

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MOUNT GAMBIER NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in June 2015



**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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Amanda O'Shea, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Mount Gambier North Primary School advised that action is being taken to comply with:

- Governance: site bullying data will be presented to Governing Council at least twice per year commencing in 2015.
- School Organisation: the school will develop a policy implementation checklist to accompany the school Bullying and Harassment Policy in 2015.
- HR Management: all staff will have Performance and Development Plans in place; the site induction policy will be reviewed in 2015.
- Cyber Safety: the school will review the Cyber Safety Policy and present it to staff and the Governing Council for adoption in 2015.

The implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. The school's attendance rate is currently 91.5%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Mount Gambier North Primary School is located in the regional centre of Mount Gambier. It has an enrolment of approximately 327 students catering for students from Reception to Year 7. The school has an ICSEA score of 924, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The enrolment has been relatively stable over many years.

The school population includes 10% (34) Aboriginal students, 18% (61) students with English as an Additional Language or dialect (EALD) background that can fluctuate in number, 32% of students are eligible for School Card assistance, 12% are Students with a Disability in mainstream classes, and 18 children are in special classes. Two special small classes (1 junior primary and 1 primary) are located onsite catering for up to 20 students from the Local Partnership. There is a DECD preschool located on the school site.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in her twelfth year at the school, Deputy Principal, Counsellor, Intensive English Language Program (IELP) Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Numeracy Coach, Advanced Skills Teacher Level 2 (AST2) and an Aboriginal Education Teacher (AET). The school operational structure comprises of the following school teams:

- Reception to Year 3;
- Years 4 to 7 and;
- IELP (Intensive English Language Program).

work in relation to improved student achievement, growth, challenge and engagement should be considered as the defined result of this work, and included in the planning.

The Principal has been at the school for twelve years and has appointed leadership personnel into the majority of the roles from the beginning of 2015. The changing school context, personnel into leadership roles and new strategies in the SIP, present a dynamic of changes that needs to be managed strategically. The Principal acknowledged that 'it takes time to embed' the changes 'to get the traction' that will positively influence student learning. The Review Panel acknowledged this context and identified a level of inconsistency in implementing the agreed actions across the school through interviews with teaching staff, School Support Officers (SSO) and members of the leadership team.

A key outcome of the self-review process identified the need to maximize the time for professional learning and dialogue in both the year level teams and whole-staff forums. Leader and staff comment confirmed an organisational change to meeting structures to facilitate professional learning and collaborative work, to achieve a consistent and coherent curriculum provision, using effective teaching practices to challenge and engage all learners. Staff commented about an overcrowded curriculum and a sense of being 'overwhelmed' with extra-curricular demands. Other staff commented about 'too much' happening in the school and a need to 'narrow the agenda'.

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.

The leadership team identified two specific actions for implementation in classrooms. These included the differentiation of teaching in classes, and the use of learning cycles in planning, teaching and assessing. Leader and staff comment acknowledged this was embedded more in the early years than other sections of the school. Feedback through staff performance and development documentation also verified the work being implemented against this expectation, more so in the early years of schooling. The Review Panel acknowledged the importance of these two initiatives but could not verify the alignment of 'differentiated teaching' within the SIP, or operational plan, as a major pedagogical approach expected consistently across the school.

Planning and learning design, using the Australian Curriculum scope and sequence, and other aligned planning scaffolds, was verified through staff comment and documentation presented. The Teaching for Effective Learning framework (TfEL) was used to guide the teaching practices and provide observational feedback to teachers. It was verified that Reception to Year 7 staff use a variety of scaffolds for planning. Examples of assessment tasks that deconstructed the learning intentions and criteria for assessment used in lessons, or series of lessons, were verified in documentation and staff comment during meetings. The leadership team stated that this practice was not consistent across the school.

Leaders commented that performance and development occurred across the three staff teams and was supported by each team leader. The TfEL and AITSL professional standards for teachers were used to identify areas for individual professional growth. Examples of feedback from classroom observations were provided by the Deputy Principal. This documentation verified the implementation of a performance and development process in support of improvement in teaching practices. Some SSO staff commented on the need for performance feedback in their roles as an aspect of their professional development. The leadership team commented that performance and development of staff is 'working better than it was' but added, 'more could be done here.'

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.

School-based data sets presented to the Review Panel verified the school's capacity to collect, analyse and track student learning and wellbeing over time. A range of data sets collected throughout the year was verified from school documentation and staff comment. The school data management system ('Tree'), offered staff an opportunity to access available learning data in timely ways to inform planning and track growth at the team and class levels. It was verified through leader and staff discussion that staff reflected on class data sets provided to them (or collected by teachers e.g. benchmarks) during and at the end of each term.

Documented evidence of class-based data showing individual progress towards DECD reading standards from Year 1 to 3 was presented to the Review Panel. A school data wall displayed the range of Reception to Year 7 data collected over the year against the school-based data collection schedule. The Principal and staff confirmed that teachers plan, assess and report using the Australian Curriculum, and other aligned assessment tools (e.g. language and literacy levels), but do not collect the word-equivalent grades for the purposes of analysis and triangulation with other learning data.

Evidence of broad range goal-setting by students at the start of the year was presented. These goals were not tracked or monitored consistently throughout the year as a natural part of the learning cycle. Whilst the school has targeted DECD learning standards expected for each year level in class data sets, there is an opportunity to develop individual improvement targets (achievement or growth) with students as an aspect of this work. Parents and students acknowledged that year level standards were presented and discussed at face-to-face reporting opportunities in relation to their children's progress. Some parents knew of goals set for their children (on charts and peg boards) but it was not consistently known amongst the parent group. Some students commented that they found rubrics, pre-tests and exemplars useful in knowing how to improve with their learning. Goal-setting was verified in documentation as an aspect of Negotiated Education Plans (NEP) and Individual Learning Plans (ILP). Some staff and students commented about learning goals being reinforced in classes through visual scaffolds.

Leader and staff comment confirmed the need to consolidate time to analyse the available data and then plan for teaching and learning in collaborative teams. Shared responsibility for learning improvement, consistency in teaching practice and regular discussion about students, will support learning continuity across the school. In light of these reflections, the Review Panel supports the intention to go deeper with this strategic work, to a point where this is embedded into practice. This would, in turn, realise the stated goal of the Principal for 'all children to be considered the responsibility of all staff' and 'that momentum not be lost' from year to year through transition.

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.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Mount Gambier North Primary School is tracking well. Good performance was evident in the developing use of student achievement data to inform school decisions and actions, meet the learning needs of targeted groups and strategically support the needs of families through community partnerships. There exists a commitment to teacher professional learning and capacity building at the school.

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

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.
2. Increase the proportion of students reaching the SEA through agreed, focused and consistently implemented, evidence-based teaching strategies from Reception to Year 7.
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.
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.

Based on the school's current performance, Mount Gambier North Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.

Jane Turner
PRINCIPAL
Mount Gambier North Primary
School

Governing Council Chairperson