

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ONE TREE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 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 Vonnie Dolling, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Julie Bishop, 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 One Tree Hill 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 6 Site Procedures: Items 1 and 2

Risk Assessments – Inclement weather - being developed.

Site Plant Register and Site Plant Maintenance schedules - being developed.

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 88.9%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

One Tree Hill Primary School caters for learners from 3 to 13 years of age in a Child Parent Centre to Year 7 school. The school is located 33kms north-east of Adelaide in the suburb of One Tree Hill. The current enrolment of 203 students has grown from 171 students in 2010. The school has an ICSEA score of 992 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3% (5) Aboriginal students, 12% (25) Students with Disabilities, 9% (18) students who come from a Non-English speaking background, 5 students under the Guardianship of the Minister, and 24% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her eighth year and second tenure at the school, an Assistant Principal who teaches in the classroom one day each week and a School Counsellor.

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 2015, 43% of Year 1 and 33% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). For Year 1, this represents an improvement and for Year 2, little or no change from the historic baseline average. No data was recorded in 2014, which affects the ability to identify trends.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 78% of Year 3 students, 67% of Year 5 students and 71% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change, and for Year 5, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards, from 84% in 2013 to 67% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 17% of Year 3, 29% of Year 5 and 5% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For the 5 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in 2013 Year 3 Reading, 80% or 4 students remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 100%, or 1 student from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result represents an improvement at both year levels from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 52% of Year 3 students, 57% of Year 5 students and 67% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards, from 68% in 2013 to 57% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 17% of Year 3, 14% of Year 5 and 5% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For the 2 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in 2013 Year 3 Numeracy, 100%, or 2 students remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50%, or 1 of 2 students from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

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: How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

How well are students achieving over time?

One Tree Hill Primary School is a preschool to Year 7 environment where students enjoy an embedded culture of supportive peer relationships. Students saw the size of the school as being one where “they didn’t get lost” and “everyone knows everyone”. They praised the grounds and their access to resources, such as sporting equipment and computers. Parents reinforced this view and commented, in particular, on the positive relationships between older and younger students. The Review Panel heard that some families have made a conscious decision to enrol their children at One Tree Hill Primary School, primarily because of the small school and rural characteristic, with close proximity to the metropolitan area. The operations of the preschool have been recognised as providing a quality program that has built confidence amongst the community for providing a strong start to learning and schooling. Of the forty-four preschoolers enrolled in 2015, forty-two elected to remain at the school for Reception in 2016.

Results for the school, as demonstrated by NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, are within the results of groups of students with similar characteristics throughout the DECD system across Years 3, 5 and 7. Given that most of the school’s Year 1 cohort goes on to be Year 2 and then Year 3, the data shows that student reading standards are improving over time. Relatively low levels of achievement in reading, indicated by 25% of Year 1 students meeting SEA in Running Records in 2013, are improved to 78% of students meeting SEA in Year 3 NAPLAN Reading in 2015. The Review Panel examined a range of school documents, including

the Whole School Literacy Agreement. The agreement states that *In all year levels, the focus on comprehension and meaning making will be prioritised*. The school attributes growth in the development of students' reading skills to this priority.

In 2015, the school began using the Scorelink program to record and track student achievement data, such as A-E grades, Oxford wordlists in reading and spelling, and PAT-R and PAT-M scale scores. The Review Panel heard that there are conversations about data at a whole-school level, through staff meetings, that are providing a sense of whole-school responsibility for the achievement of students at One Tree Hill Primary School. This continuity respects the work of previous teachers and connects teachers to each student's learning journey. The Scorelink program has been a catalyst for the practice of teachers setting and recording goals for students that build from this data. Sharing goals with students varies according to individual teachers.

Teachers are involved in setting targets for the School Improvement Plan (SIP). These targets take the form of predictions of numbers of students who will meet DECD standards according to NAPLAN and Running Records, and those who will exceed these standards to higher levels of achievement, according to NAPLAN higher bands and higher Running Record levels. Early years teachers shared with the panel the way they use Running Records for ongoing monitoring of students' understanding and the Phonological Awareness Skill Mapping test for grouping students for specific instruction. One teacher talked of *target time* twice a week when she worked with students on areas of need. A belief in the capacity for high performance is not immediately evident in the SIP targets set. A culture of high expectations for all learners is one of the defining characteristics of school improvement. Refining the SIP, including immersing the range of initiatives that support student wellbeing, so that all students see themselves as learners and the improvement focus is aspirational, will build future success.

Staff articulated a commitment to support all learners. There was evidence in student work samples of challenge being provided for some individuals through challenge books and separate activities. There are significant numbers of students not meeting standards as measured by NAPLAN Numeracy, and the school has identified this as an area of priority for improvement through the SIP. The school has resourced additional support for numeracy (and literacy) through the allocation of a School Services Officer (SSO) to all classes for one hour during each of these lessons. In both numeracy and literacy, SSOs with whom the Review Panel spoke, indicated that this time is predominantly used to individually support troubled or struggling students.

Analysing the data to inform targeted interventions was more prevalent in literacy than numeracy. Classroom-based targeted actions in mathematics were not prominent in discussions with either students or staff. There is opportunity to use the available data, such as PAT-M, to identify common or individual misconceptions that will ensure that support is specific to improving learning outcomes.

Direction 1

Raise student achievement standards by developing and articulating a whole-school set of coherent beliefs about learning that guide curriculum planning and pedagogy.

Direction 2

Target improvement in learning for all students, including higher levels of achievement for the most able students, by using data to inform planning and instruction for aspirational outcomes.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

At the One Tree Hill Primary School staff meeting, and informally, the Review Panel observed a collaborative staff with teachers willing to engage with research to inform and trial improvements to their practice. Teachers are using the support of professional learning communities to inquire into and enhance their practice in order to improve learning outcomes for students. In Term 1, the focus was on reading comprehension and laid the foundation for teachers as reflective practitioners. New staff are now connected to the agreed pedagogy, as outlined in the Whole School Agreement in Literacy, and have become part of a cohesive teaching team. From Term 2, many teachers are concentrating on developing aspects of their practice that relate to Domain 3 of the Teaching for Effective Learning framework (TfEL): Develop expert learners.

Teachers are focused on developing students as independent learners who have the capacity to improve their initial efforts, with the more capable students supporting peers in developing understanding. Teachers use grouping to meet the range of needs of learners. Teachers talked of “using 3 before me”, and using randomising techniques to select students to provide responses and examples. Some teachers talked about using dialogue as a means of learning and providing opportunities for students to learn through interaction and learning conversation with others. The school is exploring the impact of interventions in numeracy that will support raising student achievement.

Teachers are using the professional learning communities’ inquiry to improve their practice in meeting student needs. These communities are self-selected groupings around a common interest. The Review Panel heard teachers talking of *building a community of learners* (TfEL 2.2), looking at the teacher’s role in *the construction of knowledge* (TfEL 3.3), and supporting students in questioning (TfEL 3.1) *teach students how to learn*. Professor Michael Fullan refers to successful approaches to change as requiring both a positive change climate and high levels of explicitness in what needs to be done. In order to support a clearer focus on the strategies that will ‘develop expert learners’ and raise student achievement, refining the work of the professional learning communities to build greater school-wide coherence will be among the next steps for the school.

In student discussions, students articulated the link between effort and achievement, and the strategy of giving themselves time to work through a challenging or difficult problem. They were familiar with seeking support and advice from peers, but were not clear about the steps that could be taken to facilitate improvement. The Review Panel found limited evidence in student work samples of written teacher feedback or scaffolds, such as checklists of success criteria or assessment rubrics that mapped and stretched students towards higher standards of achievement. Several students said that examples of good work were sometimes read out to the class. Most students reported enjoying their learning at school, particularly in areas they felt they were good at. Some were keen to try new challenges and others talked of reading or drawing silently when a set task was finished.

The practice of having students working with teachers in documenting clear learning goals was varied. Some teachers talked of students setting goals about Running Record levels: “to learn more about sharks” or “to accrue 20 dojo points”. Others talked about students setting engagement goals. All teachers interviewed talked about giving verbal feedback to students, sometimes as a reminder of what was missing, in writing, for example, full stops or capital letters. Students talked of supporting improvement by improving their approach to learning, such as concentrating more, getting help from the teacher, writing neater, practising at home, and using resources such as the dictionary to improve vocabulary. The Review Panel did not hear students refer to setting goals related to achievement and progress. There is opportunity to link an achievement goal with the way of achieving it. One student, who had been involved in the school as a *learning leader*, was readily able to articulate possible goals for intellectual stretch; for example, “working hard”, “digging deeper” and realising that “there was just not one way of doing things”. Using an ‘I will ..., so that...’ approach to goal-setting will support students to set and meet designated achievement goals.

Direction 3

Support students to set and meet personal learning goals by improving the use of formative assessment processes to facilitate ongoing monitoring of student progress and utilising reciprocal feedback.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Student input with regard to teaching and learning is an investment that can be a powerful tool for improving performance. One Tree Hill Primary School is involved in an Uleybury Partnership initiative aimed at increasing student voice for 21st Century learning. The model includes a selected number of students acting as student commissioners and others as student learning leaders to drive improvement from the ground up. These students are involved in learning about strategies that reinforce and support students as effective learners, central to the educative process at the school, which includes discussions about fixed and growth mindsets and intellectual stretch to underpin high achievement.

Some teachers talked about the concepts of fixed and growth mindsets with the Review Panel. In conversations with students from the general cohort, only one student, also a student learning leader, demonstrated a level of metacognition to articulate the understanding of intellectual stretch and provide an example of how this applied to that student's learning. Using an example of being challenged by a magic square that had been used in a lesson, the student talked of trial and error strategies, support from peers and stretching by taking on a harder level.

The Review Panel then specifically asked to meet with the student commissioners and student learning leaders to clarify their understandings about their learning and generate an understanding of how their learning was shared with the wider student cohort. This group of nine students was articulate and demonstrated a clear understanding of their learning about intellectual stretch. Students showed some real understanding about how the use of particular kinds of questioning could lead to deeper and 'slower thinking' rather than a fast and narrow answer.

They were aware of the importance of everyone in the school having the same message, and shared the strategies that were being employed to do this. Students had made a PowerPoint presentation about their learning to share with each class and followed this by facilitating games that illustrated the concepts. Individual students had been involved in various audit techniques that evaluated the depth of student voice at the school. Some students talked of interviewing teachers and using questions specifically designed to support a deeper level of thinking. Another student talked of conducting observations in classrooms targeted at finding evidence of support for intellectual stretch. The criteria included demonstrations of referencing fixed and growth mindsets, dialogue for learning, feedback for learning and evidence of slow and fast thinking. This student reported applying evaluation to teaching and learning in mathematics.

Student commissioners and learning leaders' views about the depth of impact that their work has had in improving the school was varied. One student commented that they felt it had helped the school, because when they went into a classroom, they saw a wall of information about growth mindsets. When prompted to consider the next steps for the work of student commissioners and learning leaders, another student commented that aspects of the Bringing It To Life tool that the student had viewed may be useful to use with both students and teachers.

These students and their thinking are an excellent resource for the school. The Review Panel discussed with teachers opportunities for student choice in learning, and conversations centred around teachers planning units of work based on student interests. Students exercised choice in how they would demonstrate their learning. It is clear that student voice, given the tools and capabilities demonstrated by the student commissioners and learning leaders, has the capacity to have a strong influence on teaching and learning at the school. The next consideration is how to use student voice to enhance the school's pedagogical approach. This might be best applied to a particular learning area, such as mathematics.

Direction 4

Enhance student involvement in collaborative planning and decision-making about learning by building and connecting the model of students as 'learning leaders' to the work of teachers improving practice.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

One Tree Hill Primary School uses student achievement data and other evidence to inform decision-making and actions. Teaching practice is developing to reflect the Teaching for Effective Learning framework.

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

1. Raise student achievement standards by developing and articulating a whole-school set of coherent beliefs about learning that guide curriculum planning and pedagogy.
2. Target improvement in learning for all students, including higher levels of achievement for the most able students, by using data to inform planning and instruction for aspirational outcomes.
3. Support students to set and meet personal learning goals by improving the use of formative assessment processes to facilitate ongoing monitoring of student progress and utilising reciprocal feedback.
4. Enhance student involvement in collaborative planning and decision-making about learning by building and connecting the model of students as 'learning leaders' to the work of teachers improving practice.

Based on the school's current performance, One Tree Hill 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.

Sharyn Roberts
PRINCIPAL
ONE TREE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson