

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

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Report for Curramulka Primary School

Conducted in August 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sharron Ward, Review Principal.*

## School context

Curramulka Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 186kms west of Adelaide in the township of Curramulka. The school has a current enrolment of 29 students showing a steady enrolment growth. The school has an ICSEA score of 1022, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5 (17%) Aboriginal students, 2 (7%) students with disabilities, no students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1 (3%) child in care, and 30% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her final year of tenure. There are no other school leaders. There are 2 teachers (2FTE).

## 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 Teaching:** To what extent is questioning used to guide learning design and teaching practice?

**Improvement Agenda:** To what extent does the school make data-informed judgements about teaching and student learning?

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

Curramulka Primary School supports 29 students from 15 families. The Review Panel met with parents representing 6 families. Curramulka Primary School has a strong sense of community, and the school is seen as a significant focal point for the broader community. All commented on the strong support for school events and activities that promote and support extended learning opportunities. Parents shared examples of ways that they work in partnership with the school staff to support their child, especially in community events. Governing Council members reported that they feel included in all matters related to the school. The parents' understanding of the use of student achievement data to support and direct the learning programs was very evident. The consensus was that all staff are accessible, listening and responding when issues arise. Parents identified the school motto of *Small school – Strong team* as the soul of the school and its community.

The students valued and respected all staff, are happy to be at school, and enjoy being with their friends. The students from Reception to Year 7 (R-7) identified maths and science as strengths in their learning. The Early Years students provided writing examples that demonstrated good levels of structure, and they were able to articulate their learning within this work. All of the students thought that their learning was "interesting". Primary Years students identified the arts (drama and music) as a valued part of their curriculum and wanted this to be integrated into the weekly timetable.

Student voice is recognised, with student involvement in events as a major part of their school community participation. Students who spoke with the Review Panel were very articulate about their learning and clear about where their strengths and areas for improvement are. Some of the Primary Years students recognised that their work is scaffolded, so that it "starts easy and then gets harder", and indicated that over a school week, about 60% of their work makes them "think harder". Steps have been initiated to

enable the students to take ownership of their learning through the SMART tool, so they can develop their own short and long-term learning goals.

In her presentation to the Review Panel, the Principal identified the challenge of 'raising the bar' in relation to building the resilience of students. The school has used several programs to support student resilience, and now has consolidated its approach through Play is the Way methodology for teaching social and emotional skills. The Principal also indicated that there was a need to improve the students' skills in literacy.

Next steps include developing common understandings for all students, parents and staff, that intellectual stretch does not equate to just the provision of work at a higher year level, and that intellectual stretch is applicable to all students and across all areas of learning.

Opportunities for students to be intellectually stretched in their learning results from the development of tasks that provide different perspectives and levels of understanding, which are designed for students to think. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks is important work for the school to undertake.

**Direction 1**

**Continue to implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.**

**To what extent is questioning used to guide learning design and teaching practice?**

Reading and numeracy levels are strong at all year levels at Curramulka Primary School. The explicit teaching of reading is evident across Reception to Year 7, and is being taught consistently. Student reading is assessed regularly by teachers and supported by School Services Officers (SSO) and community volunteers. There is some evidence of data being regularly analysed by teachers to identify the next teaching points and to differentiate instruction.

Student achievement is compared from year-to-year to identify trends and monitor growth. The school has a documented assessment schedule that focuses on literacy and numeracy. Formal assessments, such as PAT-M and PAT-R, are analysed to look for gaps in the students' knowledge and skills. This information is used to plan intervention support for targeted students. There is a school-wide focus on reading due to an inconsistent approach being identified in 2016.

There is some evidence of the use of *Learning Intentions* and *Success Criteria* in lesson planning and processes in the classroom. Recent professional learning activities in STEM methodology and its integration in the curriculum were valued by teachers. The staff commented on how they could use this understanding to modify their lesson planning.

Historically, the use of effective questioning and student involvement in their learning has been a challenge for many students. In recent times, teachers and students have been working with the concept of growth mindsets, and are starting to use the language that promotes positive learning. Staff have valued the professional learning offered through the Partnership, particularly in task design and assessment.

Using student voice and co-design, in their own and each other's learning, including in pedagogical and assessment design and decision-making, would deepen and enrich the quality of student learning and strengthen higher-band achievement and retention.

**Direction 2**

**Strengthen the student influence in developing clear understandings of learning intentions and engagement with feedback, data and evidence that enables individual goal-setting.**

### To what extent does the school make data-informed judgements about teaching and student learning?

The Site Improvement Plan focuses on literacy and numeracy improvements, with specific emphasis on understanding textual information in reading and foundational knowledge in numeracy. The SIP specifies that teachers will develop a consistent plan to share data with individual students, and a whole-school approach to provide student feedback in these two areas.

The Principal and staff are open to learning and are beginning to use data in a strategic manner. They recognise the connection between the school's strategic goals and the use of data to provide a focus for planning. Regular staff meeting discussions are focused on analysis of student data from various assessments, including NAPLAN, Running Records, PAT tests, Westwood Spelling and Waddington Reading.

Historically, there was no particular clear intervention processes used at the school. However, during the past 3 years, intervention programs have been strengthened throughout the school, and specifically target students at risk. Student assessment data in literacy is the driving force behind the intervention program, and is managed by the Principal, in consultation with the teachers and SSOs. This student progress information is regularly shared both formally and informally across the staff and acted upon accordingly.

The school uses the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) perception data to identify student engagement and dispositions. The data recognises that the students are engaged in their learning with strong responses in their willingness to put in more effort to master skills, achieve academic success and have a strong belief in their academic ability.

Professional Learning uses a variety of data-informed processes and feedback to assess teaching and learning across the school. Teachers spoke honestly when assigning A-E grades for student achievement against the Australian Curriculum standards. This was being addressed through the schools' involvement in a Partnership professional learning program in moderation and task design. The student groups also spoke of their grade scores, but were unable to clearly articulate how to move from a 'C' to a 'B' or an 'A'. All members of the school community, especially students, will benefit from seeing and knowing what the 'A', 'B' and 'C' standard looks like in a specific learning task or activity, and how to achieve the desired grade.

It has been recognised that the school does use information from a variety of datasets to support and plan for student learning, particularly those students with identified learning difficulties. The next phase of the school's future planning would be to develop learning agreements and processes to cater for the abilities of all students R-7.

#### **Direction 3**

**Further develop staff competence in analysing measures of learning data and use of data to plan effective pedagogies and self-review to support curriculum change.**

### 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 Curramulka Primary School.

**The Curramulka Primary School learning intervention program is very comprehensive and productive.** Based on achievement data, the school has targeted reading as the main focus for literacy intervention. The school has identified daily reading for all students and has adopted the intervention program 'Reading Doctor' to support targeted students. This program has been very successful with sustainable support from SSOs and volunteers from the wider community. Complementing the reading focus is the individual learning program in spelling for all students R-7.

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

Curramulka Primary School provides effective leadership in strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions for a diverse and complex student population. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative planning.

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

1. Continue to implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.
2. Strengthen the student influence in developing clear understandings of learning intentions and engagement with feedback, data and evidence that enables individual goal setting.
3. Further develop staff competence in analysing measures of learning data and use of data to plan effective pedagogies and self-review to support curriculum change.

Based on the school's current performance, Curramulka Primary 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.

Rosie Harden  
PRINCIPAL  
CURRAMULKA PRIMARY 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 Curramulka Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

#### Aspect of Learning Improvement

That the teachers access the professional learning program that supports the implementation of the materials, before delivering the Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum.

That Individual Learning Plans be developed for all Aboriginal students and children in care.

That the school implements the Aboriginal Strategy 2013-2016.

#### Aspect of School Organisation

That the school develops and implements a Camps and Excursions Policy.

Awareness of *Suitability Clause* in EDSAS Purchase Order when booking camps.

#### Aspect of Safety

That the school has implemented a Volunteer Policy that accords with DECD guidelines.

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 91.9%.

## 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 Curramulka Primary School over the years 2012 to 2016. 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

Between 2013 and 2016, the reading progress using the Running Records achievement data, indicates that 5 of 8 Year 1 students, and 8 of 11 Year 2 students have demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Between 2013 and 2016, the reading progress, as measured by NAPLAN, indicates that 12 of 14 Year 3 students, 13 of 18 Year 5 students, and 10 of 11 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Between 2013 and 2016, 6 of 14 Year 3 students, 4 of 18 Year 5 students, and 3 of 11 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 1 out of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5, and 1 out of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.

### **Numeracy**

Between 2013 and 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 13 of 14 Year 3 students, 15 of 18 Year 5 students, and 10 of 11 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Between 2013 and 2016, 11 of 14 Year 3 students, 6 of 18 Year 5 students, and 6 of 11 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 2 of 9 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5, and 1 of 5 students from Year 3 remains in the upper bands in Year 7 in 2016.