

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR PARAFIELD GARDENS R – 7 SCHOOL

Conducted in February 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?".

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Julie Taylor and Marlene Henschke, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Parafield Gardens R-7 School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school's average four term attendance rate in 2014 was 88.9%. This is a decline from the improvement gained over the previous three years (90.5% to 91.8%) and was explained by the chronic non-attendance (ten days or more) of sixty seven students identified as at risk in Term 4, 2014. The school has analysed this data and has undertaken follow-up with each family to address the range of circumstances or issues leading to exemptions for home country travel and unexplained non-attendance. Related documentation was seen by the Review Panel.

School context

Parafield Gardens R-7 School is a metropolitan school with approximately 575 students inclusive of special classes, located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. The school has an ICSEA scale of 939, and is a Category 2 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The student cohort includes 35 aboriginal students and 60 Students with Disabilities. The parents of 46% of students are eligible for school card assistance. There are 23 mainstream classes and two regional special small classes. There has been an increasing enrolment over the past three years, including a rise in the percentage of students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) students totalling 45% across the school. Changing demographics in the school community have an ongoing impact on arrival and departure statistics. In 2014 there was a 17% transience factor across the school and a 15% retention rate from Reception to Year 7. Of significant pride in the school is the embedded ethos of 'Working Together'. A community driven cultural change culminated in the school being accredited in 2008 as a Save the Children United Nations Global Peace School.

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 Leadership:	To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?
Effective Teaching:	How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated and to what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

How well are students achieving over time?

In 2014, an average of 63% of students at Parafield Gardens R-7 School achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in reading across Years 3, 5 and 7 and 59% in numeracy as measured by NAPLAN.

A further analysis of the NAPLAN data sets shows fluctuating patterns in achievement over time.

In reading, the higher proficiency band achievement results from 2012 to 2014 vary considerably. At Year 3, the results indicate a decrease from 35% to 20% of students achieving in the higher proficiency bands. The same period for Year 5 shows an increase of 8% to 23%, including an increase in the size of the cohorts. For Year 7, the results waver between 7% and 16%.

In numeracy in 2014, few students demonstrate achievement in the higher two proficiency bands i.e. 9 students at Year 3 (13%), and 3 students at Year 5 and Year 7 (4%). At the same time the data dashboard shows an increase in the historic percentage of Year 3 students achieving SEA, a decrease at Year 5 and little or no improvement at Year 7.

This breakdown of data verifies the school's judgement to commence triangulating growth data sets alongside of that related to the changing demographics.

An analysis of the 2011 to 2014 Running Records data shows that the SEA growth from Year 1 to Year 2 is improving.

The percentage of students achieving SEA in 2011 at Year 1 was 45% and in 2012 at Year 2 was 57%. In 2013, 50% of Year 1 students achieved SEA and in 2014 at Year 2, 71% of students achieved SEA. To continue this improvement trend into 2015, the 63% of Year 1 students who did not demonstrate SEA in 2014 will require targeting teaching in order to achieve significant growth in Year 2.

Students interviewed by the Review Panel were enthusiastic about their learning. They felt their teachers have high expectations and were able to challenge them if they asked for it. They could give examples of what to do if they had a problem in the yard or the classroom and who they could go to for help and support.

To what extent is a positive and focused approach to improvement and change evident?

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) at Parafield Gardens R-7 School is developed collaboratively. The Governing Council reported that members were able to have input into the self review of the plan each year by looking at the DECD plans and discussing achievable targets for improvement for their school.

Other parents interviewed said they can, and do, let the school know what they think by providing feedback at any time to the leadership team and other staff. The parents found staff approachable and appreciative of proactive communication.

Staff members said they were able to have a say in the strategic directions and targeted actions through their Planning and Review Committee. This committee identifies the priorities in the plan by looking at the DECD strategic plans and ECD local partnership priorities, and through school self review processes which are informed by whole school data and teacher judgement. The committee then also takes a lead in organising a relevant professional learning program. The Review Panel heard that this process results in significant ownership for the school's directions. Teachers confirmed that when identifying strategies for improvement, the leadership team has provided opportunity for individuals or groups of teachers to trial strategies or programs that may strengthen curriculum coherence and pedagogy, including approaches to waves of intervention, and support for increasing parent engagement. This model, especially when additional human resources were required, was seen by the staff as promoting evidence-based decision making that considers impact on student learning as the main criterion.

Leadership team members and teachers said that connecting school improvement with teacher effectiveness through use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) was a new and positive initiative in 2015. The focus for improvement was the teaching strategies identified in the SIP and/or Literacy Agreement. These goals reflected the APST stage each teacher was working towards or at, and were linked to their individual performance and development plans. This approach exemplified the shared responsibility for school improvement that staff demonstrated – they are motivated collectively to improve their practice against national standards.

The Review Panel also collected evidence of proactive and persistent attention being given to ensure a safe, positive and orderly environment for learning exists in the school. The Review Panel heard from leadership team members and other staff members that knowledge of the link between learner wellbeing, engagement and achievement was central to their work. Students said they were involved in the student voice and peace committee and in supporting each other through the 'Flying Start' transition strategy for reception students, the comprehensive and ongoing 'Jump Start' induction program for students enrolling during the year, and in the year-long 'PALS' buddy program.

Overall, the Review Panel found the school's vision for improvement to be fairly centred on improving effective teaching practice and building leadership capacity across the school.

The next direction for the school is to strengthen the outcomes of strategic planning by developing an overarching outcomes-focused agreement about expected standards and the desired improvements in student performance, across the school, over time. The effectiveness of such an agreement will be reflected by the distance travelled each year by each child, using each child's own starting point as a learner as the basis of comparison for progress and growth. This focus on results will support each student to aspire as a learner and to make gains towards and beyond the SEA. The school's plans to involve students in learning design and to provide feedback to teachers are essential ingredients in this refocussed approach.

Direction 1

Improve student achievement by developing a clear and focused description of expected student outcomes, progress and growth and implement planned strategies to realise these shared expectations

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated and to what extent is assessment used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The Review Panel verified that there are a range of ways individual teachers, specialist teachers and year level teams of teachers are collecting, recording and documenting assessment information about student learning, at the end and start of a year, and through formative and summative steps and stages.

The teachers reported that they use this information to inform planning and teaching, especially when working with EALD teachers, when collaborating on negotiated education plans or individual learning plans, and when making intervention groups in class or between classes. They also reported that this information is used when Australian Curriculum units of work are collaboratively developed in professional learning teams.

Some teachers reported that developing a consistent approach to collecting and using 'just-in-time' assessment information across their teams was helping them to plan differentiated programs e.g. use of phonological awareness data for short-term skill based groups. Some other teachers described the way they track individual progress and their program simultaneously, on a daily basis and in teams e.g. by using digital applications. At the start of each year all teachers receive a Student Profile for their class. Some teachers transfer the data from the manually prepared document of summative information into their own recording systems, some digital, some in folders. Staff can see benefits in developing easily accessible methods to track individual growth over time, class by class, group by group, individual by individual.

The electronic data management system the school is planning to implement will support staff to: identify what assessment information is valued, share and discuss this information with each other, show students a picture of gains they are making point to point, and share with each parent the evidence of their child's learning over time. To be aligned with essential outcomes in the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards, this information must be organized in a coherent way from Foundation Year to Year 7. Overall, reliable use of information about student performance will also assist the school to make informed judgements about the effectiveness of teaching strategies, intervention approaches and improvement processes.

The Review Panel heard that staff wanted to build on the work started three years ago in literacy, by prioritising mathematics as the teaching, learning and assessment area requiring greater focus across the school. In support of this direction, the leadership team presented an overview of the mathematics and numeracy data collected late last year. The analysis identified some inconsistencies between the triangulated results of NAPLAN, PAT-Mathematics and the collated Term 4 2014, Australian Curriculum A-E grades.

The draft proposal for intervention in the teaching and learning of mathematics and numeracy was shared during the External School Review. Documentation includes the focused use of data, including question analysis, and the careful selection and monitoring of teaching strategies to address misunderstandings of mathematical concepts. A consistent school-wide focus on assessment practices, including support for teacher professional judgement through collaborative moderation of assessment tasks, has been identified by the school.

The Review Panel sees this proposal as both reflective and forward looking. It is based on the success of the school's previous improvement processes and is deliberate in ensuring evidence-based teaching approaches will be implemented by each teacher, Reception to Year 7, to achieve higher levels of achievement for all students.

Direction 2

Systematically collect and use a range of learner achievement information to ensure that all teachers are able to track individual progress and use formative assessment information to make timely judgements about planning and instruction for each student, specific groups and all cohorts

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Parafield Gardens R – 7 School is tracking well. Good performance is evident by a culture of improvement and ongoing collaborative professional learning for staff.

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

1. Improve student achievement by developing a clear and focused description of expected student outcomes, progress and growth and implement planned strategies to realise these shared expectations
2. Systematically collect and use a range of learner achievement information to ensure that teachers are able to track individual progress and use formative assessment information to make timely judgements about planning and instruction for each student, specific groups and all cohorts

Based on the school's current performance, Parafield Gardens R – 7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Susan Cameron
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.



Simon Harding
PRINCIPAL
PARAFIELD GARDENS R – 7 SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson