

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Lonsdale Heights Primary School

Conducted in March 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Paul Harmer, Review Principal.

School context

Lonsdale Heights Primary School is located 28kms from the Adelaide CBD in the Beach Road Partnership. The school enrolment in 2016 is 126. There has been an increase in enrolment in the past 2 years, resulting in the establishment of a new class. The school has an ICSEA score of 954, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 64% boys, 21% Aboriginal students, 23% students with disabilities, and 58% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his 2nd tenure and a Deputy Principal, with counsellor responsibilities.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: To what extent are students intellectually challenged?

Effective Leadership: To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?

Improvement Agenda: How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

To what extent are students intellectually challenged?

Lonsdale Heights Primary School works hard to support students to learn to read, write and become proficient in the number strand in mathematics. The focus of this learning is to develop students' fluency and 'word attack' skills, so that they can read and compute in number with greater automaticity. The strategic priorities of the school, the deployment of staff and the performance development processes are designed and organised to realise these aims. There are regular assessments to determine students' skill needs and achievement levels. The school provides daily intensive support in small groups. The groups are fluid, and students can be accelerated as they make progress, or drop a level if they need more practice to consolidate their skills. Students told the Review Panel that they know their levels and strive to improve. It was noted that they were less sure of what strategies they needed to use to get to the next level.

Class teachers meet with the Leadership Team and Special Education teacher once a term, as part of their performance development, to review the progress of students who have been identified at risk of not achieving (known as Wave 2), or assessed with specific learning needs (known as Wave 3). Teachers assess students using the agreed reading and mathematics assessment and testing tools. Teachers talked about how they use the achievement data to work out what skills students are having trouble with so they can target their skill gaps. The Review Panel was provided with examples of how these meetings had positively impacted on teachers' practice.

During the review, teachers brought samples of students' work to share. It was evident that teachers across all year levels plan and differentiate tasks to cater for the range of students' needs in their classes. This approach to planning enables students of all skill levels to be successful. Some teachers show students exemplars of work, to give them a clear picture of what is expected. There were also examples of the success criteria provided to students so that they know how their work is going to be assessed. These practices need to be embedded so that they become part of the daily routine.

The achievement results outlined in Appendix 2, show that in 3 of the last 4 years, over 75% of Year 7 students met the Standard of Education Achievement in reading. This trend suggests that by the time the students progress through their schooling to Year 7, they have developed fluency skills to decode and

recognise words. Only 1 out of 13 Year 7 students achieved in the higher bands in reading and numeracy in 2016, and this appears to be the trend over time. This result suggests there is room to intellectually stretch students in higher-order comprehension and problem-solving skills and strategies.

Some teachers are experimenting with a new approach to teaching maths, known as Creative Body-based Learning (CBL). Anecdotal reports from teachers suggest CBL is highly engaging and active, involving students in problem-solving.

To support students to think more deeply, to problem-solve, to hypothesise and to be able to explain and reason, teachers need to design tasks and learning experiences that enable students to develop these higher-order thinking skills. This development cannot be left until Year 7, and requires intentional planning by teachers to transform their task design to enable students to apply their learning in different contexts.

Direction 1

Investigate and implement pedagogies and design tasks to provide intellectual stretch for students, while maintaining effective intervention programs and strategies.

Lonsdale Heights Primary School is committed to supporting students to develop pride in themselves and their school. The results of the 2016 Year 6/7 survey into students' perceptions of their wellbeing and engagement show a very high connectedness and emotional engagement with the adults at school. The students reported they have a high belief in their academic ability and perceptions of themselves as learners. When asked about their willingness to put in effort to master skills and succeed academically, and to regulate their emotions, the results were lower. Although this survey was based on the perceptions of 18 Year 6/7 students, the Leadership Team told the Review Panel they observed that the students at the school are highly supported, but less willing to take risks.

The world in which students live has high degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty as knowledge is constantly changing, and there need to be multiple, innovative ways to solve problems. Students need to develop greater self-regulation, willingness to persevere at tasks over time and the ability to learn from mistakes. Knowing how to learn, the strategies for learning and how to think about learning is as important as getting 'it right'. A key pedagogical practice to support students to think about learning is the use of metacognition by teachers, where they make their thinking visible to students. This process involves teachers modelling and teaching students how to activate their current knowledge in relation to a skill or topic, and plan how to approach the learning task, interpret and analyse what they have learnt in contrast with their previous knowledge. This process is deeper and requires more awareness of thinking processes than the more common reflection processes. Once students have gained a degree of automaticity and fluency in basic skills, the next challenge for the school is to support them to develop the disposition and strategies for higher-order thinking.

Direction 2

Support students to foster dispositions for learning through making thinking processes visible and to develop greater emotional regulation and perseverance, especially when faced with unknown and unexpected challenges.

To what extent has a coherent approach to curriculum been developed?

The Review Panel observed a collaborative, improvement-focused culture amongst the staff. The school has worked to ensure there is consistency and coherence, especially in literacy learning, as students progress through their school. This was evident by consistent practices in the literacy block, in approaches to Jolly Phonics and Jolly Number, and in behaviour management expectations and processes. Each class uses Circle Time to develop social skills and to collectively resolve issues. Teachers use learning intentions to inform students of the task they will be undertaking during the lesson. There is a flowchart to describe the school processes for intervention and teachers use a one-plan approach to support students with identified needs. There is a spelling continuum and genre-based assessment rubrics from Years 1 to 7 to provide scaffolds for English teaching.

At this stage, the school has not yet developed an agreed continuum in mathematics, nor an agreement about the components of a mathematics block, other than the Jolly Maths approach. In talking to teachers, this would appear to be work that would provide greater coherence for students.

Students from Years 3 to 7 have the opportunity to volunteer to be a member of the school's band. The band is highly valued by students, parents and staff. There are high expectations about their music learning, and also in developing the dispositions of reliability, responsibility and perseverance. The band is a key vehicle for maintaining the school's identity and pride. The band is offered 3 afternoons a week.

The Review Panel noted that the dedication of time to the band puts pressure on teachers to find the time in the busy school timetable to provide learning in all the curriculum areas. Teachers told the Review Panel they sometimes integrate units of work that involve students in two learning areas. For example, the way in which students presented their mathematics task, also showed evidence of their learning in the visual arts. Similarly, the use of CBL in mathematics was seen a way of incorporating movement (PE) with mathematics. The NIT (Non-Instruction Time) component of the timetable is negotiated with each teacher, and varies from class to class.

The Review Panel acknowledges that integration of learning is a clever way of providing students with access to the whole curriculum. However, it is important that the key underpinning concepts and methodology of the learning area is not 'watered down' or lost in the efforts to integrate subjects. Central to learning in science is the understanding of the scientific method; working scientifically, which is different to the historic method or other subject discipline methods. While the Australian Curriculum was never intended for teachers to cover every topic and be entirely content-driven, there are key components in each of the Learning Areas that students should have an opportunity to learn. In science, for example, these include engaging with the physical, biological and chemical sciences and working scientifically, and similarly, there are 2 key strands (movement and physical activity, and personal, social and community health) in the health and PE curriculum.

At the time of review, the school was not able to show how it is ensuring students have an opportunity to learn these key ideas and discipline methodologies in a systematic and coherent way. These comments are not meant to be interpreted that the school should dissolve the band. As clearly stated above, the band is highly valued and is a key to developing dispositions for learning. However, it is important the school maps how it provides the learning (key ideas, topics and methodologies) in all of the curriculum areas so that students get the opportunity for coherence across the curriculum. The underpinning key ideas and concepts need to be increasingly sophisticated as children progress through their schooling.

Direction 3

Guarantee students have access to a comprehensive curriculum by mapping and documenting the key ideas, strands and topics being taught at each year level and ensure students have the opportunity to engage with the subject methodologies that are intrinsic to each learning area.

How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

As stated earlier in this report, the performance discussions with teachers involve a regular and rigorous review of the progress of the students identified at risk or needing specific support (Wave 2 and 3). Achievement data in English and mathematics, particularly in regard to skills in fluency, is used to measure the progress students have made from term to term, and the skill gaps students need support with to become proficient.

The Review Panel found that teachers know the individual student achievement levels, but seemed to have less of a macro picture of trends over time. For instance, the analysis of NAPLAN shows that the numbers of students achieving in the higher bands was very low, even though most students by Year 7 had clearly mastered fluency, and a level of comprehension and problem-solving to achieve at the DECD standards.

Similarly, students receive a report outlining their achievement in all the learning areas. At this stage, the school does not collate the individual grading to gain a macro dataset or picture of the learning achievement across curriculum areas across year levels. A discussion and analysis of this dataset, based on teachers' judgements, can be triangulated with other achievement datasets, such as the ACER tests. This

process will help to ensure teachers conduct consistent and rigorous assessment, as well as provide pointers for more targeted strategic directions.

The school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is ambitious. There are two strategic priorities – *improve learning outcomes for all students* and *develop a culture of wellbeing for students, staff, parents/caregivers and the wider community*. The SIP's strategies articulate many of the aspects of student learning and teaching that are expected at Lonsdale Heights Primary School, rather than being based on a more fine-tuned data analysis. A SIP should outline the strategic improvement focus and provide a more 'clinical' roadmap outlining the actions the school will take and how it will measure the impact.

For example, the Year 6/7 survey results and observational data suggest there is a strong connectedness to the adults at the school, and school pride is high. The school's culture, programs and events, as stated in the current SIP, have contributed to a culture of wellbeing. Therefore, the perception data indicates the improvement focus should be aimed at supporting students to develop greater perseverance and emotional regulation, especially when faced with challenges or unexpected problems. To improve this aspect of students' engagement in their learning, the school may need to try different and more specific actions, and set out to evaluate the impact.

At this point of time, the SIP reflects much of what the school does, rather than a plan for improvement with specific foci based on a thorough analysis of datasets (achievement and perception). It needs to be re-thought and refined, narrower and deeper, and the planned actions need to be more specific to the Lonsdale Heights Primary School context.

Direction 4

Analyse the achievement and perception data trends to identify more refined strategic improvement priorities and develop a plan of action that can be evaluated.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Lonsdale Heights Primary School.

Effective practice in performance development to build the capacity of teachers was evident at the school. The performance development is a regular (4 times a year) and rigorous process focused on teachers reflecting on the progress of students requiring intervention. Teachers are expected to be familiar with each student's achievement, as measured by agreed reading and mathematics assessments. Teachers were able to provide examples of how the performance development processes have impacted on their classroom practices. Teachers plan to differentiate their tasks and cater for the range of learning skills in their classes. Reflection on these discussions led to a school change in the way in which SSOs support students to provide greater connection between the intervention support and classroom learning. Evidence of these practices was verified through interviews with teachers, observing examples of students' work, teachers' performance plans and a meeting with SSOs.

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Lonsdale Heights Primary School has a student-focused, improvement culture, where collaboration between staff is evident. The support for students with special needs (intervention) is coordinated, personalised and regularly monitored to determine the progress students have made.

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

1. Investigate and implement pedagogies and design tasks to provide intellectual stretch for students, while maintaining effective intervention programs and strategies.
2. Support students to foster dispositions for learning through making thinking processes visible and to develop greater emotional regulation and perseverance, especially when faced with unknown and unexpected challenges.
3. Guarantee students have access to a comprehensive curriculum by mapping and documenting the key ideas, strands and topics being taught at each year level and ensure students have the opportunity to engage with the subject methodologies that are intrinsic to each learning area.
4. Analyse the achievement and perception data trends to identify more refined strategic improvement priorities and develop a plan of action that can be evaluated.

Based on the school's current performance, Lonsdale Heights Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



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Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

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Keith Beal
PRINCIPAL
LONSDALE HEIGHTS PRIMARY
SCHOOL

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Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented.

The Principal of Lonsdale Heights 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:

- Aspect of Governance: A site bullying audit is conducted annually, however, the results are currently being considered by the Governing Council. This process will be addressed when the bullying audit is completed this year.
- Aspect of Safety: Volunteers have not currently been trained in their obligations to respond to abuse and neglect of children in their care. This training will be provided in Term 1 2017.

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 2016 was 86.7%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 40% of Year 1 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). In 2016, 24% of Year 2 students were reported to have achieved the SEA; however, this report to DECD did not count 9 students who had previously achieved the SEA. If these 9 students are counted, 67% of Year 2 students would have been considered to have met the SEA. These results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average for both Year 1 and Year 2.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 56% of Year 3 students, 50% of Year 5 students, and 77% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change, Year 5 a decline, and Year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 22% (2 of 9 students) of Year 3, 22% (4 of 18) of Year 5, and 8% (1 of 13) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100%, or 2 of 2 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 33%, or 1 of 3 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of Year 3 students, 72% of Year 5 students, and 62% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for Years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 40% in 2014 to 62% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within, for Year 5 above, and for Year 7 just within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, no Year 3, 1 of 18 (6%) Year 5, and 1 of 13 (8%) Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, no students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and no students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.