

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Vale Park Primary School

Conducted in August 2020



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools

For

VALE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Was conducted in August 2020

The External School Review process supports schools to raise student achievement and sustain high performance. It provides quality assurance to build and sustain public confidence in government schools.

The public report with directions for the future is available on the school website.

The review panel acknowledges the co-operation provided by the school during the review process.



Anne Millard

Executive Director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



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 Marie Louise Adams, 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 groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Vale Park Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 6.7kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 486. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 478. The local partnership is Morialta.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1080 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 2% Aboriginal students, 16% students with disabilities, 13% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 9% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal who is in her first year of tenure, deputy principal (Support, Special Needs, STEM and Wellbeing) and assistant principal (Innovation and Pedagogy).

In 2020, there are 28 teachers, 15 of whom are part-time (less than a 1.0 FTE). This total includes 11 who are Tiers 1 to 5 and 10 who are Step 9.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.**
- 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.**
- 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 impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

Direction 1

Key pedagogical strategies that provide students with ownership in their learning are evident across the school; however, the degree of consistency and implementation varies considerably. While most students could articulate what they were learning, they had little understanding of learning progressions and their next steps. Providing authentic opportunities for students to critically analyse and understand their own assessment data is a key strategy that will enable teachers and students to explicitly target their learning.

Direction 2

The department's new school improvement planning process provides a framework that guides the school through the process of analysing data and identifying challenges of practice and actions for improvement. The strategic use of student and school data is critical to determining the improvement journey and is discussed in detail under line of inquiry 1 in this report.

Direction 3

A variety of evidence-based learning strategies are being used to identify and differentiate learning for students. These include pre- and post-assessments and the use of multiple entry and exit points,

particularly in mathematics. The panel observed some less-than-challenging literacy practices in a number of classes, which are not catering for the next steps in learning or engaging students within their 'zone of proximal development'.

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 analysed student NAPLAN achievement results to identify the challenges of practice and associated actions. Teacher performance development plans align well to the improvement plan and professional learning, and include coaching and mentoring organised to support the building of teacher capacity. Students are engaged in learning tasks that are designed to improve specific aspects of writing and mathematics, while a whole-school focus on vocabulary development is evident in most classrooms.

Despite this, teachers indicated an absence of ownership and connection to the site improvement plan (SIP) that resulted in varying degrees of implementation and motivation. Teachers recognise the benefits of having a school improvement plan and explicit whole school teaching and agreements. They guide consistency of teaching and learning and ensure responsibility and accountability. Currently, these are not driving the program of learning or improvement across the school.

The whole-school literacy agreement is currently under development. This document is a significant part of the challenge of practice in writing, required to guide the improvement and consistency of teaching and learning in literacy across the school. The agreement will need to be collaboratively developed and implemented as a matter of urgency.

At this point, students are unaware of the school improvement focus on writing and mathematics. An exciting opportunity exists for authentic student influence in the planning process and whole-school improvement journey.

Identifying the challenge of practice, while specifically focusing on the development of student vocabulary in writing, can be seen as limiting. It will need further collaborative review and evaluation that includes investigating current classroom practices, evidenced-based research, best pedagogical practices and impact on student learning. The 'Quality school improvement planning Handbook 2.0' will assist in guiding this process and will ensure the development of a SIP that will guide the school effectively on its improvement journey.

Direction 1 Collaboratively review the site improvement plan challenges of practice and associated actions to provide absolute clarity and a clear line of sight between goals and targets, teacher practice and students' learning.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The degree of student engagement and challenge in learning is directly related to the quality of teaching and level of differentiated learning in the classroom. The most common approach observed is differentiation by outcome, with teachers identifying the next steps in learning, as a result of the assessment of a completed task. Literacy grouping in some classes caters effectively for students with similar learning needs, while analysis of pre- and post-assessments monitors the growth of learning and identifies gaps in knowledge and understanding.

A number of lessons with the same learning task for all students was observed. Lower-ability students struggled to understand the task and higher-ability students completed the same task with ease and without challenge. While spelling/vocabulary word lists are differentiated through the use of pre-tests, the activities and strategies that most students complete are repetitive and less-than-challenging, with their value in improving learning questionable. The department's '1.4 Vocabulary: Best Advice Learning Improvement – Literacy' document has been circulated to teachers, but limited examples of these strategies were used in the teaching of vocabulary.

The extent of understanding and implementation of formative assessment and feedback strategies across the school varies. There is unassessed student learning in a number of classes with very few written formative feedback comments. This leaves students unsure of where they are in their learning and how they might improve.

Classes that engage in the writing program have high-quality narrative writing with clear learning outcomes and high expectations. Student participation in these classes was high, with many students eager to share their learning.

'Bump it up walls' were used in a number of classes, with students able to articulate their use, where they are in their learning and what they need to do next.

Direction 2 Engage and challenge all learners by identifying their learning needs and providing timely formative feedback to move their learning forward.

Effective leadership

How well does the school's strategic leadership support and sustain a culture of learning and improvement?

The recent whole-school professional writing workshop and teachers' 'Commitment to action' is providing a focus for teacher collaboration and accountability in writing across the school. All staff are engaging with, and embedding, their learning effectively. However, professional learning across the school is inconsistent, with limited opportunities to engage in high-level professional collaboration on a regular basis.

Opportunities for professional feedback on teachers' classroom performance has been discussed in the past, but is yet to be implemented. There is currently no teaching and learning appraisal process used across the school. Teachers indicated that they would benefit from such a process being collaboratively developed and implemented.

With most staff indicating inadequate consultation in school decision-making, it may be timely to review and implement the school's decision-making policy for a clearer process.

The leadership team is currently impeded by school management and administrative tasks, possibly to the detriment of strategic initiatives. Engaging with teachers and students in the classrooms and monitoring the teaching and learning is one of the most effective strategies in building teacher capacity and improving student achievement. Across the school there are number of teachers who have indicated their interest in further developing their leadership skills. With this in mind, the school is well-placed to build the capacity of teachers through a strategic shared leadership approach.

Teaching staff have recently participated in a school review and evaluation process. The valuable and reflective feedback received will assist the new leadership team in developing a sustainable and collaborative culture of learning across the school.

Direction 3 **Develop a professional, collaborative learning culture through decision-making processes that are clear, intentional and inclusive.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Staff at Vale Park Primary School are committed to engaging positively with the school improvement journey. The findings of the external review will guide the school in developing a strategic approach to providing consistency of teaching and learning and improve learning outcomes for all students. The school has over time developed the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden to be an integrated program within the school's curriculum. Students are engaged and challenged through a comprehensive learning program that has clear and integrated links to the Australian Curriculum. The school is to be commended on this initiative, and should further enhance the program by providing greater opportunities to integrate it into the school curriculum.

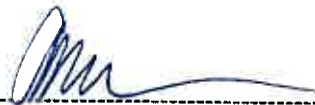
The principal will work with the education director to implement the following directions:

- Direction 1 Collaboratively review the site improvement plan challenges of practice and associated actions to provide absolute clarity and a clear line of sight between goals and targets, teacher practice and students' learning.**
- Direction 2 Engage and challenge all learners by identifying their learning needs and providing timely formative feedback to move their learning forward.**
- Direction 3 Develop a professional, collaborative learning culture through decision-making processes that are clear, intentional and inclusive.**

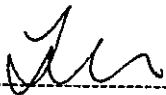
Based on the school's current performance, Vale Park Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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PRINCIPAL
VALE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
ROHAN WUNOK

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, 69% of year 1 and 77% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for year 1 and no change for year 2, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 1 has been downwards, from 73% to 69% and for year 2 upwards from 64% to 77%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 96% of year 5 students and 85% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7 no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards from 82% to 96%.

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

In 2019, 60% of year 3, 52% of year 5 and 22% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents no change, from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 71%, or 20 out of 28 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 28%, or 5 out of 18 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 94% of year 3 students, 89% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7 little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 90% to 94%.

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

Between 2017 and 2019, the school has consistently achieved higher in year 3 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 42% of year 3, 25% of year 5 and 35% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 55%, or 11 out of 20 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 60%, or 3 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.