EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Lyndoch Primary School

Conducted in September 2017

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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Liz Matheson, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Steve Clarke, Review Principal.

School context

Lyndoch Primary School is located 65kms from the Adelaide CBD in the Barossa Valley, and is part of the Greater Gawler DECD Partnership. The school has an ICSEA score of 988, and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population of 130 students includes 1 Aboriginal student, 8 students with disabilities, and 22% of families are eligible for School Card assistance. The school's enrolment has been steady over the past 5 years.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his first year of tenure, and a Curriculum Coordinator/Counsellor who has been at the school for 18 years, including 12 years in the Leadership Team. There are 9 teachers for the 6 classes.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Effective Teaching: **How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

Improvement Agenda: How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

Effective Teaching: **How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?**

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Principal of Lyndoch Primary School commenced his tenure at the beginning of 2017. He was keen to listen, observe and develop relationships with students, staff and parents to determine what is working well, and what might need to change. One of the major frustrations for staff related to the poor ICT provision in the school. Many teachers gave examples of how the lack of access to the internet and contemporary technologies and devices is limiting their teaching and communication with parents. The Principal, with the support of the Governing Council, has sought to address this problem by funding an audit and replacement of the school's infrastructure. Once this has been rectified, the school can develop a holistic approach to the use of ICT to support learning.

The school adopted a narrow and deep focus for its 2017 improvement priorities, and used the 8 Effective Practices for the development of mathematics and numeracy to guide their strategic thinking and decision-making. This enabled the school's priorities to be evidence-based and aligned with the DECD local Partnership improvement priorities. To be realistic, it was agreed to focus on Practice 5, which relates to using purposeful questions to assess and advance students' reasoning and sense-making about important mathematical ideas and relationships.

This approach to questioning has required a significant mind shift for teachers and students, in their understanding of what is important in learning in mathematics. Students told the Review Panel that their teachers were emphasising reasoning, and asking how and why they had reached an answer to a maths problem, rather than the focus being only on the correct answer. Students had noted this change in practice, and saw it as a significant change from teacher talk to increased student dialogue between students as they discuss their reasoning. The Review Panel observed these discussions in one class. In interviews the common mathematical language used by students from different classes was noted. There were also examples of students who struggled in their maths skills being able to engage in the class discussions. This approach is supported by mental routines and problem-solving, and is based on the

Proficiency Strand in the mathematics curriculum.

The other pedagogical practice highlighted for improvement was to collect feedback. The purpose of gathering feedback is to *redirect or refocus either the teacher's or the learner's actions to achieve a goal, by aligning effort and activity with an outcome* (Source: Lyndoch Primary School's Literacy Agreement addendum, Term 1 2016). The goals can relate to the task, the process or strategy, or the students' behaviour to develop better self-regulation. In speaking to students, the formation of goals, and feedback to redirect their learning, was not as evident, as most students could not remember their goals. To be effective, goal-setting needs to be short-term, the feedback ongoing, and the review process timely, as students achieve their goals.

Direction 1
Strengthen questioning and feedback practices so that they become embedded and, over time, develop teacher capacities in use of meta-cognition, ICT for learning and student goal-setting and review.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

At the beginning of the year the school established a data wall in the staff room to 'put faces on the data'. The data wall refers to the literacy achievement of all the students, with an emphasis on the progress each student is making. Running Records are taken until students are deemed to be independent, and can comprehend what they are reading, as well as self-correct and decode correctly. The other data includes the annual PAT reading test and biannual NAPLAN test. In addition, teachers collect samples of students' writing and use them to orientate their instruction. Other teachers use various class-based tests for grouping.

Most teachers told the Review Panel that the data wall, located in the staff room, had made a difference to the way they track and monitor students. As it is visible, it is in the forefront of their minds, and they often have informal chats about particular students and how they are progressing.

Most teachers talked about how they use the data to inform their planning, as they use it to emphasise a skill or strategy. The extent that this use of data enables more targeted planning and instruction varies. Some teachers are starting to use the PAT data to identify skill gaps – individual students and as a class profile. There is an opportunity to do this at a much greater depth, and to use the accompanying resources to guide teachers in knowing how to support students.

The Review Panel looked at the grading of students' achievement (A-E grades) over two semesters. There appeared to be discrepancies in the way students are graded. There were examples of students improving by two grades, or dropping by two grades in the same learning area. While this is possible, it would be an unusual occurrence, and raises the question of the consistency in grading student work, or in the way in which tasks are designed.

Direction 2
Improve the use of achievement and growth data to enable greater targeted planning, and develop moderation processes to ensure consistency in grading student learning.

Leaders and teachers acknowledged the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards grading is not a dataset the school has analysed to date. The Review Panel encourages the school to have a close look at the A-E grades using the lens of learning areas, trends over time, and triangulation with other datasets. The discussion and analysis of this data can lead to rich dialogue about the design of tasks, and the extent teacher planning and assessment enables students to demonstrate higher-order thinking. The Review Panel cautions staff not to jump to possible reasons to explain the results, but to explore them with an open mind, and to then think about implications for the school as a whole, as well as at a classroom or learning area level. This process of data analysis to identify strategic targeted actions should be ongoing, and part of the school's self-review improvement system.

Similarly, from a strategic perspective, the school needs to think about what data (achievement, growth and perception) it needs to collect to measure the extent it has achieved its strategic priorities. As described above, the school has wisely narrowed its improvement focus to pedagogical practices in questioning and feedback. The intended outcome is to "increase student engagement", and "students

taking greater responsibility for their learning". The target in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is to increase the strategic questions, instead of providing answers in a specified percentage of maths lessons. To measure this, teachers agreed to performance observation by peers. The observation focused on teacher talk versus student interaction, the different types of questions, and the extent that productive challenge was present. This template to guide the observation is an excellent way of providing professional feedback to peers, as well as collecting evidence on the school's strategic priorities.

In 2016, Year 6/7 students reported via the annual survey of Wellbeing and Student Engagement, a low level of engagement of 61%, or 19 out of 31 students, compared with the state average of 44%. Even starker was the perceived level of high engagement, with 10%, or 3 out of 31 students reporting high engagement, compared with a state average of 28%. In this survey, engagement refers to the level of absorption, interest and involvement in an activity. The Review Panel acknowledges that this group of students were experiencing disruption in their learning through a number of changes in teachers at the time of the survey, which may have impacted on the results. Whether this is the case or not, the engagement of students as an intended outcome of the school's strategic improvement is a timely decision.

It is fitting that, through the observation and other performance processes, students' voices are brought to the fore, particularly if their engagement, level of responsibility and achievement are the strategic outcomes of the school's improvement efforts. The Review Panel spoke to one of the current Student Action Groups involved in the organisation of fitness activities. They talked about the opportunity to be more involved in a range of activities this year, whereas they perceived that they "didn't really do much" in the SRC. They were familiar with the school's values. This group appears to be an 'untouched' resource in self-review processes, and may provide useful insights into the extent improvement, as planned, has been achieved.

Direction 3
Utilise and deepen the range of datasets, including students' perceptions and insights, in the strategic review and improvement planning processes.

How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

Students at Lyndoch Primary School have a range of learning needs within each class. The 2017 NAPLAN test conducted in May showed a number of students below, at and above the SEA.

Each of these students not meeting the SEA has very different needs resulting from a verified disability, specific learning difficulties, poor school attendance or, for some children, the effects of trauma. To support students who are struggling to meet the SEA, the school has offered the Quicksmart program to help develop automaticity in number. Parents and students who have participated in this program in past years provided positive testimony to how it made a difference.

The School Services Officers (SSOs) talked about the challenges they face in supporting the most disinclined and complex students to achieve the task provided by teachers. They appear to be frequently given worksheets, often not at an appropriate level or sufficiently engaging for already disinclined students. They noted that the students respond to more hands-on practical activities, even those involving repetition.

The retention of students in the higher proficiency bands as they progress through school is also a concern. In 2017 NAPLAN reading, 2 out of 5 students from Year 3 to 5 Reading (40%), and 0 out of 6 from Year 3 to Year 7 achieved in the upper bands. This raises the question of whether there is sufficient stretch and challenge for these students. The Review Panel noted the school does not have an agreed way of monitoring students' reading once they are deemed to be independent to see that they are making the expected progress. The Review Panel noted that two out of the three primary classes provide explicit teaching of concepts, such as summarising, identifying the main idea and the skills involved in reading visual information in non-fiction texts; however, the result outlined above suggests there needs to be an agreed, more systematic method of tracking progress during the year.

The results outlined above demonstrate that there is a significant range of learning outcomes and needs within each class. It also shows how important learning design is to enable all students to access the tasks, and to ensure there is sufficient rigour and stretch for more capable students in each Learning Area.

The Review Panel spoke to two groups of teachers about the A-E grades, and most agreed that support to develop their learning design would be timely.

Direction 4
Develop teachers' capacities to differentiate and design learning experiences and tasks to support the range of learning needs, and to enable multiple entry and exit points.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices, which are contributing significantly to school improvement at Lyndoch Primary School.

The level of consistency and coherence in teachers' approaches to learning and instruction in literacy and mathematics was evident in most classes. Common expectations and language support students as they progress through the school. This is particularly important in a school with a relatively high percentage of tandem teaching arrangements and teachers on contract to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Daily 5 is a model that has guided the development of routine practice in literacy. The model has been adapted and is supported by explicit teaching of skills. Students were able to speak articulately about the model, and look forward to 'meet the teacher' where they get to read and demonstrate their skills in small groups.

The common approach to the teaching of mathematics incorporates mental routines, problem-solving and reasoning. The participation in common professional development and the subsequent rich dialogue has helped to deepen teachers' understanding of mathematics. Teachers talked about the importance of students being able to 'trust the count'. The school has assessed each student's capabilities in trusting the count, and will measure their progress later in the year. This approach is supported by a significant change in teacher talk, and questioning as outlined in the report. The school's expectations are documented in the Literacy and Numeracy Agreements, although it appeared these reference documents were not used well, and need reviewing.

Evidence of these practices was verified by interviews with students and teachers, meeting with the Curriculum Coordinator, and during the walkthrough by the Review Panel.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Lyndoch Primary School provides professional and performance development to build teachers' professional understanding and practices. The school is starting to use student achievement and growth data and evidence to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole school levels.

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

1. Strengthen questioning and feedback practices so that they become embedded and, over time, develop teacher capacities in the use of meta-cognition, ICT for learning and student goal-setting and review.

2. Improve the use of achievement and growth data to enable greater targeted planning, and develop moderation processes to ensure consistency in grading student learning.

3. Utilise and deepen the range of datasets, including students' perceptions and insights, in the strategic review and improvement planning processes.

4. Develop teachers' capacities to differentiate and design learning experiences and tasks to support the range of learning needs, and to enable multiple entry and exit points.

Based on the school's current performance, Lyndoch Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

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.

Ken Randall
PRINCIPAL
LYNDOCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Lyndoch 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:

- Site Procedures: Ensure that WHS becomes a standing agenda item at all staff meetings.
- Safety: update the school's volunteer policy in accordance with DECD guidelines by the end of 2017.

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 2016 was 91.1%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 69% of Year 1 and 94% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average in Year 1 and an improvement in Year 2.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of Year 3 students, 80% of Year 5 students, and 81% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents a decline, for Year 5 an improvement, and for Year 7, little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been downwards, from 82% in 2013 to 63% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the range of results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 1 of 19 (5%) Year 3, 4 of 15 (27%) Year 5, and 4 of 16 (25%) 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 those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 2 of 4 (50%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 53% of Year 3 students, 80% of Year 5 students and 88% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents a decline, and for Years 5 and 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 59% in 2014 to 80% in 2016, and in

Year 7, from 60% in 2014 to 88% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within, and for Years 5 and 7, above the range of results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 2 of 19 (11%) Year 3, 3 of 15 (20%) Year 5, and 2 of 16 (13%) 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 those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 3 of 4 (75%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 1 of 5 (20%) students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.