

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## On-track evaluation report for Crystal Brook Primary School

One-year return conducted in November 2020



# On-track evaluation process

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.

All government schools are externally reviewed over a 3 year cycle. After the review the principal and the governing council chairperson receive a written report with a number of directions for improvement.

A copy of the ESR report is available on the school website.

The External School Review framework is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

In some cases, when the review panel identifies limited achievement and growth, together with evidence about the school's capacity for systematic improvement, a school is advised that they will be visited again in 1 rather than 3 years' time (1 year return).

Schools with a 1 year return are assisted by the education director and other department staff to receive additional coordinated and targeted support. This intervention is focused on building the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning across the school, lift expectations and achieve improved student learning results as measured against the Department for Education Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Following intervention, which occurs for 12-15 months after the ESR, a review panel conducts an on-track evaluation (OTE) to determine the extent to which the school has, with external support, developed sustainable internal capacity to improve effectiveness and raise student achievement.

The school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is the main document used to inform the OTE.

This OTE visit was conducted by Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate, and Liam Whitwell, Review Principal.

The OTE report should be read in conjunction with the report of the External School Review conducted at Crystal Brook Primary School in November 2020.

# Directions from the External School Review report

November 2020

- Key focus area 1** Privilege student academic learning in the school's stated vision and core moral purpose.
- Key focus area 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.
- Key focus area 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.
- Key focus area 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.
- Key focus area 5** Improve student learning through targeted intervention that is evidence-based and best-practice informed.

## Additional information about the school context

The principal advised that some significant contextual changes occurred at Crystal Brook Primary School since the last external school review in 2019. The school was re-categorised in the departmental classification of education disadvantage, which involved a significant loss in budget for a small school. An increase in Aboriginal learner enrolments enabled an Aboriginal education teacher (AET) appointment to support Aboriginal students in-class, develop and update learning support plans with teachers and enhance the recognition of Aboriginal culture across the school. The appointment of a new education director and principal consultant required additional familiarisation time to enable the continuity of support for developing and implementing the directions.

## Development of a school improvement plan

The principal was provided with a planning and monitoring tool to show the school's progress in implementing the ESR directions. At the beginning of term 1 2020, the principal met with the principal consultant to begin planning and update the monitoring tool with evidence of completed work. In term 2, these meetings were interrupted due to the COVID restrictions placed on schools and their visitors. The principal consultant retired necessitating induction discussions to take place with their replacement.

The vast majority of work has been carried out internally with leaders working collaboratively with staff at regular staff meetings. Leadership have strategically aligned this work with the school's improvement plan (SIP) to reduce overlap and staff workload.

## Strategic support provided to the school over the past 12 months

Leadership met regularly to plan and monitor progress. Two project officers from Learning Improvement Division were assigned to the school throughout 2020. An introductory meeting with an officer took place to

review initial plans in term 1. COVID restrictions halted discussions and a new officer was appointed requiring further familiarisation of progress to that point. After several phone conversations and correspondence by emails, a professional learning program to support teachers in reading comprehension was delivered during a student free day. The portfolio senior leader learning improvement and principal consultant provided valuable regular support. The current and previous education directors provided advice for the development of the school's strategic direction.

Leaders have focused attention on supporting teachers in the early years to develop consistent skills and processes in high-quality phonics screening testing and reading recovery programs. Robust discussions took place with primary teachers about practices, ensuring developments were aligned and focused.

## Evidence and evaluation referenced to directions in the school improvement plan

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

#### **On-track evidence**

After the 2019 ESR, leaders unpacked the directions to map out a strategic approach of implementation. They worked collaboratively with all members of the school community to gain their input. The leadership team broadened the original intent of the direction from 'student academic learning' to developing all aspects of the student.

- Vision statements were developed around the school theme of 'learning in and giving back to the community'. The school community was polled, voting on five different vision statements. A vision statement and 3 values were arrived at and will be endorsed early in 2021.
- The school logo was reviewed and updated with input from staff, students and parents. A newly designed logo, now represents symbols from the local area.
- Teachers' comments confirmed leaderships approach to developing these statements and images to represent the school, was supportive and positive. Leaders believe a next step would be to consider how teachers would include these words and images into learning through the general capabilities and cross-curricular perspectives.

#### **Review panel evaluation**

The process facilitated by leadership has developed clarity of purpose and a shared vision for learning. Leaders outlined a strategic direction connected to learning. School leaders described how they would clarify the vision statement and values with parents, teachers, students and the wider community. Further development will take place with teachers to ensure their planning of learning is aligned and guided by these statements.

**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.

#### **On-track evidence**

- Data has become a focus of school planning and learning development.
- Teachers and SSOs commented that data has become more prominent in their discussions and planning and was evident in:
  - the agreed data schedule
  - teacher discussions describing stretch and intervention using a language of learning and the tools of data
  - triangulated data used to look for growth and connections: data walls used to make data visible.
- Students described feedback to them from teachers in several forms when describing their learning progress:
  - in the early years, valuable feedback was provided in verbal comments or varied task comments
  - in the primary years, end-of-unit reviews of how students progressed or reflection at the end of a unit.
- Teachers and leaders described how they were using data to collect evidence of student learning progress:
  - student data tracker –data record and communication tool between teachers allowing teachers to know students’ needs and plan for learning
  - important upfront data for teacher planning – knowing student needs
  - traffic lights utilized for quick checks of progress and alerts for intervention and support.
- Opportunities are now present for the development of student agency through their ownership of their data and use of SMARTAR goal-setting to guide learning.

#### **Review panel evaluation**

Data has become a prominent part of the school's culture in tracking and monitoring or discussing student progress. Teachers are provided with student achievement data to assist their planning for learning, and are guided in the data development across the school by a data schedule. At a leadership level, data is used to monitor progress of the school improvement priorities and attainment of the success indicators. Documented performance development processes are well positioned to lead more evidence-based discussions around student performance.

#### **Key action to incorporate into the school’s planning:**

Strengthen review processes within the school improvement model and performance development process, focusing on evidence-based discussions.

**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.**

**On-track evidence**

- Early collaborative development of whole-school statements of practice in reading (running records and high-frequency words) and numeracy were positively viewed by teachers. Teachers commented on gaining clarity in guiding their practice citing department guidebooks of best practice and a developed data schedule.
- Targeted professional learning provided to staff has ensured sustainability and continuity of intervention programs and associated professional learning support.
- Ongoing development of phonemic awareness in planning learning and testing of student progress provided valuable data and guidance for learning support.

The development of learning intentions and success criteria to support students in better understanding and control of their learning.

**Review panel evaluation**

The early stages of development of the statements of practice have provided greater clarity for, and accountability of, teachers in their work. These documents were collaboratively developed. Leaders have a clear plan of developing these agreements into the future to guide best practice and support conversations about improvement and performance.

**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.**

**On-track evidence**

- A small number of teaching groups have provided examples of collaborative work in which teachers have trialed strategies and measured their impact on learning:
  - Improvement work in the early years using Heggerty phonemic awareness curriculum incorporating five-week learning sprints and testing.
  - The development of learning support plans has highlighted the need for shorter turnaround times in construction, implementation of effective strategies and check-ins by teachers of student progress.

**Review panel evaluation**

Improvement work in literacy and aspects of planning learning intervention has highlighted to staff the importance of measuring their impact on learning. Leaders see an opportunity to develop these practices further next year by incorporating learning sprints into stages of the whole-school improvement practices that support SIP goals. The principal flagged further development of these strategies through professional learning and incorporating processes into whole-school statements of practice.

**Key action to incorporate into the school's planning:**

Strengthen the impact of teacher practice by further developing evidence-based reflective processes that support SIP goals and lead to agreements of best practice.



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

**On-track evidence**

- Intervention programs are evident across the school and are linked to the actions of the current SIP.
  - The evidence-based programs of Heggerty curriculum in developing phonemic awareness and Jolly Phonics are providing leverage for the improvement of reading and identification of intervention
- A data schedule guides teachers in the use of data sets across the school.
- Planned support from school services officers (SSO) in classrooms.

**Review panel evaluation**

As part of the SIP, intervention programs have been established to support identified students in learning. These are particularly strong in the early years where a strategic approach of early intervention is evident. All intervention support decisions are evidence-based. Literacy and numeracy support for students in the upper primary years is provided by trained SSOs. There is a need to develop whole-school agreements around best practice of intervention to guide teachers work for the future.

# Outcomes of the on-track evaluation 2020

Based on the evidence provided, Crystal Brook Primary School is on-track to effectively implement the External School Review directions. The influence of previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement planning processes, which are proven and targeted. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. The school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement while providing effective conditions for student learning.

## **The principal will continue to work with the education director to implement the OTE key actions**

Key action 1: Strengthen review processes within the school improvement model and performance development process, focusing on evidence-based discussions.

Key Action 2: Strengthen the impact of teacher practice by further developing evidence-based reflective processes that support SIP goals and lead to agreements of best practice.

**Based on current performance, Crystal Brook Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.**



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