

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Belair Primary School

Conducted in August 2020



# 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 Liz Matheson, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Rebecca Pears and John Iannunzio, Review Principals.

## 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - Student groups
  - Teachers
  - Members of the School Improvement Team

# School context

Belair Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 10kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 614. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 580 students. The local partnership is Mitcham Hills.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1115, and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 9% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 1% children/young people in care and 9% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of tenure, a deputy principal, an assistant principal (Wellbeing/Digital Learning/STEM, coordinator 0.6 FTE Australian Curriculum/International Baccalaureate and coordinator 0.4 FTE School Improvement).

There are 31 teachers including 5 in the early years of their career and 12 Step 9 teachers.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- 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 students work.
- 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 as a basis of feedback for growth.

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

The school improvement plan targets clearly show an aim to improve student achievement in the higher bands in all data measures. Progress is closely tracked to evaluate the extent of individual improvement.

Considerable opportunities were provided for teachers to moderate student work with the local partnership and within the school. This included collaboratively designing tasks, particularly in Inquiry curriculum areas, to enable students to demonstrate higher level of achievement. Moderation of writing samples occurs through Brightpath and influences teachers’ understanding of what features of writing are required for higher achievement.

The school has worked at developing One Child One Plans. Intervention is individualised and targeted as a wave 3 strategy. The relevant teachers and principal have comprehensive knowledge of the learning profile and progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Numerous examples of regular formative assessment strategies were provided, which allow teachers to 'check in and act' by adapting the pace and group learning. Many students were able to talk about their goals for improvement.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

There is an understanding that the SIP provides the overarching plan for improvement, and that actions and PD align with the goals. Teachers stated the SIP was shared, clearly related to their work and no longer seen as 'secret business'. They are regularly involved in monitoring the implementation of the planned actions and staff are open to sharing their expertise.

Leaders developed a culture of improvement, including setting clear expectations that staff participate in collaborative work. Teams have been given time and guidance to support them. A cycle of improvement, incorporating activation of prior knowledge, planning through the learning process and critical reflection on the task design, is evident in Inquiry, but not so much in mathematics and English.

There are documented literacy and numeracy agreements outlining the expected approaches at different levels of schooling. These agreements are reviewed periodically. Leadership are aware that there comes a time in some students' learning, when these approaches no longer fit with the necessity to stretch students further, and seek to adjust the agreements accordingly.

Success criteria and challenges of practice in the SIP require re-thinking. The school needs to be clear on what students will demonstrate they know, and can do if the school is to meet its improvement targets. Using a backwards planning model, the school then determines the challenge of practice: what they will teach, how, and how they will know students are progressing in the improvement goal areas. Currently, the success criteria and challenge of practice are related to the way teachers' work: collaborative planning, assessment and moderation. The success criteria to achieve improvement in mathematics is centred on exposing students to the 4 proficiencies in mathematics.

As the SIP documents the school's improvement agenda, it needs to be explicit, sharper, targeted and measureable. There should be a strong line of sight from the defined success criteria, so that teaching practices that will influence the improvement in student outcomes, are prominent.

**Direction 1** To increase and sustain higher band attainment in student outcomes, sharpen the clarity of measurable student-based success criteria, the planned strategic actions and teaching practices required for high-impact learning.

## Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do learning intentions and success criteria enable students to monitor and assess their learning?

Student agency is one of the goals for improvement on the school improvement plan (SIP). A measure of success seeks to develop the language of learning through effective teaching practices of feedback, learning intentions and success criteria.

The capacity of students to take ownership of their learning is progressing. Checking students' prior knowledge about the central idea in a unit of learning, and seeking their input into inquiry questions, made a significant difference in the level of student engagement and ownership. This change supported teachers in knowing when to use learning intentions with their class.

The school holds an annual event where students decide how to present their work, the 'Expo', and where they can demonstrate their learning to achieve the success criteria. Parents commented that the pre- and post-assessment work samples enable them to use these as prompts to discuss learning with their children.

Success criteria was provided to students through various processes, including rubrics, exemplars and assessment quilts. Students have various opportunities for self- and peer-assessment. In some classes it is an expectation that students have undertaken both these processes before they seek individual discussion and feedback from their teacher in writing tasks.

Many students described the quick 'feedback loop', or the formative assessment processes used by teachers to indicate pace, level of challenge and understanding to the teacher. Teachers use pre-assessment for initial groupings. Ongoing formative assessment facilitates fluidity as teachers respond to needs through the learning process.

Understanding and using growth mindsets was visible in walk-throughs and discussions with students, especially that everyone has different learning entry points. Teachers incorporate a range of strategies to promote thinking, sharing and acting on their learning, that is, real-life connections, in-class reflection, and peer-to-peer support.

School planning reflects students' opinions and aspirations through defined student leadership roles and selection process. Student feedback is gathered by the principal over time to check the extent student agency is an embedded feature of the school's practices.

The review panel concluded that there was no need to make a formal Direction for this Line of Inquiry.

## Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent is student data and evidence used to inform and refine teaching at an individual, group and class level?

Tracking and monitoring of student progress is a strong feature of the school's use of data. Governing Council and parent groups reported teachers knew where their children were, as well as the achievement benchmarks and targets the school is aiming for. There is a focus on lifting grades. Most teachers have a deep knowledge of the Australian Curriculum and the International Baccalaureate requirements. The school has worked to gain greater consistency in grading of learning areas.

Less evident was the analysis of the standardised testing sets to identify the gaps at year or school levels in the students' skills and understandings, particularly in English and mathematics. It was not clear what the analysis reveals about different learning areas and groups of students.

Year 3 and 7 students achieved above students from similar contexts. Achievement in year 5 over time is a concern. The challenge for the school is to sustain students in higher-band achievement in years 3, 5 and 7, and to arrest the pattern of decline in the performance of year 5 students. To address this challenge, the school needs to know what they need to target and focus on at a deeper level. This analysis will inform strategic planning as well as classroom programming.

The introduction of Brightpath is a lever for the school to do this in writing. Several teachers now understand the need for a balance in focusing on the mechanics of writing with choices to improve the quality of writing. Similarly, in mathematics, teachers need to be transforming tasks to require students to use multifaceted problem-solving and reasoning; and in reading, the development of 'metalanguage' to be able to discuss elements of a range of text types. The school is encouraged to engage with departmental guidebooks, on curriculum support, to further their understanding and implement evidence-based pedagogies.

**Direction 2** To stretch and challenge students, build teachers' capacity to deeply analyse what students need to demonstrate to achieve higher-bands, especially in mathematics and English, and to design and transform tasks accordingly.

**Direction 3** To sharpen the challenge of practice for improvement, further develop teachers' understanding of, and practices in, evidence-based high-impact pedagogical practices.

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Belair Primary School has a collaborative culture with a commitment to enabling student agency and tracking students' learning progress. There is strong support for leadership and staff from parents and the Governing Council, and an understanding that school improvement is everyone's business and responsibility.

The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1** To increase and sustain higher band attainment in student outcomes, sharpen the clarity of measurable student-based success criteria, the planned strategic actions and teaching practices required for high-impact learning.
- Direction 2** To stretch and challenge students, build teachers' capacity to deeply analyse what students need to demonstrate to achieve higher-bands, especially in mathematics and English, and to design and transform tasks accordingly.
- Direction 3** To sharpen the challenge of practice for improvement, further develop teachers' understanding of, and practices in, evidence-based high-impact pedagogical practices.

Based on the school's current performance, Belair Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



-----  
Kerry Dollman  
A/DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



-----  
Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS



-----  
Rob Houston  
PRINCIPAL  
BELAIR 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).

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019, 82% of year 1 and 83% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for year 1 and an improvement for year 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of year 3 students, 84% of year 5 students and 92% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5 a decline, from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than, and for years 5 and 7, within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 68% of year 3, 39% of year 5 and 52% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 61%, or 23 out of 38 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 66%, or 31 out of 47 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of year 3 students, 71% of year 5 students and 90% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5 a decline, from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, years 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than and for year 5, lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 49% of year 3, 10% of year 5 and 42% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 24%, or 6 out of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 69%, or 25 out of 36 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.