

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Karcultaby Area School

Conducted in November 2017



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.

The External School Review Process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are adhered to and implemented. This information is provided in Appendix One of the report.

This External School Review was conducted by Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Mark Vincent, Review Principal.

School context

Karcultaby Area School caters for children and young people from Reception to Year 12, with a preschool on-site, and 2 sub-schools: Primary (Reception to Year 5) and Secondary (Years 6 to 12).

The school is situated 600kms north-west of Adelaide, and is part of the Far West Partnership. The enrolment in 2017 is 63 students. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1068.

The school population includes 2 Aboriginal students, 7 students with a verified disability, 7 students eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background, and no students in care. Enrolment has been steady since 2012, although this has declined significantly from 232 in 1977 when the school was established.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of her five-year tenure at the school, and a Coordinator: Teaching and Learning. There are 10 teachers (8.0FTE), including 1 in the early years of their career (third year) and 1 Step 9 teacher.

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 three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

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

Effective Leadership: How effectively does the school's strategic direction impact on learning outcomes?

Improvement Agenda: To what extent does the school monitor students' achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

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

Through this line of inquiry the panel explored ways in which intellectual stretch and challenge are understood in the school by teachers, and the impact these understandings are having on the quality of learning design.

Teachers said that through work with the maths consultant and other partnership training, their awareness about the significance of intellectual stretch and challenge has been raised. Every teacher could identify a teaching practice for intellectual stretch and challenge. These included: critical literacy, drafting and grading student responses to feedback; links to real-life and student interests; project-based work; bookmaking in science; daily 'brain busters'; use of digital technologies; and play-based learning.

Most teachers referred to the use of rubrics for assessment and planning, and Middle School students talked to the panel about the value of rubrics. However, in class visits, the panel saw little evidence of rubrics being used; nor did primary students refer to them.

Parents said that the school has a history of producing students with high academic outcomes. They said that they feel confident that all teachers at the school are skilled and effective. Primary students interviewed by the panel said that they are going well in their learning, although the work is easy and often involves worksheets.

Students told the panel that they value hands-on learning, being creative, working in groups, applying learning in new contexts, real-life learning, and cross-age learning. They said that the school provides them

with all of these opportunities for learning. However, students said that they would appreciate greater use of challenging hands-on learning, and some teachers only do this occasionally.

Secondary students identified that there are many opportunities for cross-age learning that could be seized. Students said that teachers could respond more effectively to having many year levels in one class, by providing learning opportunities that enable students to work together to apply skills to creative and problem-solving challenges. Students value their multi-aged classes and would like teachers to harness the opportunities for collaborative, cross-age learning that it offers. Teachers said that the expertise of some students in the use of digital technologies was significant, and should be capitalised on by both the teacher and other students.

Students gave examples of their agency in learning, such as, choice of topics, how they are assessed, and in the use of rubrics. However, these practices are not consistent across the school. Teachers, students and parents indicated that more cultural perspectives could also be incorporated into task design. Students, parents and teachers said that through stretch and challenge students are becoming more resilient and courageous in their learning.

Parents value the range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school offers, and students recognise the number of opportunities and experiences the school makes available to them.

Whilst there is an identifiable mechanism for enabling student voice in the life of the school, through the PAT and SAT teams, the panel thought this was an area that could be enhanced.

The panel concluded that the school has identified that pedagogies need to be improved to enable reliable and consistent stretch and challenge for all students. The school has successfully impacted to some degree on teaching practice through its strategic actions in 2017. Students are unanimous in wanting to learn in ways that always challenge and engage them. Staff recognise the value of changing their practices. However, the panel concluded that it remains a task for the school to embed these quality practices in the daily work in each classroom.

Direction 1

Plan, implement and evaluate a coherent school-wide approach to building teacher capacity in quality teaching practices.

How effectively does the school's strategic direction impact on learning outcomes?

Through this line of inquiry the panel evaluated the degree to which a whole-school approach to improving learning through intentional common actions has been effective.

The school has focused on developing common teaching elements and to foster collaboration between staff. The intent of this is to improve teaching practice across the school through the use of pedagogies for engagement. A whole-school statement about this has been developed, called *The Learning Process*. Whilst the value of the document was apparent to the panel, no teacher referred to it directly in discussions with the panel.

The school has had a whole-school focus on improving student achievement and engagement in maths and numeracy learning. Through the partnership, the school has worked with an expert coach who has supported teachers to improve their maths/numeracy practices, by way of a focus on the language of numeracy, normalising the making of mistakes, deeper open-ended questioning, and use of problem-solving and open-ended tasks. The work in numeracy has been complemented by *Results Plus* working in hubs, learning design, and motivation of students.

Teachers provided evidence of changes to their practice as a result of coaching and partnership work. The coaching has been especially effective in primary maths teaching, and secondary humanities and English. As well, these teachers have applied their increased understandings to other areas of the curriculum. However, this uptake is not consistent across the school. Secondary students reported high levels of dissatisfaction with ongoing, common textbook learning in maths and science. Teachers reported that they have difficulties in applying pedagogies for engagement because of the multi-year level classes they have to teach.

Teachers said that they value the feedback from colleagues on their personal learning, as well as the coaching in numeracy, which has significantly changed their skills. Networking and hub work is also valued by teachers as support for them in changing their practices. Working in the Partnership on Pupil Free Days, and moderation have also been influential. Additionally, the use of staff meeting times and performance and development meetings are making learning coherent for staff, with direct links to the SIP.

The school has developed and implemented a *Learning Plan* process. Each student is involved in setting goals for improvement based on learning data and discussions in a 3-way meeting with a parent and the teacher. This process is highly progressive and innovative. Teachers collate the goals for students in their class and use a traffic light system to review achievement of the goals. The proforma for the *Learning Plan* has been modified in response to feedback that was sought from families, students and teachers. It is planned to include attendance in the *Learning Plan* template next year.

Staff and primary students said that the *Learning Plans* are positive and helpful. They said that the plan tells them how they are going, and students talked to the panel about their goals. Teachers said that the plan helps them know their students better, and that it engages parents more positively and proactively in the learning of their child/young person. However, students struggle at times to engage in the interviews about goal-setting and review, and it is recommended that the students' skills in goal-setting are explicitly and regularly developed. Parents also said they would like greater alignment of the interview with the information in student reports. Secondary teachers are still finding that the *Learning Plan* method does not meet all of their needs, and that it requires some further modifications to better match the learning program of secondary students.

Professional learning and performance and development have been 'intentionalised' for School Services Officers (SSOs) to support the realisation of the SIP targets. SSOs told the panel they have noticed changes to teachers' practices and these changes have been effective in engaging more students.

An audit of the SIP during the staff meeting showed that staff commitment was considered by staff to be the most achieved 2017 SIP target. However, the view of the panel was that the 2017 SIP is crowded with 5 targets, and 29 success indicators.

In conclusion, the panel found significant amounts of evidence that teaching is being reformed to increase student challenge in learning. However, parents and the school are not together on what constitutes quality teaching and learning programs. It is important that the school narrows its improvement focus and connects better with parents so that they understand the purpose and value of changing teaching practices to ways that are always stretching and engaging for students.

Direction 2

Ensure parents and families are fully engaged as partners in the school's full range of pedagogies that deliver high levels of student interest and motivation for all groups of students.

To what extent does the school monitor students' achievement and review effectiveness of improvement processes and strategies?

Through this line of inquiry the panel investigated the degree to which the school is using an evidence-base to identify priorities for improvement, and in self-evaluation of its improvement efforts.

A requirement of all teachers this year has been for them to seek and receive some form of feedback from a colleague. Some teachers chose to seek feedback about their planning, some chose to have an aspect of their teaching observed. Seeking and responding to feedback from students about teaching has also been a focus. Students said that some teachers do seek feedback from them, and teachers respond to the feedback they have been given by students. However, students said that not all teachers seek feedback, and sometimes do not respond to it. Parents said that the school seeks and responds to feedback from families about processes, such as the Learning Plan process for parent-student-teacher interviews.

The school has identified student wellbeing as a future focus and priority for change. The school is intending to replace its leadership position in teaching and learning with a Coordinator: Engagement and Wellbeing.

A program to improve social and emotional self-management has been introduced in a primary class where conflict issues between students have presented. This program seems to teachers to be having a positive impact on the localised issues in this class; however, their view is based on anecdotal information. The panel did not find that a strong evidence-base is being used to target improvements in student wellbeing matters. The relocation of Year 6 students into the secondary structure of the school should be reviewed using evidence to ensure the best outcomes are able to be achieved for these students.

The school has a clear whole-school map for assessment and data collection. Data is stored electronically on a teacher-shared network drive that makes it accessible. There are plans to put the rubric assessments onto this drive so that teachers can add this information to the tracking and monitoring of learning growth. This indicates a move towards more nuanced use of data. Data is being used in the *Learning Plan* process.

However, teachers did not refer to the use of student learning data to monitor learning growth at a class level, or to 'intentionalise' teaching. Teachers are making inconsistent and minimum use of an evidence-base to plan and monitor the ongoing impact of their teaching.

The panel concluded that there is a need in the school to develop a deeper understanding of the significance and value of data. The school is well-placed to make greater use of an evidence-based approach to decision-making, target-setting and review. A next step for the school is to upskill students and families, as well as teachers, in the value of and application of data to setting goals and making actions more intentional and purposeful. Developing student skills in the setting and review of goals will be enabled through regular references to the learning intentions and success criteria of learning tasks. Ensuring that all strategic decisions are informed by an evidence-base so that improvements can be quantified and demonstrated will strengthen the rigour and professionalism of the school. This needs to be done for all future improvement initiatives, including the work of the new Student Engagement and Wellbeing Coordinator.

Direction 3

Use data to measure teacher and school performance at class and site levels, to identify areas for improvement, inform strategies and monitor progress towards and achievement of stated growth targets.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Karcultaby Area School.

Beliefs about learning are articulated to guide curriculum planning and pedagogy. The school has created a concept titled *The Learning Process: Guiding Principles for Learning*. This document is a one-page diagrammatic representation of common teaching principles and elements. It is based on the TfEL Framework and provides a very clear conceptualisation of teaching and learning, and the dynamics of the interrelationships between teachers' intentions and actions, and student engagement in the learning design. This document is a useful blueprint to underpin future coaching of teachers at Karcultaby Area School.

Students engage with data to develop SMART goal-setting for improvements in personal learning. The school has reformed its parent-teacher interview process through several iterations over the past 2 years. The process now includes the student in the interview, as well as giving the parents an active role. The intention of this reform work has been to harness the collective agency of the parent, student, and teacher/s to improve a student's mindset about their own learning. The process includes the use of student achievement data to inform personal student goal-setting. This process is progressive and, with further refinements and upskilling of teachers, students and parents, has the potential to add significantly to improved student learning at Karcultaby Area School.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

At Karcultaby Area School, effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning.

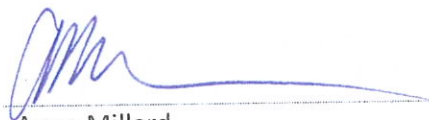
The Principal will work with the Education Director to implement the following Directions:

1. Plan, implement and evaluate a coherent school-wide approach to building teacher capacity in quality teaching practices.
2. Ensure parents and families are fully engaged as partners in the school's full range of pedagogies that deliver high levels of student interest and motivation for all groups of students.
3. Use data to measure teacher and school performance at class and site levels, to identify areas for improvement, inform strategies and monitor progress towards and achievement of stated growth targets.

Based on the school's current performance, Karcultaby Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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 three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.



Louise Watson
PRINCIPAL
KARCULTABY AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix One

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Karcultaby Area 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 2016 was 93.3%.

Appendix Two

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD 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 Karcultaby Area School over the years 2013 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 2013 and 2017, 73% (19 of 26) of Year 1 and 63% (15 of 24) of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Between 2013 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 78% (22 of 27) of Year 3 students, 71% (15 of 21) of Year 5 students, 79% (19 of 24) of Year 7 students, and 81% (21 of 26) of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Between 2013 and 2017, 56% of Year 3, 33% (15 of 27) of Year 5, 17% (4 of 24) of Year 7, and 23% (6 of 26) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

Numeracy

Between 2013 and 2017 the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 85% (23 of 27) of Year 3 students, 67% (14 of 21) of Year 5 students, 76% (19 of 25) of Year 7 students, and 77% (20 of 26) of Year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA.

Between 2013 and 2017, 47% (14 of 27) of Year 3, 19% (4 of 21) of Year 5, 21% (5 of 24) of Year 7, and 15% (4 of 26) of Year 9 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

SACE

In terms of SACE completion in 2014-16, 100% of students enrolled in February and 100% of those enrolled in October, who had the potential to complete their SACE did go on to successfully achieve their SACE.

For compulsory SACE Stage 1 and 2 subjects in 2014-16, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan, 100% of students successfully completed their Stage 1 Literacy units, 100% successfully completed their Stage 1 Numeracy units, and 100% successfully completed their Stage 2 Research Project.

One hundred percent of grades achieved in the 2014-16 SACE Stage 2 were C- or higher. For attempted Stage 2 SACE subjects in 2016, 14% (1 of 7) of students achieved an 'A' Grade, and 71% (5 of 7) achieved a 'B' Grade.