

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Nicolson Avenue Primary School

Conducted in March 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 Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Paul Luke and Cassie Ackland, 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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Nicolson Avenue Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 385kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 was 354 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 474. The local partnership is Whyalla.

The school has an ICSEA score of 915 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 14% Aboriginal students, 20% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 55% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 4th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, a Senior Leader with a teaching and learning focus, a senior leader for inclusion and a Student Wellbeing Leader.

There are 24 teachers including 7 in the early years of their careers and 6 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Sharpen improvement goals and ensure teachers have coherence of expectations and adequate time and support to successfully improve their practice.**
- Direction 2** **Strengthen the capacity of individual and teams of teachers to use assessment to inform curriculum planning and instruction.**
- Direction 3** **Build a coherent school-wide approach to the development of teacher capacity through: a clear focus for all on student learning outcomes; quality, coherent performance and development and professional learning; and quality coaching.**
- Direction 4** **Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to support inclusion and engagement and act on the findings of these evaluations to continuously improve and protect conditions for learning in the school.**

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

The previous ESR directions guided the improvement agenda since the last review and were supported by professional learning. The introduction of cohort groups allowed teachers to analyse data and track student progress. Collectively building staff data literacy skills has supported this process and this now needs to be extended to ensure analysis of whole-school data becomes routine practice.

Whilst some teachers competently use high-impact teaching practices these are not yet consistent across the whole school.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) has a narrow focus on reading and writing which enables staff to go narrow and deep. Targeted professional learning and performance development conversations are aligned to the SIP and support teachers to further refine their practice. The analysis of data has identified oral language and vocabulary as an area of focus which is being consistently addressed in junior primary and through intervention.

Leaders are strategically aligned to and line manage, an individual cohort team. The majority of staff meeting times are fully allocated to cohort work. Each term staff use their cohort time to review the SIP and monitor progress, with a deeper review occurring towards the end of the school year. Data collection is supported by a published data schedule and teachers collect their own data to track student progress.

The strong focus on cohorts has resulted in little opportunity for all teaching staff to meet together as routine practice. Teachers talked of wanting to know what other cohorts were doing as there is little opportunity to share their practice. Providing structures and processes which enable staff to share cohort work and meet together on a regular basis will support whole-school culture. Looking at whole-school data will support the collective ownership of all students.

Although Professional Development Plans (PDPs) are linked to the SIP, staff report that not everyone receives formal observations. Leaders visit classes but do not provide explicit feedback to improve teacher practice. Using focused observations and walkthroughs to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for school improvement. Leaders have an opportunity to lead the learning and ensure consistency across the school by being visible in classes and providing explicit feedback to teachers to further improve their practice. Having regular and formalised leadership observations and walkthroughs, linked to the PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher pedagogy, embed consistent practice and provide accountability.

Direction 1 **Build accountability and coherence and provide formative feedback on teacher practice through focused leadership observations and walkthroughs linked to PDP and SIP focus.**

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Students know the school values and are further supported through a variety of scaffolds focused on personal, social and emotional development consistently displayed in all classes. Students can articulate how they use these scaffolds which provide a common language throughout the school. It is now timely to review the use of scaffolds and visuals within the classroom to support student learning. Some staff are using 'bump it up walls' to provide students with aspirational examples of work which enable students to identify their next steps in learning, but this is not consistent practice.

Students feel strongly connected to adults at the school but report having little voice in their learning or the running of the school. Whilst students are 'happy' and 'safe' at school there is little evidence of them taking risks in their learning. The historical focus on wellbeing needs to shift to learning for wellbeing. Students referred to learning as 'completing work', with little curiosity or inquiry into learning. The key to engagement and high expectations in learning, where students are self-motivated and drive their learning lies in teacher pedagogy.

Most students spoken with felt they could have increased influence in their learning. Students talked of being presented with choices in lessons, but these were always teacher-driven. Most students in the primary years did not have explicit individual learning goals to provide their next steps in learning. Some teachers provide quality feedback as routine practice, but this was not consistently evidenced across the school.

There is opportunity for staff to refine current practice and embed a culture of high expectations through refocusing on high impact teaching practices which support student agency in learning. Implementing and embedding processes which provide all students with regular opportunities to input into their learning will support learner dispositions and enable students to authentically own and take risks in their learning. Students being engaged with and owning their own learning will impact positively on behaviour interruptions.

Direction 3 Develop student agency through the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies which enable students to authentically own their learning.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Staff use their strong relationship with students to hook them into the learning and provide a variety of group, paired and individual tasks to support learning. Some teachers provide a mixture of verbal and written feedback which enables students to progress their learning whilst they are doing their work. Learning intentions are common practice and students talked of knowing what they were expected to learn. Most students know their reading level but, the variance of student goal setting meant they lack full understanding of how they could improve their reading.

As cohorts largely operate in silos, this has resulted in a disjointed approach to reading across the school. The junior primary has a strong and consistent approach with fluid groupings of students, providing explicit instruction aligned to student learning needs. There is not a solid and consistent approach to reading in other classes. Although reading is at the forefront of the SIP many older students report they are not heard to read or given strategies which would improve their reading. Having a consistent approach to the SIP focus areas of reading and writing is critical to successful student outcomes. Creating a collaborative statement of expectations of practice will provide a rigorous framework of operation.

Teachers talked a lot about 'programs' whereas the focus needs to be on the pedagogy behind the programs, as this will create sustainable change. The school has some highly effective practitioners which provide opportunity for leaders to identify high impact practice and allow these to be shared across the school to build capacity in others, refine practice and build a consistent pedagogical approach.

Staff track data to identify students, but there is variance in how it is used to inform differentiated student learning. Some students want to be challenged and given harder work to push and stretch their learning. Teachers identified differentiation as an area for further support. Providing increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes will assist in improving and providing stretch and challenge for all students as routine practice.

Direction 2 **Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate scaffolding, stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.**

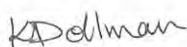
Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Nicolson Avenue Primary School has a welcoming atmosphere where staff, students and parents display a strong sense of pride in their school. Parents and Governing Council support leadership and praise the school for its inclusivity. The school values are known by students and set the tone of the school. An historical focus on wellbeing supports students and community.

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

- Direction 1** Build accountability and coherence and provide formative feedback on teacher practice through focused leadership observations and walkthroughs linked to PDP and SIP focus.
- Direction 2** Ensure all students receive differentiated learning with appropriate scaffolding, stretch and challenge through collaboratively strengthening teachers' capacity to incorporate individual student data in learning design.
- Direction 3** Develop student agency through the consistent implementation of teaching pedagogies which enable students to authentically own their learning.

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



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Pam Peters
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Nicolson Avenue 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, 48% of year 1 and 51% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 61% of year 3 students, 72% of year 5 students and 53% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 years 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 22% of year 3 12% of year 5 and 12% 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 in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 33% or 4 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 37% or 6 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 61% of year 3 students, 68% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools. For year 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving above the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

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

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 29% or 2 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 33% or 1 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.