

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR EAST ADELAIDE SCHOOL

Conducted in May 2016



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education  
and Child Development

### **Review details**

*A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is to improve the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.*

*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 DECD schools.*

*The framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.*

*The overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"*

*This Report of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Chris Roberts, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of East Adelaide School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 94%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

East Adelaide School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 4kms east of the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2016 is 721 students. In 2015, the enrolment was 668 students and numbers have increased steadily from 574 in 2012. The school is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score in 2014 was 1126.

The school population in 2015 included ≤1% Aboriginal students, 3% Students with Disabilities, 47% students of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB), ≤1% under the Guardianship of the Minister (GoM), and 8% of students eligible for School Card assistance. The school caters for a small number of refugees, as well as students from English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) backgrounds whose parents are in Adelaide on overseas work and study exchanges. There is also some movement to private school settings in the upper primary years.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her sixth year of a seven-year tenure, a Deputy Principal, Senior Leader, Teaching and Learning Coordinator in Mathematics/Numeracy, and a School Counsellor.

### **School Performance Overview**

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

#### **Reading**

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 76% of Year 1 and 91% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 97% of Year 3 students, 93% of Year 5 students and 93% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 has been upwards, from 84% to 93%.

For Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading in 2015, the school achieved better results than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved higher results in Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 67% of Year 3, 48% of Year 5 and 39% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 65% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5, and 77% students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For the last 3 years, the trend for Years 3 to 7 upper band retention was upwards, from 58% to 77%.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 90% of Year 3 students, 96% of Year 5 students and 87% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and a decline at Year 7.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 82% to 96%, and a slight decline in Year 3, from 94% to 90%.

For Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy in 2015, the school achieved higher results than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

Between 2013 and 2015, the school has consistently achieved better results in Years 3 and 5 NAPLAN Numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 45% of Year 3, 27% of Year 5 and 33% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two 2015 NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 52% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5, and 75% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average and a decline from Year 3 to 5.

### Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?</b>
<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?</b>
<b>School Community Partnerships:</b>	<b>How well does the school develop partnerships with parents to improve student learning?</b>

### To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

East Adelaide School is committed to the values of respect, responsibility, relationships and resilience, and the school is perceived by both students and parents to be a safe and inclusive learning environment. The students who came to interviews, as well as the children visited in classrooms, were great ambassadors for the school, reflecting the school's values and culture. They were enthusiastic about sharing their learning, highly articulate, and presented a range of learning activities with a sense of pride and satisfaction in having done their best work.

In meeting the learning needs of individual learners, teachers at East Adelaide School have access to a wide range of data, which is collated, analysed and shared on a regular basis to inform learning and assessment design. Self-review processes are also utilised to examine data, and teams are in place to develop action plans for improving specific student learning outcomes linked to the SIP and Strategic Plan.

There was evidence that most teachers share learning intentions with the students, as students across the year levels demonstrated an understanding of what was expected and how to complete the task successfully.

Closer examination of students' work samples revealed a wide variation within year levels and across the

school with respect to individual teachers' expectations the nature of feedback and rubrics. In relation to feedback, for example, the majority of examples shared with the Panel were personalised affirmations in contrast to feedback that provides constructive task-relevant options for improvement, or details of the 'next steps' for individualised learning. Teacher reflections and student comments also revealed the 'same task with different expectations' within a teacher-directed learning design model as the primary approach to differentiated teaching.

Rubrics are a form of feedback the teachers are using to help students recognise the different levels of achievement they can strive for and attain. Discussions with all groups of students revealed the rubrics currently being implemented focus primarily on process, outcome and/or time management components that support the teacher in making a determination of progress and achievement. Only a small number of students spoke of being involved in the development of rubrics, the design of assessment tasks and associated measures, the determination of success criteria, or deciding the direction of the curriculum as outlined in Domain 2.3 of TfEL. This provides the opportunity for the school to empower students to achieve their personal best by supporting:

- greater involvement of students in graded peer and self-assessment
- discussions of summative grading within a formative framework, and
- informed decision-making about where to put their time and energy to attain optimal achievement and progress.

#### **Direction 1**

**Build the capacity of staff and students to engage in critically constructive feedback that provides task-relevant options for improvement and supports every student to achieve their personal best.**

Further, in adopting these approaches the school will have the opportunity to explore and promote greater rigor in the learning environment, in particular, the elements of 'negotiated learning' and 'supporting each student to achieve their personal best', as outlined in TfEL. The outcome being a range of school-wide implemented strategies that:

- identify and tap into students' interests to inform learning plans
- actively involve students in the assessment process, and
- build students' capacity to achieve individual learning potential by engaging students in goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring, critical reflection and evaluation within the parameters of curriculum standards and requirements.

#### **Direction 2**

**Implement a range of school-wide approaches that respond to students' changing needs and utilise student voice and influence in the design and assessment of learning.**

### **To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?**

The school places an emphasis on fostering supportive learning environments that provide opportunities for students to experience challenge and high quality learning. Students' achievement against the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) suggests high levels of performance when compared with other schools. However, as the school is aware, the retention of students in higher bands has the tendency to drop from Year 3 to 7. The school anticipates that an inquiry approach will help students build their capacity for complex, higher-order thinking. On this basis, the Review Panel explored what teachers understand intellectual challenge and stretch to mean, and how students are supported in taking scaffolded intellectual risks in their learning.

All students interviewed were asked how challenging their work is in both specific areas of learning, such as maths or literacy, and in general. Some said it was easy, but nearly all students reported that most work was 'just about right' for them. The exception being when a new concept is introduced, and they sometimes find it a little more challenging, but once they have learnt the concept they find it easy.

A willingness to adopt new approaches was evident, and teachers have participated in a range of professional learning over time that is associated with inquiry learning, growth mindsets, powerful

learning, and TfEL. It was also evident that staff and students are working towards using a common language to discuss teaching and learning. The professional reflections provided by teachers further revealed a broad understanding of the elements of intellectual challenge; however, many descriptions included other concepts and ideas. These additions, at best, demonstrated individual efforts to link complementary approaches. Others revealed some confusion about how authentic intellectual stretch and challenge can be supported across all achievement levels, and the purpose and imperative for planning for intellectual challenge within a differentiated teaching approach.

Discussions with the parent group indicated they want students to be challenged irrespective of their achievement level, and want all children to be challenged in ways that help them improve. In particular, it was clear that parents don't believe intellectual challenge should be provided only to the top performing children. Rather, they want their child, and all students, to be encouraged and given appropriate support to achieve their personal best, whatever that may be.

In light of these findings, it will be beneficial for staff to share and expand their understandings of how learning environments where every child feels driven by the challenge to achieve more, and their resilience is increased for tackling new learning that 'raises the bar' and maximises learning, are created. Within this process, there is the opportunity for staff to construct a coherent, explicit, and consistent agreed understanding and approach to the implementation of pedagogies that support intellectual challenge within and across all year levels as a part of daily practice. A key component of the agreement should include measurable student outcomes and accountability for promoting intellectual challenge for all students not just those who 'do school well'.

This is a key factor for the school's improvement agenda. The school has demonstrated significant growth and improvement over the past few years, and realised its goal of moving from being a 'good school' towards being a 'great school'. The next step is for the school to put strategies in place that maintain this momentum and take the school forward from 'great' to 'excellent'. The Review Panel feel the school is ready to take this next step as staff have indicated a readiness to embed an inquiry-based approach into identified curriculum areas and, once consolidated, to transfer these skills to other areas of the curriculum. Some staff indicated they have started integrating aspects of an inquiry approach, as they define it, into literacy and numeracy programs. This is a good first step, which can serve as a foundation for future work on the development of a whole-school approach to intellectual challenge and the development of expert learners. In support of the outcome, leadership should develop a timeframe for implementation of agreed approaches as such changes take time, resources and commitment. It will also be beneficial to have processes in place that support the regular and rigorous review and evaluation of:

- the school's and individual teacher's progress towards identified targets and outcomes
- the effectiveness over time of various strategies to ensure these are really making a difference, and
- strategies to refine practices, where appropriate, prior to the approach being expanded into all other curriculum areas.

### **Direction 3**

**Develop and implement a whole-school agreement and planned approach to the integration of intellectual challenge into daily classroom practice that is appropriate for all learners across all year levels.**

### **How well does the school develop partnerships with parents to improve student learning?**

Parents spoke of selecting East Adelaide Primary School based on its academic reputation and cultural values. A further key factor was the initial contact with the school, particularly the welcoming and inclusive front office staff, Principal, and student ambassadors who conduct tours of the school. Inclusivity is perceived as a major strength of the school. Representatives of Aboriginal and disability groups, as well as various ethnic, cultural and religious groups reported that they feel respected and can engage productively in school activities as appropriate. The school's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and languages programs are particularly valued by the community. Parents also talked of how the site has visually changed over the past few years with improved facilities and grounds, which has had a positive

effect within the school community.

Parents value and appreciate the work that staff do to support their children's learning. They reported, for example, that teachers are accessible, work hard and are available to talk with them about their child's learning and progress. The Principal is held in high regard, and the Leadership Team presents as a unified and collaborative group.

In general, parents value and appreciate the school, but did note some inconsistencies in practices within year levels and across the school. Natural Maths was provided, by the parent group, as an example of an R-7 approach that is being implemented consistently, and would like to see other learning approaches implemented with a similar level of consistency. While fully acknowledging that all teachers are different, it is problematic that such observable inconsistencies cause parents to wonder if their child, or some students, are missing out on key aspects of learning. The Directions in this report underscore whole-school agreements and approaches, which have the potential to address these concerns in tangible ways. However, the school needs to monitor and evaluate this aspect regularly to ensure that parents are kept informed of essential teaching and learning expectations and reassured their child is experiencing a high quality learning program.

A compounding factor is parents' perceptions and experiences of significant inconsistency in the type and nature of communication depending on class or year level. In particular, the number of different school Apps was raised as a concern. In talking with the Principal, it became evident that each PLC explored a range of Apps and chose one to implement as a communication tool to share information with parents. This strategy resulted in a range of Apps being used across the school, but meant parents with more than one child need to access multiple Apps in any given week. It was also reported that in some instances the sharing of information in such digital formats started with a flourish but faded quickly. In others instances, parents reported very positive experiences and would like the sharing of student learning to be a consistent experience across all classes and year levels.

Parents as partners in their children's learning is to be encouraged and, given the interest expressed in consistent language and approaches across the school, it will be beneficial for the school to formalise systems and processes for teachers and families to communicate and work together to maximise student learning.

**Direction 4**

**Embed a range of strategies that promote consistent language, approaches, and communication tools within and across year levels that support families in being involved as partners in their child's learning.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

East Adelaide School is progressing and improving performance and effectiveness as the demonstrated growth in student achievement is above what is reasonably expected of similar cohorts of students. Effective leadership provides strategic direction and planning, and self-review processes are used regularly and strategically to determine the impact school strategies and practices are having on student achievement.

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

1. Build the capacity of staff and students to engage in critically constructive feedback that provides task-relevant options for improvement and supports every student to achieve their personal best.
2. Implement a range of school-wide approaches that respond to students' changing needs and utilise student voice and influence in the design and assessment of learning.
3. Develop and implement a whole-school agreement and planned approach to the integration of intellectual challenge into daily classroom practice that is appropriate for all learners across all year levels.
4. Embed a range of strategies that promote consistent language, approaches, and communication tools within and across year levels that support families in being involved as partners in their child's learning.

Based on the school's current performance, East Adelaide School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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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.



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PRINCIPAL  
EAST ADELAIDE SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson