

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

## EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

# REPORT FOR WOODCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in August 2016



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education  
and Child Development

### **Review details**

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*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.*

*This External School Review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability, and Shelley Cameron and Brenton Chapman, Review Principals.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of Woodcroft Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being 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 2015 was 93.3%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Woodcroft Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 23kms south of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Panalatinga Partnership. The enrolment is 865 students. The school is classified as Category 6 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1013.

The school population includes 1.7% (15) Aboriginal students, 6.4% (55) students with disabilities, 20% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 4.25% (39) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background, and 0.5% (4) children in care. Enrolment has fluctuated over the last 5 years; the recent rezoning process may have impacted on the fluctuating enrolment.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the third year of his tenure at the school. The school has a Deputy Principal, 2 Senior Leaders and 1 Coordinator. There are 54 teachers, including 7 in the early years of their career, and 20 non-teaching staff.

### **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 2015, 61% of Year 1 and 85% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents little to no change against the historic baseline average at Year 1, and an improvement against the historic baseline average at Year 2.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of Year 3 students, 72% of Year 5 students, and 87% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. At Years 3 and 7, this represents an improvement against the historic baseline average. At Year 5 this represents little to no change, however, there is a downward trend from 88% to 72% from 2013 to 2015 respectively.

For 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving above the results of similar students across DECD schools; results for Years 5 and 7 are within the range of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 40% of Year 3, 21.3% of Year 5 and 25% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. Year 3 2015 reading represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents a 3-year downward trend, from 37% to 21%, and for Year 7, this represents a 3-year upward trend, from 13% to 25% from 2013 to 2015 respectively.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 41% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 51% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average for Years 3 to 7, and a decline for Years 3 to 5.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 77% of Year 3 students, 71% of Year 5 students and 81% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. This result represents little to no improvement against the historic baseline average for Years 3 and 5, and an improvement for Year 7.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students, with Year 5 and 7 very close to being above the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 16.6% of Year 3 students, 13% of Year 5 students and 9% 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.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 50% of students from Year 3 remained in the upper bands at Year 5. These results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average. From Year 3 to 7, 24% of students remained in the upper bands. This represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

### Lines of Inquiry

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students being retained in the higher bands as measured by NAPLAN, PAT-R, PAT-M and A-E data?</b>
<b>Improvement Agenda:</b>	<b>How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?</b>
<b>School Community Partnerships:</b>	<b>How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community?</b>
<b>Effective Leadership:</b>	<b>How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?</b>

### How well are students being retained in the higher bands as measured by NAPLAN, PAT-R, PAT-M and A-E data?

Initial analysis of 2015 NAPLAN, Running Records, A-E data and PAT-R indicated that there were differences between students who were achieving in the higher bands and the allocation of As and Bs in mid-year reports. At the staff meeting run by the Review Panel during the ESR, datasets were presented showing the correlation between Higher Band achievement in 2015 and 2016, NAPLAN reading and numeracy, and the allocation of A and B grades in the mid-term reports for the same period.

It would be expected that there should be a strong correlation between A and B grades, upper band NAPLAN achievement, and above SEA PAT-R/Running Records data. The provided data did not indicate this and there was little correlation amongst datasets.

Feedback from teachers and leaders demonstrated a depth of commitment to the students in their care and included a range of questions and areas for consideration. A range of questions was tabled, which included the following: "Do we fear allocating an A or an E?", "What support are 'above SEA' students given to develop higher-order thinking skills and demonstrate achievement in the higher bands?", "Are we marking too hard?" and "Are we giving students the opportunities to apply knowledge and use what they know?" These questions provide a very powerful starting point for further discussions within the section teams.

Teachers and leaders also provided suggestions for action, including that they have the opportunity to moderate tasks and semester grades with colleagues who teach at the same year level, and that the development of rich learning tasks would provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Further suggestions included the active involvement of students in understanding their report and the resulting implications for their future learning, which included explaining to students what A-E means, and talking through their reports with them. It was also suggested that SMART goals could be based on their report and shared with parents.

It was proposed by one group that students who were performing in the higher bands in NAPLAN could be tracked throughout the school by being identified at the end of the year in a similar manner as students needing intervention.

It was evident from the discussions and written comments, that teachers and leaders saw the embedding of consistent understanding achieved through moderation processes, as essential to the development of coherence and congruence in the allocation of A-E grades. It was also apparent that the staff saw the need to further explore the development of transforming tasks that would allow for multiple entry and exit points across year levels and curriculum areas. Identification, tracking and monitoring of higher band students will need to be implemented if the school is to maintain the higher-band percentages demonstrated in Year 3 through to, and including, Year 7.

The section teams' structure provides an appropriate venue where this work could be undertaken.

#### **Direction 1**

**Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff to work in and across year level groups to develop common understanding and greater consistency in the allocation of A-E grades through regular and collaborative moderation of students' work.**

#### **How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?**

The Principal reported that the school has embarked upon a comprehensive process of self-review over the past 12-18 months. The school has undergone significant changes in the past three years, including rezoning, which has resulted in a reduction of approximately 100 enrolments from 2013. At the same time, there has been an increased complexity within the student population. The 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) indicates an increase in students developmentally at risk from 13.2% in 2009 to 37.3% in 2015. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) enrolments have increased. A rise in the number of students verified with an autism spectrum disorder has also occurred. The teaching and leadership profile within the school has also changed significantly over the past three years, with the retirement of 10 permanent classroom teachers, and all five members of the current Leadership Team have less than three years' tenured experience in their respective roles.

The Leadership Team worked closely with the Principal Consultant to refine the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) to identify the key factors that were non-negotiable, agreed to by all, and linked with performance development processes. Staff responses via a survey (conducted by the Review Panel during the ESR) indicated their support for the new SIP, stating that it was clear, easy to understand and not overwhelming, and that they appreciated the opportunity to work in like groups to discuss issues in depth. There was also affirmation for the inclusion of data to inform SIP outcomes.

The Leadership Team, together with the Principal Consultant, refined the leadership structure resulting in three tiers of leadership; that is, Principal and Deputy, 3 senior leaders, and 4 teachers who represent their respective sector. Teachers are allocated into 5 section teams aligned by year level, including one team for specialist teachers. Section representatives are released on the same day to allow for collaboration within and across sections. The structure also provides for communication channels with additional curriculum and management committees across the school. This is a carefully thought-out leadership structure that provides opportunities for capacity building at many levels.

Responses from staff via the SIP survey indicated the highest priority was to provide opportunities for students to be intellectually challenged and stretched. Staff indicated that the setting of SMART goals for each student would support this work.

Leadership reviewed the effectiveness of the SIP implementation via electronic surveys at regular points throughout the year. An example of this is a survey conducted by the school at the end of the first semester indicating that 39% of classes have SMART goals set for 1-2 students; and in a further 33% of classes there are 3-5 students with SMART goals in place. In 15% of classes more than 5 students have at least one SMART goal in place and 12% of classes do not yet have any SMART goals for any students. Staff

indicated their support for SMART goals and a desire to set goals for all students, but saw time constraints as an inhibiting factor in achieving this. The survey indicated that 50% of staff felt they were highly supported by the special education staff in setting SMART goals, and 80% indicated that they were only somewhat confident in setting SMART goals themselves. Thus, it would appear that, while staff acknowledge the value of SMART goals in stretching and challenging students, they are not yet confident to undertake this work independently.

Leadership has also undertaken a review of intervention processes, including the roles of the Special Education teacher and the classroom teacher, in supporting Wave 2 and 3 students. This has resulted in significant changes that include clear structures for entry and exit of students receiving intervention. An understanding that intervention processes need to be fluid to meet the changing needs of students is now apparent. The introduction of uninterrupted time has been appreciated by all with a strong focus on classroom teachers remaining in charge of the learning for NEP students. This has also been strongly supported by the Special Education teachers. A timetable has been developed and implemented that outlines a coordinated and comprehensive strategy that respects the principles outlined above.

The school is to be commended for the comprehensive work it has undertaken to ensure self-review processes result in clarity of responsibilities for teachers and improved learning outcomes for students. It is now important that any new initiatives are given sufficient time to become embedded as an integral part of the learning culture at Woodcroft Primary School.

#### **Direction 2**

**Embed regular and strategic use of self-review processes to determine, and act upon, the impact school strategies and practices are having on both teacher practice and student learning outcomes.**

#### **How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community to improve student learning?**

Nine student forums were held with 108 students from Years 3 to 7 during the External School Review. Students were asked to comment on how they felt they had done in their mid-year report and if they knew why they had received those grades.

Students, in general, were not clear why particular grades were allocated to specific subject areas, and were unable to specifically indicate what they would need to do to improve their grade. The majority of responses related to behavioural or effort-based responses, for example: 'keep trying' and 'focus a bit more'.

Several students indicated that their teacher did not give 'excellent', another student stated that their class teacher allocated an 'excellent' to two students in the mid-year report, but did not know what they had done to achieve that grade. Many students reported that they were happy with receiving satisfactory grades.

Parents indicated, through the 2015 school community opinion survey, an area of dissatisfaction related to the lack of useful feedback provided by teachers about their child's school work. John Hattie's research on Visible Learning indicates that feedback is one of the most influential practices to impact on student achievement.

A total of 22 parents were interviewed via two parent forums and a meeting with the Governing Council. The majority of parents commented on the strong support structures the school has in place for students with learning difficulties and also commented on the high level of care provided to students. Several parents stated that they believed their child was not being pushed enough in their learning.

A survey conducted during the ESR by the Review Panel indicated that 13% of staff, when reflecting on a recent unit of work, indicated to a high degree that they created opportunities to stretch students and to enable them to think more deeply about the topic; 80% responded that they provided opportunities to stretch students to a medium extent.

Sixteen percent of staff via the same survey indicated to a high degree that they effectively enabled students to apply their skills/understanding in different contexts; and 74% indicated that they provided opportunities to apply skills/understanding to a medium degree.



As outlined in the TfEL Framework Domain 2.4 *Challenge students to achieve high standards with appropriate support*, key actions for teachers include setting tasks with multiple entry and exit points to maximise each student's learning time and progress. Higher-order thinking and positive learner identity is built through succeeding at challenging tasks with appropriate support.

There was evidence of several classrooms where students were highly engaged and intellectually stretched through a variety of strategies and across learning areas. Students reflected on their learning goals, which were visible and referred to. The power of 'yet' was very evident.

The school's change agenda is well-positioned to adopt a systematic whole-school approach to student influence with a specific focus on feedback and intellectual stretch. Students have the capability to set their own learning goals, provide and receive feedback that will inform future learning, and enable them to accept responsibility for themselves as learners.

Ongoing and strategic work within and across year levels will support the aspirations of all sectors of the Woodcroft Primary School community. The opportunity for parent interest groups to be informed and involved in effective feedback and intellectual stretch will further develop the very strong community support that currently exists. Three-way interviews may be a useful strategy to trial as a starting point in this area.

### **Direction 3**

**Strengthen the capacity of students to have greater influence over their learning through a specific focus on feedback and intellectual stretch.**

### **How well does leadership facilitate the development of coherent high quality curriculum planning and effective teaching?**

The Leadership Team is to be commended for its thorough and comprehensive work in developing frameworks, structures and processes that provide both opportunity and time for staff to engage in professional learning.

High quality curriculum coherence and consistency in the implementation of effective teaching in a large school is often challenging. The structures that are now in place via the leadership framework will strongly support the work of the middle leadership team, as they work with teachers and section leaders to implement and embed the SIP priorities.

It is clearly apparent that the school has provided multiple opportunities for staff to be engaged in professional learning in a diverse range of areas and over several years. This has included collaborative work within the Partnership at a range of levels. Staff have also committed to undertake professional learning in their own time and in section teams, including online learning.

While there is strong support and commitment to improving professional learning at both an individual and cohort level, the school may now benefit from developing strategic plans to embed valued high-yield pedagogies and practices as a result of this learning.

When discussing moderation of tasks and the apparent anomalies (as outlined earlier), it became clear that, while staff had undertaken professional learning in this area, moderation was not embedded within or across section groups. Staff also commented that they had undertaken professional learning in natural maths, but the implementation within and across the school was not consistent. Considerable work has been undertaken on Growth Mindsets as part of the work within the Partnership. Common understanding within and across year levels may assist to embed these practices across the school. The work of the Leadership Team with section leaders is critical in progression of this work.

The work undertaken in the embedding of 'Play is the Way' language and processes across the school has been very successful and strategies used here may well be transferrable to other school priorities.

The development of a whole-school English (and subsequent Numeracy) agreement that reflects the needs and aspirations of the Woodcroft Primary School community is paramount in ensuring students are provided with opportunities to consistently demonstrate their ability to achieve their personal best. The school is to be commended for the work already undertaken in this area.

The identification of valued assessments and setting of aspirational targets in collaboration with teachers will be crucial in achieving long-term improvement and support. The subsequent sharing of these targets with students and families will support all to become powerful partners in the learning.

The systematic collection, analysis and sharing of common datasets within and, consequently, across section teams, is a very important factor in monitoring the progress of all students, including those requiring intervention and extension. The work of the middle leadership team in inputting data is a valuable asset, which could now be further enhanced by supporting the inclusion of class teachers in entering and analysing datasets on a regular basis. In this manner, direct links between learning improvement, SIP and Performance Development processes could be aligned.

**Direction 4**

**Work closely with section leaders to align professional learning with SIP priorities and embed resulting whole-school pedagogical practices.**



### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Woodcroft Primary School is to be commended for the manner in which it works in partnership with parents and stakeholders. 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. Provide planned and regular opportunities for staff to work in and across year level groups to develop common understanding and greater consistency in the allocation of A-E grades through regular and collaborative moderation of students' work.
2. Embed regular and strategic use of self-review processes to determine, and act upon, the impact school strategies and practices are having on both teacher practice and student learning outcomes.
3. Strengthen the capacity of students to have greater influence over their learning through a specific focus on feedback and intellectual stretch.
4. Work closely with section leaders to align professional learning with SIP priorities and embed resulting whole-school pedagogical practices.

Based on the school's current performance, Woodcroft Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



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DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston  
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CHIEF  
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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.

Kristian Mundy  
PRINCIPAL  
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