

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ALLENDALE EAST AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in July 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 Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sue Record, 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 Allendale East Area 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 2 Learning Improvement

Item 9: The school is implementing the Aboriginal Strategy 2013-2016.

Part 3 School Organisation

Item 2: The school is implementing the DECD Attendance Policy and Attendance Improvement Plan with clearly stated targets and strategies to manage attendance.

Part 6 Site Procedures

Item 4: The school has implemented processes to ensure it is compliant with the DECD ICT Security Policy.

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 89.4%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Allendale East Area School is located 500kms south-east from the Adelaide GPO and approximately 23kms from the regional centre of Mt Gambier. The school caters for approximately 204 students from Reception to Year 12, and has a DECD preschool (Kirinari) also located on the campus.

The school enrolls students from localities including Allendale East, Port MacDonnell and the Nelson District in Victoria. The majority of students travel to the school by bus.

The student cohort consists of approximately 3% Aboriginal or Torrens Strait Islander (ATSI) students, 4% Students with a Disability, and 20% eligible School Card holders.

The school is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage with an ICSEA value of 982.

The school leadership comprises a Principal in her first year of tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal, two Coordinators 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).

Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school.

Reading

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 14 of 27 (52%) Year 1 students and 10 of 14 (71%) Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The Year 1 result is below the school's historic average. From 2011 to 2015, there was a downward trend, from 89% to 52% of Year 1 students achieving the SEA. There is a similar pattern emerging at Year 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% (12 of 16) of Year 3 students, 95% (18 of 19) of Year 5 students, 53% (8 of 15) of Year 7 students, and 50% (6 of 12) of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 7, the result is below the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5 result is above the school's historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 5, the school is achieving above the results of similar students across the DECD system. The school is advised to monitor the comparative results at the Year 3 and 7 levels as there is an emerging pattern over time of achievement at the lower end of results of the comparative group of students.

In 2015, 19% (3 of 16) of Year 3, 26% (5 of 19) of Year 5, 20% (3 of 15) of Year 7, and 17% (2 of 12) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result is below the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 6 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 4 students remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. A single student in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. Finally, of the 5 students in the top two bands at Year 3 (2009), taking into account arrivals and departures, 2 remained in the upper bands at Year 9 in 2015.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% (10 of 16) of Year 3 students, 90% (17 of 19) of Year 5 students, 67% (10 of 15) of Year 7 students, and 50% (6 of 12) of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result shows a decline compared to the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5 results are above the school's historic baseline average and the Year 9 results are within this average.

From 2013 to 2015, there is a downward trend evident for Year 3 Numeracy (from 75% to 63%). For Year 5, there is an upward trend (from 63% to 90%) over this period. There are no discernible patterns for Years 7 and 9 throughout this period.

For 2015 Year 3, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system. For Year 5, the school is achieving above the results of similar students across the DECD system. The school is advised to monitor the comparative results at Year 3, as there is an emerging pattern over time of achievement at the lower end of results of the comparative group of students.

In 2015, 19% (3 of 16) of Year 3, 0% of Year 5, 0% of Year 7, and 25% (3 of 12) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result shows little or no change compared to the school's historic baseline average.

Of the 3 students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2013), taking into account arrivals and departures, 0 remained in the top two bands at Year 5 in 2015. A single student who achieved in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, did not remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. Of the 4 students who achieved in the top 2 bands in numeracy at Year 3 (2009), 1 remained in the top two bands in Year 9 (2015).

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2015, all nine of the Year 12 students who had the potential to complete did successfully achieve their SACE. This result represents an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. Thirty-three percent of the students achieved their SACE using VET subjects.

In the 2015 SACE results, 97% of grades achieved were C- or higher. This result represents an improvement compared to the historic baseline average.

One hundred percent (100%) of Stage 1 students achieved a C or higher in the Personal Learning Plan. One hundred percent (100%) of Stage 2 students achieved a C or higher in their Research Project.

The Principal's presentation highlighted her vision to lead school improvement through a focus on teaching and learning. Student wellbeing and safety, role clarity in leadership and a focus on policy development have required an intensive focus in recent times. The Principal was resolute in her commitment to ensure strong community connections based on trust, respect and credibility.

The Principal outlined her intended future actions to begin shaping a vision with the school community – a vision that creates transparency, and refines the school identity based on its capacity to deliver effective outcomes for students in partnership with the community.

As a result of the above data and the Leadership Team's presentation, the Review Panel explored the Lines of Inquiry as below.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Effective Teaching: How effectively are teachers using DECD pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?

To what extent are the professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

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

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Staff confirmed that the school-based data system (Scorelink) offered capacity and opportunity to track, monitor and target student learning in a more systematic way. There was a disparate range of views expressed from amongst staff as to their use and analysis of available learning data through Scorelink in support of improved learning at the individual, cohort and school levels. Members of the Literacy Committee verified the use and analysis of data to inform staff of emerging patterns and trends. Some staff indicated little or no engagement with school-wide data, while others used it readily in their planning, assessment and reporting. A data collection schedule was provided as evidence of a process to gather, rather than use, the data in a more strategic way in staff teams. Staff use in-class assessment information to guide their planning and programming.

Some secondary staff acknowledged the importance of having clear information about the strengths and areas for support for students moving into this section of the school. Staff literacy and numeracy curriculum committees had considered Running Records, NAPLAN and PAT data to determine directions in learning. Secondary teachers use the SACE Chief Assessors' Reports, moderation training and rubrics to modify their planning, assessment design and teaching approaches. The school SACE completion and grade results for 2015 support the staff work in this area.

A member of the Leadership Team presented documentary evidence demonstrating growth in numeracy speed and accuracy for ten Year 4 to 10 students engaged in the Quicksmart maths intervention program

over a three-year period of intervention (2013 to 2015), in conjunction with a school focus on problem-solving strategies in numeracy. Such a strategic approach to target techniques and measure the resultant impact over time is recommended when expanding further initiatives based on evidence.

Parents commented on the structure of the reporting system currently available to them. It was evident in parent interviews that the format used in reporting student progress was not meeting the needs of parents. Parents were critical of the limitations of a 'tick-a-box' and short written feedback format in reporting on student achievement and growth. Students and parents commented on some inconsistencies in perceptions between grades recorded and the dispositions/abilities indicated in student reports. Staff and parents acknowledged relatively 'low' attendance rates at face-to-face interviews, which may serve to ameliorate such discrepancies in understanding.

Parents also commented on their perceptions of the timing of more detailed reports showing achievement and next steps in student learning. These currently occur at the end of Term 3, which parents consider 'too late' to intervene if required.

Students verified that they received feedback on their work by means of the teachers' use of marks, ticks/crosses, test scores and comments. This was viewed during class walkthroughs and through viewing students' books, undertaken by the panel during the review. Learning goals were set by some students with their teachers, but the timing of the review of goals was dependent on "which teacher you get". Students verified that they knew of 'standards' expected in their learning. They confirmed standards in reports, reading Lexiles, NAPLAN bands, PAT scores and SACE achievement.

Direction 1

Expand opportunities for all staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing data to support the strategic planning and implementation of targeted strategies that will raise student achievement outcomes across all year levels.

To what extent are the professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

The staff are afforded opportunities to develop both personally and professionally at Allendale East Area School. Teachers commented on a variety of recent professional learning opportunities explored (or considered) at the school: Natural Maths, Maths for Learning Inclusion, Growth Mindsets, Mind Matters, ICT, Literacy and use of data by teachers. One teacher wrote: "Teachers are targeted and supported to attend particular professional learning in order to meet our improvement priorities".

Staff commented on opportunities afforded to their professional learning over time. Staff interviews and written comment revealed that they felt supported to explore professional learning through multiple options. One staff member commented: "We need to evolve with the students. We're learners with them as well". There are a number of highly effective practitioners across the school. Written feedback from some staff verified a need to maintain accountability to each other to connect the curriculum and pedagogical approaches implemented across the school.

The Review Panel sought evidence of a coherent and connected staff professional learning program undertaken throughout Semester 1, 2016, either as a whole-staff or sectional teams, to collect evidence of collaborative learning in a planned and sequenced manner. Minutes of meetings provided in this period of time did not reflect evidence of professional learning to embed agreed teaching and curriculum initiatives, aligned to the Site Improvement Plan, to a high level of consistency across the school. One exception to this evidence was documentation of staff training in developing NEPs and Individual Education Plans for students at the school.

There was evidence of staff commitment to their professional learning and implementation of evidence-based practices across the school. Only one teacher referenced the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) observation tool as a means of reflecting on their professional practice. Some teachers reflected on increased student engagement and less behavioural disruption as a result of implementing different strategies in their teaching. Such practices provide a 'window of opportunity' to counter some

staff concerns about behaviours presented through the middle years of schooling.

Members of the Leadership Team and staff commented about the range of sensitivities amongst staff in having colleagues and peers from other sections of the school visiting and observing teaching practice in an effort to build professional capacities. Some staff commented that this approach was a powerful way to expand and consolidate effective teaching practice across the school and sought opportunities for this to happen. The school values of 'Courage, Excellence and Respect' should serve as the guiding principles for this approach to build collegiate expertise and curriculum coherency across the school. One teacher described her 'risk-taking' in asking the Principal to observe her 'talking less' in class and encouraging students to 'talk more'. Both teacher and Principal described this process as highly energising and professionally invaluable in developing teacher capacity.

There was evidence presented to the Review Panel of an intention to undertake performance and development to a more strategic and structured level. Documentation was provided of the Principal's initial one-on-one performance discussions with staff held in Semester 1. There was anecdotal evidence provided of class walkthroughs occurring, oral feedback provided to teachers, encouragement and motivation of staff to observe each other teach. Some examples of documented staff performance and development plans were sighted by the Review Panel. Members of the Leadership Team have been assigned responsibility for performance management of sections of staff under a recent restructure of senior staff responsibilities.

Direction 2

Support the implementation of consistent and connected curriculum and pedagogical approaches through performance and development strategies that encompass focused classroom observations and formative feedback for staff.

How effectively are teachers using DECD pedagogical frameworks to guide learning design and teaching practice?

Under the guidance of the Principal, there have been a number of opportunities undertaken to reflect on aspects of school operations and programs. These have included: behaviour management, teachers preparing Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) and review of the school literacy plan. Staff noted that there has been an increased emphasis on listening and responding to the 'voices' of students, and working more collaboratively with students to better meet their opportunities for engagement and improved learning.

Some exemplars of NEPs devised for individual students requiring support were provided during the review. Clear goals and adjustments to learning were articulated in these documents. Students requiring support with aspects of their learning were directed into MiniLit (Literacy Reception to Year 2), MultiLit (Literacy from Year 2) and Quicksmart (Maths from Year 4).

Staff commented about the need to tailor programs to support presenting student needs. A few examples were cited in the secondary section of the school where strategies such as 'He's the Man', 'She's the Look' 'Finding My Place' and RAGE (anger management) programs, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and integrated SACE subjects developed with student pathways in mind. Leaders and teachers confirmed a responsiveness to re-badge curriculum design to best meet the pathways for students completing their SACE. An example of this capacity to re-design subject provision was cited in Agricultural Science and confirmed by students, parents and staff. In the primary section, staff commented on the introduction of 'Jolly Phonics' (Reception/Year 1) and 'Words Their Way' (Years 2 to 6) as the preferred literacy approaches.

Parents on the Governing Council saw a number of learning opportunities offered at Allendale East Area School that are difficult to replicate in alternative schooling options. They commented positively about: lower numbers in classes; a focus on building student resilience and personal capacity; opportunity for student leadership; personalised support; links to the local community through projects; and pathways for learning on offer at the school. Perceptions of staff and parents regarding destination data from Year 8 indicated that there has been a developing trend for students to transfer to other local public and independent secondary schooling options for family reasons, friendship links and larger cohort groups.

These are beyond the school's control.

Students spoke about a number of effective teaching strategies happening across the school. However, it was evident through observations and discussions with teachers that strategies were not applied consistently across all classes as whole-school approaches to improve student outcomes. Students cited strategies such as: explaining learning intentions before lessons/units, 'We are Learning Today' (WALT); explicit teaching with some groups in classes; using peers to explain learning to others; use of scaffolds in classes (subject language, writing genre posters); use of SACE exemplars; and goal-setting with timely reflection. To create certainty and predictability for students across the school, it would be ideal for staff to agree and embed those strategies that best support student learning within the Allendale East Area School context. A teacher interviewed described this ideal as: "being on the same page".

Some students interviewed commented about a need to provide further challenge in learning. This was also noted in some written comments from teachers. Older students described how some teachers provided the same questions to all students, while others offered a selection of questions ranging to more challenging. Younger students confirmed the use of tests to determine groups of students requiring different levels of support and challenge; teachers worked more intensively with some groups, while others worked more independently. Many teachers also recorded that it was an area for further improvement, particularly as it related to the design of learning tasks in classes with multiple year levels and ability levels. Students and parents appreciated that successes, inside and outside of the school, were acknowledged at assemblies.

Direction 3

Strategically embed agreed and defined curriculum and pedagogical approaches to a high level of consistency in all classes to ensure delivery of learning engagement and challenge for all learners across the school.

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

The school has continued to implement the 2015 Site Improvement Plan with an intention of aligning it to the DECD and State directions, outcomes from the External School Review and reflections of the newly appointed Principal. The Principal expressed intent to build a stronger focus on teaching and learning over time to make the school an 'awesome' place to learn. Currently, there have been some policy and procedural issues that have warranted immediate attention. This was confirmed in staff, parent and student interviews.

The Principal, parents and staff were clear about the need to engage with the local community to progress the work of whole-school improvement, and a working relationship based on mutual respect and trust for the work being undertaken. The Principal expressed a need for the school to re-define its identity and direction based on these values. Other members of the Leadership Team indicated that the school was previously 'badged' as an 'enterprise school', through the influence of thematic approaches within the curriculum. This team was also cognisant of the need to explore Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects as a way to engage students, meet presenting needs and expand problem-based learning across the curriculum.

Through the leadership of the Coordinator, Teaching and Learning, a Literacy Committee is continuing to align the Reception to Year 7 component of a whole-school scope and sequence linked to the Australian Curriculum.

In discussion with the Leadership Team and members of Governing Council, there was agreement that clarity was needed with respect to the roles, responsibilities, delegations and operations of the formal governance body at a more strategic level. Parents interviewed indicated that the Principal is introducing tighter operational structures to support the work of the Governing Council. Staff acknowledged the importance of parent support, but verified a drop in active participation over time. They commented that without the face-to-face interaction with parents it was difficult to build relationships. About this connection, a member of the Governing Council stated: "We have a Principal who is switched on to community engagement".

Within this context, a number of different strategies are being applied to communicate more effectively with parents about a variety of topics related to learning. These strategies include: class dojo (Reception/Year 1 class - although Internet access is problematic for some families), Skoolbag App, newsletters, emails, phone calls and information evenings. Parents spoke positively about the Secondary Information evening held recently. They commented that they got insights into the teachers as individuals, how they taught and the achievement of SACE.

Staff and parents agreed on the importance of clear and timely information in relation to student behaviour and actions taken to intervene at the school level. It was verified that Governing Council is developing a parent survey to 'test' parent views about the recent Results Plus work in literacy and numeracy undertaken in the school. Involvement by the governing body in this form of strategic work is to be commended.

During Term 1 2016, the staff had undertaken a self-review of school activities and events, for example, assemblies, interviews, sports day, skills for success program, school photos, swimming, secondary information night, and etc. Whilst this level of reflection is commended to improve the level of efficiency and effectiveness of these events, it needs to be applied rigorously to improve teaching and learning and, ultimately, student learning outcomes.

The Leadership Team and staff acknowledged the Principal's ability to encourage greater 'freedom to explore', yet with clear role definition and greater levels of accountability and a sharper focus. This team was supportive of the school's capacity to support students with complex needs due to the skills and flexibility evident across the teaching staff. Parents highlighted the value they placed on lower class numbers across the school in support of a more personalised approach to learning. Staff and parents interviewed acknowledged the move of Year 7 students into the secondary setting as a positive one in responding to social, emotional and behavioural needs of students.

Leadership and teaching staff described working relationships as supportive, approachable and open. The teaching staff are willing to lead staff meeting discussions and share their learning and resources with each other. Team work is a feature within curriculum committees. The staff confirmed that they had recently revisited the Site Improvement Plan (SIP).

Parents view the relationship between their children and teachers, and links between school and home, as important. A parent of a Reception student commented: "My daughter loves her teacher". Parents valued aspects such as interviews, listening to reading at school, class newsletters, and sharing levelled readers and sight words at home.

Direction 4

In collaboration with key stakeholders, develop a concise strategic plan that embodies a rigorous, focused and connected learning pathway from Reception to Year 12; a plan that has a focus on 'high expectation and high achievement' for student learning and clear definition about how this will be achieved.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Allendale East Area School is supported by committed and dedicated staff who are working diligently to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for students. The newly formed Leadership Team is refining and restructuring school operations to deliver an engaging and challenging learning program based on evidence from interrogation of various datasets. Teachers are encouraged to explore professional learning and implement teaching approaches that support higher level engagement and learning. Teachers are encouraged to learn from each other to ensure learning continuity from Reception to Year 12. Parents consider the school a safe and supportive school that achieves 'good' results.

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

1. Expand opportunities for all staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing data to support the strategic planning and implementation of targeted strategies that will raise student achievement outcomes across all year levels.
2. Support the implementation of consistent and connected curriculum and pedagogical approaches through performance and development strategies that encompass focused classroom observations and formative feedback for staff.
3. Strategically embed agreed and defined curriculum and pedagogical approaches to a high level of consistency in all classes to ensure delivery of learning engagement and challenge for all learners across the school.
4. In collaboration with key stakeholders, develop a concise strategic plan that embodies a rigorous, focused and connected learning pathway from Reception to Year 12; a plan that has a focus on 'high expectation and high achievement' for student learning and clear definition about how this will be achieved.

Based on the school's current performance, Allendale East Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

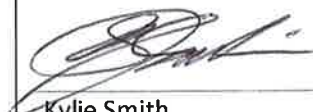


Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
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Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Kylie Smith
PRINCIPAL
ALLENDALE EAST AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson