

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Mount Gambier North Primary School**

Conducted in May 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 contributed 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 Belinda Krollig, 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
  - School Support Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Mount Gambier North Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 430kms from the Adelaide CBD in the provincial city of Mt Gambier. The enrolment in 2019 is 290 students. The enrolment at the time of the previous review was 327.

The school has an ICSEA score of 919 and is classified as Category 2 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage. The local EDC Partnership is Blue Lake 2.

The school population includes 10% Aboriginal students, 20% students with a verified disability, 26% of students with English as an additional language or dialect background, 16 children in care, and 74% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of his tenure at the school, a deputy principal, an assistant principal (IELP), a coordinator (teaching and learning) and a wellbeing counsellor. There are 29 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 6 Step 9 teachers.

## Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Increase the proportion of students, as well as retaining those students identified as achieving in the upper two bands in literacy and numeracy at year 3 through to year 7, by targeting their learning through differentiated teaching.
- Direction 2** Increase the proportion of students reaching the SEA through agreed, focused and consistently implemented, evidence-based teaching strategies from reception to year 7.
- Direction 3** Improve student learning engagement by implementing a whole-school performance and development process that provides constructive feedback to teachers on the agreed pedagogical initiatives and planned learning cycle expected across the school.
- Direction 4** Achieve higher standards of learning achievement by using the available data, and the Standards of Educational Achievement, to establish realistic personal learning targets with individual students consistently across the school.

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

The school has made progress implementing the previous directions and it was recognised that a recent change in site leadership has advanced the process to be more targeted.

The retention and increase of the number of students in the higher bands has yet to be achieved, however the school is addressing this through a focused approach in literacy as identified in the 2019 Site Improvement Plan (SIP). To achieve this, the leadership team is supporting teachers in their professional knowledge in programming and differentiating the curriculum for all students and not just the targeted cohorts.

The school developed agreements to focus on literacy and numeracy and has trialled a number of evidence-based learning approaches and programs to include phonics, spelling and writing. This was done with different cohorts of teachers. The reintroduction of common literacy practices to include learning sprints was introduced in 2018. The next phase for the school is to identify specific approaches

that will engender consistency of practice of teachers and the interconnectedness of the learning for the students from R-7.

Professional learning and performance development has significantly changed across the school. The restructuring of the current year level teachers to form PLC groups has initiated shared planning with some year level groups. The next phase is to develop the leadership capacity of the teaching teams to lead their own learning working toward the SIP priorities. Performance development is an on-going process with the key focus on the teaching.

The introduction of an electronic data recording system (Sentral) has enabled ready access for teachers to update and reference. Student data is referred to at staff and PDP meetings. The next steps for the school is for teachers to conduct a more cohesive and deeper analysis of the data for their year levels and the impact across the R-7 range. This is then to be followed up with students knowing their data and taking ownership towards their learning.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

#### *How well does the school critically evaluate current curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice to determine challenge of practice?*

The development of the SIP process was inclusive of staff through a series of meetings, and input from the previous improvement plan contributed to the 2019 improvement plan. The school identified challenges of practice focus to be on the teaching of phonics, writing (mainly spelling) and general capabilities in numeracy to enable students to be mathematical thinkers.

The use of data to determine curriculum focus and the trialling of credible learning programs in literacy has given the school a starting point and baseline information. The next process to consider is the exploration and building on the SIP focus and developing a shared approach in identifying evidence-based pedagogical practices that support the SIP goals and connects the learning from R-7.

It was evident to the panel that pockets of collaborative actions exist amongst some teachers and teacher teams where they analyse achievement data, use data to plan, have common assessments, share moderation and follow the schools pedagogical agreements. The staff are well versed in the objective of improving the spelling undertaken by the school and recognise the connection with the overall reading and writing objective from the improvement plan. The panel gained a sense that the staff believe that the trialling of programs has given sufficient information to make a commitment to evidence-based learning tools to support them with their task design and achievement of the school's achievement targets.

With a focus on the planned action, monitoring processes and evaluation of the improvement model, the school will be able to identify suitable pedagogical practices and that can then become embedded in the daily learning routines of the school.

**Direction 1** To improve learning outcomes for all students, embed a consistent commitment to the school's improvement model with specific reference to sustaining achievement in R-7 literacy and numeracy through quality teaching.

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

The panel recognise that structures and systems have been put in place to enable teachers to trial a range of pedagogical practices. These include work in phonics and guided reading, Brightpath writing strategies, coupled with supporting intervention programs such as Language and Literacy levels, Multi-lit and Quicksmart.

Staff have also been trialling a number of recognised teacher programs in literacy such as Bookmaking, Writers Notebook and Words Their Way. The review panel identified that the trialling of a number of programs has created a disjointed appraisal of these programs. The next steps for the school to consider is to identify through evidence the most appropriate learning programs that can provide high yield outcomes in student learning and achievement R-7.

Intervention processes are well established across the school with sound evidence-based programs supporting students with learning needs. The SSO staff are well versed in administrating support programs and sharing information with teachers and parents.

The pedagogical survey indicated that 70% of staff rated themselves in the medium range in creating opportunities to stretch students in their learning. In addition, over 50% of staff indicated that in the future they need to implement further strategies within their lesson planning to accommodate more stretch and engagement for all learners.

The development of common understandings that engagement and challenge does not just equate to the provision of work at a higher year level, and that intellectual stretch is applicable to all students and across all areas of learning would be helpful. A coherent professional learning program that focuses on the craft of teaching, supported by evidence-based programs, would enrich the quality of student learning and strengthen student achievement and retention.

**Direction 2** Build a coherent professional learning program that focuses on the craft of effective teaching built on evidence.

### ***How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and effective teaching?***

The panel ascertain that differentiated teaching strategies vary amongst the teachers with ability grouping being the main organisational strategy used. In the majority of situations the differentiated processes were tailored to cater for students with learning needs using intervention programs. The panel acknowledge that the school is about to commence intensive professional learning in formative assessment through the partnership. Pre and post assessments are used to assist with the planning process with several responses showing a bias toward informing and setting up ability groups.

The use of learning intentions and success criteria strategies are used by some teachers throughout the school. This is recognised by staff and they are supportive of the need for further development in this area to ensure consistency of practice across all teachers.

Feedback to and from students is limited with many students not having a deep knowledge of their achievement.

The school has demonstrated a strength in intervention processes to support student wellbeing and learning. Reference to One Plan documentation for targeted students is used by teachers to differentiate their learning.

With a focus on effective teaching for all learners, the next steps in the professional development process are to develop a collective understanding of differentiated teaching, strengthen teacher understanding of student agency within the planning process and build on teacher knowledge of meta-cognition for learning.

By strengthening teacher knowledge in task design that involves students, it will further develop and embed effective and consistent teaching practice in curriculum planning across the school.

**Direction 3** To improve pedagogical practices and student learning outcomes, build on teacher capacity to provide quality differentiated instruction that embeds the formative assessment cycle in all planning and teaching.

***To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?***

The principal identified that the school needs to refocus on learning excellence and provide opportunities for high achieving students. The review panel noted that growth mindset strategies have been in use, but were not prominent in current classroom conversations.

The school offers social learning programs that develop a student's social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Building on this focus to learning would be helpful. The school's initiative to introduce the Berry Street positive education model will offer further skills and knowledge for both students and teachers to promote positive learning. Committing to this model to specifically teach students about stretching their learning and being persistent/resilient at a deeper level will be beneficial to all learners.

The school would benefit from the development and embedding of common understandings relating to intellectual stretch and challenge.

**Direction 4** To develop a high expectation of achievement for all learners, explore and implement approaches that integrate and embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Mount Gambier North Primary School the influence of previous ESR directions is evident in the school's improvement. The school is providing effective conditions for student learning, and using improvement planning and monitoring processes to raise student achievement.

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

- Direction 1** To improve learning outcomes for all students, embed a consistent commitment to the school's improvement model with specific reference to sustaining achievement in R-7 literacy and numeracy through quality teaching.
- Direction 2** Build a coherent professional learning that focuses on the craft of teaching supported by evidence-based pedagogy.
- Direction 3** To improve pedagogical practices and student learning outcomes, build on teacher capacity to provide quality differentiated instruction that embeds the formative assessment cycle in all planning and teaching.
- Direction 4** To develop a high expectation of achievement for all learners, explore and implement approaches that integrate and embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Mount Gambier North Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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# 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, 61% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2018 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of year 3 students, 50% of year 5 students and 52% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 5, and 7 this result represents a decline and for year 3, this represents little or no change from the historic baseline data.

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

In 2018, 10% of year 3, 6% of year 5 and no 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 29%, or 2 out of 7 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

### Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 45% of year 3 students, 33% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 3 has been downwards from 66% to 45% respectively.

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

In 2018, 14% of year 3, 8% of year 5 and 2% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 75%, or 3 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018 and no students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.