Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Edwardstown 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 Debbie Grzeczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Linda Ritchie, 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

Edwardstown Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 8kms from the Adelaide CBD. The current enrolment in 2021 is 524. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 428. The local partnership is Mitcham Plains.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1071 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, 12% students with disabilities, 8% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 24% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal, Deputy Principal, Wellbeing Coordinator, a Literacy Coach, numeracy team teacher and a special education support teacher.

There are 30 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career, 13 Step 9 and 2 ATS2 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **In the review and renewal of the school's Literacy Agreement ensure there is a consistency, coherence and rigour in teaching, assessment and tracking practices in English and literacy across the curriculum.**

Direction 2   **Through Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) further strengthen conceptual understanding that underpin learning in Inquiry units.**

Direction 3   **Strengthen student influence in the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning process.**

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

The previous directions have guided the school's improvement agenda since the last review. Staff collaboratively produced clear agreements to guide their practice in literacy, which is now a working document and reviewed regularly. Refining and reducing programs and approaches has built a whole-school targeted approach to literacy. Whilst all staff engage with the agreement, building consistency of practice will create deeper impact on student outcomes.

Professional learning teams are a strength of the school and a key driver for the school improvement plan (SIP). Meetings have a clear structure and agenda and are valued by staff who see them as central to their practice. Staff report sharing practice within PLTs has improved pedagogy. Opportunity now exists for PLTs to share their work with all staff to further strengthen a whole-school approach.

Student influence increased, but students still do not have ownership of their learning. The focus on inquiry provided opportunity for ownership, but this is yet to translate into other curriculum areas. Student agency in learning remains an area of focus for the 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 SIP has 3 focus areas which guide teacher practice. Professional development plans (PDPs), professional learning and professional learning teams are all aligned to the improvement plan. Clear structures and processes support improvement, with the main driver being cohort-based professional learning teams. Time was allocated to enable these groups to formally meet, which is appreciated by staff. Staff value these meetings and see clear connection with their practice, resulting in teams meeting more often.

Teachers monitor progress of the SIP each term during PLT time, with an in-depth review occurring at the end of the year. Staff track targeted students and use this data as part of monitoring and reviewing the improvement agenda. Targeted student data also forms part of a data dialogue with leaders, providing an overview of the impact of practice on student achievement.

Whilst teachers know the SIP and see it as their guiding document, there is opportunity to fully engage all stakeholders by ensuring school services officers, community and students know the focus areas. The school identified targets against all goals, but needs to refine Aboriginal student targets to ensure they are aspirational and reflect data. Disaggregating data for all priority groups will provide collective ownership and identify trends.

Working with staff to refine some PDPs, ensuring goals are explicit and aspirational, will further support improvement. Although PDPs are linked to the SIP, staff did not have formal observations. Using focused observations to improve teacher pedagogy is a critical driver for school improvement and helps build a sense of urgency. Leaders have opportunity to lead the learning and ensure consistency across the school by being visible during learning and providing explicit feedback to teachers to further improve their practice. Having regular and formalised leadership observations and walkthroughs, linked to PDP and SIP focus, will provide targeted and timely feedback to further strengthen teacher pedagogy and embed consistent practice.

Direction 1   **Strengthen consistency through a cycle of focused observations with explicit feedback to further refine teacher practice.**

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

Students are exposed to a variety of individual, paired and group work, with most talking about 'hands-on' and inquiry-based learning. All teachers use aspects of evidence-based pedagogy to support student learning, and most students have individual learning goals. The majority of classes display learning intentions, which are used by students to support and articulate their learning. Some classes are effectively using peers to read, support and edit work, which enables students to receive timely feedback to further improve. A common language of 'learner powers' allows students to articulate their learning, with most students reporting engagement and enjoyment of lessons.

Clear, documented approaches to English and maths builds consistency within individual professional learning teams. Providing structured opportunities for professional learning teams to share their practice with all staff will further strengthen a coherent approach. Staff want the best outcomes for students and there is obvious expertise amongst staff. Identifying these areas and enabling staff to work alongside and upskill others will help refine and further improve teacher practice. Supporting staff through focused walkthroughs and observations will identify effective pedagogy and enable this to become embedded practice throughout the school.

Teachers provide structural support for student learning, but very little student work is displayed. Giving students tangible and aspirational examples of how to improve their work could be strengthened using 'real' examples of student work. In classes where student work formed part of scaffolding, students talked of how it allowed them to track, improve and stretch their learning.

Teachers use pre- and post-testing to group students and track and monitor growth. All staff track data to group students, but how it was used to inform student learning varied. Differentiated lessons were not a consistent practice, with over half the students spoken to reporting they were not regularly stretched and challenged in their learning. Increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would enable differentiation, with stretch and challenge for all students to become routine practice.

Direction 2   **Strengthen teachers' capacity to use data to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.**

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 displayed in classes. Whilst students are 'happy' and 'safe' at school, there is little evidence of them taking risks in most of their learning. Students referred to learning as 'completing work' and 'getting things right'. Some students talked of being presented with choices in lessons, but these were mostly teacher-driven. The key to engagement and high expectations in learning, where students are self-motivated, lies in teacher pedagogy.

Some teachers provide quality feedback as routine practice, but this was not consistent across the school. 'Bookwork' was often not marked or lacked comments to provide students with the next steps in learning. Older students were given self-assessment rubrics. Although students stated these helped their understanding of attainment levels, there is opportunity to amplify their impact by sharing the curriculum and allowing students to co-construct rubrics.

The recent inclusion of inquiry into the SIP resulted in all teachers actively planning and teaching inquiry-based learning. All students spoken to discussed engagement and enjoyment in inquiry lessons as they 'owned' their learning. Open-ended task design provides high-level stretch and challenge. 'Project work' was aspirational and often related to real-life practical learning. 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 to provide all students with regular opportunities to input into their learning will support learner dispositions and help students authentically own and take risks in their learning.

Direction 3 **Develop a culture of high expectations and aspirational achievement which enables all students to monitor and assess their learning, establish clear success criteria and receive targeted and timely feedback.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Edwardstown Primary School has a strong sense of community which is valued by all. Students have positive connections with staff and are happy and proud of their school. A focus on learning is supported by a common language across all classes. Cohesive leadership supports staff through clear structures and processes focused on school improvement. Staff are open to new learning and have high expectations of each other. Parents refer to the school as their school of choice.

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

Direction 1 Strengthen consistency through a cycle of focused observations with explicit feedback to further refine teacher practice.

Direction 2 Strengthen teachers' capacity to use data to design and implement learning experiences that enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.

Direction 3 Develop a culture of high expectations and aspirational achievement which enables all students to monitor and assess their learning, establish clear success criteria and receive targeted and timely feedback.
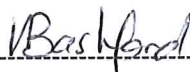
Based on the school's current performance, Edwardstown Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.

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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 2020, 88% of year 1 and 94% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement in year 1 and year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 90% of year 3 students, 91% of year 5 students and 80% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 65% of year 3, 49% of year 5 and 25% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 84%, or 26 out of 31 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 56%, or 9 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 86% of year 3 students, 90% of year 5 students and 76% 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 year 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 53% of year 3, 28% of year 5 and 33% 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 in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 55%, or 16 out of 29 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 7 out of 7 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.