

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Aberfoyle Hub R-7 School

Conducted in September 2020



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 Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Christine Bell, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent representatives
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers

School context

Aberfoyle Hub R-7 School caters for student from reception to year 7. It is situated 23kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 306. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 319. The local partnership is South Valley.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1037, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 17% students with disabilities, 3% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 23% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 5th year of a seven-year tenure, deputy principal in their 1st year of a five-year tenure, and a curriculum leader who is in their 2nd year of a three-year tenure. The deputy principal has a focus on special education and learning needs, while the curriculum leader focuses on teacher pedagogy, curriculum, learning design and coaching.

There are 22 teachers including 5 in the early years of their career and 4 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Focus school improvement efforts on the development of coherent, high-quality curriculum planning and effective teaching.**
- Direction 2** **Raise the expectations that all teachers have for all students, and consistently and regularly provide tasks that develop knowledge, skills, problem-solving, and critical and creative thinking.**
- Direction 3** **Strengthen the school’s identification, organisation, and resourcing of the additional needs of students through strategic, evidence-based review and planning.**

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

Direction 1:

Effective learning design and teaching practices were evident in the early years, with a strong focus on literacy and development of a consistent approach to phonics teaching. Across the school, there is a strategic focus on improving achievement in writing, with explicit teaching and moderation of writing tasks key to improved learning. High levels of collaboration in teaching teams is providing greater consistency of pedagogy and curriculum planning across classes.

Direction 2:

Opportunities for students to be engaged in high-order thinking tasks continues to be an area for development. There are pockets of effective practice that could be replicated across the school. Whole-school focus on writing can be seen as the catalyst for improved engagement and challenge for students, with higher expectations and explicit teaching tasks that stretch their thinking and intellect.

Direction 3:

The school made significant progress with this direction. Student review process, and individual identification and tracking of students, ensures that those in need receive the appropriate support and intervention when required. The school has significantly increased the school services officer (SSO) support for these students. Adding sensory and interoception rooms provide alternative opportunities for students to regulate their emotions.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school critically evaluate current curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice to determine challenges of practice?

The school has an effective analysis and tracking process allowing identification of learning areas for focus and improvement. Writing was chosen as a challenge of practice from the review of student data and an overall awareness of inconsistencies in teacher practice. The school collaboratively developed a reception to year 7 writing agreement, focusing on a balanced and sequential approach to teaching of writing. Explicit teaching of genres and guidance for effectively designing quality learning tasks were included and supported by planning resources to ensure consistency of practice. Mentoring and coaching was provided to support and enhance pedagogical practice, and is appreciated by teachers. A writing assessment and moderation tool provides a clear understanding of the sequence of teaching and learning, emphasising moderation of student learning across the school. Most students are engaged effectively in identifying where they are in their writing journey and what their next steps in learning are.

A similar process was used in the early years to improve reading achievement, specifically around teaching of phonics. A comprehensive review of progress was conducted by early years teachers, recognising changes in pedagogical practices and approaches over time, and highlighting improvement in student achievement. Opportunity exists for the school to replicate this process as part of whole-school review and evaluation of the site improvement plan.

The focus on reading in years 3 to 7 appears to have less emphasis, compared to reception to year 7 writing and reception to year 2 reading. Teachers confirmed that the level of guidance and support provided in the writing agreement is not present in the literacy and numeracy agreements. Reviewing these whole-school agreements will ensure all goals remains balanced and recent improvements in student achievement results are maintained and improved.

Direction 1 Ensure consistency of pedagogical practice and improved student achievement by collaboratively reviewing and implementing whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements that reflect current research-based curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

There is a strategic use of learning intentions and success criteria in most classes, providing students with clear expectations and required learning outcomes.

A variety of approaches to differentiation of learning are evident across the school. The most common approach is differentiation by outcome, where teachers analyse next steps in learning, as a result of the assessment of a completed task. Literacy and numeracy grouping in some classes caters effectively for students with similar learning needs. However, a number of lessons were observed with limited differentiation of learning and the same learning task for all students. Lower-ability students had difficulty understanding the task, and higher-ability students completed the same task with ease and without challenge. Catering for learning needs of all students, particularly higher-achieving students, needs to be carefully considered in the design of learning.

The panel acknowledges the differentiation for students with special learning needs. Quality conditions for learning were evident in special classes, and in mainstream classes with social, emotional and academic dispositions carefully considered and implemented.

Students at this school become more confident in their learning the more they are engaging in the process of learning. At this point in time, there are varying degrees of implementation and understanding, as well as formative assessment and feedback practices. In some classes, formative feedback is being provided that challenges students to review, reflect on and refine their understandings yet, in other classes, there was learning that had yet to be assessed. When students understand what they need to do to improve, they feel encouraged and supported to achieve the learning goals.

An opportunity exists for the school to audit the consistency of high-impact strategies and current pedagogical practices, with view of improving engagement and challenge through wave 1 teaching. This has potential to provide the highest lift in achievement, and assist in decreasing reliance on wave 2 interventions. It may also assist in reducing student anxiety, frustration and negative behaviours.

Direction 2 Enhance student engagement in their own learning by collaboratively designing and implementing a consistent whole-school approach to effective student voice and formative feedback and assessment.

Effective leadership

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes in building teacher capacity?

The whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning quality in writing gives teachers a positive example in developing and implementing consistent practice across classes with similar year levels, and a sequence of learning across the school. Year level professional learning communities (PLCs) have become drivers for positive change within the team, and seen as building collegiality, collaboration and consistency in professional learning.

Teachers value classroom profiling, as a strategy to improve their ability to manage the classroom environment and provide optimum conditions for student learning. A formal process for collaborative, reception to year 7 classroom observation, would provide opportunities to observe, be observed and receive performance feedback. Opportunities to visit and see best teaching and learning practice in other schools would assist in building capacity.

Newly qualified teachers require strategic and targeted support as part of induction to their career. Although there is informal support for them, a more formal process including observation and evaluation, regular meetings with leadership, opportunities for observations in other classes, and specialised professional learning is needed.

Quality and depth of teacher performance and development plans and review and feedback varies considerably. A consistent approach to professional development planning is a powerful way of ensuring the focus is on school and personal improvement, building teacher capacity, responsibility and accountability.

With a committed and professional staff, the school is well-placed to develop a culture of collaborative learning across all classes in curriculum and pedagogy.

Direction 3 Improve student achievement and build teacher capacity through the development and implementation of a formal R-7 process of collaborative professional learning that provides explicit performance feedback and supports high-quality teaching and learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

The school has an inclusive, supportive and welcoming environment centred on improving student achievement. Staff are collegiate, collaborative and dedicated. Students are friendly, positive and keen to apply themselves in learning. Exemplary teaching practice that occurs across the school should be embedded in more detail. With an already well-established process for tracking student achievement data, the school can include impact tracking of identified evidence-based practices and further enhance student learning achievement.

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

- Direction 1** **Ensure consistency of pedagogical practice and improved student achievement by collaboratively reviewing and implementing whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements that reflect current research-based curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices.**

- Direction 2** **Enhance student engagement in their own learning by collaboratively designing and implementing a consistent whole-school approach to effective student voice and formative feedback and assessment.**

- Direction 3** **Improve student achievement and build teacher capacity through the development and implementation of a formal R-7 process of collaborative professional learning that provides explicit performance feedback and supports high-quality teaching and learning.**

Based on the school's current performance, Aberfoyle Hub R-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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 2019, 57% of year 1 and 58% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for years 1 and 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students and 78% of year 7 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, a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 54% of year 3, 49% of year 5 and 29% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 41% to 54%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 77%, or 10 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 77%, or 10 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of year 3 students, 78% of year 5 students and 81% of year 7 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, a decline, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 68% to 78%.

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

In 2019, 37% of year 3, 22% of year 5 and 27% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for years 5 has been downwards from 27% to 22%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 70%, or 7 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 57%, or 4 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.