EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR RICHMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in March 2015
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 overarching review question is “How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?”

This External School Review has evaluated:
- the school’s self review processes and findings,
- the school’s achievement data and progress over time,
- the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and
- parent and student views about the school.

The External School Review included an analysis of the school’s key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Fiona Voigt Review Principal.
Policy compliance
The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Richmond Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal of Richmond Primary School advised that action is being taken to comply with:

- Governance Item 8 – site bullying data will be collected twice per year and shared with the Governing Council and school community
- Performance Plans – all teachers will have performance plans in place in 2015

The implementation of the DECD student attendance policy was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. The school’s current reported attendance is 93.5%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Richmond Primary School is a metropolitan school of approximately 250 students. Enrolment has been stable for many years, although there has been an increase in enrolments in 2015.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1072 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population reflects a culturally diverse community. The school population includes 50% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background, 8% students with Disabilities and 23% of families are eligible for school card assistance. There are three Intensive English Language Classes (IELC) located at the school.

The leadership team consists of a Principal and Deputy Principal, both in their second year at the school, an Assistant Principal IELC, Literacy and EALD Coordinator and a School Counsellor.
Lines of inquiry

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

**Student Learning:**
- How well are students achieving over time?
- How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

**Effective Teaching:**
- How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?
- To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

**How well are students achieving over time?**

The school has maintained a focus on literacy, numeracy and student wellbeing and inclusion as strategic priorities over recent years. The pre-review analysis of student achievement data revealed an erratic pattern in literacy and numeracy achievement and growth against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). Reading data for Year 1 and Year 2 indicates that students are commencing school with some gaps, but these are identified and addressed as students move across the junior primary section of the school. In 2014, at the end of Year 2, 86% of the cohort had achieved the SEA.

Analysis of NAPLAN data for reading across Years 3, 5 and 7 from 2008 to 2014, revealed that an average of 77% of Year 3 students achieved the SEA during this period. For Year 5 students, there has been an upward trend developing over the past three years with 81% of the cohort achieving the SEA in 2014, and a similar and consistent trend was identified for the Year 7 cohort with approximately 75% achieving SEA, with a drop to 68% in 2014.

In numeracy, there has been an increase in the numbers of students achieving the SEA at the Year 3 and 5 levels over the past four years. The Year 3 cohorts have increased from 50% at SEA to 80% at SEA during this period. The Year 5 cohorts have shown growth in the percentage achieving the SEA but not at the same rate as Year 3 cohorts. This pattern of growth was not evident at Year 7 where there has been a downward trend evident over the same period of time from 75% to 57% achieving SEA.

The data from 2008 to 2014, revealed that, of the students tested in the higher two bands in reading and numeracy at Year 3, an average of 50% were retained in these two higher bands in Year 5 and a similar pattern existed through to Year 7. These figures have been adjusted for students moving into and out of the school throughout this period. The data led the Review Panel, to explore the following lines of inquiry.

**How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?**

It was evident from analysing the school’s achievement data that the school maintained a strategic approach to supporting students in reading through the early years. From 2008 to 2014, an average of 40% of each Year 3 cohort achieved in the top two proficiency bands in reading. The school is encouraged to maintain these percentages in the upper two bands in reading at Year 3 and ensure that these students retain this performance as they progress through schooling.

Curriculum and pedagogical leadership at the school level, in classrooms and within specialist programs, provides the capacity for continued improvement at the school. The analysis of school data influenced the school’s decision to focus on numeracy as an aspect for further learning improvement. The school has selected a proven change process used successfully to embed improved literacy outcomes over time. The
leadership team and Governing Council representatives confirmed that the community is engaged in this current change process in support of these improvement efforts.

The development and implementation of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) was undertaken collaboratively by the leadership team and staff at the school. Staff members commented about their collaborative involvement during the External School Review. Robust processes were in place to collect and analyse student learning data across the school and include the identified priorities in the SIP. This was evident in the self review documentation and through the leadership team presentation. Staff, student and parent groups commented that learning data was used at the school and classroom levels to plan for the varied needs of learners. However, use of this data to establish a baseline for setting improvement targets was not evident in the school strategic plans.

Direction 1
Establish realistic school targets for achievement and growth against the DECD standards, so that they guide and model learning expectations between teachers and students at the classroom level.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The Review Panel noted the effective way in which students were engaged in the learning process. The student groups confirmed that teachers used student achievement information to cater for the varied needs of learners. The students commented that different learning groups existed in all classes and that learning goals were established and discussed with students. Students talked about what this looked like within their learning programs. This process was influential in developing positive mindsets of learners at the school, as was evident in student anecdotes, classroom observations and parent comments during the External School Review.

Student voice was an important contributor to learning conversations undertaken in classrooms across the school. Older students articulated language for learning through terms used such as ‘goal setting’, ‘feedback’, ‘prior knowledge’, ‘mental starters’ and ‘learning intentions’ as well as other technical language associated with literacy learning. Staff members’ comments reinforced this as a deliberate process and authentic way to encourage a broader base for student voice across the school. The Review Panel acknowledged this as a particular strength of the school’s improvement efforts to engage students further in their learning.

Leadership team members and teachers reinforced the importance of professional learning to further enhance their curriculum knowledge and teaching skills across all areas of the curriculum. Leadership team members, students and parents commented positively about the quality of teaching evident across the school. Staff members completed professional learning as one team and shared their learning with one another regularly. The Review Panel observed effective examples of this practice during the onsite review.

Observations by the Review Panel in classrooms confirmed the use of intentional strategies by teachers to support a range of learning needs. Tasks were differentiated for groups of learners and scaffolds were evident in classrooms to support student independence and problem-solving. This evidence confirmed the leadership team’s description of learning support and showed some differentiated teaching approaches used in the school. Through discussion with the Principal, it was agreed that the expansion of differentiated teaching with engaged and motivated students will be beneficial for getting and keeping students in higher proficiency bands of learning achievement.

Direction 2
Improve the proportion and retention of students in the higher bands of NAPLAN and Australian Curriculum by differentiating the learning for these identified students based on their individual learning goals.
To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Parents, students and staff commented positively about cultural diversity as a strong component of the school’s identity. A number of parents commented that this aspect was the reason for enrolling their children at the school. Students and parents confirmed that this inclusive school identity was significant in the creation of a safe, supportive and friendly school environment – one that exhibits few instances of bullying or harassment amongst the student body. This was confirmed in the data presented to the Review Panel.

There was evidence that the teachers and leadership team cater for the varied needs of learners within the school. Leaders, teachers and school services officers work collaboratively across classrooms and specialist programs to meet the cultural, language and learning needs presented in the student cohort. There was evidence presented to the Review Panel, that the professional learning needs of staff are planned and accommodated in alignment with the school’s improvement agenda.

The Australian Curriculum was used successfully to plan for the learning undertaken across the school. This was confirmed through school curriculum documentation and staff discussions. The school programmed for the delivery of a broad and balanced learning program. Whole school agreements for literacy and numeracy were in place to ensure consistency of curriculum design and delivery. Class planning folders confirmed planning against the Australian Curriculum and the use of assessment data to support planning for the needs of learners.

Teachers report to parents using the DECD agreed standards of A to E grades. Parent and student forums confirmed the use of this practice in reporting achievement. The use of formative assessment to guide learning for students, and in reporting to parents informally, was evident through student and parent discussions. Parents commented on the positive change in reporting over the past two years. According to parents, information about student progress and achievement has become more personalised in written reports. Parents commented that they learn about their child’s progress through personal connection with teachers, conversations with their children and through school communication channels.

Students commented about teachers providing timely and useful feedback with their learning. Students indicated that teachers provide ‘next steps’ for their learning and use ‘honest and direct feedback’ as successful strategies to support their learning. Teacher planning folders demonstrate that student assessment is used to guide the learning program and formation of classroom groupings.

Students engage with the explicit pedagogical structures and use meta-language for learning. Terms such as ‘orientation’, ‘sequencing’ and ‘learning intentions’ were used successfully with and by students in their literacy learning. Observations in classes confirmed that expectations in learning tasks are made explicit for students during lessons.

Staff members access and use various planning frameworks, programs and standardised assessments to support learning intervention across the school, particularly for learners experiencing difficulty. What was not evident during the review was a school focus on challenge for higher level learners. School performance data verified that students in the top proficiency bands of NAPLAN at Year 3 were not retained in the higher bands as they progressed through the school to Year 7. The school leadership team was aware of this trend and acknowledged this as an aspect for improvement.

**Direction 3**

Increase the challenge and rigor in the planned learning tasks to support more students to achieve at higher levels as measured by the Standard of Educational Achievement.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Richmond Primary School is tracking well. Good performance was evident through effective leadership and teaching, using ongoing and connected professional learning to improve student learning.

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

1. Establish realistic school targets for achievement and growth against the DECD standards, so that they guide and model learning expectations between teachers and students at the classroom level.
2. Improve the proportion and retention of students in the higher bands of NAPLAN and Australian Curriculum by differentiating the learning for these identified students based on their individual learning goals.
3. Increase the challenge and rigor in the planned learning tasks to support more students to achieve at higher levels as measured by the Standard of Educational Achievement.

Based on the school’s current performance, Richmond Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL 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.

Tracey Davies
PRINCIPAL
RICHMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson