

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Laura Primary School

Conducted in May 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

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 Simon Harding, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Lissa Hutter, Review Principal.

School context

Laura Primary School is located 213kms north of Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2018 is 85 students, and 13 preschool students. The enrolment has fluctuated over the last 5 years. The school had officially amalgamated with Wirrabara Primary School and Laura Preschool Centre at the beginning of 2018.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1048, and is classified as Category 5 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students with 1 student in the preschool, 6% students with disabilities, and 19% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of her tenure at the site and an early years leader (Band 1), employed for 2018, to work across the preschool and school assisting with the transition of the preschool amalgamating with the school. There are 6.6 FTE teachers including 1 early career teacher. The school utilises 117 schools services officers' hours and 119 early childhood worker hours.

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 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

Student Learning:	To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?
Improvement Agenda:	How effectively are data and evidence-based discussions used to inform and build a culture of continuous improvement?
School Community Partnerships:	How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

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

When staff focus on high expectations for students and deliver high-quality learning tasks with the aim to stretch and challenge students, opportunities to maximise learning can be realised by students. Developing the students' confidence to take risks in their learning will benefit outcomes for student learning.

The learning data collected at a system level over time indicates that high percentages of students at Laura Primary School are achieving at or above the expected Standard of Educational Achievement. In addition, data demonstrates that, over 3 years, more than 30% of year 3 students achieved in the higher bands, with 67% being represented in 2017. Recent results across the school have demonstrated significant gains in students attaining SEA and those represented in the higher bands. The school should be commended on these results, which provide it with a solid base to strengthen strategies to stretch and challenge students in their learning.

The students valued and respected staff; they are happy at school and see it as a place for learning. The majority of older students indicated that 'learning new things' was most important, and clearly articulated their justifications, including "it's not about the grade, it's about the effort" and "when you learn something new, you've got it". Younger students talked about 'making new friends' being most important, as "you need to have friends to be happy at school and this helps to make you learn better".

Students interviewed indicated that around 20% of their work, over any given week, was hard. They could provide the panel with a range of strategies they use to work through harder learning. The school has acknowledged that, at times, complacency and compliance can be an issue for students, as is taking intellectual risks necessary to optimise their learning.

It is important to act on these perceptions, so as to not restrict students from achieving the high standards which data indicates they are capable of. The strategic and regular implementation and review of perception data around how students believe they best learn will continue to inform both students and staff in their next steps for learning. Linking this to a whole-school approach to develop and embed growth mindset language and actions, will enable students to further build a range of skills and strategies to sustain positive learning dispositions.

Parents believed one of the strengths of the school was how well staff knew their child and the genuine interest they take in every child. They stated it was one of the reasons for choosing the school, along with the focus on learning and how students engaged with learning.

Teachers articulated their own personal understandings of what intellectual stretch and engagement mean, and provided examples of the strategies they employ with their students. They are professional and collaborative in their approach towards improvement in this area, and towards delivery of quality practice, which is based on research and evidence.

The review panel confirmed that the students and teachers have further capacity to draw upon to achieve high-level outcomes. Through a focused and strategic whole-school approach of building common understandings and practices of intellectual stretch, students' achievement will be further strengthened.

Direction 1

Implement consistent and coherent teaching strategies across the school, which effectively integrate and embed intellectual stretch and challenge for students into daily classroom teaching and learning.

How effectively are data and evidence-based discussions used to inform and build a culture of continuous improvement?

There is a strong culture throughout the school community that places the child at the centre of everything the school does. Staff regularly discuss their work inclusive of how students are progressing both formally and informally. The panel found the staff seeking opportunities to willingly work in collaboration with colleagues to improve their practice, with the aim of improving learning outcomes for students. Teachers understand the importance of data-informed planning and learning.

The principal shared the recent journey of a number of changes of leadership and staff resilience in providing a positive learning environment for students where they could be successful. More recently, data has become central to self-review processes. The new priority focused on writing, in conjunction with further development in oral language, was identified from reviewing data and recognising further professional learning was needed to guide students' improvement in this area. Staff talked positively about the professional learning they had undertaken as part of the Brightpath trial in 2017 and work on this into 2018. They continued to implement improved practices, including moderating writing samples

more effectively, and making more accurate teacher judgements when assessing student writing samples. There was some evidence of teachers using individual goal-setting in relation to writing.

When discussing the use of data at a class and cohort level, teachers referred to grouping students and some goal-setting. There is some use of PAT and NAPLAN data to establish both groups and starting points. Individual teachers use a variety of diagnostic assessment data to support learning and modify teaching strategies. The use of systems data, NAPLAN, PAT-R and PAT-M, and cross-referencing with class datasets, inclusive of A-E grades, varied across the site. Further work in this area would strengthen the capacity of staff to triangulate datasets. Sharing of what constitutes an A through to an E grade at each level with the school community will support congruence and clarity for all stakeholders.

Teachers stated that importance of differentiation in their planning and practice has a positive impact on individual student growth. They shared some examples of working towards this in the classrooms, such as the 'I do, we do, you do' model, adjustments to the program, more visuals in maths, rotating group activities, and writing year level objectives on the board and referring to them each lesson. There are further opportunities for teachers to explore and build consistent approaches in relation to differentiation to best meet the learning needs of students across the school, focusing on each child working towards making at least 12 months' learning growth each year.

Parents were highly supportive of teachers and their knowledge of the students. They are aware of individual student goals for their child, and goals shared at parent-teacher interviews; however, some parents expressed the desire to have a higher level of consultation/input into learning goals.

Every student benefits from regular feedback about their learning. Effective feedback includes the identification of what students are doing well, what the areas for improvement are and the strategies they could use to make that improvement. Students could articulate strategies to assist them to know how well they are doing in their learning. Some students mentioned their learning goals and ways their teacher assists them to improve such as "give hints", "focus on your goals", and "when teachers mark your work and you get full marks". Students are aware of their responsibility in their learning and the benefits of working hard.

Use of data across the school varied amongst the staff. The principal shared that there has been some resistance in displaying student data, and the new initiative of releasing teachers to meet with students individually to discuss their progress. The notion of building capacity of staff to access, collate and analyse data independently to inform whole-school planning and classroom practice is to be commended. It is important to build clear and agreed practices across the school in the use of data, both for planning of innovative learning/task design and sharing with students to strengthen their voice in the establishment and monitoring of their individual learning goals.

Direction 2

Strengthen the capacity of teachers to effectively use a range of student data to explicitly inform innovative learning design, differentiation and clarity of judgements for all stakeholders while building student understanding and ownership of their data for continuous learning improvement.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning and throughout the school?

Students were enthusiastic in their discussions and eager to talk about their school and learning. They could clearly articulate how they best learn and what impacts positively on their learning. Students

believed they have good teachers who motivate them to learn. When discussing their learning there was some evidence of students having choice in their topics.

When asked about what they believed they were good at, many students indicated subjects related to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Students could also identify a variety of strategies teachers use to assist them to improve. Older students shared the positive impact goal-setting has on their learning, how these are established and how they have some input into the goals. Goals are then shared with parents at parent-teacher interviews. They also shared the idea of constructive criticism, small goals set during lessons, and reflection on what they could do better next time.

Younger students shared ideas such as “getting work marked and getting full marks” and the “teacher provides us with hints not the answer”. Teachers stated they are continuing to develop their skills and knowledge in providing students with clear and effective feedback in a variety of ways, at different points/stages during the learning process that better optimises the learning opportunities for students.

However, the process of working with students on individual goal-setting across the school was not consistent. There was some evidence of teachers celebrating with students when they achieve one of their goals. Some students shared how they talked through the goals with their teacher, others wrote up short-term goals based on a piece of work to reflect on, prior to the next piece of writing.

Improved individual achievement would be gained through a more consistent approach and focus on individual goal-setting, along with building and capitalising on the capacity of students and parents to contribute positively in the process of developing, monitoring and celebrating the achievement of goals. This would also provide parents with enhanced clarity of the *next steps* in their child’s learning.

Parents valued the interview and reporting processes the school offered, and teachers were approachable and willing to make time to discuss the progress of their child. Parents were also keen for their children to have input into their learning and more opportunities to follow their interests in their learning.

Teachers recognised that feedback from students on teaching and planning was limited across the school. Teachers stated that they are beginning to incorporate this aspect into their planning. There was some evidence of student surveys and verbal feedback. Skills and knowledge of differentiated learning strategies is varied across the staff, and student goal-setting was part of practice in most classes.

Teacher professional learning in relation to a deeper understanding of student influence at the planning stages of learning has the potential to raise intellectual stretch and challenge for students across the curriculum. Strategic work across the site focusing on learning design, inclusive of embedding processes where all students have regular opportunities to discuss and demonstrate ‘how’ they learn, will further strengthen teacher understanding of the student as a learner. Strengthening learning as a two-way process, inclusive of student feedback about the ‘how’ of learning, will provide students at all levels of schooling with an authentic voice and ownership of their learning.

Embedding student voice in learning, including decision-making in pedagogical and assessment design would deepen the quality of student learning, achieving increased ownership, stretch and levels of higher-band retention.

Direction 3

Strengthen student agency in developing clear understandings of learning intentions and engagement with feedback, data and evidence that embeds clear individual goal-setting across the school.

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 Laura Primary School.

Effective practice in the development of a strong positive identity and sense of belonging by all stakeholders was evident at the school. The positive identity and sense of belonging has been influenced by the principal's effective leadership, along with staff and school community, to bring together the amalgamation of the 3 sites, leading to an improved sense of belonging of all students and their families. In particular, the panel noted the positive and supportive school culture across all stakeholders that has led students and the school community coming together with a shared vision and a focus on learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Laura Primary School works in partnership with parents and stakeholders, and the demonstrated growth in student achievement is at or above what would be reasonably expected of a school in a similar context.

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

1. Implement consistent and coherent teaching strategies across the school, which effectively integrate and embed intellectual stretch and challenge for students into daily classroom teaching and learning.
2. Strengthen the capacity of teachers to effectively use a range of student data to explicitly inform innovative learning design, differentiation and clarity of judgements for all stakeholders, while building student understanding and ownership of their data for continuous learning improvement.
3. Strengthen student agency in developing clear understandings of learning intentions and engagement with feedback, data and evidence that embeds clear individual goal-setting across the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Laura 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.



Prue Hunter
PRINCIPAL
LAURA 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 95%.

Appendix 2

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 2017, 67% of year 1 and 71% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents little or no change for year 1 and an improvement for year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of year 3, 5 and 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools in years 3, 5 and 7.

In 2017, 59% of year 3, 75% of year 5 and 75% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and for year 5, this represents an improvement trend from nil percent in 2015 to 75% in 2017.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100%, or all 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or the 1 student from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 94% of year 3, 100% of year 5, and 100% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents little or no change, and for years 5 and 7, the result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2017 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools in years 3 and 5 and similar in year 7.

In 2017, 65% of year 3, 25% of year 5 and 100% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend has been upwards for year 3 students only from 30% in 2015 to 65% in 2017.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33% or 1 student from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or the 1 student from year 3 remains in the upper bands at year 7 in 2017.

