

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

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in November 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 Lyn Arnold, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Kylie Eggers, 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 Pleasant Primary School has verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) referenced to work of Early Years educators – Early Years staff are working closely with the local kindergarten Director. Expectation is that EYLF will be reflected in instructional program and monitored through professional development meetings.
- Performance Development Plans – there will be consistency across the school through the use of an agreed template, and all staff, including part-time teachers and SSOs, will have a plan documented and referred to during professional development meetings.
- Compliance with ICT security policy – working through administration computers to ensure all staff have an individual login, which needs to be done one machine at a time, as the school works on a peer-to-peer network.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school was found to be compliant with this policy, and has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes.

In 2014, the school reported attendance of 90.6%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Mount Pleasant Primary School is located 65kms from Adelaide at the south-eastern end of the Barossa Council area. The school has a relatively stable enrolment, with 53 students enrolled in 2014, and 51 students in 2015. The school has an ICSEA score of 1007, and is classified as a Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3 Students with Disabilities, with another 15 students receiving extra support in class or small groups, and with an average of 37% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his first tenure at the school. As a small school with 3.6FTE teaching staff, including the Principal, the staff members form a collaborative leadership group across Reception to Year 7.

### Lines of inquiry

*During the review process, in addition to the foundation line of inquiry on Student Learning, the panel focused on two key areas from the External School Review Framework:*

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>To what extent is data and assessment information used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?</b>
<b>School Community Partnerships:</b>	<b>How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?</b>

### How well are students achieving over time?

The school has a small enrolment and the student population is somewhat transient, with students moving in and out of the school for varying reasons. For example, of the five Year 3 students at the school in 2012, only one student was still enrolled at the school in 2014 as a Year 5. Consequently, the comparison and tracking of student data over time is difficult, and no conclusions should be drawn on the numbers documented below. Rather the school focuses on the tracking of individual growth and progress over time.

In 2015, the Reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 10 of 14 Year 3 students, 5 of 8 Year 5 students, and 3 of 5 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In relation to students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in 2015, 4 students were in Year 3, 2 students were in Year 5, and 2 students were in Year 7. This compares to an average of 4, 1 and 2 students for Years 3, 5 and 7, respectively, over the previous five years (2010 to 2014), indicating an upward trend in Year 3 over time.

Of those students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in Reading, 1 of 1 student from Year 3 in 2013 remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 1 of 1 student from Year 3 in 2011 remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This compares to an average of one student retained in the upper bands at Years 3 to 5, and two students retained from Years 3 to 7 between 2008 and 2014.

In 2015, the Numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 9 of 14 Year 3 students, 5 of 8 Year 5 students and 2 of 5 Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.

Of the students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher bands for Numeracy in 2015, 2 were in Year 3, 2 were in Year 5 and 1 was in Year 7. This compares to an average of 2, 1 and 1 students for Years 3, 5 and 7, respectively, over the previous five years, 2010 to 2014.

Examination of results for the retention of students who achieved in the NAPLAN higher proficiency bands in Numeracy shows that 2 of 3 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 in 2013 to Year 5 in 2015, and 0 of 1 students remained in the upper bands from Year 3 in 2011 to Year 7 in 2015. This compares to an average of one student retained in the upper bands for Years 3 to 5, and one student for Years 3 to 7, from 2008 to 2014.

Through individual student monitoring and tracking, and staff analysis of the data, the school's self-review processes recognise the need to move more students into the higher proficiency bands in Reading and Numeracy, and that Numeracy scores could improve across the year levels. The school has developed Literacy and Numeracy agreements in support of whole-school approaches that use evidence-based strategies to explicitly teach essential skills and understandings together with improvement targets.

### To what extent is data and assessment information used to inform curriculum planning and instruction?

The school has implemented a continuous improvement agenda that includes regular self-review, particularly in relation to learning and pedagogy. In support of identifying improvement priorities, the school has engaged with a range of strategies that have proven highly effective, including the examination of the root causes, reality and associated consequences of current and proposed teaching practices.

As the school has small cohorts in each year level, the school has developed a schedule for the collection of reliable and relevant data, particularly in Numeracy and Literacy, to examine individual student progress and growth during regular staff and Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, and ongoing informal chats. Self-review processes have also led staff to begin developing individual learning improvement plans for all students within a case management model.

The professional learning undertaken balances school priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) with the interests and needs of individual teachers. The staff have found their participation in the Torrens Valley Partnership to be particularly beneficial, and the teachers demonstrate a culture of change and willingness to improve. They are open to new ideas, willing to explore approaches for improving the learning outcomes of their students, and are committed to taking action.

At the time of External School Review, all teachers were working towards integrating the Australian Curriculum and a range of evidence-based, contemporary pedagogical approaches into their instructional program and assessment process.

The school uses a range of data from formative assessments, together with teacher judgement, to report to parents against the Australian Curriculum standards, using A-E measures, as required by DECD policy. Through discussions with the Review Panel, however, teachers recognised they are not using the A-E data in a reciprocal way to inform or refine their instructional learning and assessment designs or the plans for student improvement. Rather, they refer to standardised and diagnostic test data. In their discussions, they also recognised the opportunity to triangulate data to compare and contrast achievement data and information across all relevant sources, and for the development of processes to use this data in meaningful ways to enhance individual student improvement plans.

#### **Direction 1**

**Build the capacity of teachers, and develop ongoing processes for the triangulation of data across relevant sources, to inform and enhance curriculum planning and instruction.**

### How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

Students were very willing and enthusiastic about sharing their work and their learning with the Review Panel. In moving about the school, students were observed to be very respectful of others, including their peers, and their comments indicate they value their teachers, and their school, highly.

There also is a strong partnership between parents and the school, and parents spoke highly of the community aspects of the school. In particular, the respect the school shows to families through the 'open door' policy, with staff and leadership being very approachable on any issue at any time.

The school champions a philosophy of there being 'no secret teacher business'. In support of this philosophy at the student level, the school is moving towards a wider use of rubrics and feedback strategies to assist students in understanding the learning intentions and outcomes of assessment tasks. As a whole school, the staff have also adopted five key questions that all students should be able to answer. Namely: "What am I learning? How am I doing? How do I know? How can I improve? Where do I go for help?"

These are positive approaches for improving student learning outcomes that the Review Panel found are emerging in teachers' practice. Ongoing support and development is recommended to ensure these, and other similar evidence-based practices, become fully embedded and sustainable over time in classrooms across the school.

In particular, a focus on students being able to talk confidently about how they are doing, how they know and how they can improve should prove beneficial. In talking with students, it emerged that across the year levels, except where rubrics were used, most students were unable to articulate to the Review Panel

how they were going, or what grades they had or could receive for various activities. Students across the school also were unclear on what constitutes an A-E grade, how these are allocated, or how to improve their grade. This was confirmed by parents who told the Review Panel that their children, like them, are trying to get their 'heads around' the grading system.

Strategies that engage students in the planning of assessment tasks that enable them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge at higher levels of proficiency should be further developed and implemented. The provision of exemplars of what is required to achieve a particular grade that aligns with rubrics and learning guides will assist students to set personal learning goals that, in turn, can inform the co-construction of individualised learning improvement plans. Further, it can provide a structure for highlighting personal learning growth and progress in ways that are relevant and meaningful for students and parents, and which complement the assessment outcomes against the Standards.

While building teacher capacity to provide quality formative and summative feedback is an important strategy, students also benefit from planned opportunities to develop their capacity to participate in effective and constructive feedback processes that authentically value their opinions and enable them to influence their learning in positive ways.

### **Direction 2**

**Build the capacity of teachers and students to engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes, and participate in the co-construction of individual learning improvement plans in ways that strengthen students' influence on their learning.**

Additionally, within this context, the school has an improvement agenda to increase the opportunities for all students to experience greater intellectual stretch and challenge. Parents were supportive of this aspiration and, similarly, students expressed interest in taking on greater challenges with appropriate support. Parents, in particular, like the idea of their children engaging in stretching and motivating challenges that would assist in building academic resilience. Clearly outlining achievable and realistic success criteria and goals in the individual learning improvement plans, which take into account a student's needs and capacity, will support the development of positive mindsets and further complement the whole-school program to build social-emotional resilience.

### **Direction 3**

**Foster and promote appropriate student intellectual challenge that enhances deep understanding and engagement in relevant and purposeful tasks by identifying evidence-based pedagogical practices for consolidation and further development.**

## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Mount Pleasant Primary School is tracking well. The school has a strong partnership with parents and stakeholders. Teachers engage in ongoing collaborative professional learning, and leadership is shared across the school to strategically plan for school improvement, and the provision of targeted interventions for at-risk students. Programs and strategies implemented across the school are monitored and evaluated regularly to determine their effectiveness in relation to student achievement and growth.

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

1. Build the capacity of teachers, and develop ongoing processes for the triangulation of data across relevant sources, to inform and enhance curriculum planning and instruction.
2. Build the capacity of teachers and students to engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes, and participate in the co-construction of individual learning improvement plans in ways that strengthen students' influence on their learning.
3. Foster and promote appropriate student intellectual challenge that enhances deep understanding and engagement in relevant and purposeful tasks by identifying evidence-based pedagogical practices for consolidation and further development.

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



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL  
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.

Tony Wrigley  
PRINCIPAL  
MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson