

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Aldgate Primary School

Conducted in March 2021



Review details

Our education system aspires to become the best in Australia by seeking growth for every student, in every class and in every school.

The purpose of the External School Review (ESR) 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 is referenced throughout all stages of the ESR process.

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 here, they have all been considered and contribute to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Julie Bishop , Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Belinda Smith, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student representatives
 - Teachers.

School context

Aldgate Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 18kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021 is 293. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 290. The local partnership is Mount Lofty.

The school has a 2019 ICSEA score of 1106 and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 6 Aboriginal students, 7% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background and children/young people in care, and 10% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 2nd year of tenure and a Deputy Principal in their 1st year of tenure.

There are 13 teachers including 1 in the early years of their career.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Revise the site improvement plan and develop a clear understanding with teachers, students, the Student Representative Council (SRC) and parents of what is understood by and expected in STEM learning to make strategic decisions about the pace of change.**
- Direction 2** **Build teachers' capacities to critique and improve their leaning design, so that students have the opportunity to develop critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and reasoning, and to transfer their strategies for learning into different new contexts.**
- Direction 3** **Explore and develop ways to strengthen students influence in learning and assessment processes, and to align the work of the student leadership group with the school's improvement plan, vision, and mission.**

What impact has the implementation of previous directions had on school improvement?

The principal reported:

Dir 1: Staff undertook significant professional learning to move from design technologies to an approach based on the engineering design process, which is a more cohesive approach.

Dir 2: This has been a continuing focus and students have strong skillsets in these areas. Pairing this with growth mindset education and permission to make mistakes, led to a much higher student capacity to influence others, express opinions, solve authentic problems and use these skills in a wide variety of areas.

Dir 3: Students have a much greater influence in learning and assessment which could be further strengthened, particularly in the younger years. The site is continuing to build student leadership at the school and are trialing new ways of supporting students leadership this year. It is expected that students will have a greater influence on improvement plans, vision and mission.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

All staff are responsible for monitoring the progress and impact of the school improvement plan (SIP). The school identified 2 goals: to increase student achievement in the higher bands in numeracy and increase student achievement in literacy. Staff reported that leadership identify and share data from whole-school and year-level perspectives.

The school worked with a numeracy consultant to support and strengthen effective practices in numeracy. Daily challenges are provided that incorporate thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. Extension math groups have been implemented to increase and sustain the number of students in higher bands. Staff reflections identified that students are now posing questions, and teachers are asking purposeful, probing questions that include authentic and meaningful problems.

Focusing on improving pedagogy, positive mindsets and targeting misconceptions resulted in the development of collective understandings and practices across the site. Staff reflections identified the need to develop a balance between problem-solving and fluency, and ensure consistency within and across year levels, with respect to curriculum content, as areas for further development.

Staff reported that work undertaken with a literacy consultant at the beginning of the school year provided a strong framework to progress whole-school improvement in literacy. The panel noted that a diverse range of strategies were implemented across the site to sustain and increase higher-band achievement in literacy.

This included the following:

- focus on reading strategies
- engagement in high-interest texts
- writing for a purpose
- extension reading groups
- monitoring data
- sourcing quality literature.

Providing visual scaffolds for learning, to ensure SIP goals are visible in every learning area, is a strategy for further consideration.

Opportunities for year level teams to meet with leadership at regular intervals to review and monitor progress of the SIP would be valued. The school is well-placed to develop and embed whole-school processes to ensure that SIP goals are consistently and collaboratively implemented and reviewed across the site.

Direction 1 Strengthen school improvement processes through regular, planned opportunities for all staff to collectively review and evaluate progress of the SIP.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers using evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?

Teacher reflections during the review identified that all learning needs to be meaningful, engaging and provide challenge. In conversations with students, only one student in reading and one in science identified that they found learning challenging. In a survey conducted during the external review, 55% of staff identified that opportunities to stretch students' deeper thinking about the topic, were achieved at a medium to low extent.

The school is well-placed to implement regular, planned opportunities where staff collaboratively design and differentiate learning, ensuring needs of all students are addressed. Work in this area will be strengthened through planned opportunities for staff to develop whole-school understandings in implementation and regular review of learning goals and targets to inform next steps. Staff reflected that planned opportunities to meet as a team to collaboratively review student learning goals, as a continuous process, would be advantageous.

The panel noted wide variance between teacher perception and student understandings of learning intentions and success criteria. All staff, via a survey conducted during the review, identified that clarity in learning intentions was achieved at a medium to high degree; however, only 22% of staff indicated that students understood the learning intentions to a high degree. Embedding a whole-school approach to the implementation and review of learning intentions and success criteria at planned intervals, is an area for further development.

Feedback for learning is a fundamental component in supporting students to make effective decisions about their learning. The school is well-positioned to explore and implement a whole-school approach to feedback for learning that provides planned opportunities for all students to become informed and active partners in their own learning. Work in this area will be further consolidated via development of whole-school understandings and practices, through a language for learning that is embedded across the site and shared with families.

Direction 2 To collaboratively identify and develop a language for learning that is embedded across year levels and areas of study.

Effective leadership

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

Staff acknowledged that a coherent approach to curriculum and pedagogy was in the initial stages of implementation. Providing planned time to work together in year level teams to strengthen curriculum planning was identified as an area for further consideration.

The teaching for effective learning (TfEL) guide is regularly used during staff meetings to strengthen and affirm collective understandings of effective teaching. Work in this area will be strengthened through collaborative identification and implementation of agreed pedagogical practices across the site, ensuring consistency and clarity within and across year levels. Staff acknowledged that observations of teacher practice are in a developmental stage.

Teachers develop a yearly overview of curriculum priorities relevant to their specific levels of teaching and areas of curriculum. Termly overviews of curriculum priorities are published on the school's website and, as such, are available to parents.

The school has recently engaged in a Partnership initiative that is focused on developing and strengthening effective teaching practices across the site. The initiative is multi-faceted and provides professional learning in literacy and numeracy. Staff reflected that the 'be brave and lead' program will stretch their learning.

The school has undertaken significant work to develop and strengthen a coherent approach to curriculum. During interviews, it was identified that whole-school literacy and numeracy agreement development were developed in 2020. The science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) agreement is currently in the development stage. The school reported that they reviewed the work of other sites to provide exemplars as a base foundation for their learning agreements.

The leadership team is well-placed to strengthen and embed the work undertaken in the development and implementation of the learning agreements. These agreements will be most beneficial when they are embedded across all year levels, reviewed at planned intervals, and regularly shared with students and community.

Direction 3 Embed the literacy, numeracy and STEM agreements across the site, which are shared with staff, students, and community in a continuous cycle of review.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

The school demonstrated high levels of commitment to continual improvement. Work in the 'be brave and lead' initiative, focused on literacy and numeracy in the middle years, will provide a strong basis for the school to further explore the 'be brave and teach' for early career teachers. The school is well-positioned to collaboratively strengthen teaching and learning across year levels and areas of learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen school improvement processes through regular, planned opportunities for all staff to collectively review and evaluate progress of the SIP.**
- Direction 2** **To collaboratively identify and develop a language for learning that is embedded across year levels and areas of study.**
- Direction 3** **Embed the literacy, numeracy and STEM agreements across the site, which are shared with staff, students, and community in a continuous cycle of review.**

Based on the school's current performance, Aldgate Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Aldgate Primary School

Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

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 2019, 77% of year 1 and 76% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 95% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019 the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 87% to 95%.

For 2019 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 50% of year 3, 58% of year 5 and 34% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 80% or 20 out of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 53% or 9 out of 17 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 98% of year 5 students and 97% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For years 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been downwards from 93% to 82%, and the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 88% to 97%.

For 2019 year 3, the school is achieving lower than the results of similar groups of students across government schools. For 2019 years 5 and 7, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 34% of year 3, 32% of year 5 and 52% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 48% or 11 out of 23 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 80% or 12 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.