

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Moonta Area School

Conducted in April 2019



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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Rob McLaren, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Rosie Heinicke and Debbie Grzeczowski, Review Principals.

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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Moonta Area School caters for children from reception to year 12. It is situated 159km from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 406 students. Enrolment has been declining over the last 5 years. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 509 students.

The school has an ICSEA score of 933 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education (DfE) Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 13% Aboriginal students, 20% students with disabilities, 2 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 6 children/young people in care, and 36% of families eligible for School Card assistance. FLO enrolments in 2018 were 23, with 21 in 2019.

There are 3 sub schools: Early Years (R to 2), Primary Years (Years 3 to 6) and Senior School (Years 7 to 12).

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 7th year of her tenure at the school, 2 assistant principals and 6 Band B1 coordinators (Teaching and Learning R-2, 3-6 and 7-12, Students with Additional Needs, SWL Primary and SWL Secondary). There are 37 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 12 Step 9 teachers.

The school values are: Learning, Caring and Sharing.

The previous ESR was undertaken in 2015 and the school's previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Improve student engagement and raise achievement by strengthening the resolve and professional practice of staff to support all students to be successful learners, and work closely with families from Reception to Year 12 to ensure shared responsibility exists for this outcome to be fully realised.
- Direction 2** Increase the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning, and the number of students achieving and retaining scores in the higher two bands, by regularly tracking and monitoring student progress and by using this evidence to inform learning design and targeted teaching.
- Direction 3** Increase the number of students successfully completing the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) by engaging year 10 to 12 students, staff and parents in the design and consistent implementation of the school's SACE Improvement Strategies.
- Direction 4** Challenge students to aspire and achieve by increasing opportunities for all students to personalise and influence their learning and be involved in authentic decision-making to support higher levels of learning.
- Direction 5** Use self-review processes to monitor the impact in each sub-school of the implementation of assessment and teaching policies and agreements at each year level, and the effectiveness of differentiated teaching strategies on student learning outcomes at the cohort level.
- Direction 6** Support all teachers to raise student achievement by using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as a benchmark for improving practice, and use school

agreements and targets to prioritise the use of structured time for collaborative teamwork and professional learning.

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

The leadership presentation provided the panel with an overview of a large body of work that had been undertaken by leadership in collaboration with staff in addressing the six 2015 ESR directions. It was acknowledged by the panel that changes in leadership and staff had occurred during this period providing challenges in developing, embedding and attaining consistency of practice of this work.

Comprehensive documentation was provided by leadership describing the processes followed to distil the focus areas for improvement from these directions: consistency, attendance, powerful learning and high expectations. Further collaboration with staff in the triangulation of data and identifying trends refined the priorities as documented in past SIP documents.

The impact of these directions was clearly visible in the documentation and embedded practices described by many staff. These conversations also confirmed an awareness by many staff of the priorities and goals for improvement and the collaborative process that was followed to develop them.

Regular self-review processes were well documented with a Gantt chart detailing the timing and aspect of review taking place. To raise levels of student engagement and achievement in the senior years a number of SACE improvement strategies, documented processes and data sets were described. One strategy, to empower students to take greater control of their learning, involved students with their home group teacher using Grade point (GPA) and Effort point (EPA) averages to set goals and track and monitor their own practice. Considerable curriculum documentation has been completed using agreed common templates allowing students, staff and parents greater access to curriculum expectations and resources. To guide teacher practice further, literacy (R-12) and numeracy (R-7) agreements have been developed supporting the current focus in the SIP. Staff, students and parents commented that there was greater consistency of actions in using the refined student behaviour management (SBM) policy and procedures, supporting students and conditions for learning.

The panel believe this work has been valuable and has positioned the school well for ongoing improvement.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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

Leaders and staff described a strong sense of collaboration in the process of school improvement. The site leader and members of the leadership group have over a number of years implemented structures and processes that enable all members of the school community to provide input and take a shared responsibility for developing the priorities of the school. In developing the current SIP extensive data sets were analysed by leaders in developing the goals, actions and challenges of practice (CoP) for improvement. Leaders presented this information and through a consultative approach asked staff to reflect on their current role and practice and unpack the goals for further refinement.

This collaborative approach to the SIP development enabled many staff to be able to articulate the two goals of Numeracy and Literacy clearly, while reflecting on their own practice of improvement through the actions and challenges of practice. Some specialist teachers were already linking the SIP to the learning in their planning.

A number of teachers and leaders, when questioned about how the school ensures that the SIP goals for improvement are being effectively enacted in classroom, referred to Performance Development processes (PDP) and team meetings while others talked of classroom observations and walkthroughs. Staff commented that some of these had been trialled but were not yet consistent practice. Some staff had varied experiences and views of the effectiveness of these processes suggesting the need to commit time across the school to ensure consistency of practice.

An opportunity exists to further clarify and strengthen the roles and responsibilities of teachers and leaders in using evidence-based structures and processes (e.g. PDP, Classroom observations and walkthroughs) that support the enactment and embedding of agreed practices and the SIP goals for improvement.

Direction 1 Further develop and clarify the roles and responsibilities of teachers and leaders in using evidence-based improvement structures and processes (e.g. PDP, Classroom observations and walkthroughs) that support the enactment of school priorities and raise student achievement.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practice that engage and challenge all learners promoting a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

From classroom observations and conversations with students and teachers the panel identified pockets of evidence-based pedagogical practice. In the early years (R-2) learning was well structured and scaffolded with students observed working collaboratively in ability groups. Learning intentions and success criteria were evident in some mathematics classes with teachers using them to clarify the purpose of the learning.

In many primary years (year 3-6) classes there was evidence of high quality pedagogical practice with teachers providing examples of planning using agreed common templates that highlighted connection to curriculum requirements. These plans showed differentiated practice for identified student groups based on reviewed PAT, NAPLAN and site-based data sets. Responses by this group of teachers during a staff meeting activity on the lines of inquiry showed they had a very clear and consistent grasp of differentiation

practices and how to apply them in the classroom. A number of these teachers also provided evidence of learning in context demonstrating Problem Based Learning (PBL) approaches. Students commented positively on their learning in these classes, describing how they were challenged by the tasks but also how they could work through a difficult problem while receiving help from their teacher or peers. Some specialist teachers and upper secondary classes promoted a collaborative approach to learning with learning tasks supporting group work and incorporating open-ended questions for students to respond to.

Wellbeing for learning has been a major focus for development across the school designed to address behaviour and engagement concerns in classes. A number of teachers, more predominantly in the middle years, commented that there needs to be a greater balance between this and learner achievement. In these classes it was observed that many teachers provided highly structured lessons with set learning activities as a way of control. However, many of these activities lacked differentiation and scaffolding making it difficult for students to be either supported, or challenged, in their learning.

Evidence of students influencing learning across the school was limited. In some senior secondary and primary years classes it was observed that students had more one-to-one conversations with their teacher but this was predominantly around teacher feedback through drafts, better ways of completing set tasks or choices of how to present their work. The panel also observed a few cases of teachers seeking feedback from students that they could use to improve their practice.

While there are pockets of high quality practice that need to be acknowledged and shared there exists an opportunity to review contemporary evidence-based pedagogical practices and reach agreements about which would better support engagement and challenge in learning for all learners. The implementation of these practices could be further enhanced through targeted professional learning and focused evidence-based PDP processes.

Direction 2 Develop agreements in which high impact evidence-based pedagogical practices will be utilised to support engagement and challenge for all learners.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The use of data in processes of whole school improvement and self-review was very evident through documentation and conversations with leaders and teachers. Some teachers described their use of running records, NAPLAN and PAT data in their planning. This commonly took the form of learning adjustments or intervention strategies for students with learning needs or difficulties. There was evidence of a small number of staff gathering and analysing assessment data to inform next steps in learning however when questioned it was not clear or consistent among teachers regarding how this translated into differentiated practice. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of differentiated curriculum planning and implementation varied as did its implementation.

Teachers and leaders described internal and external moderation processes with other schools as providing important forums for teachers to share practice and gain greater consistency in the judgement of student achievement. A number of teachers commented that this process has made them reflect on current assessment tasks, modifying them to provide greater challenge and connection to the curriculum standards. When asked how the designed assessment tasks provided evidence of learning that may inform planning

and instruction, responses from teachers were inconsistent and a number commented on the time constraints associated with reflection and analysis.

Some year levels use data effectively to track and monitor student progress and provide learning support as needed. The use of this and any other data by teachers to influence or improve instruction was limited. Some teachers described taking part in classroom observations and walkthroughs but commented that this was not a consistent or agreed practice.

Student influence in shaping learning by providing feedback to teachers was also very limited. Only a few teachers could describe processes where they actively sought feedback from students about their practice as a means to improve what they do.

The panel believe there is a need to develop clarity of understanding and agreement about what is effective differentiation of learning and how assessment and student feedback can inform teacher planning. This could be further supported with PDP and other improvement strategies designed to develop teacher practice.

Direction 3 Establish agreements that document effective differentiated practice across the school and further develop structures and processes to ensure improvement strategies are informed by assessment data and student feedback.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

Moonta Area School has strategically developed effective actions in response to the previous ESR directions and many are evident in the school's improvement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. The panel believes the following directions will support the school in continuing this work.

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

- Direction 1** Further develop and clarify the roles and responsibilities of teachers and leaders in using evidence-based improvement structures and processes (e.g. PDP, Classroom observations and walkthroughs) that support the enactment of school priorities which raise student achievement.
- Direction 2** Develop agreements in which high impact evidence-based pedagogical practices will be utilised to support engagement and challenge for all learners.
- Direction 3** Establish agreements that document effective differentiated practice across the school and further develop structures and processes to ensure improvement strategies are informed by assessment data and student feedback.

Based on the school's current performance, Moonta Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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 2018, 63% of year 1 and 76% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 63% of year 3 students, 73% of year 5 students, 41% of year 7 students and 43% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For year 5 this result represents an improvement, for year 3 this represents little or no change, and for years 7 and 9 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 30% in 2015 to 73% in 2018.

For 2018, year 3 and 9 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools. Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 34% of year 3, 20% of year 5, 6% of year 7, and 0% of year 9 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 30%, or 3 of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, 17%, or 1 of 6 student from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9, and no students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students, 38% of year 7 students and 40% of year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 an improvement and for year 7 and 9 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2018, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 31% in 2015 to 67% in 2018.

For 2018, year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within, while in years 7 and 9 the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 23% of year 3, 17% of year 5, 3% of year 7 and 0% of year 9 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 60%, or 3 of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7, no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 9 and no students from year 7 remain in the upper bands at year 9 in 2018.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2018, 53% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve SACE. This result for October SACE completion represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2015 and 2018, the trend has been upwards, from 90% in 2015 to 100% in 2018.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2018; 81% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 98% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 literacy units, 49% successfully completed their Stage 1 numeracy units and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

Ninety eight percent of grades achieved in the 2018 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. Forty three percent of students completed SACE using VET and there were 23 students enrolled in the Flexible Learning Options program in 2018.

For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2018, 17% of students achieved an 'A' grade and 47% achieved a 'B' grade. This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline averages for the 'A' grade and 'B' grade respectively.

In terms of 2018 tertiary entrance, 33%, or 5 out of 15 potential students achieved an ATAR or TAFE SA selection score.