

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Crystal Brook Primary School

Conducted in July 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 (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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lynette Simons, 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 implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Crystal Brook Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 200kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 182 students, the same as in 2015 at the time of the previous review. The school is classified as Category 4 on the Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1004. The local partnership is Upper Mid North (Pirie).

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, 11% students with a verified disability, 25% of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background and 3 students in care.

The school team consists of a principal in the 1st year of their tenure at the school, a senior leader: student wellbeing and engagement (0.6FTE), 15 teachers (10.1 FTE) including 2 in the early years of their career and 7 Step 9 teachers.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Support students to become expert learners by developing an agreed continuum of skills and abilities that promotes a coherent approach in teachers' planning and implementation from reception to year 7.
- Direction 2** Support quality learning outcomes for all students by implementing continuous monitoring and evaluation processes of individual learning plans.
- Direction 3** Build the capacity of staff to provide quality formative and summative feedback that helps students to benchmark their progress continuously against standards.
- Direction 4** Raise student achievement by ensuring teachers adapt their teaching practices in response to student feedback, and share explicitly the outcomes with students.

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

At the staff meeting a few teachers said that after the 2015 ESR, there had been some work with teachers around feedback. These teachers could remember receiving some training in how to give and how to seek feedback from students, however during the 2019 ESR there was little evidence of this work in the school. Feedback to students appears to take the form of encouragement rather than to assist improved learning. Feedback was more linked to behaviour than learning outcomes.

There is a lack of coherence in teachers' planning and implementation particularly between year levels and within classes.

The school invests heavily in intervention, however there is little evidence that the efficacy of these interventions is monitored.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

To what extent is there a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current practice and pedagogy in the goal areas?

There was little evidence that a culture of evidence-based improvement planning has been built in the school. The only evidence that was found is in the work of the new principal who has taken some initial steps towards the development of effective school improvement planning. It was reported by staff and teachers that the principal has introduced improvements this year, including informal observations of teaching, a focus on contemporary curriculum as outlined in the Australian Curriculum and improved responsiveness to parent concerns. This year performance and development processes have been formalised and strengthened. Teachers value this rigour and the quality of support and feedback they are now receiving. Running records, Brightpath, PAT and NAPLAN data is used summatively to develop whole-school goals for improvement. This data is used at a macro level on a single data day. However there is not a system for collating and triangulating student datasets in order to regularly track and monitor student learning growth: as individuals, classes, cohorts and at the whole-school level. A more targeted, evidence-based approach in R/1 classes has begun this year. This is being developed around the phonics strategy with the support of the Literacy Guarantee Unit.

There was limited evidence that the school's moral purpose is understood as being improved student learning and that improvement occurs through effective teaching. A focus for the school is to redefine its core business and unite all teachers around the moral purpose of improving student learning. The school must bring together evidence-based cycles of strategic improvement informed by the development of a whole-school tool for tracking student learning growth over time.

Direction 1 **Privilege student academic learning in the school's stated vision and core moral purpose.**

Direction 2 **Ensure the school is continuously delivering student learning growth by regularly assessing learning in accordance with a whole-school assessment schedule, and using triangulated data to enable close monitoring of growth.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Teachers value collegiality, 'professionalism' and receiving support from leadership for managing student behaviour. Collaboration between teachers is mostly informal. The only formal meeting is the weekly staff meeting and, due to part-time arrangements, 4 teachers do not attend staff meetings. This impacts on a number of classes and is problematic as improvement initiatives are missed by these teachers. The school has participated in the Brightpath initiative since 2017. There is a compliance around testing of students within the Brightpath program and moderation of the work samples but there is limited evidence that it has become valued as a moderation tool or that it is being used to explicitly improve student writing capacity. There is a big focus across the school on the implementation of the Lisa Burman bookmaking and notebook writing strategies.

Teachers report that students are engaged and enjoying writing more, but there is limited evidence that it has impacted on students' writing skills. There is also limited evidence of differentiated planning around and explicit instruction to intentionally teach writing skills as is enabled by the Brightpath strategy. All

teachers are involved in the Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) improvement strategy with a maths focus in 2018 and currently a self-selected focus. It is important that teachers link their LDAM work to whole-school improvement intentions.

There is minimal consistency of practices between teachers and across all year levels. Supporting teachers to develop and be accountable for the implementation of common teaching practices that continuously improve student literacy and numeracy learning would be helpful.

Data literacy levels of staff is an area for growth. There is a need for all teachers to move from data for compliance and summative purposes to formative uses of datasets to intentionalise teaching and to inform intervention practices. The regular and collaborative work by teachers with data to analyse and apply differentiated learning design, and to monitor the impact of changed teacher practices on student learning outcomes is critical. This could be achieved by prioritising this work in accordance with the Simon Breakspear model of learning sprints.

Direction 3 Ensure learning programs are effective for students through the implementation of whole-school agreements for literacy and numeracy that are consistent and informed by the Department for Education literacy and numeracy guidebooks.

Direction 4 Continuously improve the impact of teaching on student learning through the use of targeted short cycles of learning developed by all teachers collaboratively in teams.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

There is a great deal of school resourcing put into intervention programs, however the effectiveness of these programs was less evident. The panel questions the efficacy of interventions as there appears to be no clear direction for the intervention or the evaluation of the success of intervention. Many staff provide interventions but there is a minimal coming together of these providers around an over-all school learning improvement agenda. This results in privatised practices and lack of coherent student learning trajectories. Intervention practices are not informed by current Department for Education best-practice advice, and outdated assessment tools and programs continue to be relied upon. There were little evidence of processes for ILP writing and review for Aboriginal students or evidence that the plans are used by teachers after they are written. The ILPs are out of date and contained no SMARTAR goals, nor was there evidence that they are used regularly to track student learning growth. There was not collated or triangulated data to monitor Aboriginal student learning trajectories.

It is essential that practices around intervention become targeted toward individual student needs and are evidence-informed. Intervention practices should be evaluated regularly for efficacy against student achievement of SEA targets, and must conform to the Department for Education best-practice advice. Individual student learning goals must be SMARTAR and reviewed by the teacher regularly.

Direction 5 Improve student learning through targeted intervention that is evidence-based and best-practice informed.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Crystal Brook Primary School, new leadership has begun to bring cyclical, evidence-based strategic improvement into the school. The school is valued by its community and students and families are motivated to support improved learning outcomes. Conditions for effective learning are strong in the school with quality learning spaces and processes that ensure a strong teaching and learning environment.

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

- Direction 1** Privilege student academic learning in the school’s stated vision and core moral purpose.
- Direction 2** Ensure the school is continuously delivering student learning growth by regularly assessing learning in accordance with a whole-school assessment schedule, and using triangulated data to enable close monitoring of growth.
- Direction 3** Ensure learning programs are effective for students through the implementation of whole-school agreements for literacy and numeracy that are consistent and informed by the Department for Education literacy and numeracy guidebooks.
- Direction 4** Continuously improve the impact of teaching on student learning through the use of targeted short cycles of learning developed by all teachers collaboratively in teams.
- Direction 5** Improve student learning through targeted intervention that is evidence-based and best-practice informed.

Based on Crystal Brook Primary School current performance, the school will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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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 2018, 75% of year 1 and 67% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average in year 1 and a decline in year 2.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 71% of year 3 students, 84% of year 5 students, and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents a decline and for year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2018, years 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 29% of year 3, 24% of year 5 and 33% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 42%, or 5 out of 12 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 71%, or 5 out of 7 students, from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75% of year 3 students, 80% of year 5 students and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline, for year 5 this represents little or no change and for year 7 this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2018, years 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within and for year 7 higher, than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 25% of year 3, 24% of year 5 and 61% 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.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 60%, or 3 out of 5 students, from year 3 remained in the upper bands at year 5 and 88%, or 7 out of 8 students, from year 3 remained in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.