

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Paracombe Primary School

Conducted in May 2021



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 Katherine Holman, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Catherine O'Dea, Review Principal.

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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Paracombe Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7 on-site and at a preschool at Houghton 5kms away. It is situated 30kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 64. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 68. The local partnership is Torrens Valley.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1052 and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 20% of students eligible for School Card assistance. Some families are 4th generation Paracombe students.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in 4th year of tenure.

There are 5 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career, 1 Step 9 teacher, 1 AST2 teacher, and another teacher and school services officers (SSOs) in the preschool.

In the past 4 years, 2 SSOs and 2 teachers retired – a significant impact. Two teachers are new to Paracombe this year, one a graduate.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Implement pedagogical change with a focus on high expectations, engagement and intellectual challenge and the incorporation of opportunities for students to negotiate the learning.
- Direction 2** Use evidence of learning, formative assessment strategies and diagnostic analysis of student achievement data to support learning design and differentiated learning for all students.
- Direction 3** Implement a strategic approach to building teacher capacity, based on high-quality professional learning, classroom collaboration, high expectations, and professional accountability.

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

The school has continued to align their work with the previous ESR directions. Task design with multiple entry points and moderations allowed students to be challenged and demonstrate their skills and understanding. Staff are collaborating to strengthen this work.

The school uses data extensively to inform planning and instruction, and to track and monitor the impact on student learning. This work is continuing to be refined and staff can see progress of learning achievement. Learning tasks are differentiated and focus on using learning progressions and scope and sequence to ensure the curriculum is delivered in a coherent way across the school.

There were extensive professional development opportunities provided to staff that are aligned to the Site Improvement Plan (SIP). These built staff knowledge, skills and understanding to improve their teaching practice. There are several early career teachers, which meant building staff capacity has remained a priority. Staff implemented evidence-based programs and work towards developing whole-school practices to build consistency across the school.

While staff are using formative assessment strategies, they are still working on ensuring feedback is effective and explicit.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvements strategies and actions based on the impact on student learning?

Quality school improvement planning improves targeted teaching to strengthen the impact on student learning. Processes and structures used by the school are strategic, intentional, reflective and monitor the impact of what and how they are teaching on student learning outcomes. There is whole-school ownership of the SIP. Staff are committed to improvement and are highly collaborative. They were involved in the development and review of the SIP. Parents interviewed by the panel know the school has a focus on improving reading, writing and numeracy.

Staff analyse data to inform their teaching and learning and to monitor the impact on student learning outcomes. They continue to build their data literacy and use data to identify the next learning steps for individual students in reading, writing and numeracy. The deep knowledge that all staff have of every students' learning is commendable.

There is alignment of each area of the improvement planning cycle. For example, identified actions in the plan support staff to meet goals. The processes used to monitor impact of their actions, and review and evaluate progress are particularly robust. Guided questioning is a strategy to reflect on 'if they have done what they said they would' and 'going deeper into identifying next steps'. There is documented evidence of regular review where staff reflect on where they are now, what is new and where to next, which prioritises their ongoing work.

Professional development is intentionally aligned to the SIP. It is evidence-based and systematic, building staff capacity to improve through increasing their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Their learning references the Department's guidebooks and learning resources. This approach is strategic and effective in supporting early career teachers. Processes are in place to share learning. The school is well-positioned to continue to build staff capacity to ensure high-impact strategies are implemented in classrooms.

Direction 1 Continue to use improvement planning processes that build staff capacity to improve teaching practice and implement the high-impact strategies that strengthen the impact on student learning.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidenced pedagogical practices that engage and challenge students learning to inform next steps?

The school has been working on task design to stretch and challenge all learners since the last school review. This work involves building staff capacity, so that students know how to improve their work, through effective use of feedback and clear success criteria that allows students to establish and achieve learning goals.

Staff are articulate about teaching and learning and committed to improving their practice. They consistently identify the next steps to support achievement for all students. There is significant evidence of staff implementing strategies from professional development. Staff collaborate to reflect on their practice and are committed to developing common understandings and whole-school approaches to ensure consistency and coherence across classes.

Feedback can be an effective tool to improve student learning, but it needs to be contextual and explicit. Teachers need to follow-up with students, to see if they have understood the feedback, and are acting on it. Some students spoke about how they received feedback and how it was used; however, evidence of feedback was not consistently visible in books.

Staff and students began developing learning goals. Some students stated what they are learning and what their next learning steps are. However, they were not clear how they would achieve their learning goals.

Students from reception to year 7 are developing skills and understanding of the reasoning they use to solve problems. They are learning how to explain their reasoning in mathematics and are presenting this in a variety of ways, including being filmed, telling others, and recording their thinking. Some students found it frustrating to have to explain their reasoning but understood the idea of productive struggle and know learning must involve challenge. This work could be supported by developing staff and student understanding of success criteria and how this is used to assess performance and to set goals to improve.

As students progress through their schooling, they need to develop the skills to reason, justify, explain, and apply skills and concepts in different contexts. The design of tasks that require students to articulate these skills is a work-in-progress.

Direction 2 Support students to assess and improve their progress through developing greater clarity of success criteria, quality task design and providing effective feedback.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Staff, students, and parents are extremely proud of their school. Paracombe is the school of choice for many parents, while some parents have had generational connections to the school. They greatly appreciate the sense of community and that everyone knows and supports each other. There is a great deal of support for extracurricular activities such as the choir, opportunities for student leadership and public speaking, participation in the Houghton Spring Fair and the Friday afternoon elective program.

Parents recognise the Principal's leadership as collaborative. Decisions are made in consultation with the community. Governing Council are kept well-informed about school business. Parents see teacher engagement as positive. They appreciate the 'extra mile' teachers go to and felt they were kept informed of their children's learning and made aware of any issues. They also stated that issues were resolved quickly, and staff were accessible and receptive to parents. The community are supportive and happy with the education their children get at the school and were able to articulate what they saw as the benefits of attending a small school.

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

- Direction 1** Continue to use improvement planning processes that build staff capacity to improve teaching practice and implement the high-impact strategies that strengthen the impact on student learning.
- Direction 2** Support students to assess and improve their progress through developing greater clarity of success criteria, quality task design and providing effective feedback.

Based on the school's current performance, Paracombe Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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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).

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 is done 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 the aggregated data from Paracombe Primary School.

Further information concerning school performance is available in the school's annual report.

Reading

In the early years reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2016 to 2019, 86% of year 1 and 77% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 79% of year 3 students, 97% of year 5 students, and 91% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 43% of year 3, 63% of year 5, and 46% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2016 to 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 84% of year 3 students, 94% of year 5 students, and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2016 to 2019, 28% of year 3, 34% of year 5, and 46% of year 7 achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.