

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR KAURNA PLAINS SCHOOL

Conducted in March 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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Judy Anderson, Review Principal. Mr Frank Lampard and Mr David Branson provided community liaison through part of the Review process.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Kurna Plains 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 1 Governance:

1. Bullying data

Bullying data was collected using data warehouse. All data was collected from 2013-2016 and this included the following:

- Threatening or actual behaviour
- Interfering with the rights of others.

At the time of the external review, Governing Council has ceased operation in 2015. Reports will be made to the Governing Council, if reconvened, and to the Education Director if one is not established.

2. Student Voice

Student Voice policy to be implemented in 2016 as part of the coaching program. Feedback will be collected from students using the TfEL compass tool to ensure that democratic relationships develop, and that students have an active role in their learning.

Representatives from each class will also take part in the Student Representative Council (SRC) to ensure student voice is active in whole-school matters.

Part 6 Site Procedures:

1. Cyber Policy

Cyber policy to be implemented within the school in 2016. Cyber policy to cover social networking and protective cyber practices for students to ensure their safety when using the internet. This will be completed at the end of Term 1.

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 72.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Kurna Plains School is a Reception to Year 12 school in the northern metropolitan area that caters for Aboriginal students. In 2016, there are 76 students enrolled at the school. The school has an ICSEA score of 623 and is classified as Category 1 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 95% Aboriginal students, 11% Students with Disabilities, 69% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 2% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 21% of families eligible School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the eighth year of her 2nd tenure, a Deputy Principal with responsibility for Intervention, Wellbeing, SACE and VET, and a Senior Leader with responsibility for Literacy and Numeracy curriculum development. This last position is contracted until the end of 2016.

The turnover of teaching staff over the years has provided challenges regarding pedagogical and curriculum development and continuity at the school.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Given the small number of students at each year level at Kurna Plains School, this report cites numbers of students achieving SEA over a period of five years.

Reading

In the Early Years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. School data shows that from 2011 to 2015, 3 of 27 Year 1 students and 2 of 21 Year 2 students met the SEA.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that from 2011 to 2015, 6 of 22 Year 3 students, 8 of 32 Year 5 students, 4 of 35 Year 7 students and 4 of 44 Year 9 students achieved SEA. Students in Early and Primary Years have consistently out-performed those in the Middle Years of schooling.

Tracking student improvement from Year 3 to 5, 5 to 7, and 7 to 9 is compromised due to variance in the number of students remaining at the school over an extended period of time.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that from 2011 to 2015, 4 of 22 Year 3 students, 6 of 31 Year 5 students, 5 of 35 Year 7 students, and 0 of 44 Year 9 students met SEA.

It is apparent that achievement in the Early and Primary Years of schooling is not sustained through to the Middle Years.

SACE

In 2014, 2 of 6 students achieved their SACE in February, compared to 2 of 7 students in 2015.

Lines of Inquiry

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

Effective Teaching:	To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?
Student Learning:	To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?
Effective Leadership:	How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Throughout the External Review process, the panel was made aware of the diverse and complex needs that many students at Kurna Plains School bring to their classroom. Issues ranging from trauma to disability, including substance abuse and domestic violence, potentially compromise the learning and achievement of these students. Equally strong evidence provided throughout the review determined that staff at Kurna Plains School respond to these issues strategically, supportively and optimistically. The panel identified staff response to complexity as seeing opportunities, not obstacles.

During conversations with teaching staff, parents, SSOs and intervention personnel, the panel was provided with many examples of the adjustments and accommodations in place to maximise students' potential access to learning. Connections with agencies that promote mental and physical health, support families in crisis or provide pathways to employment are some of the partnerships the school has forged to meet this intent. The panel commends the staff members' consistent commitment in responding to the vast and varied needs of their student community.

This individualised approach to maximising wellbeing through strategic design, provides a model to which staff can refer when considering how differentiation in *learning* can be enabled. During classroom walk-throughs and conversation with staff and students, the panel sourced evidence that identified the varying levels of differentiation operating across the school. In some classes, students had individual expectations and learning opportunities designed for them. This was more apparent in the Senior Years. In most classrooms, data had been used to determine ability groups. The students in the groups received 'extra' work or 'easier' work, depending on the level of their achievement.

The panel heard staff refer to data that determined where a student is 'at' in their learning. The potential exists for diagnostic data such as the PAT-M and -R tests to be used to identify *why* a student is at a certain point in their learning and which strategies they need to develop to progress to the next level, in turn, informing the teaching.

The collective inquiry question posed at the staff meeting: *How can we meet the diverse learning needs of our students?* elicited responses that represent staff members' varied understanding of practices that enable differentiated learning experiences. The panel sees the potential that exists for staff to work together to ensure that learning is as strategically tailored to individual needs as the approach to wellbeing.

Direction 1

Plan and deliver differentiated learning opportunities that are based on valid data and responsive to student miscues, strengths and learning needs.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

The leadership presentation and conversations with staff made evident that there is a priority to enable a pedagogical shift at Kurna Plains School. Practice that authentically engages students and that requires them to solve problems, think deeply and apply their learning, represents the vision towards which staff are working. The panel strongly concurs with this intent.

The expectations staff hold regarding student potential are commendably high; the panel heard many comments reflective of an aspirational and non-excusatory culture. The research of Sonia Neito, in *Affirming Diversity*, has shown high expectations encourage *students to work harder and achieve more, simply because they believe they can and are expected to*. The Review Panel commends the culture of aspiration the Kurna Plains staff have established regarding their students' learning.

Students hold strong and quite varied views regarding their learning and prospective achievement. Some Middle Years students discussed learning with an attitude of disenfranchisement, presenting the belief that it lacks purpose, is for the teacher, and that success is unimportant. However, when discussing his Professional Development Plan (PDP), one Middle Years student did so with animation, referring to the relevance it has to his interests and potential employment.

Authentic engagement involves students pursuing learning because they understand the purpose, process and outcomes. At Kurna Plains School, engagement is authentically enabled in some classrooms. Some students have access to teaching that provides direct instruction and modelling, and are provided with feedback that acknowledges growth, whilst making the next steps in the learning process clear. In some classes, students have opportunities to reflect on and make decisions about their learning, using scaffolds and exemplars to determine success and consider modifications.

Opportunities for students to immerse themselves in deep thinking and access learning that connects with

their interests exist in some classes at Kurna Plains School. Some teachers report having adjusted the curriculum to offer inquiry questions to students involving concepts that are relevant to their lives. Responses from students were reported as having been more positive, and engagement with the learning more rigorous as a result.

During the walk-through process, an Early Years student was seen to be, and then later reported in an SSO group conversation, as lacking focus. The panel was made aware that this often manifested as disruptive and distracting behaviour. This same student was part of a conversation with the Review Panel, held in the Resource Centre the following day. After having offered his comments to the group, the student left and returned with a comic book. He did not take further part in the conversation, but did interact with the text for a reasonably extended period of time, presenting as engaged and focused. He then responded at length and with great enthusiasm to questions the panel member asked about the book. This example represents the potential all students have to learn, when provided with opportunities to influence and make decisions about their learning, enabling authentic engagement.

Direction 2

Increase student ownership of learning and intellectual engagement through collective inquiry into pedagogical approaches that enable students to see purpose in, and make decisions about, their learning.

How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

The Leaders' presentation made clear the priority to develop coherent, contemporary pedagogical approaches across the school: *Improve numeracy and literacy achievement through developing pedagogical practices that develop expert learners*. Conversations with staff and document analysis made evident that strategic systems and processes operate to progress this intent.

Performance and Development (PD) processes were reported by all staff with whom the Review Panel spoke as being regular and targeted. The Leaders' presentation discussed a case-management style approach to PD meetings, whereby the teachers, SSO and line manager review students' progress and use the findings from this to formulate performance plans for the teacher. SSOs also reported frequent PD conversations, both formal and informal, that alert the line manager to their professional learning needs. Of particular note, SSOs, who spend a significant amount of time supporting students in class, attend each staff meeting.

Professional Learning (PL) opportunities are scheduled weekly for staff and have included a strong focus on the teaching and learning cycle, led by the Senior Leader. Staff PL is aligned with the school's priorities and clearly focused on contemporary approaches to teaching.

Conversations with staff made evident that teachers are confident in using data to identify students' placement in ability groups. Limited evidence was provided on teaching staff in using data diagnostically to address students' miscues or strengths, and to tailor teaching accordingly. Currently, staff are provided with a written synthesis of students' Language and Literacy level data, which has been analysed and created by the Senior Leader. A teacher engaging with their students' data actively and analytically is crucial in planning and delivering targeted, intentional teaching in the classroom. The Review Panel identified an opportunity to utilise the rigorous PD and PL systems that exist at the school, to review and build teachers' capacity to examine data diagnostically and to enable strategic and differentiated planning and teaching.

The coaching model that has been initiated in 2016 is focused on developing effective and evidence-based pedagogy across the school. This imperative is implemented by the Senior Leader, and the panel heard that this model has already challenged teachers to reflect on practice and undertake change in their approach. Teachers discussed having adjusted their questioning techniques, moving from closed questions that elicit low cognitive responses to more Socratic questioning techniques that require higher-level thinking. Another teacher discussed reviewing the amount of talk time she afforded herself; adjusting her approach to enable more student discussion. Teachers reported that the observations and regular feedback that

characterise the coaching model, whilst initially challenging, were critical in bringing about pedagogical development.

The panel agrees that the coaching model, and the professional learning that supports improvement in practice, are critical in achieving Kaurna Plains School's intent to embed contemporary practice across the school. The tenure of the Senior Leader, who has carriage of both these initiatives, ceases at the end of 2016. Given the above, it is vital that structures ensuring sustainability of existing improvement practices are identified and implemented, and a collective approach to the leadership of quality pedagogy is enabled.

Direction 3

Deepen teacher capacity to analyse valid data to plan differentiated learning opportunities, through a review of existing practice and professional learning designed to meet staff members' needs.

Direction 4

Ensure the sustainability of existing improvement practices through the development of shared educational leadership.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

At Kaurna Plains School teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning, and a culture of improvement is characterised by high expectations for students.

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

1. Plan and deliver differentiated learning opportunities that are based on valid data and responsive to student miscues, strengths and learning needs.
2. Increase student ownership of learning and intellectual engagement through collective inquiry into pedagogical approaches that enable students to see purpose in, and make decisions about, their learning.
3. Deepen teacher capacity to analyse valid data to plan differentiated learning opportunities, through a review of existing practice and professional learning designed to meet staff members' needs.
4. Ensure the sustainability of existing improvement practices through the development of shared educational leadership.

Based on the school's current performance, Kaurna Plains School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



for 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.



Bronwyn Milera
PRINCIPAL
KAURNA PLAINS SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson