The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Tarlee Primary School

Conducted in June 2018

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Phil Garner, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and David Manuel, Review Principal.

School context

Tarlee Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 80kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Lower Mid North Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 23 students, and has been steady over the last 5 years. The school is classified as Category 2 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 956.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 10% of students with a verified disability, 73% of families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background and no children in care.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2nd year of his tenure at the school. The school has no senior leaders. There are 1.2FTE teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career.

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 2 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Student Learning: **To what extent are students engaged and intellectually stretched in their learning?**

How effectively is student growth monitored and evaluated?

Effective Teaching: **To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually stretched in their learning?

When the school has high expectations for students and provides learning opportunities that are engaging and of high interest, students build their self-esteem, increase in confidence and improve in academic achievement.

The school is committed to professional development in Visible Learning with partnership schools. When the learning is visible the student knows what to do and how to do it, and the teacher knows if learning is occurring or not. Teaching and learning is visible when the learning goal is not only challenging but is explicit. The panel acknowledges that Visible Learning is a recent area of development for the school and, over time, it will become embedded in the teaching and learning process.

Students the review panel met with know when they are doing well – when they achieve full marks or when they finish their task on time – and indicated that they would like harder, more challenging tasks to work on. The panel observed that learning across the school has elements of less challenging tasks that are easily achievable by students. It was also evident to the review panel from classroom observations that much of the student work displayed in the classroom and in the students' books was unfinished. Some tasks were marked with written feedback, but this tended to be praise rather than formative feedback to inform the learning. Considering the continuing professional development in Visible Learning,

the school can ensure clear learning intentions, challenging success criteria, an engaging range of learning strategies and appropriate feedback are provided in the teaching and learning process.

Considerable time and effort has been recently invested in the development of a whole-school numeracy agreement. The policy is a succinct document that has all the elements of an effective numeracy agreement that will successfully guide the school in improving student achievement in numeracy. While the numeracy focus for the first 6 months of this year has been on 'trust the count in number', there has been limited focus on other areas of the numeracy curriculum. Some students indicated that they are getting bored with maths, which in turn is leading to an increase in off-task behaviours. The newly developed numeracy policy can be effectively adopted and implemented in all classes to ensure a balanced approach to the teaching of numeracy across the school.

All students have independent learning plans that are developed in collaboration with teachers and parents. Teachers meet with each student to develop the learning goals and review them each term reflecting on their progress. Overarching goals are devised and short-term classroom goals are developed to assist in the achieving of the main goal. Goal charts are on display in the classroom to track the progress of the short-term goals. This process enables the school to track student progress and ensure students are taking some ownership of their learning. Students indicated that they could not remember their main goal, but identified their short-term goals from the classroom wall chart. The school has an opportunity to review and evaluate the process of independent learning plans and goal-setting to ensure that they are driven by each student's next steps in learning and include directions from the diagnostic analysis of student achievement data. A continued focus on this over time will enable highly effective SMARTA goals to be developed by all students.

Involving students in the design of their learning allows teachers to progressively move from more prescriptive learning activities to student-led activities, increasing student motivation and engagement. Although students have access to curriculum rubrics and success criteria to guide them in their learning tasks, they mentioned having difficulty interpreting and using them due to their complexity and technical language. There is an opportunity to engage students in developing user-friendly documents that guide the learning and foster increased student responsibility and accountability for their learning. The effective use of the Education Department's pedagogical framework to guide learning design and teacher practice, particularly Domains 2.3 and 2.4, will guide the school in the direction of greater student ownership of learning.

Direction 1
With high expectations for all students, develop and implement a balanced Australian Curriculum with challenging, engaging and negotiated learning tasks, and a focus on making the learning visible.

How effectively is student growth monitored and evaluated?

The analysis of Tarlee Primary School's NAPLAN student achievement data between 2014 and 2017 indicates that all students achieve at or above the department's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). While this achievement is commendable, the low numbers of students achieving in the higher bands is the next achievement target to be addressed (refer to Appendix 2).

Considerable time and thought has been invested in analysing student achievement data in the school. Student individual learning plans include, in graph form, their achievement, progress and growth in literacy and numeracy. Parents who met with the panel value this information as they can easily follow their child's progress. In addition, a variety of assessment data is used by teachers to monitor students'

understanding of mathematical concepts. Students are aware of their misconceptions in maths through 'trust the count' assessments but, as mentioned previously, this has led to a narrow focus of learning in numeracy. Pat-M and R data are shared with students by the principal to inform them of where they are in their learning. There is an opportunity to formalise this process and include the next steps in their goal-setting and the individual and group design of their learning.

School service officers (SSOs) indicated having limited access to student achievement data, with no formal processes for providing learning interventions for students. At times, SSOs feel charged with managing individual student behaviour and keeping students on-task rather than focusing on their learning needs. While this may be a strategic way of ensuring students are kept on-task, an opportunity for challenging and appropriate learning remains. Students would benefit from a formal identification process that provides targeted intervention strategies to enable them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

As a result of recent professional development, the reception to year 2 class, in collaboration with the preschool, has introduced a more focused approach to improving children's oral language, with the differences between formal and casual oral language being explicitly taught. A variety of different strategies are being used, for example, barrier games to practise giving instructions. This is a positive approach to the teaching of oral literacy. The school can collaboratively develop a whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy using a similar process to that of developing the numeracy agreement.

Direction 2
Collaboratively use student achievement data diagnostically with a focus on higher band achievement to inform the learning design, develop interventions and allow students time to plan, monitor, analyse, and evaluate their learning progress.

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

Parents the panel spoke with are extremely happy with the learning and wellbeing environment of the school. There is a strong focus on caring for, and supporting students with special needs, with parents indicating that their children's teachers "never give up on kids, and will always search to find ways of assisting them in their learning". The majority of parents are happy with the growth made by their children as well as the strong family feel and relaxed atmosphere of the school. There are strong school/home communications with parents to assist in the development of independent learning plans for students.

Teachers have recently participated in professional development on understanding students in poverty. This has enabled teachers to understand the varying needs of the students in their care and the challenges they face. Independent learning plans for students are excellent examples of how the school monitors and tracks the learning and wellbeing needs of students.

The school operates a split-day with 2 classes each morning and 1 reception to year 7 class each afternoon. Students indicated behaving well in the afternoon, as they see the difficulties when the teacher has to work with all the reception to year 7 children in one class. They went on to say that there are lots of mixed group tasks, with older students managing the junior students, and mentioned that they sometimes get frustrated with their behaviour and the lack of quality engagement for themselves. Students believe they can benefit from having more sport, drama and hands-on activities in science during this time. The review panel noted that students had difficulty articulating the language of learning. Having greater opportunities to be involved in the design and monitoring of their learning should provide them with a greater understanding and knowledge of the process.

Learning tasks with varying degrees of differentiation were noted. Some individual tasks were linked to behavioural rewards and designed to keep students on task and away from other students. Other tasks were less challenging and designed to keep students working. Off-task behaviour observed by the panel was often reflected in the quality of their engagement in the learning tasks.

The review panel understands the challenge in designing appropriate learning opportunities for a wide range of year levels and student abilities in a complex small school situation. It is important for teachers to understand and recognise the individual learning needs of students, and work collaboratively to develop appropriate support structures to assist every student's growth and success. The school could collaboratively develop engaging and challenging inquiry learning tasks that have multiple entry and exit points catering for the curriculum and learning needs of students. The development of targeted and scaffolded learning plans for students with learning difficulties will enable them to be authentically engaged in their own learning, and allow SSOs and parent volunteers to understand and support students effectively in their learning.

A focus on professional collaboration and professional learning for all teachers, particularly early career teachers, is critical to attaining high levels of student achievement. Opportunities need to be provided for teachers to collaborate, observe, plan, evaluate and teach together on a regular basis. The school and the partnership should continue working towards developing an appropriate and sustainable professional learning process for all teachers.

Direction 3
Develop and implement scaffolded learning plans for students with learning difficulties that will enable them to be authentically engaged and allow support staff to competently support the students in their learning.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Tarlee Primary School.

Effective practice of developing community relationships was evident at the school. The junior primary class has being working together to develop the school's family day, with students taking ownership of the planning. Developing close relationships with a French school, that has since renamed the school in honour of a soldier that came from Tarlee, has further developed positive community relationships, with parents and students attending the renaming ceremony in France. These are just 2 examples of how the school is developing closer links with the community and using community resources and agencies to support students.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Tarlee Primary School has demonstrated that students are achieving the SEA, but opportunity exists to enable students to achieve in the upper bands.

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

1. **With high expectations for all students, develop and implement a balanced Australian Curriculum with challenging, engaging and negotiated learning tasks, and a focus on making the learning visible.**

2. **Collaboratively use student achievement data diagnostically with a focus on higher-band achievement to inform the learning design, develop interventions and allow students time to plan, monitor, analyse, and evaluate their learning progress.**

3. **Develop and implement scaffolded learning plans for students with learning difficulties that will enable them to be authentically engaged and allow support staff to competently support the students in their learning.**

Based on the school's current performance, Tarlee Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.

Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.

Chris Turrell
PRINCIPAL
TARLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.
The school attendance rate for 2017 was 97.3%.

Appendix 2

School performance overview

The external school review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the department's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Tarlee Primary School over the years 2014 to 2017. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2014 and 2017, 63%, or 5 of 8 year 1, and 67%, or 6 or 9 year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100%, or 6 of 6 year 3 students, 100%, or 9 of 9 year 5 students, and 100%, or 8 of 8 year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 50%, or 3 of 6 year 3 students, 22%, or 2 of 9 year 5 students, and 12%, or 1 of 8 year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading.

Numeracy

Between 2014 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100%, or 6 of 6 year 3 students, 88%, or 7 of 8 year 5 students, and 100%, or 8 of 8 year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 33%, or 2 of 6 year 3 students, 11%, or 1 of 9 year 5 students, and 12%, or 1 of 6 year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy.