

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Murray Bridge South Primary School

Conducted in May 2021



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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Marie-Louise Adams 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
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Aboriginal Education Team (AET)
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Murray Bridge South Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 78kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 271. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 325. The local partnership is Murraylands.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 872 and is classified as Category 1 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 27% Aboriginal students, 10% students with disabilities, 33% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 60% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of Principal in their 1st year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, a wellbeing leader, an intervention leader and a literacy improvement leader.

There are 18 teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 10 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- Direction 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.
- Direction 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.

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

Actions were taken to address the previous ESR directions, including establishing a whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics, spelling and reading. Initiating the Big Ideas in Number as an assessment tool to track, monitor and inform numeracy teaching and learning, has been positive. The establishment of Wave 2 intervention using a systematic reading intervention program to support students performing below literacy benchmark was implemented. Results to date include a growth across all cohorts in reading and spelling results, through a program that places emphasis on termly assessments of phonics, informing the grouping and regrouping of students for targeted teaching.

A whole-school diagnostic assessment using the Big Ideas in Number assessment tool supports teachers to track and monitor student progress, and informs next teaching steps to move student learning forward. The testing supported teachers' use of data to inform teaching and ensure learning is targeting individual

student needs. The introduction of a teaching 'sprint model' allows teachers to implement whole-school priorities linked to the SIP in a step-by-step way. Results to date include an increase of accountability and focus on using data to inform teaching and learning. Aboriginal students are tracked and monitored using the same tracking tools as all students. Aboriginal Community Education Officers (ACEOs) work closely with the Aboriginal community and families to support Aboriginal students to be successful at school. Some of the results to date include 71% of year 4 Aboriginal students achieving the SEA, 73% of students making progress in reading and spelling, 33% of students accessing the literacy intervention program, and 93% of these students making good progress in reading and spelling.

The review panel acknowledges that the Principal has only been at the school for 12 months and recognised that some elements of the previous directions are now to be linked to the school improvement plan (SIP).

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

The review panel recognised that the leadership team provides high levels of support and guidance for all staff and regularly meets to discuss the progress of curriculum delivery in line with the SIP action. Tracking and monitoring of the SIP is discussed with teachers at staff and year level meetings. The school refers to the core datasets of phonics and reading assessments as the basis for setting improvement targets and tracking intervention groups. Action plans and curriculum agreements explicitly support the SIP goals.

Strategic organisational structures were implemented across the school to address the learning priorities. Appointing curriculum leaders and using departmental support agencies allowed for immediate improvements in teaching of reading and phonics. Staff spoke favourably and respectfully of the leadership team in guiding the improvement journey.

The school adopted a literacy development tool as the vehicle for change in literacy, which had a significant impact on their approach to teaching spelling. Future steps include recognising the success of current initiatives and ensuring they become embedded practice.

Professional development planning processes are explicitly linked to the SIP priorities with staff more accountable to the SIP and the implications it has on their teaching.

Data collection and review is evident with a cycle of regular testing occurring. Data sharing was a 'game changer' for staff in understanding where the students are 'at'. The momentum gained to track, monitor and utilise datasets to inform next steps in teaching must be maintained.

The school is in a state of transition due to enrolments and staff density. Raising of student achievement through further development of effective teaching practices is the future focus. The development of the 2022 – 2024 SIP will provide leverage for leadership and staff to reflect on data trends, and current teaching practice to sharpen improvement actions and targets.

Direction 1 Strengthen agreed SIP pedagogical actions to ensure a whole-school approach to effective and consistent teaching that is responsive to student achievement data.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

All staff are united in doing their best for all students and enthusiasm about the positive change in direction, in terms of whole-school pedagogy, is shared across mainstream and specialist teachers. The panel recognised the diversity of learners within classes, and noted the structures, systems and programs offered to support all students.

The common goal of literacy created a good level of collaboration and commitment amongst the year-level teams. Teachers indicated that introducing an evidence-based phonemic awareness assessment program was a positive strategy in assisting with their teaching of literacy across the school. The school adopted a common teaching strategy to promote literacy development, and its implementation is seen in all classes.

Teachers are now using a data sprints approach, as a monitoring strategy of student progress, and are adjusting teaching in response to this approach of planning in relation to data (formative assessments), teaching, and assessing (summative assessments), to inform the impact of teaching. Regular evaluation of teaching programs and student progress through this approach is to be enhanced and sustained.

Formative assessment processes varied amongst the teachers, with most staff rating their capacity to implement this assessment strategy at a medium to high level of effectiveness in their learning design. Consider how the school can build on this work, so that all staff are using it to inform teaching and learning (not just to organise groups) and incorporate all elements of the process in their planning.

Differentiation occurs to varying degrees according to year levels, with pockets of strength in some year level teams. Staff noted the literacy development data as a good tool to identify differentiated entry points for teaching. Consideration should be given to how differentiated planning does not necessarily mean work set at a higher year level, and how individual problem-solving tasks can be blended with explicit teaching strategies to challenge all learners.

The next steps to consider include teachers consistently planning differentiated teaching opportunities, embedding the formative assessment cycle, with a particular focus on learning intentions and success criteria to offer stretch and challenge for all learners.

Direction 2 To provide challenging learning opportunities for all students, build teacher capacity and efficacy in differentiated planning using the formative assessment cycle across the school.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Murray Bridge South Primary School has experienced a changing culture where learning reflects the school's new vision and values of high expectation for all. The school demonstrates effective leadership which provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. The school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. Students are given opportunities and scaffolds to help them improve their learning aspirations.

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

Direction 1 **Strengthen agreed SIP pedagogical actions to ensure a whole-school approach to effective and consistent teaching that is responsive to student achievement data.**

Direction 2 **To provide challenging learning opportunities for all students, build teacher capacity and efficacy in differentiated planning using the formative assessment cycle across the school.**

Based on the school's current performance, Murray Bridge South Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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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 2020, 28% of year 1 and 49% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 1, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average and, for year 2, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 58% of year 3 students, 54% of year 5 students and 61% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, for year 5, a decline, and for year 7, an improvement from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 15% of year 3, 17% of year 5 and 8% 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 year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and for year 7, this result represents a decline.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 62%, or 5 out of 8 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.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 51% of year 3 students, 49% of year 5 students and 42% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For year 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 3% of year 3, 10% of year 5 and 8% 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 years 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 36%, or 4 out of 11 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.