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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR GUMERACHA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in October 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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Tanya Oshinsky, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Gumeracha 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:

Part 1 Governance:

Site Bullying Data will be added to Term 4 planning document actioning.

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 working towards being compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 92.6%, which is marginally below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Gumeracha Primary School caters for students from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 34kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment is 64 students and has slightly declined over the past five years. The school has an ICSEA score of 1004 and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1.4% Aboriginal students, 4.3% students with disabilities, 4.3% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) and 1.4% children in care.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 1st tenure.

It should be noted that the 2015 school year began with 100% staff turnover, a Principal in her first principal appointment and in the first year of her tenure. The staff began the year dealing with the aftermath of the Samson Flat bushfires where staff, students and families had suffered very considerable personal and material losses. The school staff and, in particular, the Principal are to be highly commended for the manner in which they supported students, staff and their families. Such a task is difficult in any circumstance, particularly when you do not have established relationships.

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 2015, 38% (3 of 8) of Year 1 and 80% (8 of 10) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

No Running Records data was submitted in 2014.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% (8 of 8) of Year 3 students, 67% (4 of 6) of Year 5 students, and 73% (8 of 11) of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement, for Year 5, this represents little or no change, and for Year 7, this represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 75% (6 of 8) of Year 3, 17% (1 of 6) of Year 5, and 9% (1 of 11) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Of the two students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading in 2013, 1 student from Year 3 remains in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. Of the two Year 3 students from 2011, 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change, and for Year 7, this result represents an improvement.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 50% (4 of 8) of Year 3 students, 33% (2 of 6) of Year 5 students, and 82% (9 of 11) of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 13% (1 of 8) of Year 3, 17% (1 of 6) of Year 5, and 9% (1 of 11) of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents little to no change from the historic baseline average.

No students achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in 2013. No students achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy in 2015. One student from Year 3 in 2011 remains in the top two bands at Year 7 in 2015.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning:　　　　　**How well are students achieving over time?**

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

School Community Partnerships:　**How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?**

How well are students achieving over time?

The Principal reported in her presentation that at the beginning of 2015 there was evidence of students who were capable learners but not highly motivated to achieve, datasets were incomplete or not available, and students were not sure of their reading levels.

The school embarked upon a change agenda that included quality literacy and numeracy learning. The Principal reported that 'Thinking and Learning' was added to school priorities as a result of observations that students were often happy and compliant until they were pushed into an area of challenge, thus 'working and thinking tough' was identified as a priority in supporting students to develop growth mindsets. The school acknowledges that improvement in learning outcomes cannot be achieved without students having positive learning dispositions. The school has undertaken some very valuable work in this area.

The school is to be commended for the work already undertaken to build teacher capacity in numeracy through their participation in a Partnership-led initiative to trial and implement a specific pedagogy that has been successful in other sites. All staff have received training and three staff members are trained facilitators. This initiative provides a very strong foundation for the school to develop common understandings, common language and pedagogical approaches. This will support coherence and congruence in both the understanding of effective practices in maths and its implementation within and across year levels.

The school, through the leadership of the Principal, has also implemented a range of well-considered and strategic approaches to intervention in both literacy and numeracy.

In a survey distributed during the ESR, 20% of staff responded that the feedback they gave to students helped them to know how to improve to a high extent and a further 40% of staff indicated that they adapted their planning in response to the feedback they gave to the students to a high extent.

John Hattie's research on Visible Learning indicates that feedback is one of the most influential practices to impact on student achievement. Interviews with students indicated that many students did not know why they had achieved a particular grade, some students stating they were surprised and many students indicating that effort was the most likely reason for achievement. One student stated: "I was surprised I got a high score, I thought I wouldn't, it magically happened".

In one class, students indicated a range of strategies they could use to improve and check their learning, and were able to articulate how and when they used them. This included working and checking with peers. There was strong evidence that the class used a growth mindset process. This involved *first thinking*, *second thinking*, *feedback*, and *celebrating the struggle.* They also provided feedback to their peers during writing whilst, in another room, group verbal feedback was evident.

A pedagogy that can support ongoing and meaningful feedback is sharing the learning, in which the student is an active partner in the learning. Processes can include, but are not limited to, sharing the *why* of grade allocations with individual students, discussing results of standardised tests, regular reading and writing conferences. Conversations can then result in the student and teacher collaboratively setting next steps goals that are timely and achievable. Students with an authentic voice in their learning are able to act from a premise of knowing, with learning processes and outcomes never being a surprise.

When teachers adapt and refine their teaching strategies in response to feedback from students, strong learning communities develop.

A whole-school approach to develop and implement processes in the *what, when* and *how* of feedback will be a powerful tool in supporting students and staff to progress the Thinking and Learning priority of the Site Improvement Plan.

Direction 1
Support students to know how to improve by implementing strategies for teachers and students to give and receive timely and detailed feedback in an ongoing cycle of review and improvement.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The staff survey conducted during the ESR asked teachers to reflect on a recent unit of work. Results indicated that 100% of teachers identified the following areas to be achieved to a medium extent: supporting students to understand the learning intention, the use of effective pedagogies and creating opportunities to stretch students to enable them to think more deeply about the topic.

Staff also indicated the following as aspects they would like to have done better: include students in the learning process, design ways for more entry and exit points for learning and assessment, share the learning with others (that is, peers teaching peers and students teaching parents), and provide authentic audiences for students to share their learning.

Interviews held with teachers indicated their high level of professionalism and commitment to the students in their care. All teachers were open to new learning and to improving their practice. Teachers commented positively on the benefits that professional learning opportunities have brought to their teaching.

Data is collated at an individual level, staff are provided with whole-school datasets and they discuss how to use individual students' strengths to progress their learning. Class teachers, at regular intervals, identify 6 students, two low achievers, two mid-range achievers and two students who are achieving above the expected standard. These students are closely monitored with progress regularly reviewed.

The school has identified its own targets for PAT-M and PAT-R assessments, and expectations by year level are higher than those set by DECD, which is clear evidence of aspirational targets, and supports the school's priority to stretch and challenge students.

There is strong evidence of a collaborative and consultative staff working to improve the learning outcomes for all students. This work may be further progressed through the development of year level aspirational targets, and some common agreements around datasets for specific learning, for example, spelling. Staff indicated the value of common datasets to identify the learning needs of students before they enter their new class.

At present, classroom datasets vary from class to class. This can be problematic when one year level is split over two classes. Expectations, datasets, moderation of work samples, congruence with the Australian Curriculum and Achievement Standards can be aligned across such classes to ensure consistency. A review of common understandings around data collection may assist all staff to embed congruence within and across classes.

Staff have provided strong evidence of being reflective practitioners, open to new learning and committed to supporting the learning of every student. They have indicated their commitment to create opportunities to stretch students that will enable them to think more deeply and to design tasks that allow for multiple exit and entry points. These aspects were identified by staff as a priority in the ESR survey conducted during the review. This will be important work to be undertaken across all year levels and all areas of the curriculum. The school is well-positioned to achieve their goals in this area.

Direction 2
Embed the use of multiple datasets to inform teaching and the design of rigorous tasks aligned with the Australian Curriculum and Achievement Standards.

How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?

Governing Council members, when meeting with the ESR panel, indicated their overwhelming support for the school and the current work being undertaken to improve teaching and learning. Several members indicated their aspirations for the school to provide more opportunities for students to be stretched in their learning.

The Review Panel met with the school leaders and they outlined their role as running the assembly and helping organize the Junior Primary class. These student leaders also stated that they wrote articles for the newsletter, put notices on the noticeboard, helped the younger students in the kitchen and showed them how to use equipment. School leaders indicated that the work of the Student Representative Council (SRC) involved having input to wet weather play, the sports shed, crazy hair days, writing a letter for flagpoles, and the chickens. Leaders were also responsible for writing notes. While the students were justifiably proud of their work as leaders, there is potential for the work of school leaders to have a stronger impact on student learning. Student interviews conducted during the ESR identified maths, writing and Japanese as the learning areas that were the most challenging for them.

The students have a very strong sense of belonging within the school community, and they are well-positioned to progress their aspirations through the development of avenues that will provide opportunities for authentic student influence in their learning.

Gumeracha Primary School has a small, committed and highly skilled staff, including specialists in Inquiry Learning, maths and eLearning. All of these learning areas provide opportunities for students to engage, be challenged and stretched in very different contexts. It may be possible to utilise these skills across all classes, thus building both teacher capacity and student expertise.

Students and staff can benefit from the implementation of perception data as a valuable means of informing next steps for learning. When asked during the review what advice they would give to a beginning teacher, students from a range of year levels and classes provided the following responses: "make learning just right but challenge me", "don't make me revise the easy stuff", "stretch us", and many similar others. The staff are to be commended for supporting students to be reflective; students have provided clear evidence of knowing themselves as learners.

The school is in a position to embed deliberate, regular and focused opportunities for students to participate in collaborative planning and decisions about themselves as learners and their learning.

Direction 3
Increase student influence by involving them in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Gumeracha Primary School has a culture of improvement. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. The school works closely in partnership with parents and stakeholders. The Governing Council is highly supportive of the work of the Principal.

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

1. Support students to know how to improve by implementing strategies for teachers and students to give and receive timely and detailed feedback in an ongoing cycle of review and improvement.

2. Embed the use of multiple datasets to inform teaching and the design of rigorous tasks aligned with the Australian Curriculum and Achievement Standards.

3. Increase student influence by involving them in collaborative planning and decision-making about their learning.

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

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.

Lyndsey Martin
PRINCIPAL
GUMERACHA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson