

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Murray Bridge North School R-7

Conducted in March 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 Katherine Holman, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Graeme Fenton, 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
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Teachers.

School context

Murray Bridge North School R-7 caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 75kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 was 596. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 590. The local partnership is Murraylands.

The school has an ICSEA score of 910 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 12% Aboriginal students, 9% students with disabilities, 11% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 37% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of tenure, a Deputy Principal in the 1st year of tenure, 0.5 Curriculum Leader, Assistant Principal - Intervention, Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP), a Well-Being Coordinator and an Engagement Coordinator.

There are 46 Teachers including 9 in the early years of their careers and 24 Step 9 Teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Extend the level of student voice and responsibility for learning by increasing student involvement in high level opportunities that challenge, stretch and involve them in the development of success criteria and rubrics.**
- Direction 2** **Extend opportunities for staff and students to practice authentic feedback and feedforward (staff to staff, students to staff and staff to student) to develop common purpose and confidence in delivery of effective feedback throughout the learning process.**
- Direction 3** **Accelerate improvement in student achievement through a consistent and coherent approach to Professional learning and implementation of identified whole-school approaches.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?
Changes in leadership and direction have had significant impact on school culture. As such, there was not a lot reported about how the previous ESR directions had impacted on improvement. The focus since 2019 has been to re-establish a culture which fosters the conditions for learning and get whole-school ownership and connection to the Site Improvement Plan (SIP). While there was evidence in some classrooms of teachers using learning intentions, this was not consistent throughout the school.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

Intentional and strategic processes and structures are in place to provide connection and whole-school ownership and accountability for the achievement of the SIP. There is documented evidence demonstrating that staff engage with the improvement planning cycle. The leadership team are using evidence-based programs and the guidebooks to shape the improvement work. The establishment of the Management Committee has been a highly effective strategy in gaining greater connection with staff. It has also been effective in building trust, reshaping the culture of the school and giving all staff a voice and a vehicle for two-way feedback.

Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) are an integral structure to support the improvement journey and are driving implementation and collaboration of year level teams. The focus for learning sprints is aligned to the SIP goal to improve student achievement in reading. From student data, the PLGs identify an explicit teaching focus and track and monitor the impact of their teaching on student learning. This learning sprint is reviewed on a 5 week cycle. Some staff are feeling optimistic and motivated by the measurable and visible impact of their focused teaching on student learning outcomes. While this work is in early stages and there is a variance between the quality and commitment between PLGs, there is a genuine willingness to work together to improve teaching practice and student learning outcomes.

The school, through the Aboriginal Community Education Officers and Aboriginal Education Teacher, has put in place outstanding processes to track and monitor the growth in learning for Aboriginal students. The team also monitor engagement, attendance and support families to be connected to the school. Families do engage with the school in a variety of ways. Extensive datasets are kept as evidence of the effectiveness of the high impact strategies they use. All processes were transparent and success is celebrated. The program is highly connected to the community and valued by students and parents.

Direction 1 Continue to strengthen and embed school improvement processes and structures that make it clear to teachers what they need to do in the classroom to raise student achievement for all students.

Effective leadership

How effective are the school's professional learning and performance development processes in building teacher capacity?

An analysis of the department's School Performance Report demonstrates there is an urgency to improve learning outcomes for students as the school is currently sitting below like schools in student achievement on all measures.

There is discounting of the system data by some staff as they see the complex context of the school and the high degree of transience as the reason for low levels of achievement. Comparable schools with similar contexts also experience complex challenges. Closely monitoring data on a regular basis is assisting staff to start reflecting on their practice and make changes to improve student learning outcomes. Staff Performance and Development Plans (PDPs) are aligned to the SIP and along with presenting the work they do in their learning sprints to the whole school, provide accountability for performance.

There has been a variety of professional learning to further develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to teach reading. Staff were able to articulate changes they had made to their practice as a result of the professional development. The school is now in an exciting position to build on this work. Teachers were using data to identify gaps in learning focusing on phonics and the explicit instruction required to fill the gaps. A whole-school focus on teaching phonics was evident through classes and was also supported by an intervention program. For some groups the PLG learning sprints are seen as a very effective strategy to narrow the focus of their teaching and track and monitor learning outcomes.

The panel heard from students and staff there is not a focus on providing tasks which stretch and challenge students. The higher achieving students are not catered for adequately and are almost invisible in the learning. There is an opportunity to foreground the curriculum units and revisit task design, differentiating learning, clear learning intentions and succinct success criteria.

Direction 2 Use the curriculum resources developed by the Curriculum and Learning directorate to provide quality task design with multiple entry points to improve stretch and challenge.

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school provide and monitor a safe, supportive and respectful environment to maximise learning?

There have been significant changes to the culture of the school. This was evidenced through the perspective survey and by interviews conducted with the panel. There was a calm feeling around the school and the students in general were engaged and participating in the learning. However, students and staff said behaviour and students' lack of readiness for learning continue to be a disruption impacting on the ability to maintain a safe and respectful environment. Many of the learning environments were appealing, bright and had scaffolding to support students with their learning. Some classes had learning intentions displayed and students were able to talk about what the learning intentions were in interviews held by the panel. The Wellbeing and Intervention Team are committed to working together to coordinate strategies taking into account social and emotional needs as well as learning needs to support students and their families. Parents feel communication around learning and wellbeing could be better

The work being undertaken to build students' ability to utilise emotional regulation strategies is essential. This will require continuity and provision of professional development to build knowledge and staff capacity. The intentional and mindful implementation of practice that is trauma-informed, supports the development of emotional regulation and promotes a positive and optimistic mind set, would further build conditions for effective learning. It may be beneficial for consistency and continuity of learning to look at whole school approaches R to 7 as it was evident that the school still identifies itself as a Junior Primary and a Primary. Given that the discounting and deficit thinking was still evident in discussions about student achievement data, the can-do growth mind set is as relevant to staff thinking as it is for students.

There may be some opportunities to further develop the culture by creating a positive narrative around high expectations for learning across the whole school.

Direction 3 Improve conditions for effective student learning through a whole-school approach that raises staff, students and community expectations, optimism and belief in their ability to achieve.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The school is well-placed to accelerate learning outcomes for students. The leadership team have put into place strategic processes and structures to support greater connection to the SIP and an understanding of what the focus looks like for each year level. The school is using the improvement cycle to plan, track how they are going and identify next steps. School culture has had a significant improvement. The PLGs have become far more collaborative over the last three years and staff have a genuine commitment to improving teaching practice and student learning outcomes. The panel saw pockets of excellence in teaching practice and staff reported feeling supported by leadership. Staff also reported they felt empowered and their voices were being heard through participation on the Management Committee. The parents expressed their satisfaction with the school and noted there was more structure and higher expectation of learning in some year levels, particularly in reception. The students were happy and overwhelmingly thought the best thing about their school were the teachers which highlights the connection they have to the school. The higher achieving students the panel spoke to were extremely articulate and demonstrated a good understanding about their learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Continue to strengthen and embed school improvement processes and structures that make it clear to teachers what they need to do in the classroom to raise student achievement for all students.**
- Direction 2** **Use the curriculum resources developed by the Curriculum and Learning directorate to provide quality task design with multiple entry points to improve stretch and challenge.**
- Direction 3** **Improve conditions for effective student learning through a whole-school approach that raises staff, students and the community expectations, optimism and belief in their ability to achieve.**

Based on the school's current performance, Murray Bridge North School R-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Anne Millard
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James Parkin
Principal
Murray Bridge North School R-7

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 2019 45% of year 1 and 41% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate 63% of year 3 students, 68% of year 5 students and 46% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 this represents an improvement and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 5 and has been upwards from 45% to 68% and in year 7 the trend has been downwards from 63% to 46%.

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

Between 2017 and 2019 the school has consistently achieved lower in years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 24% of year 3, 13% of year 5 and 1% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change, for year 5 an improvement and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 35% or 6 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 9% or 1 out of 11 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 63% of year 3 students, 57% of year 5 students and 46% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

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

Between 2017 and 2019 the school has consistently achieved lower in years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019 11% of year 3, 4% of year 5 and 6% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents little or no change and for years 5 and 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend has been downwards from 7% to 4% in year 5 and from 11% to 6% in year 7.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 33% or 3 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 44% or 4 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.