

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW
REPORT FOR TAILEM BEND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in March 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Rob Harkin, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Patrick Moran, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Tailem Bend 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 a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy.

In 2014, the school reported attendance of 89.3% which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Tailem Bend Primary School is a school with approximately 140 students, located in the Murraylands region of South Australia. The school has experienced a significant fall in enrolments in recent years, as a consequence of the demise of the town's major employment focus of railway maintenance and provision. The school has an ICSEA score of 954 and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, 10% students with Disabilities and 43% of families receiving School Card assistance.

The school's leadership team consists of a Principal who is moving into a new leadership role in the Local Partnership, and a Student Counsellor.

The school operational structure comprises of three year level teams: Early Years, Middle Primary Years and Upper Primary Years.

Lines of inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three 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?
Improvement Agenda:	How effective are the school's self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

How well are students achieving over time?

The review panel noted that a coherent and focused approach to the teaching of literacy has been developed and implemented across the school. This focus on improving literacy achievement has been evident for a number of years and there is evidence of consistently supported staff learning and whole school adherence to agreed approaches to the teaching of literacy, which is reflected in the student achievement growth, most particularly in the early years.

By Year 2, 67% of students have achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA), measured by Running Records data. By Year 3, 65% have achieved at NAPLAN proficiency band 3 or higher in reading and a large percentage of year 3 students achieved well in NAPLAN writing in 2014. While cohort numbers are small, there has been appreciable achievement in the higher proficiency bands at years 3 and 7, in the past few years.

In the Annual Report, the Principal identified growth in student written language outcomes as a highlight. This is demonstrated by NAPLAN data and moderation of student work across various year levels in the school, with the most significant growth occurring in the early years of the school.

However, the NAPLAN achievement trends for students in Years 5 and 7 are far more challenging for the school, particularly so for numeracy achievement.

This is underscored by the data from PAT-Mathematics testing conducted in 2014, where across Year 3 to Year 7, only 17% of students were at the PAT-Mathematics benchmark or higher. The data for the upper primary classes, is even more problematic.

The leadership team acknowledged that more must be done to raise student achievement, particularly in numeracy.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

There is evidence of cohesive and coherent school leadership and school governance which is underpinned by respectful interactions and framed by the school values of respect for others, self, teaching and learning and the environment.

Much work has been done to ensure that pre-conditions for learning are in place. There is evidence of a calm, respectful school culture where strong relationships between all the key players, students, teachers, support staff, leadership and community, are evident. The review panel observed classrooms where students are calm and on task. The positive school culture is an outcome of a consistent and coherent approach to student behaviour development and student wellbeing that is grounded in an appreciative approach. Staff and parents report, that students are increasingly resilient and self-manage their behaviour. The review panel observed circumstances where student interactions might have been challenging and problematic, but consistently observed those same students making positive choices.

Students report that the school supports them in their learning, and provides numerous opportunities to participate in the life of the school. Results of a student wellbeing survey reveal that 59% claim to be always happy and to feel good at school, while another 36% are mostly happy at school. Only 7% reported any

instances of bullying, and 73% of students said that their teachers are always helpful. The review panel found evidence of students who are respectful, articulate, confident, and socially and environmentally aware.

Student voice is respected, supported and promoted actively in a number of ways. There is broad student representation on what is known as the Student Learning Committee. Student leaders are drawn from this group, and a small executive group participates in various aspects of school life, including attending Governing Council, membership of a Murraylands student forum, and participation in a learning project led by the Partnership's Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) coordinator.

The review panel found evidence of a school culture characterised by coherence and connectedness. Throughout the External School Review the review panel noted that teachers and support staff spoke with one voice about a number of school practices. For example, behaviour development (not management), relationships, the approach to teaching literacy, implementation of the Australian Curriculum, student voice, communication and connection with community.

The school is an active participant in an Australian Curriculum implementation cluster group. Teachers meet regularly with colleagues from other schools in the Murraylands and focus on pedagogy and assessment, and moderation of student work.

The greatest evidence of curriculum coherence is in delivery of literacy across the school. It is claimed that this is a consequence of the school's response to key recommendations from a Diagnostic Review conducted in 2011, and the impact of the school leader's participation in the Principal as Literacy Leaders (PALL) program conducted across a number of DECD schools. The very focused and sustained literacy approach is supported by the work of a literacy coach and the leadership team, and by regular professional learning. The review panel observed that there is strong commonality, coherence and alignment in teacher language and conversations about the delivery of literacy in the school. The teachers in the early years section of the school provided evidence of differentiation in their literacy programs to meet the varied needs of learners.

While there is certainty, coherence and confidence about the teaching of literacy, the Review Panel noted that there needs to be a sharpened focus on how the school can improve numeracy outcomes, particularly in terms of teacher practice. There is a numeracy coach who works in the school 0.5 full-time equivalent, and that person has been working intensively with two staff members who both had expressed a lack of confidence in teaching mathematics. The improvement foci have been questioning techniques (reducing tendencies to rescue students), increasing activity-based learning and less reliance on text books. Other staff members have had the opportunity to engage in professional learning provided by the coach.

While expected growth (as measured by the PAT-Mathematics screen) has not eventuated, there is certainly a heightened school awareness of, and urgency about, the need to prioritise numeracy improvement. Numeracy is a key improvement priority in the Site Improvement Plan (SIP), including the development of a whole school approach to numeracy, and improved skill development of teachers, support staff and students.

As noted previously, the school's numeracy data is poor, and the leadership team has acknowledged there is a need for concerted action.

In discussions with staff and the leadership team, the Review Panel heard evidence of how the school has successfully built a culture of wellbeing and success through behaviour development, by developing clear goals, providing clearly focused professional learning for staff, using data to inform and measure success and embracing action research. There is a need for a similar focus on improving numeracy outcomes.

Direction 1

Develop a coherent improvement agenda for the teaching of numeracy across the school, by drawing on the knowledge and practices that underpinned the successful development of the behaviour development model.

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

The SIP 2014 – 2016, is comprehensive. It is very evident that it was developed collaboratively by the staff team in consultation with the Governing Council, which has endorsed the plan. In fact, a feature of school culture is the close professional relationships and mutual respect enjoyed by staff and the Governing Council.

A broad range of data is collected by the school, and a recent focus of leadership work has been to upload this data into a commercial software package, that will facilitate easier aggregation and analysis of the data to support improvement. Teachers shared that the analysis of various school data sets, is often an agenda item for staff meetings.

The school's performance development processes also align with school improvement work. Teachers are encouraged to identify aspects of pedagogy or classroom practice that can be evaluated and shared using an action research approach.

A key priority in the SIP is the development of a whole school approach to improving numeracy outcomes, and improving the numeracy knowledge and skill sets of teachers and support staff. The strategies identified for this priority are aligned and coherent. However, the identified measures or evidence of successful achievement are generalised statements of behaviours and/or practices. There are no specific student achievement targets documented. The review panel recommends that specific measurable improvement targets are incorporated into the SIP.

The school has identified a particular focus on 'number' as a key improvement strategy for numeracy. The school's data (e.g. PAT-Mathematics) suggests that a high number of students are not at benchmark and would benefit from targeted learner intervention support. This need has been identified by the leadership team by the funding of a significant number of additional Student Support Officer (SSO) hours across the school. The SSO team presents as a dedicated and professionally functioning team. However, members report there is confusion about who is responsible for coordinating and monitoring their work, whether it is the teacher who has the special education focus role, or a member of the leadership team. The Principal accepts that this is an issue of concern, and is currently taking steps to be more closely involved in coordinating the work of the SSO team.

The review panel also identified delivery of intervention support across the school, as an area for improvement. The current focus of intervention is for those students with identified learning disabilities. However, analysis of the school data clearly shows that there are quite a large number of students who are not at benchmark, and who would benefit from targeted support.

The priority for the school would be to establish processes for early identification of these students, for development of learning plans that articulate what and how the key learner improvement measures are to be implemented, and how the interventions are tracked and evaluated.

Direction 2

Improve learner achievement outcomes for all students by identifying and coordinating intervention and differentiation practices across the school.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Tailem Bend Primary School is tracking well. There is evidence of focused leadership, regular collection and analysis of data, effective self review processes, and a focus on improving student learning outcomes.

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

1. Develop a coherent improvement agenda for the teaching of numeracy across the school, by drawing on the knowledge and practices that underpinned the successful development of the behaviour development model.
2. Improve learner achievement outcomes for all students by identifying and coordinating intervention and differentiation practices across the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Tailem Bend Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.



~~Noel Kneebone~~ Travis Schenke
PRINCIPAL
Tailem Bend Primary School



Governing Council Chairperson