 1 of 5 Year 5 students and 3 of 5 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

In 2015, in Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system. The Year 5 result is below the average results of similar students across the DECD system for the first time since 2010. Again, cautionary discretion is required as it may be cohort-related. It is highlighted for school monitoring purposes.

In 2015 NAPLAN Reading bands, 2 of 7 Year 3, 2 of 5 Year 5 and 2 of 5 Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands.

Of the one Year 3 student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in 2011, taking into account arrivals and departures, one remained in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 5 of 7 Year 3 students, 2 of the 5 Year 5 students and 4 of the 5 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change in performance compared to the school's historic baseline average. For Year 5, it represents a decline in performance against the school's historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the average results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy, 1 of 7 Year 3, 1 of 5 Year 5 and 1 of 5 Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands. For Year 3, this result is lower than the school's historic baseline average.

Of the one Year 3 student who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in 2011, taking into account arrivals and departures, one student remained in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2015. This latest result represents little or no change in performance compared to the school's historic baseline average.

The Principal reflected on the improvement efforts undertaken with staff over recent years. The collection and use of learning data to inform actions and strategies to be implemented at the school has impacted positively on teacher capacity to deliver a consistent and coherent learning program for all students. Professional learning has been influential in leading curriculum and pedagogical change with teachers. The Principal described the importance of continued pedagogical development, assessment for learning and student voice as key levers for continued learning improvement.

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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| Effective Teaching: | How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning? |
| School Community Partnerships: | How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school? |
| Effective Leadership: | How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity? |

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

Over time, the school has demonstrated its effectiveness in supporting students to achieve in the top two achievement bands for NAPLAN Reading. From 2011 to 2015, 60% of Year 3, 24% of Year 5 and 17% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two bands for their year level. For NAPLAN Numeracy, over the same period of time, 38% of Year 3, 23% of Year 5 and 21% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two achievement bands. The patterns for both curriculum aspects indicate that higher percentages of students demonstrate ability to achieve in the higher bands by Year 3 and then this result diminishes (more so in reading) as students progress to Year 7.

As the school has a number of multi-year-level classes, differentiation based on quality assessment information, both summative and formative, is required to ensure that expectations and outcomes sought challenge each learner individually. It was verified that the school has centred responsibility and accountability for learning of every student to the classroom teacher through a Wave 1–3 approach to

intervention. It was verified that students requiring planned support through SSO time receive such intervention under the guidance of the teacher within the classroom. Intervention for every student at the classroom level through effective teaching practice is viewed by the Principal “as the way forward”. Parents of students with verified needs recounted specific actions implemented by the school to meet these needs. For example, provision of an adjustable standing table, personal iPad and training about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have been verified as effective actions introduced by the school. One parent commented: “My child learns in a certain way. The teachers try different things to support him.”

Differentiated teaching was verified through staff, student and parent interviews and through class observations. The Review Panel verified the following teaching strategies used to cater for the different ages, year levels and capabilities in classes: different entry points and release points for students, class groupings, students undertaking different roles in groups, use of mini-whiteboards by students, using levels of questioning, and activating prior knowledge and understanding of students in the class. In one class visited, worded challenges were accessible for students who required extension. In another classroom observation, an integrated study unit in geography allowed for student negotiation in their learning.

It was verified that the in-class teacher and SSO collaboration has been an operational shift in the delivery of intervention support this year. Staff confirmed the following outcomes: learning continuity over the week; greater awareness of class program and student learning goals by SSO staff; improved alignment of school improvement directions and, as one staff member commented: “A belief that we’re all striving for the same thing.” Classroom observations revealed visual scaffolds in all classes to allow students to access visual clues to support the development of learning independence.

The school has introduced a literacy block with some agreed explicit approaches implemented with respect to reading, comprehension and writing. These approaches have been supported through staff professional learning. In the early years, spelling and phonics assessment is used to establish the foundational skills and knowledge for literacy learning. Reading levels are tracked and monitored through Running Records (to Level 30) and through Lexile levels for more independent readers. This was verified through discussions with students, staff and parents. A numeracy block operates prior to lunch each day with agreed strategies implemented from staff joint training. A whole-school numeracy agreement was still to be developed with staff in this priority area. In the early years, a pedagogical approach of ‘I Do, We Do, You Do’ is used to differentiate the varying needs of learners in the classes.

The reading and numeracy data in the ‘School Performance Overview’ section above indicates a need to identify and retain students who achieve higher levels in their learning. The school has this capacity. Once identified, teachers need to ensure that ‘differentiation’ for highly capable learners is planned and catered for in the design of learning. The school is beginning to explore how tasks can be transformed to meet demands of the curriculum and the diverse needs of students in multi-age classes. The staff are encouraged to continue this work with a particular emphasis on challenge for high-performing learners.

Direction 1

Improve the percentages of students achieving in the higher bands of literacy learning through the design of tasks that personalise and connect learning for students in authentic ways.

The school has an abundant supply of assessment data that supports its diagnostic and evaluative decisions in terms of student support and curriculum emphases to be acted upon. This was evident through staff, student and parent interviews. An assessment schedule mapped over the year was provided to the Review Team as evidence of this practice. The school staff map and track student performance through data walls and class datasets evident in the school. It was clear that the school has been discerning about what data will provide the most useful information to support school- and class-based decisions about learning.

Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are devised for students who require intervention for their learning. Goals are established for these students and these were verified in the documentation provided. Across the school, every student has a number of goals defined for their personal and academic improvement. These are discussed with students and parents and reflected upon at the end of each term. This was confirmed through student and parent interviews.

The Review Panel confirmed that this was the beginning of an effective process to make learning goals clearer and more explicit for every student. Continued refinement of this process could make these goals more specific, targeted, realistic and achievable each term. The school visual displays, relating to improvement in learning, personal development and school attendance, demonstrate the school’s resolve

to make a difference for student outcomes and to make these expectations visible.

The staff developed their capacity to understand and assess various writing texts through the (twice yearly) English as a Second Language or Dialect (EALD) assessment process. Writing scaffolds for different text types and word walls were evident in classes to support student independence in writing. The staff were involved in writing moderation with another local school to gain a broader comparative perspective of the achievement of Poonindie Community Learning Centre students against the required standards. This was verified in staff interviews. One student interviewed by the Review Panel clearly articulated a specific individual learning goal in her writing, which was to: “broaden my vocabulary used within my persuasive writing.” Staff training has led to the provision of very specific and targeted goals in writing, as evidenced by this example.

One teacher explicitly described how he formatively assessed student learning at the classroom level. He described such approaches as: asking students to articulate the processes they used to solve problems; listening to students think, pair and share their understanding in small groups; asking reflective questions at the end of lessons and recording notes in student books. These strategies were verified through conversations with students from the class and through student work samples in books.

Some students described pre-testing and post-testing as strategies used by their teacher to determine what students already know and what needs to be taught. They also described a model of ‘Gradual Release of Responsibility’ where the teacher spends time developing student understanding while other students worked independently on the set task. Other formative assessment strategies verified with the students included: one-to-one oral teacher-student feedback; providing ‘next steps’ for the individual child orally and in writing; using a ‘coloured cup’ system to allow students to discreetly indicate whether they needed additional support with the concept being taught.

The school has a wealth of summative data about student learning. The combination of school-based data and the ‘rich’ information gleaned by teachers on a daily basis over a number of years has the capacity to target learning at the individual level. As one teacher described: “Tracking the children and getting the full picture is getting there.” Staff have an opportunity to further develop their formative assessment strategies to refine ‘next steps’ for individuals in line with the current school directions.

Direction 2

Raise achievement and growth in learning through formative assessment approaches that guide, support, challenge and refine ‘next steps’ for students.

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

A 2013 survey of students indicated that the school needed to accommodate for student voice within school life. The school reported no change to perception data from students the following year. Staff members have continued to develop this as an aspect for improvement through such strategies as ‘student for a day’, student forums, ERRAPPA student leadership camp, Student Representative Council (SRC), reporting to Governing Council and facilitation of 3-way interviews. Subsequent student surveys (for example, Edmodo, Kahoots, TfEL) have evidenced a rise in the development of student voice within the learning program. An improvement in student perception was verified in documentation and student commentary during the review.

It was verified that two teaching staff invited feedback about their teaching from students in 2015 using the ‘TfEL Compass’ as a tool. These two staff members identified one specific area for improvement based on this student feedback. It was evident that other staff had undertaken TfEL pre-observation surveys prior to having the Principal and a peer colleague observe in classrooms.

One teacher confirmed that she engages student interest through exploring their ‘wondering’ in topics such as ‘Under the Sea.’ This allows her to integrate maths, reading, writing, letter and word study through their questions and interests. The teacher uses simple techniques such as ‘thumbs up/down’ to gauge their level of understanding and interest in their learning. Another teacher has responded to explicit student feedback that indicated his teaching instructions were too long-winded. This was confirmed by students and the teacher. In response, the teacher has adjusted his approach to introducing topics and concepts to

be taught.

The examples above are important steps to progress the genuine influence of student voice in learning to bring further relevance, connection and understanding to the learning program. The students are perceptive, articulate and keen to learn. Building student voice as a natural component of effective teaching and learning within the classroom would complement the school's direction in this area of work.

Direction 3

Raise levels of student engagement in learning by eliciting genuine student voice within the classroom to positively influence teaching pedagogy and learning design.

How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

Pedagogical improvement has been a documented school improvement priority since 2013. This was verified through leader and staff conversations and through documentation provided to the Review Panel. The teaching staff have undertaken a 'gradual' approach to the implementation of the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) and are looking to further use this resource in disciplined dialogue sessions in staff meetings. This was verified in the documentation associated with scheduled staff meetings over time.

Staff members have engaged with a range of training and development associated with the Australian Curriculum, reading, writing and numeracy and other DECD priorities, and with professional learning both internal and external to the school. The school has strategically used the skills of the Curriculum Consultant in designing the learning program with clear links between curriculum and effective teaching practices, to engage students further. This support was highly valued by teachers, was made evident through interviews with staff and also in documentation provided.

Defined structures and frameworks for reading and writing were developed and implemented across the school. These were evident in school documentation (whole-school literacy agreement), student discussions and classroom observations. The early years teachers presented evidence (AEDC data) of the need to develop oral language skills of young students, while primary teachers explicitly taught the meta-language to become effective readers, writers and users of maths concepts. It was verified through student and parent conversations that they were aware of year-level standards applied to reading and writing. To develop deeper understanding in learning, one teacher was observed requiring students to explain their learning to others (peers), and asking students to present evidence of their learning at the required achievement standard. The concepts of expected 'standards' were clearly evident in the language of staff, students and parents.

The Principal undertook observations of teaching practice in classrooms in 2015 and provided teachers with written feedback. It was verified that staff engaged in an opportunity to observe a colleague with the Principal and provided feedback to their peers as an agreed strategy to build teacher capacity. The Review Panel verified this practice and the associated feedback provided about the teaching practices employed during these observations. The Review Panel acknowledged the staff commitment to professional learning and viewed peer professional observation as a future strategy to embed agreed teaching approaches across the school. The school culture was verified as highly professional and committed. This approach to building the capacity of teachers would support the school's next steps in its improvement journey.

Direction 4

Support collective action for evidence-based pedagogical improvement through expanding the opportunities for staff to give and receive feedback on agreed approaches to achieve consistency.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Poonindie Community Learning Centre has the demonstrated capacity to self-review regularly and strategically monitor the effectiveness of its defined actions. It has multiple measures of data to evaluate the impact being made to student learning outcomes. Effective teaching practices are evident and the students are responsive and engaged. A culture of improvement and high expectation is evident amongst the school leaders, staff and parent community.

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

1. Improve the percentages of students achieving in the higher bands of literacy learning through the design of tasks that personalise and connect learning for students in authentic ways.
2. Raise achievement and growth in learning through formative assessment approaches that guide, support, challenge and refine 'next steps' for students.
3. Raise levels of student engagement in learning by eliciting genuine student voice within the classroom to positively influence teaching pedagogy and learning design.
4. Support collective action for evidence-based pedagogical improvement through expanding the opportunities for staff to give and receive feedback on agreed approaches to achieve consistency.

Based on the school's current performance, Poonindie Community Learning Centre will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
A/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.

Robyn Kenny
PRINCIPAL
POONINDIE COMMUNITY LEARNING
CENTRE

Governing Council Chairperson