

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Para Hills West Primary School

Conducted in October 2019



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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Belinda Kopania, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Observation of Improvement Planning Team Meetings
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs) and Grounds Person
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Para Hills West Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 17kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 223 students. Enrolment has increased steadily over the last 3 years.

The school is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 954 and the local partnership is Montague.

The school population includes 5 Aboriginal students, 13% of students with a verified disability, 50% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 50% of students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background and 4 students in care.

There are 9 classes operating across the school: 4 Montessori and 5 mainstream.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 5th year of their tenure at the school. The school has one assistant principal. There are 11.2FTE teachers and a 0.7FTE library allocation.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Meet the varying needs of each student through the design of learning opportunities based on analysis of valid data that identifies intervention for all students.
- Direction 2** Develop the learning expertise of all students through inquiry into teaching strategies that enable students to engage in intellectual challenge and expand their thinking processes and the consistent implementation of these approaches across the school.
- Direction 3** Enable student ownership of the learning process through the implementation of teaching strategies that make clear the intention of, and criteria for, successful learning and that allow students to plan, monitor and assess their progress.
- Direction 4** Build teachers' capacity to use data diagnostically, set aspirational learning goals and implement consistent pedagogical practice through collective development of targeted professional learning and performance development systems.

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

The panel sourced evidence that there has been a deliberate and targeted approach undertaken to respond to the previous directions. Data analysis is a priority within the school's improvement agenda. Systems to build teachers' capacity to analyse and plan in response to data is robust and have had notable impact on practice. In the main, the data utilised is generated through PAT-R assessments and Running Record results. Staff have then developed agreements regarding how they will implement consistent approaches to develop students' fluency, comprehension and decoding skills.

Learning intentions and success criteria have been introduced to the school. Whilst all teachers report that they provide the scaffolds, it is mainly middle year students who are capable of articulating their understanding of the intent of their learning and the criteria of grades. The school continues to consolidate this approach.

Professional learning and performance and development systems have been strategically designed to progress teachers' capacity to implement the school's expected practice and agreements. A sustained and targeted approach has seen external expertise sourced as well as an increasing 'in-house' model of peer leadership implemented. Consistent practice in the area of reading has been achieved as a result of this.

The school's response to direction 2 will be discussed against the second line of inquiry in this report.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

The school has responded to the improvement planning model with a notably collective approach, and the school's priorities are consequently understood and valued by staff and parents.

Each teaching staff member is involved in a portfolio group that oversees the school's work in English and maths. To progress the first Challenge of Practice, agreements regarding the teaching of reading, the initiation of intervention programs and the purchase of resources has been managed by the English portfolio group. The maths group has also worked towards agreed statements of practice to implement actions against the second Challenge of Practice, although it is widely reported that the school's focus remains on reading.

Portfolio groups meet regularly and teachers provide perception data regarding actions undertaken so far and the influence they believe this is having within their classes. This information is collated by the leaders and used for forward planning. The panel attended portfolio meetings where members discussed the development of plans for 2020. This process saw staff explore their ideas as to what had been completed in 2019 and what they might suggest for the next iteration of planning.

The consultative and collective culture of improvement planning that has been achieved at the school can now be enhanced through the introduction of a more evidenced-based, intentional element. Monitoring the impact of the school's work using the success criteria within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) was not evident, and forward planning is currently informed through teachers' suggestions and perceptions. The panel encourages a more evidentiary approach to self-review, that continues to elicit teacher input, whilst asking the question '*and how do you know?*'. Exploring proven, evidenced-based actions to respond to findings will assure a more intentional and accurate approach to planning.

Much of the feedback provided by teachers celebrated the development of agreements and the establishment of interventions or practices. For the school to engage in authentic self-review and determine the actual *impact* of these initiatives, reference to the success criteria of each SIP goal is important. This will ensure the school's progress is accurately evaluated through students' learning outcomes.

Direction 1 **Ensure self-review is accurately informed by data that determines students' understanding and growth and that future plans are referenced to proven, evidenced-based initiatives.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

It is apparent that staff have engaged with the concept of developing contemporary practice and that the notion of consistency is broadly appreciated. To this end, some initiatives have been coherently implemented. A highly consistent approach to reading has been introduced to the school. Interventions are equally coherently implemented, and assessments show them to be effective in supporting students to improve. An initiative to deepen students' understanding of computational thinking has been established and reflects the school's intent to raise the profile of the 21st Century learner. Some evidence of teaching that encourages students to reflect, think and inquire was also sourced.

The panel acknowledges the higher profile that differentiated practice has across the school, which was less evident in 2016. All staff discuss the intent to meet students' particular learning needs and express the understanding that this applies to *all* learners. Subsequently, there is a more deliberate, conscious effort to study data and to respond to findings with accuracy. At this point, this practice is evident mostly through reading, where students' miscues and strengths are diagnosed and teaching tailored accordingly. Some teachers also use the approach that sees students engage with one of three tasks designed to be more simplistic, at standard or complex. Grouping within classes is also common practice designed to better meet students' learning needs. The panel acknowledges the school's work in better personalising learning for students and notes staff are well placed to further engage with the concept of teaching that is *differentiated* to allow multiple access and exit points, and address varied learning styles.

The concept of contemporary pedagogical practice is far more evident at the school in 2019. However, evidence of students completing work that requires lower level processing is still apparent within classes. Exercise books show worksheets often used in both English and maths. An agreed and contemporary approach to pedagogical implementation across the curriculum is not yet evident. There is clearly an opportunity to further build on the school's drive for coherent, influential practice through pedagogical renewal.

Direction 2 Engage students in learning that promotes greater cognition through collective, evidenced-based inquiry into teaching practice that allows students to develop and apply the skills of an informed, adaptive learner.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers using the Australian Curriculum to support and improve student learning?

Through partnership work, teachers have undertaken professional learning focused on how best to plan learning that will stretch students' thinking. Documents showed some staff have created units of work that encourage students to explore mathematical concepts and apply their knowledge, rather than answering questions or completing sums.

Documents provided to the panel showed variance in planning approaches at the school. Some staff represented their planning through analysis of reading data and explained how this allows them to personalise their plans to meet student needs. Some staff showed detailed plans that include levelled tasks, formative assessment and reference to the Australian Curriculum (AC). Reference to planning with students and in response to their interests was also made. Whilst a few plans and discussion with teachers reference the learning achievement outcomes in the AC standards, planning from the content descriptors is more

common. Plans that are topic or product driven are evident. Consequently, there is a tendency for students to engage with learning that is designed to create an artefact or complete a task, rather than an opportunity to develop deep understanding and skills.

Some evidence of teachers beginning to consider how better to evaluate student learning was evident through partnership professional learning, however, this is not yet influencing teachers' existing assessment design. Evaluation of students' learning through responses to teacher-designed questions is still apparent. There is now an opportunity to develop assessments that evaluate students' growth against achievement standards. Designing assessments that allow them to demonstrate their skills in, for example, interpretation, analysis or reasoning will enable teachers to make valid judgement of progress against the AC learning outcomes, and allocate an appropriate grade. The panel acknowledges that reports to families are closely aligned with statements from the AC achievement standards, whilst agreeing that plans and practice can be better informed by these.

Direction 3 **Ensure teaching is designed to progress students' skills and understandings identified in the Australian Curriculum standards, through review of existing planning practices and the development of assessment tasks that evaluate students' authentic learning.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Para Hills West Primary School, staff work collaboratively and enthusiastically to improve teaching and learning for students. A highly collective approach to school improvement is reflective of the school's culture of respect and unity.

Many conversations made evident the staff and families' perception that the school is on a trajectory of improvement and that direction is clearly articulated by leaders and valued by all.

A more data informed approach to reading is representative of the school's commitment to meet the needs of all learners and will provide a strong model to which staff can refer as they move to implement their numeracy improvement agenda. The systems in place to build teacher capacity through professional learning and performance and development will provide a valuable vehicle through which the following directions can be progressed.

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

- Direction 1** Ensure self-review is accurately informed by data that determines students' understanding and growth and that future plans are referenced to proven, evidenced-based initiatives.
- Direction 2** Engage students in learning that promotes greater cognition through collective, evidenced-based inquiry into teaching practice that allows students to develop and apply the skills of an informed, adaptive learner.
- Direction 3** Ensure teaching is designed to progress students' skills and understandings identified in the Australian Curriculum standards, through review of existing planning practices and the development of assessment tasks that evaluate students' authentic learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Para Hills West Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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PARA HILLS WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL



GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

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 2018, 23% of year 1 and 21% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents decline for years 1 and 2, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for years 1 and 2 has been downwards, from 42% to 23% and 50% to 21%, respectively.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 3 students, 86% of year 5 students, 67% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline from historic baseline average, an improvement for year 5, and for year 7 little or no change.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 52% to 67%.

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

In 2019, 10% of year 3, 7% of year 5 and 9% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For years 3 and 5, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, and for year 7, little or no change.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 0%, or 0 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 33%, or 1 out of 3 students from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 48% of year 3 students, 61% of year 5 students, 70% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, and an increase for years 5 and 7.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 58% to 70%.

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

In 2019, 5% of year 3, 11% of year 5, 9% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average, an improvement for year 5 and little or no change for year 7.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been downwards, from 17% to 5%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 0%, or 0 out of 1 student from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, 33%, or 1 out of 3 students from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7.