

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR BELAIR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in February 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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Katherine Holman, 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 Belair 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:

Part 1 Governance:

The Principal will work with the new Governing Council to strengthen practices for reporting information about school improvement to the school community.

Part 4 People and Culture:

The new Work Health and Safety Committee will ensure appropriate induction of staff.

Part 6 Site Procedures:

The new Work Health and Safety Committee will address the following issues: Hazard Identification; Hazardous Chemicals; Records Management; and ICT Security Policy, by the end of Term 2, 2016.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy 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 2015 was 95%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Belair Primary School is located 10 kilometres south of Adelaide in the foothills of the Mount Lofty Ranges. In 2013, the co-operating Belair Schools (Belair Junior Primary School and Belair Primary School) amalgamated to form one Reception to Year 7 school. The school implements the Australian Curriculum through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) across Reception to Year 7.

There are currently 580 students enrolled at the school. Enrolment numbers have increased over the last 5 years with a 14% increase from 499 students in 2011. The school is not zoned. The national ICSEA score is 1117 and the school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. There is limited mobility in the community and very little transient enrolment. The school population includes two Aboriginal students, 19 (3%) Students with Disabilities, 45 (8%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and five students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM). In 2016, ten percent of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The Leadership Team consists of the Principal, who has been at the school for eight years, originally as the Principal of the Year 3 to 7 school and, since 2013, as the Principal appointed to the Reception to Year 7 school. The Deputy Principal and the Coordinator: PYP, were both appointed new to the school in 2013. The Assistant Principal: Digital Learning was appointed in 2015.

Staffing is stable and reflects a range of teaching experience from Early Career teachers to 75% of teachers awarded Step 9. There are 11 non-teaching staff members working across the school.

School Performance Overview

In 2015, students at Belair Primary School are performing well, as measured by a high proportion of students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement for NAPLAN. Comparatively, students are performing as well as, if not better than, similar groups of students in DECD schools.

Reading

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 94% of Year 3 students, 92% of Year 5 students and 92% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For all year levels, this result represents an improvement from historic baseline average (2008 to 2012).

In 2015, at all year levels tested in NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving results that are higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. Over time, that is, between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved results higher than (Year 5) or within (Years 3 and 7) the range relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 70% of Year 3 students, 42% of Year 5 students and 37% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for 2015 NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 63% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 61% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. There is a trend downwards from Year 3 to 5 in 2015, from 79% in 2013 to 63% in 2015. These results represent little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 69% of Year 1 and 83% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 1 is downwards from 95% in 2013. In relation to the historic average, this result represents an improvement in Year 2, and a decline in Year 1.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of Year 3 students, 95% of Year 5 students and 80% of Year 7 students demonstrated the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement. At Years 3 and 5, the results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average of 85% and 89% respectively, and a decline at Year 7 from the baseline average of 83%. Between 2013 and 2015, there is no improvement trend evident at any of the year levels.

In 2015, for Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved higher results than similar groups of students across DECD schools. At Year 7, the comparative results are consistent with those of similar groups of students. Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved higher results in Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 48% of Year 3 students, 31% of Year 5 students and 19% of 7 students achieved in the top two numeracy bands. These latest results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average at Year 3.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 59% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 47% of students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. These results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

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

- Student Learning:** How well are students achieving over time?
- Effective Teaching:** To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?
To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?
- Improvement Agenda:** How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

How well are students achieving over time?

The 2015 School Performance Measures used by DECD indicate that students at Belair Primary School are demonstrating improvement from the historic average in six of the eight supplementary areas of the SEA. Ninety-three percent of students across the school, on average, are achieving the SEA in Reading and 88% are achieving the SEA in Numeracy.

The school has also shown improvement in four of the six DECD strategic objectives related to higher levels of learning. The School Performance Report shows significant improvement in reading, with 70% of Year 3 students achieving higher-band results, adding to the average of 50% of students overall scoring in the higher two bands for reading across Years 3, 5 and 7. The average rate for numeracy across the same year levels shows an improvement from the historic average.

The recent analysis of A-E grades assigned in 2015 against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards from Year 1 to 7, indicates that, on average, 93% of students across the school are achieving C grades or above for English, mathematics and science. Further analysis shows that across these subjects, respectively, there were 48%, 50% and 61% of students achieving C grades, with only 13% of students achieving an A in English, 12% in mathematics and 6% in science.

Parents reported that they were happy with their children's progress at school and appreciated the balance of experiences that students were offered and received. However, in relation to mathematics, they would like the school to lift and retain the results, especially in preparation for secondary education.

The school is currently implementing an agreement to collect a range of school-based assessment data sets. Staff are in the process of collating, analysing and comparing the information available in order to better know and understand 'how well students are achieving over time'. During the review, progress to date was shared in a staff meeting, with feedback collated and provided to the Leadership Team for further action.

The Review Panel commends the school on the high proportion of students achieving the expected DECD standard, and draws the same conclusion as the school regarding next steps for improvement. The school now needs to respond to the NAPLAN pattern showing that not all students are retaining higher levels of learning from one year to the next; for example, approximately 60% in reading and, on average, 50% of students in numeracy. Because improvement in, and retention of, learning is a significant responsibility of schools, deliberate attention is required to ensure the gains made one year by every student are retained and not lost over time. How such a pattern is being reflected in the distribution of A-E grades requires further exploration by the staff, looking, in particular, at the results at a class, cohort and whole-school level.

All students at the school can be challenged and supported to achieve at higher levels every year. Such an expectation is embedded in the set of qualities described as the 'learner profile'. Acquisition of these qualities provides a firm foundation for success at this school.

Direction 1

Ensure all students progress every year, and retain higher levels of learning over time, by enabling them to demonstrate their achievement, against and beyond the SEA.

To what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The Australian Curriculum (AC) is delivered at Belair Primary School in alignment with the requirements of the Primary Years Program (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB). In 2010, the school earned authorisation from the IB Office to deliver the PYP to Reception to Year 5 students and, in 2013, in collaboration with the school community, the decision was made to extend the program to students in Years 6 and 7. A comprehensive and coherent Program of Inquiry (PoI) has been developed ensuring a consistent approach to curriculum planning, instruction and assessment now exists across the school from Reception to Year 7.

Teachers reported that they value the clear expectations associated with working within the requirements and in year-level teams to plan and deliver the curriculum. They described a 'backwards by design' planning approach and the inquiry learning process (for example: tuning in, finding out, sorting out, taking action) as the mainstay of the planning framework used by all teachers.

The Review Panel heard from staff and students that a provocation and/or a pre-assessment task is used with students as the starting point for learning design to check prior knowledge and skill. Peer and self-assessment processes and summative assessment tasks, for example, rubrics designed by the team, are used during the unit of work to 'refine the planning as the learning happens'. Digital learning tools, including iPads, are used by students to demonstrate and extend their learning in a variety of ways. Timely feedback is also used. Students reported that this is valuable when "it keeps us on track". Teachers receive leadership, coaching and support from the Assistant Principal Coordinator who also teaches in classes three days per week.

Teachers and the Leadership Team raised a number of issues related to 'how and what we are doing with grades', alluding to the need to develop and formalise an ongoing process for moderation of the A-E scale. Last year, Belair Primary School participated in some moderation activities with local schools from across the Partnership, which was valuable. The need for an internal process is now a priority.

The current Site Improvement Plan includes reference to moderation in mathematics and English, particularly in relation to student work samples, within and across levels of schooling, including criteria for A-E. The staff are keen to undertake this work, including further discussion about planning and assessment, to ensure essential skills of English and mathematics are covered in their units of inquiry and in 'stand-alone' planners.

A focus on transforming assessment tasks to 'stretch' students in their thinking and learning will also assist each professional learning team to collaborate and moderate for consistency at, above and below year levels. As the school undertakes to clearly define the process for assigning and reporting A-E grades against the AC achievement standards, teachers will develop a shared understanding of the achievement levels and the guidelines for implementing the grading criteria. This professional learning will provide the basis for ongoing moderation of assessment and student work.

Direction 2

Build teacher capacity to make consistent evidence-based judgements against achievement standards, by firmly establishing collaborative processes to support the moderation of assessment tasks and student work.

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Teachers knowing and understanding the needs of learners is the starting point of effective instruction. To strengthen this basis at Belair Primary School, the Principal has introduced a process whereby staff are engaged in using achievement information to determine specific learning goals for all students in each class. This year, two team meetings per term will be dedicated to ongoing tracking of every learner's growth. Outcomes of monitoring progress in this way will be shared by teachers in triad groups of cross-year level colleagues. The conversation will focus on six students each teacher has been tracking, three for English and three for mathematics. The professional conversation will focus on ways the teachers are addressing the range of needs.

The Review Panel was fortunate to observe teachers sharing the initial information during the review. They

were engaged and willingly talking through the new process of using the 'pink folder' of data as a starting point. This data had been collated as part of student handover at the start of the school year. An appreciative discussion generated feedback, including caution about having too much information at some year levels, and comments about trialling what information is most useful, for what purpose, and where 'too much is overwhelming'.

Through the review interviews, teachers said they felt the policies and pedagogy underpinning the PYP standards do support them in catering for the varied needs of learners. They feel confident in the use of a range of 'assessment for learning' processes, including pre-assessments to 'move students forward' from where they are to the desired outcomes. The portfolio of work for a unit of inquiry serves as a record of a student's thinking and progress and the teacher's feedback. Some teachers also talked about 'regrouping students' to support higher levels of learning.

The school's literacy agreement (May 2015) outlines the agreed practices, intervention programs and the assessment and data collection timeline. A similar agreement will be developed for numeracy in 2016.

The school has developed and implemented a thorough Student Review Team (SRT) approach to manage intervention resources for students achieving below the SEA and/or who have specific learning needs. In addition to the students assessed with learning disabilities, in 2015, there were fifty students identified through the national data collection process (NCCD) as requiring adjustment support to better access learning. All these students have an individual learning plan that records goals, adjustments and indicators of success. The SRT meets regularly and distributes the minutes to staff.

The Review Panel also saw evidence of the school's Early Literacy Screening process used for Reception students. Concepts of print are tested along with phonological and phonemic awareness. From Year 1, students requiring support for specific skills are allocated to small reading intervention groups, in addition to the class program. A similar process will be established for numeracy in 2016.

Parents reported that the three-way interviews were a good source of information about how their child was going as a learner. During these reporting times, students said they reflect on the attributes in the Learner Profile to describe their strengths and goals as a learner. As part of the local Partnership, staff will soon be engaging in professional learning to incorporate strategies that will further promote positive growth mindsets with students.

Direction 3

Strengthen differentiated teaching processes by making effective use of data, surveys and formative assessment information, to monitor and refine learning goals with students, and to use these as the basis of feedback for growth.

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The Principal described the processes the school uses as part of the culture of continuous improvement. Staff are very collaborative and engage in shared work to implement the curriculum, address the needs of students and develop school agreements. The current school improvement priorities are identified in the 2016-2018 Site Improvement Plan: Numeracy; Literacy; Science; and Engagement/Wellbeing. The Numeracy and Literacy aspects of the plan are the most strategic at this stage. Numeracy is the highest priority for 2016.

The numeracy work will build on the model used in 2014 to 2015 to develop reading and other aspects of literacy. The successful elements from the literacy improvement agenda will be replicated to develop agreements for common practice. This work will be led by the Principal and the Deputy Principal and includes:

- an audit of practice in classrooms
- use of data and evidence
- professional learning aligned to the SIP
- 'vertical' groups of teachers in performance conversations (shared accountability), and
- structured release time for collaborative work.

IB World schools are continually evaluated and accredited against international standards and practices. The

school, therefore, has embedded practices in place to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional practice through use of a detailed PYP Action Plan 2013 to 2017. A Digital Learning Action Plan also exists to support teaching and learning in every classroom, communication with parents and a professional network for staff.

In the Principal's presentation at the start of the review, the Leadership Team expressed a desire to strengthen aspects of the way the school undertakes the implementation of the priorities and the way ongoing monitoring and self-review happens. They also would like to see the participation of the Governing Council and work of the Education Committee included in a more formal way.

The Review Panel found that staff and parents find it very rewarding to be involved in the school and to support all students in a place that has a strong sense of community. Students, parents and staff 'value the extra' that students get in relation to the well-balanced offering of skills, attributes and values, all underpinned by a culture of mutual respect.

Based on the description above, the Review Panel feels no need to provide a formal Direction for this Line of Inquiry. However, the Principal has been encouraged to engage in further research and reflection about designing 'new ways' of collaboratively transforming and embedding improvement across the school.

The previous Directions provided in this report can be implemented as the basis of this reform.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Belair Primary School has provided evidence of consistent performance and effectiveness, including high levels of growth in student achievement over time against the Standard of Educational Achievement. There is a culture of improvement and strong collaboration across the school. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning. Students and parents feel ownership for the school and strong connections as a community.

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

1. Ensure all students progress every year, and retain higher levels of learning over time, by enabling them to demonstrate their achievement, against and beyond the SEA.
2. Build teacher capacity to make consistent evidence-based judgements against achievement standards, by firmly establishing collaborative processes to support the moderation of assessment tasks and student work.
3. Strengthen differentiated teaching processes by making effective use of data, surveys and formative assessment information, to monitor and refine learning goals with students, and to use as the basis of feedback for growth.

Based on the school's current performance, Belair Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston
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.



Susan Copeland
PRINCIPAL
BELAIR PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson