# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Renmark West Primary School

Conducted in August 2020

# 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 Simon Harding, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Thomas Harvey, 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

Renmark West Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 243kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 170. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 190. The local partnership is Renmark Loxton.

The school has an ICSEA score of 972, and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 9% students with disabilities, 11% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children in care and 50 students are eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2nd year of her 2nd tenure. The school also has a student wellbeing leader (1.0 FTE).

There are 10 teachers including 3 in the early years of their career and no Step 9 teachers.

## The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

**Direction 1**    To improve student achievement, lift the expectations of students, and develop and implement consistent approaches to pedagogy, assessment and tracking, particularly in mathematics and numeracy.

**Direction 2**    To provide intellectual stretch, develop the design of tasks and pedagogical practices for 'stretch', while working with parents to support students to use growth mindset dispositions in their learning.

**Direction 3**    To support students to know how to improve, ensure learning intentions are understood, provide explicit feedback and modelling, and create opportunities for students to engage in goal setting, in an ongoing cycle of review.

**Direction 4**    To strengthen student engagement in their learning and throughout the school, align the work of the SRC more closely with the school's priorities, and provide opportunities for all students to be more involved in their learning and assessment within their classroom.

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

The school has worked as a site and at partnership level to improve task and assessment design based on the Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) strategy. Professional learning teams (PLTs) were established with cross-site representation, and teams were supported by a leader to guide the work. Each group focused their work on the learning area of mathematics, collaboratively planning and developing common assessment tasks to implement. After implementation, they collectively undertook formal moderation processes. Staff talked about the value of this work and how it supported changes in their practice.

The school undertook professional development in Visible Learning over 3 years. This involved teachers

participating in impact cycles, assisted by an impact coach focusing on achievement data, developing a teaching cycle and reviewing progress. This work supported teachers in using learning intentions and success criteria more effectively to assist student learning. Students could articulate how these elements inform them of expectations and how to assess their work. As part of the Visible Learning focus, teachers worked intentionally to more effectively provide students with stretch and challenge. The school continues to focus on strengthening and embedding common practices to support learning outcomes for students linked to the previous directions in the action of the current site improvement plan (SIP).

# Lines of inquiry

## Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of its improvement planning processes and impact on student learning to inform next steps?

Decisions about the SIP priorities are based on student achievement data. The plan provides clear direction, actions are aligned to achieving goals, which are evidence-based, and resourcing is in place to support implementation. The Literacy Guarantee Unit (LGU) assists the identification of areas for growth in current practice, and provides professional learning and coaching. Staff value the engagement of an expert in literacy. This drove the development of common evidence-based practices in literacy which will be documented in the near future. There is a culture of collegiality across the staff, and a willingness to learn from each other through regular sharing of practice focusing on the SIP priorities. Aligning this work with PLTs, both within the site and with teachers of like year levels in partnership schools, is valued. Ongoing professional learning and opportunities through release time to plan collaboratively and share strategies for assessment supported change in teachers' practice.

Time in staff meetings is allocated to evaluate the impact of SIP actions based on targets. Staff are interested in taking a more active role in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the SIP. They understand their responsibility for implementing action plans that support improved teaching practice and student learning outcomes. Professional learning for staff is aligned with the SIP, with expectations for staff to clearly align their performance and development plans (PDPs) to the goals in the SIP. There was some evidence of other change practices not outlined in the SIP. Keeping the focus narrow and deep will support quality and consistent implementation, inclusive of accountability measures, of the priorities. Governing council believe the school provides information about the SIP through updates at meetings and are keen to take a more active role. Strengthening the identification of evidence-based actions, clearly aligned to the challenges of practice and well-defined success criteria, are next steps in achieving the identified goals.

| Direction 1 | Strategically strengthen staff capacity to link the challenges of practice and plans of action while evaluating impact of these based on clearly articulated success criteria. |
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## Effective teaching and student learning

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

The principal said the school is working to develop effective and consistent pedagogy focusing on literacy and developing an agreement for the site in literacy practices. A strategic approach to training and coaching for staff was provided with guidance from the LGU. Staff acknowledged that coaching and strengthening of collaborative planning processes leads to developing agreed understandings and practices across teaching teams, which are aligned to the site priorities. Leadership ensured appropriate resourcing is in place to support effective implementation, and are responsive to staff feedback to inform next steps. The school adopted an approach of targeted student groups across years 3 to 7 in spelling and writing, as part of their impact cycle focus. Teachers are involved in evaluation of the effectiveness of each cycle undertaken.

Learning intentions and success criteria are used effectively across the school by teachers and students. Students talked about how the learning intentions assist them in understanding what they are learning, and how they use success criteria to do initial assessment of their work. There is a degree of co-construction of success criteria by teachers and students, and evidence of students having individual learning goals. Effective practices, which are data-informed in relation to goal-setting varied significantly across the school.

Using the LDAM strategy, staff participated in training, collaborative planning and moderation processes with staff from partnership sites. Effective task design to provide stretch and challenge for learners was a focus of these discussions. Teachers discussed strategies used to support the variety of needs in their classes. The depth of knowledge and practices in relation to intentional teaching with a focus on individual student data varied. Strengthening common understandings and effective practices in data literacy to inform teaching and learning programs is an area for further development.

Direction 2    Strengthen staff capacity to develop deep data literacy skills which intentionally informs teaching and learning programs to optimise outcomes for students.

## Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence on their learning?

The commitment to Visible Learning over time assisted teachers in embedding learning intentions and success criteria across all learning areas. Students confidently talked about benefits of discussing learning, and being explicit about demonstrating their success both in developing their understanding and use of the language of learning. They were clear about strategies to use when they are stuck in their learning and willing to share their ideas for learning when asked. There is a positive disposition to working in cross-age groups by students knowing that the learning is targeted to their needs.

Students understand that effective feedback is important for their learning. Moderation of student work samples teachers have undertaken was valued, particularly in writing using Brightpath. This work is developing common understandings and consistent judgement. Teachers shared examples of strategies they are using, such as rubrics, to support student understanding of expectations for the task. Further development of common understandings and practices to support consistent judgement in both formative and summative assessment will strengthen this work.

Through the Visible Learning training, teachers continued to develop skills and practices to provide effective feedback to students. Students seek more explicit feedback to effectively inform next steps in their learning. Writing is one area where this was improved using Brightpath. Evidence showed students are provided with opportunities to peer-assess and give feedback using scaffolds like success criteria or rubrics. The extent to which teachers adapt and refine their teaching in response to student feedback is developing, as it mostly occurred incidentally. Intentionally engaging students in the language of learning and seeking feedback for students to become partners in their learning equips them to more effectively monitor and regulate their learning. Strengthening effective practices for informative two-way feedback, leading to enhanced differentiated learning will support improved outcomes for students.

Direction 3      Strengthen student influence through developing common evidence-based practices in two-way feedback and providing opportunities for students to take increased responsibility for their progression of learning.

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Staff are positive, energised, committed to collaboration and focused on students and their different learning needs. There is an optimistic school culture. Parents interviewed acknowledged their child's engagement in learning, along with their happiness and safety at school.

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

Direction 1    Strategically strengthen staff capacity to link the challenges of practice and plans of action while evaluating impact of these based on clearly articulated success criteria.

Direction 2    Strengthen staff capacity to develop deep data literacy skills which intentionally informs teaching and learning programs to optimise outcomes for students.

Direction 3    Strengthen student influence through developing common evidence-based practices in two-way feedback and providing opportunities for students to take increased responsibility for their progression of learning.

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

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# 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, 53% of year 1 and 77% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and an improvement for year 2 from the historic baseline averages.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 74% of year 5 students and 69% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, for year 5, an improvement and for year 7 a decline, from the historic baseline averages.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 63% to 69%, and for year 7 the trend has been downwards from 82% to 69%.

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

In 2019, 39% of year 3, 32% of year 5 and 13% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 83%, or 5 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 1 out of 1 student from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 85% of year 3 students, 80% of year 5 students and 81% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline averages. For year 7, this result represents little to no change from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 31% of year 3, 20% of year 5 and 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 2 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.