



EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools Division

Report for Mawson Lakes School

Conducted in June 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 June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Sue Mittiga and Tracy Davies, Review Principals.

School context

Mawson Lakes School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 12kms north of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Hollywood Lakes and Gardens Partnership. In 2016, 802 students were enrolled. Due to significant increases in enrolment, from 613 to 802, the school now has a Capacity Management plan actioned this year. The school has an ICSEA score of 1070, and is classified as Category 7 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1.1% Aboriginal students, 3.2% students with disabilities, 52.3% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 25% of families eligible for School Card assistance. Forty-six different nationalities are represented at the school, with Asian and British being predominant.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the third year of his first tenure, a Deputy Principal in her third tenure and two senior leaders.

The school is in close proximity to the University of South Australia offering staff and students varying opportunities to work together.

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?

School Community Partnerships: How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Improvement Agenda: To what extent is there a culture of continuous improvement across the school?

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

Mawson Lakes School is focusing on accelerating the percentage of students achieving and being retained in higher proficiency bands. This priority was evident in the leadership presentation, and verified consistently by staff and students in both documentation and conversations. The Review Panel acknowledges the professionalism displayed by staff which was evidenced throughout the review. All staff members have high expectations for themselves and their students. The level of mutual trust and respect between leadership and staff was clear. Staff and students commented on the visibility of leaders and the common dialogue to improve learning.

As a result of the lower levels of student achievement in mathematics, the school invested financially to develop a consistent school focus in the Natural Maths model. Ongoing professional development built staff capacity, and this was supported by collective and individual expectations that the model will be enacted in classroom practices. Students confidently articulated their understanding, growth and positive engagement in mathematics. They described the use of rainbow facts, mental routines, problematised situations and reflection to help their learning improvement. Some students reflected on a new awareness of the connectedness to reading comprehension and how this is helping them to work out written problems in maths. As indicated by the achievement data in Appendix 2 of this report, this will require ongoing work to ensure teaching and learning strategies are well-embedded into daily practices.

The Review Panel sought clarification as to how students were engaging in learning and the extent that all students are being supported and catered for. The Review Panel was able to verify that there is an

expectation of student growth regardless of any educational disadvantage. Intervention occurs primarily in classes ensuring high-level participation in class learning. Maximising the flexible learning options in classes complemented the high degree of active participation in learning. The Review Panel saw students participating in explicit whole class instruction, group learning, peer work and independent learning.

The degree of differentiation for learning and assessment varies significantly. Staff spoke of the use of multiple entry and exit points to enable students to engage in learning at their level of readiness. Students appeared to understand and accept the effort required from them to improve their learning: "In the subjects I don't really like, I really need to put a lot of effort to concentrate and improve" and "I know I don't put in the same effort into the areas I like because it seems easy".

At the staff meeting teachers were asked to work in groups and discuss the barriers for continuous improvement. Comments indicated there has been more emphasis placed on students with low achievement, resulting in high achievers not being sufficiently enriched or challenged. Whilst teachers were able to explain what differentiation is, the level of rigour in their planning and practice was not as evident. Staff comments indicated their preference for a specialised 'gifted and talented' program rather than the possibilities to engage students through higher levels of questioning within the classroom, which will promote and challenge critical thinking and problem-solving.

Critical to providing opportunities for students to stretch their intellectual thinking is the task design. Moderation processes and the highly evident level of professionalism amongst staff, will enable teachers to openly and honestly critique their task design and success criteria.

Some students spoke of 'next steps' and how their teachers are supporting them through providing feedback to increase their learning levels. Many students spoke of success criteria in the form of rubrics and how they support students to know what is expected. The Review Panel noted the varying levels of effective feedback being provided to students to support and motivate them in their learning. Students shared examples of feedback, such as "good work", "well done" and "keep trying". When asked how they knew if they're improving, student responses included: "When I get lots of ticks" or "When I get good marks". Feedback did not seem to be provided through the unit of learning, nor specifically in relation to the success criteria. Furthermore, many students had not seen an exemplar of 'C' grade learning, compared to 'A' grade work. Apart from behaviourally orientated feedback, students were not able to describe strategies for improvement.

To enhance the learning the school needs to address the effectiveness of feedback provided to students. There needs to be a clear and common understanding of what effective feedback is and what it isn't, and when it is most powerful for students. Further reflection on the effectiveness of this feedback should lead to the development of consistent approaches, which support and motivate student learning to improve learning growth.

Direction 1

Increase the percentage of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of differentiation, multiple entry tasks and feedback on how to improve.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Involving students in the development of success criteria will enhance students' motivation to improve. Some teachers talked about the continuous conversations they have with their students to increase the level of student 'ownership' for their growth and learning. The Review Panel acknowledges the current work being done across the site on Growth Mindsets and the Learning Pit. Provision for practising the skills of resilience and responsibility was verified to varying degrees across the school. Students articulated the learning pit and how they use the strategies to build their resilience when they are feeling confused, frustrated and anxious in learning: "When I'm learning something new, there are times when I have a fixed mindset, I then remember some of the strategies I can use, have a go, put more effort in listening, one step at a time and, gradually, my mindset changes from fixed to a growth mindset" and "In our class, we focus on improving our learning, our teacher asks us to look back at when we started a new topic and then reflect on our learning growth". Staff conversations, however, reflected more variance with identifying

students' lack of resilience as a concern.

There was clear evidence from student and teacher conversations that the school desires students to increase their level of "ownership" in learning. The Review Panel found that the degree of student influence as co-constructors varied from high degree to limited. To genuinely enable students to have greater ownership, teachers must let go of teacher-directed pedagogy. The gradual release of responsibility requires learners to be given the right amount of assistance at the right time. If the learner can perform a task with some assistance, then he or she is closer to mastering it. Furthermore, as learning is a social as well as individual activity, teachers need to create opportunities for students to co-construct their understandings and mastery of skills with peers. They need to have a good understanding and strategies on how to learn.

The Review Panel heard the enthusiasm of students to aspire to greater learning outcomes, and their involvement as co-constructors will assist in developing an understanding of the criteria, as well as a method to track their learning throughout, and at the conclusion, of a unit of learning.

Direction 2

Increase students' ownership for their learning by developing greater opportunities for peer learning and student influence in their assessment and learning processes.

To what extent is there a culture of continuous improvement across the school?

Evident throughout the External School Review was the effective use of data to drive and monitor improvement, target professional development and build teacher and leadership capacity.

The leadership presentation positioned the school as one that has a strategic and reflective approach to self-review. Purposeful data is collected and analysed to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Analysis of data is done through the lens of multiple measures. Process and perception data is then triangulated with achievement and demographic data. The strategic plan is designed with all staff to ensure ownership and common understanding.

Staff in conversations shared their increased involvement in the ownership and use of data. Staff commented on their positive change in perception about the value of data to inform, reflect and review school priorities. Drilling down into data to student level and involving students in the learning process will enhance differentiation for learning.

Strategic processes for ongoing improvement of student learning are in place, which have been constructed, reviewed, modified or extended according to the needs of the students. The Review Panel sighted the depth of documented data analysis and the reflective processes that have resulted in targeted professional development aligned to performance management processes.

The Review Panel acknowledges the commitment staff are applying to the whole-school agreements, with particular emphasis on mathematics and how professional development is improving consistency across the school. Developing the use of the Critical and Creative Thinking General Capability as a lens for teacher and year-level planning, alongside numeracy and problem-solving, are avenues to be considered. Whilst it was verified that improvement in mathematics needs to be a priority, it is also as important to ensure the teaching of English isn't put aside. The balance between both English and mathematics is important yet challenging, so as to not overwhelm or dilute the improvement focuses.

Induction for early career teachers is structured to include ongoing support and consideration for their wellbeing and professional development. Mentors are identified from within the staff, enabling ongoing support. Sharing resources and opening classes was verified as "normal" practice.

Governing Council representatives, staff and students shared the visibility of leadership. Appreciation for the ongoing communication at Governing Council meetings regarding whole-site improvement and sharing of the work being done and future possibilities was highlighted positively by Governing Council representatives. All stakeholders shared the value the Leadership Team places on improving student learning. Initiatives to drive improvement were evidenced throughout the ESR.

Building leadership capacity was verified and appreciated by staff and leadership, especially opportunities to share good practice, lead learning, and involvement within the Partnership. Increasing teacher capacity is high on the improvement agenda. In a staff perception survey conducted as part of the review process, some staff indicated their level of discomfort with the Natural Maths model, yet, stated their willingness to develop and enhance their skills through observations, practice, reflections and further professional development. The courage to request to be observed when teaching is a reflection of the high level of professionalism and the culture for improvement that is apparent at Mawson Lakes School.

Direction 3

Strengthen professional accountability in curriculum planning, pedagogical development and use of achievement data in all learning areas.

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 Mawson Lakes School.

Effective practice in enhancing school community partnerships was evident at Mawson Lakes School. The shared appreciation by Governing Council representatives of the commitment of staff to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for students was clearly evident. The link to the University of South Australia is unique, purposeful and valued by students. Student voice indicated the value of existing programs and how this involvement is inspiring them to increase the depth of their learning whilst inspiring them towards opportunities beyond school.

Effective school leadership in fostering a culture for learning was clearly evident. Teachers are encouraged to build their capacity and leadership skills through leading learning at Partnership and school levels. The collegiality and support for all staff was constantly verified. The clear purpose for improvement was recognised and acknowledged with the sharing of good practice, and support for each other through the mentoring and buddy system. Staff were recognised not by their length of experience, but by the strengths they bring to the school. The aim to improve learning for everyone was clearly established through the documentation, meetings, observations and conversations with the Review Panel.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2017

The professional learning and performance development at Mawson Lakes School is translated into effective teaching across the school resulting in increased levels of consistency. Student achievement data and other evidence, such as multiple measures, is used purposefully to inform decisions and actions at class and whole-school level.

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

1. Increase the percentage of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of differentiation, multiple entry tasks and feedback on how to improve.
2. Increase students' ownership for their learning by developing greater opportunities for peer learning and student influence in their assessment and learning processes.
3. Strengthen professional accountability in curriculum planning, pedagogical development and use of achievement data in all learning areas.

Based on the school's current performance, Mawson Lakes 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.



David Cowles
PRINCIPAL
MAWSON LAKES SCHOOL



Dominic Marafioti
Governing Council Chairperson
MAWSON LAKES SCHOOL

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 Mawson Lakes 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 92%.

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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2016, 60% of Year 1 and 70% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline for Year 1 and an improvement for Year 2 from the historic baseline average.

In 2016, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88% of Year 3 students, 78% of Year 5 students and 70% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Years 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 3 has been upwards, from 81% in 2014 to 88% in 2016. Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been downwards, from 95% in 2014 to 70% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 Reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools.

For 2016 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 47% of Year 3, 29% of Year 5 and 19% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 43%, or 12 of 28 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 50%, or 5 of 10 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.

Numeracy

In 2016, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 86% of Year 3 students, 78% of Year 5 students, and 80% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 5 and 7 has been downwards, from 86% in 2014 to 78% in 2016, and 90% in 2014 to 80% in 2016.

For 2016 Year 3 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools. For Years 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2016, 26% of Year 3, 19% of Year 5, and 19% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2014 and 2016, the trend for Year 7 has been downwards, from 36% in 2014 to 19% in 2016.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50%, or 14 of 28 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2016, and 100%, or 6 of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2016.