



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Vale Park Primary School
Conducted in February 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Cindy McGarry, Review Principal.

School context

Vale Park Primary School is located 7km north-east of Adelaide. The school was established in 1964 and has recently had an increasing number of enrolments, reaching a seven-year high of 478 in 2017. The school has an ICSEA score of 1072 and is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3.1% Aboriginal students, 4% students with disabilities, 38% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 0.5% children in care, and 12% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 4th year of her tenure and a Deputy Principal in the 5th and final year of her tenure, whose responsibilities include those of Counsellor. The school has elected to use the Coordinator's salary to fund the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program.

In 2017, there are 26 teaching staff, 8 of whom are part-time. Four teachers are beginning teachers on contract. The Intervention and Support (I&S) teacher works 1.0FTE, with 0.8FTE allocated to I&S and 0.2FTE to Aboriginal Education.

Lines of Inquiry

In considering the data summary in the School Performance Overview (Appendix 2) and the Principal's presentation, the Review Panel explored the following Lines of Inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness in raising student achievement and sustaining high performance. During the external review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Improvement Agenda: How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Throughout the External School Review (ESR) process, it was highly apparent to the panel that staff at Vale Park Primary School have respect for students as stakeholders in the school, and that structures and forums have been initiated to ensure they have opportunities to contribute to school initiatives and to develop leadership skills. The traditional model of the Student Representative Council has been made redundant in favour of a more active and inclusive approach to student voice. The recently appointed Student Ambassadors represent this intent, as did their informed discussion regarding the Student Action Committees. The Ambassadors and many staff spoke about these groups leading processes to promote the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden (SAKG), Information Technology (IT), Resource Centre, Magazine and yard play. Of particular note was the Community Action Committee's success in raising funds for a school in Fiji in 2016. During the walk-through process and student discussions, the panel was made aware of the readiness and willingness of students at Vale Park Primary School to speak about their school and learning, and it was noted that every student with whom they spoke was polite, respectful and friendly.

The culture of inclusion of students within school initiatives provides fertile ground for the staff at Vale Park Primary School to move the notion of student voice to an even more authentic level; one that enables students to have influence over their learning.

During the walk-through process and through discussion with staff and parents, it was evident that some students at Vale Park Primary School have access to pedagogical practices that promote ownership of the learning process. The panel heard that some teachers have provided rubrics to students that identify the characteristics of successful progress through a task or assignment. Some students referred to this scaffold as allowing them to determine how to work towards a higher grade. A few teachers also spoke about having made evident the Outcomes and Standards within the Australian Curriculum to students at the start of the learning cycle; this was confirmed by some of the older students. At the time of the ESR, all students across the school had just taken part in a goal-setting process that allowed them to record an aspiration regarding both learning and social achievements. In some classes, students discussed their goal and how they will achieve it with clarity and confidence, whilst in others, there was less certainty regarding their goal or how they will work towards it.

When asked how they know how they are progressing, some responses from students made evident that they have access to feedback designed to acknowledge growth and to make clear the next stage for improvement. Older students discussed the teacher having used NAPLAN and PAT data to show the students the degree to which they had grown their understanding and skills, and that they were then able to identify the next area for learning. In other forums of the ESR, students reported that they knew they were progressing well if they scored high on a test, if they finished work on time or presented a large quantity of written product. A few students also discussed the receipt of stickers, ticks and rewards as indicators of success.

The introduction of Google Classroom to students in the Middle Years was seen by them as an excellent opportunity for the teacher to provide regular, immediate and useful feedback that will support them as they progress through a task or assignment. The panel agrees that this is one way in which effective feedback can be provided.

Ensuring students across Vale Park Primary School understand the purpose of their learning, and can plan, monitor and assess their progress, is the next step in developing authentic student influence at the school.

Direction 1

Develop student influence over learning through collective inquiry into, and consistent implementation of, teaching practice designed to promote student understanding and ownership of the learning process.

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Through the leaders' presentation it was evident that the importance of collective, consultative processes of self-review is appreciated by the Leadership Team and that systems operate to progress this notion. The understanding of review for improvement is widespread across the staff.

Since 2014, numerous areas of school operations have been subject to self-review. These include Committee Structures, Professional Learning, Intervention and Support, Student Voice and Grounds. It was reported by the leaders that the latter initiative had been a strong contributor in raising community perception regarding Vale Park Primary School and increasing enrolments.

Review of literacy teaching and learning in 2014 led to the development of a well-documented literacy Agreement that is now uniformly referred to by all staff with whom the panel spoke. The expectations regarding teaching strategies, programs, assessment and intervention are clearly stated and even new staff to the school report using the document to guide planning and practice. This agreement provides teachers with clear standards against which to measure student achievement in literacy, as determined by Running Records, PAT-R and NAPLAN assessments.

Of particular significance is the leaders' work in reviewing students' perception regarding safety at school. The model adopted to identify baseline perception data and to then respond accordingly has been implemented with exceptional outcomes. Initial findings from students regarding behaviours and locations within the school that made them feel unsafe informed strategic change that now sees a substantial increase in students feeling safe at school. Of note, this model of self-review is ongoing; the panel was informed that student opinions regarding safety are harvested termly, and responded to as required.

Following a review of improvement planning structures, sub-committees have been established to drive the Site Improvement Priorities. Each teaching staff member is expected to sit on one of the committees and each committee is led by a teacher. Many discussions during the ESR made clear that a Pupil Free Day in Term 4 is convened to allow each of the committees to review achievements throughout the year and to determine priorities for the new school year. Discussions and document analysis made evident that these processes of self-review are informed by staff perceptions and opinions, sought through the Plus/Minus/Interesting model and 'brainstorming'. When asked how achievement of priorities is determined, staff reported that teacher confidence and "seeing how we feel we are doing" determine success, and that they then "come up with" the next year's priorities. The panel's analysis of the SIP Action Plans showed that under 'Targets', there are statements of intent in two plans and a range of strategies in the third, neither of which provide staff an opportunity to measure success against agreed targets and to then respond strategically.

The panel commends the consultative and collective processes of self-review operating at Vale Park Primary School. An opportunity now exists to develop a data-driven and strategic approach through analysis of the range of valid data harvested to identify relevant, measurable targets regarding the school's priorities. These will inform which 'process markers' to establish to monitor progress throughout the year and allow quantifiable processes of self-review for improvement.

Direction 2

Establish strategic, measurable targets and plans of action that are informed through collective analysis of the range of valid data harvested at the school.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

The introduction of the Stop, Think About it, Act and Reflect (STAR) approach to 'situation solving' in some areas of learning has had a significant impact on student thinking across the school. Almost all students with whom the panel spoke discussed this approach and how they use it in science and maths. Many students also spoke about using this model to solve friendship and yard issues. One teacher discussed how he uses the model in class when students experience organisational difficulties. A student reported that using STAR meant she "now doesn't have to go to the teacher all the time".

The concept of Growth Mindset has also been introduced and embedded across the school, evident through discussions with every student with whom the panel spoke. Students have full understanding of the application of a Growth Mindset in learning, and one student reported that "even if you are performing at a high level, you still need a Growth Mindset, or you would just stop there".

These two approaches represent the capacity of staff to introduce and consistently implement contemporary strategies that encourage students to think at a more sophisticated level. They provide a model from which further opportunities for all students to be intellectually challenged and extended can be developed.

Data harvested over a four-year period showed students are performing above students in comparative cohorts. The data also showed a tendency to a downward trend in students sustaining high band achievement as they progress through school. Conversations throughout the ESR showed a strong variance in teachers' strategic use of achievement data to identify and plan learning opportunities designed for the individual student. Some staff reported using data to determine miscues and teaching intentionally to the student's needs as a result of this. Others reported having data available but not having used it to determine student needs. The walk-through process and conversations with students showed that in some classrooms, opportunities for students performing well to stretch their thinking and engage in challenge were compromised, as the class was provided with the same spelling list or worksheet. Some parents with whom the panel spoke, whilst acknowledging the complex nature of differentiation, expressed a desire to see their child's learning needs to be better met, for them to be challenged more frequently, and to have their learning extended.

The opportunity to enact the Wave One approach to learning, quality teaching that is designed to meet the needs of every learner, is an exciting next step in Vale Park Primary School's improvement journey. The intentional and intellectually challenging pedagogy and diagnostic use of data that is operating in some

classrooms provides a model from which staff can develop differentiated and targeted teaching that ensures success for all.

Direction 3

Differentiate learning opportunities, identify personal learning goals and ensure challenge and extension for all learners through the exploration of individual students' achievement data.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Vale Park Primary School:

The process of self-review used to identify and address students' perception of safety at the school has been rigorous, targeted and influential. Data sourced through this process has been responded to strategically and deliberate change enacted. Ongoing monitoring of this aspect of school improvement has shown that almost every student feels safe within the school environment and, therefore, well-placed to engage effectively with learning.

Strategies that promote student agency are positively influencing learners' thinking within the learning process. The strategic introduction and consistent implementation of the concept of Growth Mindset and the Stop, Think About, Action, Reflect (STAR) approach to students' thinking has had a very positive and significant impact on how students approach challenging situations and work towards resolutions in both learning and relationships. These approaches contribute strongly to the school's vision to develop 'innovative, creative, curious and self-motivated learners' and to broaden the opportunity students have to make decisions about and own their learning.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

At Vale Park Primary School a culture of improvement is characterised by high expectations for students, and teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning. Self-review is consultative and has brought about some significant change.

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

1. Develop student influence over learning through collective inquiry into, and consistent implementation of, teaching practice designed to promote student understanding and ownership of the learning process.
2. Establish strategic, measurable targets and plans of action that are informed through collective analysis of the range of valid data harvested at the school.
3. Differentiate learning opportunities, identify personal learning goals and ensure challenge and extension for all learners through the exploration of individual students' achievement data.

Based on the school's current performance, Vale Park Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.




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.



Anne Cannizzaro
PRINCIPAL
VALE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



M. HEDGES
Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Vale Park Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be (compliant/working towards being compliant) with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2016 was 94.1%.

Appendix Two

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 2016, 62% of Year 1 and 82% 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 for Year 1 and an improvement for Year 2.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 1 has been downwards from 85% to 62%.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 95% of Year 3 students, 84% of Year 5 students, and 93% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average and little or no change for Year 5.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 and 7 has been upwards, from 84% to 95%, and 64% to 93%, respectively.

For 2016 Year 3 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools, and at Year 5, within similar students' results.

In 2016, 77% of Year 3, 55% of Year 5 and 37% 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. For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 83%, or 19 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 44%, or 7 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 93% of Year 3 students, 88% of Year 5 students, and 97% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards from 77% to 88%.

For 2016 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 51% of Year 3, 35% of Year 5 and 45% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3 this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 14% to 45%.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 83%, or 19 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 44%, or 7 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.