

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for McDonald Park School

Conducted in August 2019



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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Steve Freeman, Review Principal.

Review Process

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

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - Leaders
 - Parent groups
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

McDonald Park School caters for children and young people from reception to year 7. It is situated 434kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 567 students. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 611.

The school has an ICSEA score of 974 and is classified as Category 5 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 4% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 10 children/young people in care and 35% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of their tenure at the school. The school has a deputy principal and two senior leaders (Teaching and Learning and Student Wellbeing). There are 34 teachers including 4 in the early years of their career and 13 Advanced Skills Teachers. The school is supported by 21 SSOs.

Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Raise the percentage of students achieving at higher levels by making the school's high expectations' for all explicit, and use these standards to assist students to set and realise their learning goals.
- Direction 2** Increase the numbers of students consistently achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement in literacy and numeracy by tracking the learning growth of every student, and by using this information systematically to inform planning and respond with targeted instruction.
- Direction 3** Strengthen teacher capacity by ensuring there is successful implementation of site improvement strategies in every classroom, that student learning outcomes are monitored, and that the impact of professional learning processes are regularly evaluated against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- Direction 4** Empower students to take responsibility for their progress and success by strengthening the use of a range of formative assessment and problem solving strategies to build resilience and other learner dispositions and increase the positive engagement of all students in every class.

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

The current principal has been in their position for 3 years and has led the implementation of the previous directions. During that time it was evident to the panel that there had been intentional actions with a logical and sequential process implemented to address the previous directions.

Actions undertaken in response to the directions include:

- The explicit teaching of learning intentions, success criteria and modelling of high expectations, including students being familiar with the Australian Curriculum standards
- Quality planning of task design, expectations and wellbeing initiatives have been established enabling teachers to focus on learning that includes the moderation of achievement standards
- The development and revisiting of literacy and numeracy agreements and learning check-ins
- The implementation of an Interoception program and the Lead Learner initiative has provided support for the needs of students by catering for their emotional, social and academic needs.

The review panel recognised that some elements of the previous directions are still relevant and acknowledge that the school has undertaken responses to address and build on what has been achieved from the previous directions.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

It was evident to the panel that the school is effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement. The principal reported that structures and systems are in place including dedicated time at staff meetings and learning teams working on quality planning with a focus on moderation. The principal stated that more team planning has increased the use of quality tasks, and anecdotal observations indicates that students are more engaged in learning.

The panel identified that there is effective leadership in providing strategic direction for improvement planning and appropriate targeted interventions. Student achievement and support is focused through the analysis of data with the expectation that all staff have an understanding of their students' data and progress. This is further supported through the performance development processes where evidence-based discussions are conducted on individual, cohort and whole-school data.

Team targets are set by each learning team and are strongly linked to the SIP. The school embraces the 'learning sprint' model for the tracking and monitoring of these targets. 'Learning check-ins' are also used to ensure that curriculum agreement actions are continually being used across the school.

The use of a central electronic data storage system allows all staff to access achievement data which is updated regularly. This information is the focus of a planning day set in term 4, where all staff analyse the information, reflect on the SIP targets and set future directions for the following school year.

The school's planning processes are evidence-based and targeted. The leadership team consistently review and evaluate SIP progress and dedicate time for planning at the end of each term. This collaborative approach has enabled each leader to have greater focus on improvement planning.

Direction 1 To raise student achievement outcomes across the school, build the consistent use of student achievement data to track student performance and inform planning.

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY

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

There is an intentionality by teachers to do their job well and it was also apparent that there is a sense of pride from the staff in being 'leaders' in pedagogical practice both internally and within partnership schools.

The pedagogical survey indicated that 73% of staff rated the engagement of students in their learning at a high level. The same survey however indicated that teachers rated the opportunities to stretch students to enable deeper thinking was at a medium to high level, and staff acknowledged that this is an area for further development.

The concept of high expectation is promoted across the school with teachers modelling expectations and referencing 'A' level exemplars. Several classes use a rubric to illustrate what a student needs to do to achieve a higher grade but this was not consistent practice across the school.

The 'Lead Learners' initiative has provided the opportunity for students from years 2 to 6 to stretch and challenge themselves both academically and socially. Students and parents both commended this program.

Other extra-curricular activities such as Lego League and Mad Minute debating are offered to students across the school.

The NAPLAN data indicates that the trend of higher band achievement has shown little or no change. The leadership team and teachers recognised that further work to improve this are the next steps to consider.

High impact pedagogy is critical to student engagement in learning. Evidenced-based teaching practices enrich the quality of student learning and strengthen higher band achievement and retention. The consistency of effective teaching that engages and challenges students, together with the effective use of data, are the next steps to consider.

Direction 2 **Implement consistent and sustainable teaching practices that provide engagement and challenge for all students with particular emphasis on stretching students in their learning.**

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

The panel identified very strong evidence of collegiality across the school and in particular within the year level teams. Staff meeting structures enable learning teams to discuss and analyse whole-school, cohort and individual student data. The learner sprints and check-ins are two strategies valued by staff in allowing them to focus on understanding student achievement, data and teacher practice.

Moderation of student work is a regular practice amongst teams and the sharing of information has enabled teachers to adapt and improve their teaching focus and planning. It was evident to the panel that there is some inconsistency of understanding of the Australian Curriculum standards between year levels. The next steps to consider include revisiting and developing a collective understanding of learning progression through the Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) strategy process.

Formative assessment practices varied amongst teachers with the vast majority using only summative assessment tasks to ascertain student knowledge and attainment. There are pockets of teachers using an inquiry-based approach in their classrooms, which is strongly supported through the collaborative work conducted with library staff.

Feedback strategies varied amongst teachers with some classes involving students in self and peer feedback assessments. The vast majority of teachers provided instant oral feedback through conferencing with students. Feedback from students to teachers was low, and occurred only by a few students.

Strengthening the effective use of the Australian Curriculum particularly in authentic assessment are important next steps.

Direction 3 **Provide differentiated learning opportunities for all students, through building teacher capacity and efficacy in learning design and formative assessment.**

Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At McDonald Park School, the influence of previous directions is evident with the school effectively using improvement planning and monitoring processes to support this work. Teacher and leader practice is positively impacted by effective systems that build capacity, and provide effective conditions for student learning.

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

- Direction 1 To raise student achievement outcomes across the school, build the consistent use of student achievement data to track student performance and inform planning.
- Direction 2 Implement consistent and sustainable teaching practices that provide engagement and challenge for all students with particular emphasis on stretching students in their learning.
- Direction 3 Provide differentiated learning opportunities for all students, through building teacher capacity and efficacy in learning design and formative assessment.

Based on the school's current performance, McDonald Park School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



Andrew Wells
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS



Kirsty Trahar
PRINCIPAL
MCDONALD PARK 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 2018, 41% of year 1 and 60% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 73% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents a decline, for year 5 this represents an improvement, and for year 7 this represents little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 3 has been downwards from 80% to 69%, and for year 5, the trend has been upwards from 64% to 76% respectively.

For 2018 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2018, 31% of year 3, 19% of year 5 and 19% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 33%, or 8 out of 24 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 56%, or 14 out of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 69% of year 3 students, 72% of year 5 students and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for years 5 and 7, this represents an improvement, from the historic baseline average.

For 2018 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 23% of year 3, 13% of year 5 and 13% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2018 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 64%, or 9 out of 14 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 43%, or 9 out of 21 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.