Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Brahma Lodge Primary School

Conducted in February 2020

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 Brenton Robins, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representative
  - Leaders
  - Parent representatives
  - School Support Officers (SSOs)
  - Students
  - Teachers

School context

Brahma Lodge Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 21kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 229 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 213. The local partnership is Salisbury.

The school has an ICSEA score of 912, and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 13% Aboriginal students, 18% students with disabilities, 38% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 4 children/young people in care and 70% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 12th year and an assistant principal who is responsible for intervention. There is a numeracy coordinator, literacy coordinator and a wellbeing coordinator.

There are 14.6FTE teachers including 3 in the early years of their career and 3 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

Direction 1   Strengthen the motivation of students to improve and achieve by building on assessment for learning strategies and opportunities for students as evaluators.

Direction 2   Raise student achievement levels by further developing the design of learning and tasks that challenge and enable all students to demonstrate higher-order thinking and learning in new contexts.

Direction 3   Target student learning growth by using multiple measures to inform, monitor and evaluate learning and achievement.

Direction 4   Ensure that the varied needs of learners are met by refining and documenting processes for decision-making in school-wide interventions that build on quality classroom pedagogies provide additional support for learners in classrooms and target learner support through specific programs.

Direction 5   Improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students by implementing systems that track and monitor the learning outcomes and growth of these students at cohort and individual levels.

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

The current principal has been in their position for 12 years and it was evident to the panel that there has been intentional actions to address the previous directions.

Student wellbeing is a priority and it was evident to the review panel that this is at the forefront for staff and is recognised by the students and parents community. The strong sense of safety and security has produced motivation and pride from students who are confident within themselves in approaching their school work.

It was evident to the review panel that there are pathways offered for students to make choices within their learning. Students and parents talked about how teachers plan and reference learning around 'real life' situations or contexts to enable the students to make connections with their learning, problem solve

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and interact with others. Teachers design learning tasks at a C standard and are then provided with pathways enabling them to show achievement at, above or below the level dependent on the understanding demonstrated.

The focus of the Intervention Programs is on assisting students below the benchmark in reading and number. Professional learning on mathematical misconceptions and Big Ideas in Number has led to changes in practices. The introduction of literacy programs such as Initial-Lit and online reading has improved learning in literacy. The restructure of SSOs has enabled a more focused approach to supporting intervention. Student Information Folders provide up-to-date information on student progress and are accessible to all staff. The recent appointment of an Aboriginal Community Education Officer (ACEO) has enhanced the profile of Aboriginal students across the school. The review team sighted evidence for tracking Aboriginal students' academic achievement with recent data showing 70% of Aboriginal students achieved the Department for Education's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in NAPLAN.

The review panel recognised that some elements of the previous directions are still to be addressed and to be actioned in conjunction with strategies identified in the Site 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 student learning to inform next steps?

The review panel recognised that the leadership team provides a high level of support and guidance for all staff through actioning effective and targeted professional learning and modelling teaching practices. Staff responses verified these actions citing that all actions were evidenced-based and student focused. Leadership takes responsibility to collate and analyse the achievement data which is then shared with staff for feedback. Leadership acts upon the feedback to set SIP goals and targets, and uses 2018-2019 achievements as the benchmark for growth.

A culture of collegiality exists across the school. The majority of staff indicated that the openness of sharing practices, having a common learning focus, release time and knowing that support is available from leadership and colleagues is valued. Staff meeting agendas enable regular reference to the achievement data and SIP targets. Curriculum overviews are linked to SIP actions and the accountability of curriculum delivery. A culture of high expectation for all staff and actions for improvement reflect this sentiment. It was evident that the roles and responsibilities of all staff are clearly defined.

Performance development meetings are focused on improving teacher practice and student achievement to meet targets and improve pedagogy. Reference documents on powerful learners, mathematical proficiencies, and transforming task and learning design are provided to all staff as a guide for planning. Moderation of tasks are done at year level and staff meetings. Teachers engage in mentoring, observations and reflective conversations. Student Information Folders enable whole-school recording of achievement data. The school facilitates self-review processes at a classroom level in student progress via fortnightly Initial-Lit check-ins and maths misconception measures which is used to determine next steps for student learning.

The review panel recognised that the school is addressing the SIP stages of improvement. The next steps is to continue building teacher knowledge and capacity in using student data to inform teaching to enable achievement and growth in student learning.

Direction 1   **Continue the focus on individual student achievement through strengthening the efficacy of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in planning and practice with the expectation that each student should achieve at least one year's growth throughout each year of schooling.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The principal reported that work conducted throughout the school is strongly based on evidenced-based research, with a number of pedagogical models used for implementation. It was also evident that all staff know the academic and social needs of their students. The explicit teaching routines literacy and numeracy has been a successful process. Differentiated teaching varied amongst teachers with pockets of strengths in some year level teams. A bias towards differentiating for students with particular learning difficulties was commented on by most teachers.

Formative assessment processes varied amongst teachers with the majority referring to the use of learning intentions (or similar language) for individual lessons. The reference to success criteria associated with the learning intention was less evident. The consistency of this practice was not fully evident. Future steps include revisiting the formative assessment process and to ensure that all staff are understanding and using all elements of the formative learning process. This includes intentional learning and success criteria that reflects what students can do, say, make or write. Feedback to students about their work varied amongst teachers with the main strategy being verbal feedback although some teachers provided written feedback. Survey results indicated that 76% rated their use of feedback to help students to improve as medium to low, with 45% of teachers indicating that this is an area for improvement.

The learning tasks provided pathways that enabled students to work at, above or below level. Students indicated that some classes offer extension work through the use of worksheets and problem challenges. The pedagogical survey results indicated that 63% of teachers rated their ability to create opportunities for stretch and challenge and enable students to apply their skills at a medium to low extent. The same survey indicated that 80% of teachers rated how effectively they enabled students to apply their skill and understanding in different contexts at a medium to low level.

Direction 2   **To meet the learning needs of all students ensure that teachers consistently plan teaching opportunities that includes the formative assessment process with particular focus of the students being key determinants of the process.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?

It was evident to the panel that relationships between the students and teachers are very strong. Students reported that their teachers offer encouragement, advice and guidance. The House colours program is valued by teachers, students and parents and is seen a vehicle for developing student action, responsibility and connection with the school.

Teachers' create interesting learning opportunities connecting tasks to real world examples. However, students interviewed (mainly upper primary) indicated that they have a limited say in their learning through project choices and presentation options.

The majority of students understood A-E grading and cited them as the main source of knowing how well they are doing. The sharing of achievement data directly with students varied amongst teachers. The sharing of assessment data with students would enable them to have ownership in their learning focusing on growth points/distance travelled is a future consideration. Term overviews provides opportunity for students to understand what is to be taught.

Feedback from teachers on student progress ranged from conferencing conversations to annotations in books. Survey results indicated that 79% of teachers rated how effectively the feedback given to students help them to improve at a medium to low level. Students did indicate that progress data was not strongly used as part of the feedback they received. The sharing of assessment growth points and distance travelled with students is something the school can aim for. How feedback for learning is offered to students that is understood and enables them to make shared decisions in their learning is another area for focus.

Involving students through learner voice and co-design of their own and each other's learning that includes learning and assessment design, and decision-making, would deepen and enrich the quality of student learning and strengthen the potential of higher band achievement and retention targets.

Direction 3   **To ensure authentic students influence in their learning strengthen teacher knowledge and action to embed student agency in learning design, assessment and feedback.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Brahma Lodge Primary School is providing effective conditions for student learning. The school environment offers a focus on learning through respect for diversity, a safe orderly environment and clear expectations for learning. Parents and teachers talked about the strength of the school where 'students come first'. The school community recognises the support offered to all students and their work in addressing student needs. The school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement.

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

Direction 1   Continue the focus on individual student achievement through strengthening the efficacy of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in planning and practice with the expectation that each student should achieve at least one year's growth throughout each year of schooling.

Direction 2   To meet the learning needs of all students ensure that teachers consistently plan teaching opportunities that includes the formative assessment process with particular focus of the students being key determinants of the process.

Direction 3   To ensure authentic students influence in their learning strengthen teacher knowledge and action to embed student agency in learning design, assessment and feedback.
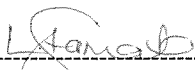
Based on the school's current performance, Brahma Lodge Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.
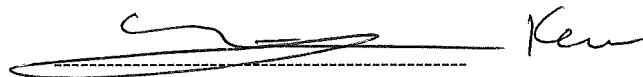
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Appendix 1

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 2019, 10% of year 1 and 29% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for year 1 and 2, from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 91% of year 3 students, 73% of year 5 students and 86% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 57% to 86%.

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

In 2019, 52% of year 3, 18% of year 5 and 21% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or 3 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 3 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 65% of year 3 students, 59% of year 5 students and 52% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 7, this result represents a decline, and for year 5 an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For 2019, year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within, and for year 7, below the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 26% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 14% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 1 out of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 75%, or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.