

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Eden Hills Primary School**

Conducted in June 2018



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Marie Wright, Review Principal.

## School context

Eden Hills Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 15kms south of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Mitcham Hills Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 273 students, and has been steady over the last 5 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 1119, and is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 9% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), no children/young people in care, and 10% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of tenure, a deputy principal, and a curriculum coordinator.

## 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 2 key areas from the External School Review framework:

**Effective Teaching:** To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident with a view on the school culture?

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

Literacy and numeracy are the two curriculum priorities of the school's site improvement plan, with the intention of 'improving student learning and engagement through the implementation of quality teaching and learning programs...' To accomplish these 2 objectives, the strategies undertaken include whole-staff professional development in pedagogical practices in literacy and numeracy, development of structures in data collection and graduated intervention programs.

The principal's presentation highlighted a significant change in the pedagogical approach across the school with the withdrawal from the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary and Middle Years curriculum framework, and the undertaking of a new approach that maintains the inquiry learning concept but is more aligned with the Australian Curriculum. A broad consultation process was conducted through the governing council to ensure that all parents were informed of the change from IB to an alternative curriculum platform. It was noted that the transition from the IB format was 'relatively smooth', with teachers using some of the strengths of the IB program and blending them with the newer approach to curriculum planning and teaching.

There is increased reference to the use of achievement data; plotting of student growth has improved in recent times, with an emphasis on the tracking of students involved in any intervention support programs. As a result, there has been a 46% increase in growth scores of identified and targeted students. The results from the systemic achievement data (Running Records, NAPLAN, and PAT tests) showed that very few students did not meet the SEA benchmarks.



The focus for the year level teams has moved from teachers concentrating on their own class group of students to an extended cohort focus, where teachers take responsibility for all students within their teaching team. This is exemplified with the years 5 to 7 group, who have adopted a middle school model of teaching, where the students move amongst the 4 classes and are taught by different teachers in maths and literacy. This has enabled the learning program to be tailored to the different abilities of students, and teachers expanding their knowledge on the range of abilities of all students. One teacher cited: "This approach has enabled quality tracking of students across classes and not just your own – created teamwork and is not insular". This change was verified by some of the students who indicated that they like this approach and recognised that each teacher has particular strengths in their teaching and helped them with their learning.

The leadership team was strategic in the deployment of staff in 2018, aiming to ensure the right mix of staff skills and experience was used to construct the year level teams. Consequently, team collaboration in curriculum planning was noted as a strong element within each of the year level team.

Teaching staff acknowledged the variety of professional learning opportunities offered, which covered both curriculum developments in literacy, such as Words Their Way, Jolly Phonics and Daily 5, and maths programs, such as Back to Front Planning. The social skills program Play is The Way and work in growth mindsets has been implemented to develop and support the learning dispositions of students. The local partnership focus on assessment and moderation has been addressed through combined schools' professional learning sessions, followed-up at staff meetings and within each year level team.

Lesson structures are a combination of explicit teaching and independent learning using an inquiry based learning approach. Teachers use a range of diagnostic assessments such as Imaths, Running Records, Daily 5 and Words Their Way, to group students. Teachers indicated that using these strategies provided opportunities to track students better and see what the students can engage with. Students indicated that being in groups helped them work with their peers and allowed the teacher to take 'workshops' (mini lessons) to explain the work, use examples, break the learning up into parts and ask lots of questions.

Task design planning varied amongst the teachers, with integrated units of inquiry being a common practice across the school. The implementation of the Mappen curriculum framework in term 1 is used to support the curriculum delivery in all subjects. As this is relatively new, some teachers found it 'too prescribed' and are 'unpacking it' to help them with their lesson planning so that it is engaging for the students.

All staff recognised that each class has a diversity of learners ranging from high achievers to students with identified learning needs. There was a common understanding about differentiated learning from the teachers, and a teacher summed it up as "being different for different kids and finding strengths and trying to plan for them". The application of differentiated practices ranged from conferencing and modifying tasks, to intervention support with school services officers. One teacher referenced the Australian Curriculum as a means of differentiated planning by referring to the curriculum and its scope and sequences to plan lessons for specific students. The language of 'multiple entry points' was evident during the teacher discussions. Students recognised different learning approaches that teachers used to make their learning interesting, and cited examples such as using technology, experiments, pictures on worksheets and YouTube videos. They also said that, at times, the teachers talked too much, and provided too much information, while students prefer to have the work 'broken up' into steps over time.

In relation to the students' influence in their learning at the classroom level, there is mixed understanding and practice by teachers on how they incorporate student input into their lesson design. To address the concept of lesson learning intentions and tasks, the acronyms WALT (We Are Learning To...) and WILF (What I'm Looking For...) were recently introduced across the school. This process was developed through



consultation with the SLLIP; however, not all staff were using it to its full potential, with some staff modifying its use to suit their class level. Older students recognised it as a means of helping them with their learning, and they were occasionally referred to by the teacher during lessons or with individual student conferencing. Other strategies included self-reflection sheets and setting short, attainable goals in specific subjects or lessons for some of the younger students. Several classes have learning goals displayed in-class and parents are invited in to see them. Students also mentioned that some goals were set for the year; however, the consensus was that these only worked sometimes.

Strategies used by the teachers as part of the learning design involving students, include the use of success criteria and rubric charts, adapting tasks and questions and the choice of starting levels for students according to their abilities. Most of the students indicated they had about a 50% say in their learning, with the vast amount of 'say' in how they can present their project (for example, models or PowerPoint presentations). Other forms of involvement were working with others or working with different materials and resources. The teacher pedagogical survey conducted during the review identified that teachers acknowledged the need to allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the work provided, give plenty of practice to apply their learning, and make learning intentions clear.

Feedback from the teachers varied from simple ticks, stickers and written comments of encouragement to personal conferences with students, as well as the annual survey and questioning matrix. Teachers recognised that feedback from students in their learning was important. Teacher survey results demonstrated that more opportunities need to be provided for students to give meaningful and constructive feedback to their peers and teachers.

Data literacy is growing amongst teachers and school services officers in understanding and supporting learner growth and its role in the task design process. Use of data in plotting and tracking growth has been heightened in recent times, with teachers referring to datasets such as NAPLAN and PAT, being used to direct planning. Other datasets used by teachers include the Running Records, Daily 5 assessments and teacher records. Senior students indicated that the teachers didn't talk too much about NAPLAN, but did refer to other school-based tests to inform them of their achievements.

The concept of stretch and challenge amongst teachers is evident through the language of growth mindsets and the Learning Pit, however, only a few students made any mention of either one of these strategies when talking about their learning. Some classroom practices used to exemplify stretch and challenge included offering a 'maths problem a week', maths investigations for identified students or giving more advanced year level worksheets.

Students indicated that the level of work offered was a mixture of hard and easy work, ranging from 25% to 50% degree of difficulty with a bias towards the work being easier. When asked 'what is the most important thing about being at school?', 64% of students responded that 'learning new things' was important to them. Parents commented that, although learning opportunities offered at school are good, it was perceived that the middle range of students were getting less support, and that "all of the children should be stretched". From the pedagogical survey conducted, responses from teachers indicated a need to provide time for students to follow through with applying their skills and understandings in different contexts and incorporating student voice in terms of task design, assessment and deeper thinking.

Teacher professional learning around a deeper understanding of involving student influence in the planning of curriculum and lessons would be a key factor in addressing learning design, assessment and moderation processes within the school. It has the potential to raise the intellectual challenge of students and stretch teaching for student learning across the curriculum. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks would complement this, and is seen as important work for the school to undertake. Implementing and embedding processes that provide all students with



regular opportunities to discuss and demonstrate *how* they learn will further strengthen teacher understanding of the student as a learner. Feedback about the *how* of learning from a student's perspective is critical in establishing learning as a two-way process. Students at all year levels benefit from the opportunity to have an authentic influence in their learning.

Involving students through learner voice and co-design, in their own and each other's learning, including in pedagogical and assessment design and decision-making, would deepen and enrich the quality of student learning and strengthen higher-bands achievement and retention.

#### **Direction 1**

**Develop and embed authentic student influence on learning, strengthened by embedding learning intentions, goal-setting and student feedback, as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.**

### **To what extent is collective responsibility and collective action evident with a view on the school culture?**

Wellbeing for Learning is the third priority on the school's site improvement plan, with one of the intentions being the 'promotion of student voice across the school'. To enact this, the 4 main commitments to action are: align student voice teams with the governing council committees, develop student feedback within the classroom, promote student excellence and achievement, and develop student leadership through action groups.

The panel gained an understanding that there is a strong culture of support and commitment from all of the stakeholders (staff, students and parents) associated with the school. The governing council representatives interviewed indicated that the culture of the school is highly regarded, and the school is well-connected to the community. The school is seen as inclusive, with students having a voice. Consultation and feedback is a constant area of focus at meetings and through the school's communication processes, aiming to provide information to and from the community to foster quality and engaging learning experiences for all children.

Parents are very protective of the uniqueness of the school. A number of changes were noted across the school, such as staff appointments, new directions in curriculum delivery, changes in structures and school-based events. The premise for these changes was to further enhance the existing culture of learning that puts the students' educational outcomes in the forefront of all that the school does. These changes were conducted with full consultation of all members of the school community and accepted as steps towards building on the culture of improvement.

The students described the school as 'a welcoming and happy place where everyone fits in and belongs', and a student summed up these sentiments saying: "We feel pretty good about our school". Similar comments were made by the staff: "A great place to work, strong community feel, highly involved parents, an enthusiastic team approach". The parents' reflections were best summed up by the comment that the school "is in a place of transition at present – puts students at the centre – values student leadership and learning, providing student-centred education – engaged, included and stimulated".

The principal recognised that the promotion of student voice in learning was evolving across all facets of the school, from student-based student representative council (SRC) activities, to student influence and partnership within their classroom learning.

The students interviewed said that they were not familiar with the school's site improvement plan and what it does; however, they were familiar with the school's values. The panel observed copies of the

school values displayed in the classrooms. Students discussed their meaning with teachers and how teachers can support students' attitudes towards their work and relationships with their peers.

The panel met with the SRC who were able to describe their roles and influence across the school. Most of the actions focused on fundraising activities such as casual clothes days to support a particular charity. Future actions include 'nude food days' and SRC newsletter updates. The most significant SRC activity has been the shared responsibility in the new playground development, where the SRC were collectively involved in planning with staff and governing council. Students interviewed commented on how they felt the process was inclusive and that student opinions were valued.

Student representative council members were enthusiastic about representing the student body and reporting at the next governing council meeting for the first time. They felt positive about being included, saying: "We are the students' voice and it is important to have the students' perspective".

Work to date in building the collective responsibility of students by the school leadership is commendable, and has the potential to expand the students' role in future decision-making and actions. School staff and the parent community are poised to teach and support students through further learning opportunities and experiences to empower them with a deeper understanding and responsibility towards their contribution to the culture of the school and the broader community.

#### **Direction 2**

**Foster a shared culture of learning in the school through a positive and focused approach to improvement and change that is determined, understood and enacted by staff and community.**



## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Eden Hills Primary School has a culture of improvement characterised by high expectations for students.

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

1. Develop and embed authentic student influence on learning, strengthened by embedding learning intentions, goal-setting and student feedback, as part of regular reviews at the beginning and end of units of work.
2. Foster a shared culture of learning in the school through a positive and focused approach to improvement and change that is determined, understood and enacted by staff and community.

Based on the school's current performance, Eden Hills Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



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Jason Munro  
PRINCIPAL  
EDEN HILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Governing Council Chairperson



# Appendix 1

## Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 92%.

# Appendix 2

## 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 2017, 85% of year 1 and 72% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for both years 1 and 2.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84% of year 3 students, 81% of year 5 students, and 82% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for years 5 and 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 58% of year 3, 51% of year 5, and 33% of year 7, students achieved in the top 2 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 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 83% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 50% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

### Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84% of year 3 students, 83% of year 5 students, and 70% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for years 5 and 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 96% in 2015 to 70% in 2017.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2017, 50% of year 3, 26% of year 5, and 19% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 54% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 57% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.