

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

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in October 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 Julie Hardy, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Fiona Voigt, 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 Clare 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:

- Individual Learning Plans for Aboriginal children will be updated by the end of Week 2 Term 4 2015.
- Site Induction Policy developed for implementation in Term 1 2016.
- Parent Complaints Policy to be updated and processes developed for Governing Council and leaders to monitor and respond to complaints.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 89%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Clare Primary School is a Reception to Year 6 school, located in mid-north South Australia. The school has an increasing enrolment trend with approximately 250 students enrolled in 2015. The school has an ICSEA score of 980, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

In 2015, the school has 9 mainstream classes and a half-time regional Special Class with students integrated into mainstream classes each afternoon.

The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 9% Students with Disabilities and 30% of families are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in his first tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal in her first tenure at the school, and a School Counsellor.

### Lines of inquiry

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

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Improvement Agenda:</b>	<b>How well are data and evidence translated into targeted actions?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>To what extent is the curriculum coherent from the perspective of learners as they progress through the school?</b>

### How well are students achieving over time?

In the early years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2014, 71% of Year 1 and 69% of Year 2 students achieved the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) or above. Between 2012 and 2014, there is a downward trend in terms of improvement, from 84% in 2012 to 69% in 2014 at Year 2.

The 2015 results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of Year 3 students and 65% of Year 5 students achieved the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) for reading. 49% of Year 3 students and 62% of Year 5 students achieved or exceeded the SEA for numeracy. The 2015 result is unusually low compared to previous years where there has been an upward trend from 71% in 2012 to 85% in 2014.

In reading, 20% of Year 3 students and 24% of Year 5 students achieved in the two highest proficiency bands of NAPLAN in 2015, while in numeracy, 17% of Year 3 students, and 8% of Year 5 students achieved in the two highest proficiency bands.

In relation to achievement in the highest NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 7 of the 10 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. In numeracy, 3 of the 4 students from Year 3 remained in the highest bands in Year 5. This represents an improvement on historic average for reading and a decline for numeracy.

The challenges for Clare Primary School are to increase and sustain the proportion of students achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement at all year levels, increase the number of students achieving in the higher proficiency bands of NAPLAN, and ensure all students continue to make expected or greater than expected growth in their learning as they progress through the school.

### How well are data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

While measures of student outcomes are essential to all school improvement efforts, school improvement involves fundamentally improving what a school does on a daily basis. In order to do this, the school needs a range of regular, scheduled processes through which they collect and analyse multiple measures of data and evidence relating to student learning and school processes.

At Clare Primary School, the panel was particularly interested in the evidence and processes that are used to review progress and plan for the future. The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) outlines actions to be undertaken in relation to improving student outcomes in literacy, numeracy and wellbeing.

One way of ensuring that the data collected has a direct impact on school improvement, is to undertake self-review processes that evaluate the extent to which programs and strategies improve learning and implement the findings consistently across the school. Effective self-review processes draw on a range of data, not only about student learning and wellbeing, but also the views of parents, students and teachers about how the school is going and future directions. At the time of the review, the panel heard that while community views have been sought informally, there was no consistent and systematic process for collecting views about the school from parents, teachers and students, but that this was planned for later in 2015.

In relation to processes for reviewing progress towards improvement goals, the panel heard how staff use data and evidence to reflect with others on the effectiveness of improvement strategies in a staff meeting each term and also on a “Data Day” in Term 4. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Literacy and Numeracy meet three times a term. A PLC in Wellbeing also meets. At the time of the review, PLCs were developing Whole School Agreements in Literacy and Numeracy, which were in draft form, awaiting ratification and implementation.

As part of the development of the Literacy Agreement, an audit of literacy practices across the school was conducted with the intention of reducing and refining approaches to provide a more consistent experience for students between year levels. The panel noted the potential for PLCs to take an active role in driving the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of improvement priorities.

#### **Direction 1**

**Increase the proportion of students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by collaboratively implementing self-review processes that have clear effect on outcomes for students and school processes, and consistently acting upon findings.**

Another aspect of on-going self-review is a focus on the processes and policies that enable the school to run efficiently. At Clare Primary School, the panel heard how processes are underway to review and update school policies and procedures in order to ensure they are current and useful. The panel noted the need to prioritise this work to ensure that it becomes a routine part of leadership team members’ portfolios of responsibilities.

#### **Direction 2**

**Develop a shared approach to leadership in which members of the leadership team have clearly-defined responsibilities and accountabilities.**

The External School Review Panel is interested in determining how thorough and reliable evidence is, and how it is translated into strategic decisions and actions at whole-school, classroom and individual student level. A range of data is collected and analysed at Clare Primary School. Teachers who spoke to the panel, talked about how the introduction of consistent standardised assessments to monitor students’ progress in letter-sound knowledge, reading, spelling and mathematics has provided an evidence base for ongoing improvement. At the time of the review, there was no sufficient data to track students’ learning growth year-on-year, but plans were in place for this to happen as the data becomes available.

The panel saw evidence of processes to triangulate student data to compare information related to achievement, attendance, engagement and behaviour, and to monitor student progress at individual and cohort level. This process of “putting faces on the data” has provided a useful overview of performance across the school and identified the impact of wellbeing and attendance on learning outcomes.

One of the outcomes of this analysis has been to identify the need for a whole-school focus on addressing gaps in students’ letter-sound knowledge, an important precursor to reading and spelling. A consistent approach to intervention in these areas was initiated in 2015, in addition to existing intervention programs. While intervention programs are valued by teachers, with some evidence of early improvement, it is important that the impact of interventions is monitored to ensure the skills acquired are being transferred into other learning areas. Staff talked about the way intervention programs are structured and the responsibilities for documenting and updating Negotiated Education Plans and Individual Learning Plans, as well as how data is collected and analysed to identify students, match them with appropriate interventions and monitor their progress. The panel noted the opportunity to review and document these processes so that responsibilities are clear.

Consistently implementing well-understood assessment for learning approaches is one way of tailoring teaching to meet the needs of learners. Also, within this Line of Inquiry, the panel was interested in the way data is used in classrooms to monitor learning and inform teaching. Teachers talked about a variety of student

achievement information they use to inform their planning and teaching, and the panel heard how teachers collect and use evidence at an individual level.

### **Direction 3**

**Increase the number of students making expected or greater than expected progress, by ensuring that the school has reliable and easily-accessible data collection and analysis processes for staff to regularly monitor the progress of individual students and cohorts throughout the year.**

#### **To what extent is the curriculum coherent from the perspective of learners as they progress through the school?**

The Australian Curriculum sets out the core knowledge, understanding, skills and general capabilities important for all Australian students, and what should be taught and achieved as they progress through school. In discussing approaches to planning and teaching, the panel saw evidence that teaching programs are planned, sequenced and referenced to the Australian Curriculum. Teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of what is to be taught at appropriate year levels and talked about strategies they use to engage students in their learning. Students talked about a strong sense of community at the school and positive relationships. Students also identified that when consistent and agreed classroom management processes were used effectively, they were able to engage in the learning tasks and avoid “wait time” while issues were resolved.

The panel was particularly interested in the degree to which teaching and learning is sufficiently consistent from year-to-year, to enable students to build on their learning as they progress through the school. The panel saw evidence of learning tasks that were designed to support the needs of a range of learners and provide opportunities for student choice. Students identified feedback from teachers about their work as being helpful in identifying what they needed to do to improve. The children who spoke to the panel found verbal feedback to be most common, though written feedback and rubrics that described assessment criteria to scaffold learning were also used by some teachers. Staff and students identified the unreliable nature of the ICT systems as being a barrier to learning, and the panel heard that steps were being taken to resolve systemic flaws and create a sustainable model for ICT development.

In discussing how judgements in relation to achievement against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards are made and reported to parents, teachers described a range of evidence that they use and noted that parents had mentioned a degree of inconsistency in assigning of grades across the school and between years. Teachers use the exemplars on the Australian Curriculum website as a way of checking the standard of student work to ensure it demonstrates the standard. The panel saw evidence of learning and assessment tasks that enabled students to demonstrate high-level learning outcomes in some classes. Students talked about their reports being an important indicator of how they are going at school and that three-way interviews were a good way to share their learning with their parents. The panel noted that collaborative moderation processes that supported teaching teams to make consistent judgements against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards, would reduce the variation in reported grades.

Another way of creating a more consistent experience for students is for teachers to work together to plan, assess and implement agreed teaching approaches. The panel heard that teachers were committed to working together and made their own arrangements to meet informally and plan. However, a systematic approach was not yet in place at a whole-school level that would allow teachers to regularly meet to plan collaboratively, moderate shared assessments and consider student learning growth and achievement.

When reflecting on the degree to which curriculum is coherent from the perspective of the learner, staff identified a number of strategies to strengthen current practice. Key amongst these is the need to develop common understandings about the most effective approaches to teaching and consistently implement these in every classroom. At the time of the review, practice was most consistent in reading and spelling, with agreed approaches being implemented across the school at allocated times during the day, supported by specific intervention programs.

The panel heard that teachers had engaged in a range of professional learning with their colleagues and with curriculum experts to increase their understanding of how to teach mathematics. In discussions about the best way to cater for the needs of all learners at a classroom level, teachers were clear about the role of assessment and data, planning and programming, but less sure about pedagogies that support differentiation. The panel noted that the literacy and numeracy agreements currently being developed would provide a useful reference point for consistent practice.

**Direction 4**

**Accelerate the learning of students by rigorously and consistently implementing whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy that include explicit expectations for student achievement. Ensure that agreements are aligned with professional learning and performance development processes.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Clare Primary School is tracking well. In 2015, the school was experiencing some challenges with providing a coherent curriculum for learners; however, there is a renewed focus on processes to raise student engagement and achievement.

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

1. Increase the proportion of students achieving the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement by collaboratively implementing self-review processes that have clear effect on outcomes for students and school processes, and consistently acting upon findings.
2. Develop a shared approach to leadership in which members of the leadership team have clearly-defined responsibilities and accountabilities.
3. Increase the number of students making expected or greater than expected progress, by ensuring that the school has reliable and easily-accessible data collection and analysis processes for staff to regularly monitor the progress of individual students and cohorts throughout the year.
4. Accelerate the learning of students by rigorously and consistently implementing whole-school agreements in literacy and numeracy that include explicit expectations for student achievement. Ensure that agreements are aligned with professional learning and performance development processes.

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



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL  
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.

Mark Vincent  
PRINCIPAL  
CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson