Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Hewett Primary School

Conducted in June 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 Katherine Holman, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Mike Tate 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

Hewett Primary School caters for students from choose from list. It is situated 45 kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 530 mainstream students and 22 in the Disability Unit. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 570. The local partnership is Greater Gawler.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 998 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 12% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 18% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school also hosts a unit for 24 students with intellectual disabilities. This is a valued part of the school with students included in school events and programs.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 1st year of tenure, and the following staff:
- Deputy Principal Band 3 (4th year of a 5-year tenure) – Student Well-being and Learning (Positive Education, Student Behaviour Management and School Operations – no teaching load)
- Senior Leader Band 2 (1st year of a 3-year tenure) – Teaching and Learning (0.6FTE Leadership Administration and 0.4FTE teaching load as an Aboriginal Education Teacher
- Student wellbeing leader 0.6FTE
- Disability Unit Coordinator 1.0FTE (0.7FTE Leadership Administration/0.3FTE Teaching Load).

Additionally, there are 30 teachers (26.2FTE) with 1 in the early years of their career and 17 Step 9 teachers across the mainstream and Disability Unit classes.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   **Embed common understandings and agreements around intellectual stretch and challenge through the planned development of transforming tasks across learning areas.**

Direction 2   **Strengthen and embed student influence for learning across all year levels, including the planned application of TfEL perception data as part of regular classroom review processes.**

Direction 3   **Develop further opportunities for parents to become informed partners in their child's learning, including the sharing of what curriculum is planned and expected to be delivered in each year level.**

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

1. Maths, along with learning intentions and success criteria, were the school and Partnership focus for developing stretch and challenge. Significant professional development was undertaken. Differentiation and tasks with multiple entry points were on the agenda in performance management meetings.

2. Moderation has been a focus over several years. Staff collaborated with each other and the Partnership to moderate work in maths and writing. The Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)

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communication system was also effectively implemented in the Disability unit. The Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) is used to track progress of students in the unit.

Formative assessment is an embedded practice. Goal-setting and feedback continues to evolve across the school. Feedback from students is collected in a variety of ways and a 'student leadership in learning' committee was established to promote student voice. The teaching for effective learning (TfEL) document was used to focus teaching observations and as a guide to provide feedback.

3. Teachers ran sessions for parents. The school worked on continuing to build relationships with families. Literacy and numeracy expectations were collaboratively developed to encourage consistency across year levels and provide a scope and sequence of learning and identify what is expected to be taught at each year level.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

Quality school improvement planning requires schools to continuously monitor what and how their teaching impacts on student learning outcomes. Staff engagement with the improvement planning cycle, informed by evidence and effective implementation, is essential to increase student achievement.

At the beginning of 2021 a new Principal was appointed to the school. While there was a school improvement plan (SIP) in place, it was crowded, lacked precision, and required time-consuming data collection.

The current Principal led staff through a process to narrow the SIP to 1 goal and 1 challenge of practice. Through a staff survey conducted by the review panel, teachers confirmed they were involved in this process and know the expectations for their classroom practices. The Governing Council reported that they knew the school had reviewed and narrowed the focus of the SIP.

Although staff were used to collecting a range of datasets, they have not engaged with a rigorous analysis of the datasets in standardised tests and assessments used by the Department for Education. They have not systematically evaluated how students answered the questions or identified implications for their planning and teaching. It is difficult for a school to prioritise their goals and challenges of practice without knowing what the specific gaps in students' skills and concepts are.

There is potential for, and a system expectation, that there will be increased percentages of students reaching standard of educational achievement (SEA) in the year 1 phonics screening data and year 1 and 2 Running Records. The school is working with the Literacy Guarantee Unit to strengthen their work in teaching of phonics and reading.

The Principal has sound knowledge and understanding of effective improvement planning and is working with the leadership team to build staff capacity in each stage of the cycle. There are opportunities to further refine processes and practices to prioritise and evaluate the impact on student learning outcomes. The school is well-placed to continue this work through an intentional focus on a more narrow and deep approach and evidence-based teaching practices.

Direction 1   **Strengthen the staff understanding and ownership of the improvement planning cycle and the implications for classroom practice.**

Effective teaching and student learning

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

Staff are committed to improving their teaching programs and learning outcomes for students. The panel observed some excellent practices and routines across the school. Training and development for staff was based on a 'train-the-trainer' model, where groups of staff participate in externally provided professional learning and come back and train others. While it is admirable staff are open to new learning, they sometimes do not have a deep knowledge and understanding of the program, which impacts on the effectiveness. Furthermore, the school continuously took on new programs. Some staff reported confusion about how some programs should be implemented, and mixed and matched strategies from a range of programs. This method of implementation compromises the fidelity of programs and, consequently, coherence across the school was not evident. Working with the Literacy Guarantee Unit will assist staff with authentic implementation of programs.

Number talks, requiring students to articulate their thinking and strategies in solving mathematical problems, were identified by staff and students as being an extremely effective strategy. These processes developed student knowledge and ability to identify efficient strategies to solve problems. This practice was embedded and consistently used across the school.

The PODD system is used effectively in the Disability unit to enhance communication for all students.

Teachers were able to talk about differentiation for students, and the panel observed some teachers providing explicit instruction to small groups while the other students worked independently. They also described about how school services officers support individuals and groups. There is an awareness that effective task design can provide multiple entry points to stretch and challenge all students. The panel concluded this is being done to varying degrees of success.

Staff will need to collaborate to prioritise the evidence-based programs and pedagogies they will use to deliver quality teaching and learning, to provide greater engagement stretch and challenge for all students. There is also an opportunity to develop some whole-school expectations that are consistently implemented by all staff across the school.

Direction 2   **Develop whole-school literacy and numeracy expectations that incorporate regular review and update that all staff implement consistently and with fidelity.**

Effective teaching and student learning

Assessment and Feedback - How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

Assessment of student learning is used to inform a cycle of planning, teaching, review and assessment to support progress in student achievement.

Some staff discussed using summative assessments with students to set learning goals. Exemplars were provided in some classes so students could assess where their work fitted and what they had to do to improve. The upper primary classes use rubrics and marking matrixes to assess their learning. Using learning intentions and success criteria to support students' knowledge of what they are learning and how they will know they were successful, are an embedded practice across the school. Some staff are still not totally confident in moderating work and there is an opportunity to build staff skills in this area.

It was evident that some staff were consistently using a range of formative assessment strategies with students. Students were able to verify feedback was useful to improve their learning. Giving and receiving effective feedback to improve learning outcomes is used to varying degrees. The school is well-placed to continue to strengthen their work in goal-setting, providing feedback to improve learning and using assessment for planning to differentiate the tasks.

While there is a rigorous schedule for extensive data collection, it is not evident that it is valued by staff or how it is used to inform planning. There is a pause on data collection to allow the staff to collaboratively decide which datasets are most useful to inform more targeted planning and why.

The school is working towards greater engagement with the datasets used by the system to track and monitor student achievement and growth data at a school, cohort, and individual level. Several staff said they appreciated the narrowed focus and having a pause on data collection, as it became overwhelming. ABLES are used effectively in the Disability Unit to assess student progress.

There are opportunities to develop common understandings of how assessment and analysis cycles can be better used to inform planning.

Direction 3   Build teacher capacities in data literacy to inform planning and teaching.
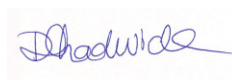
Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Staff, students and parents of Hewett Primary School feel proud and positive about their school. Recent significant renovations to the Disability Unit improved the learning environment. Parents reported that some families attended the school as students themselves. They liked the school community and thought having the Disability Unit on-site added to the diversity within the school. Parents on the Governing Council and students felt they were supported by the staff and that communication with the school was effective. Parents were appreciative of the communication through ClassDojo and felt this gave a little snapshot in to daily learning.

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

Direction 1   **Strengthen the staff understanding and ownership of the improvement planning cycle and the implications for classroom practice.**

Direction 2   **Develop whole-school literacy and numeracy expectations that incorporate regular review and update that all staff implement consistently and with fidelity.**

Direction 3   **Build teacher capacities in data literacy to inform planning and teaching.**

Based on the school's current performance, Hewett 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 2019, 62% of year 1 and 47% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of year 3 students,83% of year 5 students and 85% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average, for years 5 and 7 this result represents little or an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 76% to 83%. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 76% to 85%.

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved higher in year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 38% of year 3, 28% of year 5 and 17% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average in year 5 an improvement, and year 7, 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, 62%, or 13 out of 21 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 36%, or 4 out of 11 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, 80% of year 5 students and 76% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3,5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 23% of year 3, 16% of year 5 and 22% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 44%, or 7 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 43%, or 3 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.