EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MURRAY BRIDGE SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in August 2015
Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Murray Bridge South 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:

- ICT Security Policy - The school has most aspects in place but has plans to update for 2016 school year to conform with any outstanding requirements.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school was found to be compliant with this policy, and has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 87.5%, which is below the DECD target of 93% but higher than other Category 1 schools.

School context

Murray Bridge South Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 site located 85kms east of Adelaide in the township of Murray Bridge. Enrolments in 2014 were 319, which have increased from 291 in 2012. The school is classified as Category 1 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage, and has an ICSEA score of 896.

The school population includes 21% Aboriginal students, 8% Students with Disabilities, 27% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 3% students under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 56% of families are eligible for School Card assistance. There is a high level of mobility in the community with an average of 30% turnover in enrolments over the previous five years, primarily associated with changes in employment opportunities.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in his third year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, and a Coordinator, Curriculum (0.2 FTE) and AET (0.3 FTE), who is also the Coordinator of Primary Australian Curriculum (0.5 FTE) for the Murraylands Partnership, and a Counsellor (1.0 FTE).
To what extent are teachers’ pedagogies reflective of the TfEL Framework?

While not having the benefit of participating in Phase 1, teachers at the school have joined Phase 2 of the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) pilot program being undertaken this year by the Murraylands Partnership. Additionally, the school’s Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are using TfEL as a lens for reviewing quality teaching and learning, and to support the planning and sharing of effective pedagogical practice.

Early in the review process, the Panel became aware that most staff had not had the opportunity to examine ways in which their current practices mapped onto the TfEL framework. Consequently, the Panel invited the staff to participate in the identification of their most effective pedagogical practices, and the assignment of these practices to one of three specific teaching domains: creating safe conditions for rigorous learning; developing expert learners; personalising and connecting learning.

At the time of the External School Review, teachers had only been formally engaged in the TfEL program for a short time, and many processes are yet to be embedded fully into practice, but the mapping process demonstrated that some elements of each domain form part of teachers’ current practices. Furthermore, the analysis of teacher reflections and the mapping process conducted throughout the External Review corresponded closely with teachers’ ratings on the Australian Curriculum and TfEL aspects of the Engaging with the Australian Curriculum survey undertaken in Term 1, 2015. That is, teachers’ collated responses on the survey suggested most teachers are at the ‘developing’ or ‘functioning’ stages for Domains 2, 3 and 4, thereby confirming the panel’s findings.

Specifically, the Review Panel found that teachers and leaders have put significant effort into creating a safe learning environment for students. In particular, there is evidence of effective approaches to behaviour management and student wellbeing, as demonstrated by the reduction in suspensions and exclusions (take homes), and increased attendance rates. Students reported to the Panel being happy at school and feeling positive about their learning, which aligns with their responses to a recent KidsMatter survey. They also reported feeling safe at school. While recognising a degree of bullying and poor behaviour taking place in the yard and classrooms, students perceive it as being dealt with fairly and equitably. They also know the consequences of poor behaviour and feel the measures are appropriate: “teachers take care of us at playtime and bullies get time out”. Students also spoke of how they look out for each other and care about others’ wellbeing, which also matched with their responses in the KidsMatter survey. Students were able to explain to the Review Panel aspects of various frameworks that underpin positive behaviour management approaches in the school environment.

Less evident in the teachers’ reflections were teaching practices that supported the ‘conditions for rigorous learning’; namely, the involvement of students in determining the direction of the curriculum, and challenging students to achieve high standards with appropriate support. This presents an opportunity for the staff to build on the safe conditions already established in classroom learning environments to incorporate authentic student influence and intellectual challenge into learning and assessment design. In support of improving student learning outcomes, the school should consider the role of higher order thinking and executive functioning, and how these aspects can be integrated into existing classroom learning programs to build students’ capacity to achieve at standard and score in the higher proficiency levels over time.

**Direction 1**

**Build the capacity of all students to achieve at standard, and in the higher proficiency bands over time, by incorporating conditions for rigorous learning into all teaching and learning programs.**

The mapping process also showed that some teachers are engaging at a deeper level with various strategies for effectively developing expert learners, as defined within the TfEL Framework. Further discussions and investigations with staff, through the TfEL pilot program and school-based PLC meetings, regarding their understanding of this domain and how it can be realised consistently and effectively in learning design and assessments, should prove beneficial. These discussions and investigations should be linked to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement and capabilities across the A-E standards in multiple modes, as well as applying their learning in real world, authentic contexts.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Murray Bridge South Primary School is tracking well. It demonstrates growth in student achievement above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context and collects relevant data regularly to track and assess the progress of students.

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

1. Build the capacity of all students to achieve at standard, and in the higher proficiency bands over time, by incorporating conditions for rigorous learning into all teaching and learning programs.

2. Increase the number of students achieving standards and benchmarks by developing a collaborative whole-school approach for driving forward effective pedagogical approaches, particularly those that support personalising and connecting learning in relevant ways to students' lives and aspirations.

3. Improve the engagement and learning outcomes of Aboriginal students by continuing to build respectful, productive relationships with Aboriginal students, their families and the wider school community, including the implementation of an associated review cycle in support of continuous, ongoing improvement in this priority area.

Based on the school’s current performance, Murray Bridge South 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.

Graham Alder
PRINCIPAL
MURRAY BRIDGE SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson