

# **Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### **Report for Mount Pleasant Primary School**

Conducted in September 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 Rob McLaren, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Kirsty Trahar, 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

Mount Pleasant Primary School is situated in the Barossa Council area 65km north east of the Adelaide CBD. The current enrolment is 68 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 51.

The school has an ICSEA score of 981 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 13% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 33% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the third year of their tenure at the school. There are 4 teachers including 2 Step 9 teachers.

## Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

The panel sourced evidence that the school has responded effectively to the previous directions. Data collection and interrogation has become more prominent in whole-school practices with data schedules, data walls and spreadsheets guiding staff in planning for learning, and the tracking and monitoring of learner progress. Evidence-based identification and intervention of students with learning needs has been enhanced. Some foundational work to develop student agency in learning was undertaken with a student voice audit and the 'tell to ask' project developing staff and student capacity in using student feedback to improve teacher practice. While progress in this has been sidelined due to other priorities, the site leader and staff believe this is an area of further development.

Targeted professional learning in growth mindsets, habits of the mind and powerful learners has developed the capacity of teachers to use evidence-based pedagogies to build intellectual challenge. Teachers commented that they have been influenced by a partnership focus on moderation, challenging them in their task design and mathematics in developing deeper understandings of concepts and eliminating misconceptions. Teachers hence believe they have developed a range of effective practices and strategies that promotes engagement and challenge in learning.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

*How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies/actions based on their impact on student learning?*

The school has engaged in a collaborative, evidence-based process by reflecting on existing practice and referencing guidebooks, best practice papers and the analysis of student achievement and disposition data to develop the 2019 Site Improvement Plan (SIP). Staff were able to clearly articulate in interviews the priorities for improvement, whilst describing the Challenges of Practice with less clarity. Data collection and analysis has grown in prominence since the previous review with data forming part of both formal and informal conversations between staff and is visible in the use of data schedules, data walls and spreadsheets.

The principal in their presentation stated that as a small school there are many opportunities to formally and informally monitor the progress of the SIP strategies and actions in the achievement of agreed goals. The principal also described half termly 'check-ins' at staff meetings that review the SIP progress using evidence collected in a staff 'share book' and principal classroom observations to plan next steps.

In 2019, staff have been engaging in 5 weekly learning sprints in an identified area of improvement aligned to the SIP goals. In each sprint the team reviews evidence of best practice, trials agreed strategies and uses both pre and post data to measure impact. Staff spoke positively of this process and the sharing of best practice at staff meetings and believed this should be developed further. A more formalised term 4 student free day reviews the yearly progress of actions and strategies with staff discussion responding to set provocations and data provided by the principal.

These processes position the school well for the Improvement of Practice and Monitoring Impact stages of the cycle of improvement. Ensuring these structures and processes are regularly enacted and further aligned to other evidence-based performance development processes will provide staff with the opportunity to effectively reflect and improve practice, while strengthening the improvement agenda.

**Direction 1** Further enhance the schools capacity to assess impact and adjust practice as required through a collective, aligned and regular data informed approach to self-review.

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING & LEARNING

### *To what extent do teachers ensure that students have authentic influence in their learning?*

The previous review identified a need for improvement in strategies to strengthen student influence in learning. In particular, formative and summative feedback and assessment processes were highlighted to increase the likelihood that students will experience greater self-worth, engagement and purpose in school.

During classroom observations, the panel cited small pockets of practice where teachers were empowering students in making decisions about their learning and developing a language of learning. Teacher responses in a review staff meeting survey rated a high importance on student agency in learning. Conversations with the teachers detailed an example where students co-constructed their learning with their teacher on spending a voucher that their class had won. Students worked in groups developing writing and vocabulary skills, constructing wish lists, prioritising, planning and using voting to make decisions.

Descriptions of future plans to reinvigorate early years learning with a focus on how students learn, a greater use of play-based learning and the development of metacognitive skills have potential to further develop student agency. In observing the year 3 to 4 class, learning intentions and success criteria are co-constructed by students and their teacher and were utilised to give direction and purpose in learning. These were regularly reviewed to check progress in learning. Further examples were provided by teachers and students in science, HASS and the year 5 to 7 class project based learning activity in which projects provided authentic opportunities for student agency and challenge in learning.

Student voice is supported through the Student Representative Council (SRC) which provides an opportunity for students to develop leadership skills. Student leaders described the SRC as an active group organising and running school assemblies, representing the school in community and environmental events and fundraising while providing a forum for student issues to be discussed. However, the SRC does not discuss learning or ways to improve learning, with prior work in the 'tell to ask' student voice project where students were upskilled in what are rich, deep questions and after observing lessons provided teachers feedback about their questioning. Students commented that they saw value in this project and believed it could be developed further.

In conversations with students it was clear that there was not a consistent or sophisticated language of learning. Student responses, when asked about how they were progressing or how they could improve, lacked any depth or understanding of the learning process. There were limited examples of a teacher seeking feedback from students about their practice. This was recognised in the survey responses and while they considered it useful it would take time to build capacity of staff and students.

To enable students to have greater ownership, control and authentic influence in learning, an opportunity exists to build on previous work to develop a common understanding of the learning process, a language of learning and effective dispositions to learning across the school.

**Direction 2     Strengthen student engagement by building common understandings, strategies and learning dispositions that enhance student influence in learning.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING & LEARNING

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

The agreed schools vision of learning clearly states the promotion of intellectual stretch and lifelong learning. The challenge for teachers in supporting this is meeting the learning expectations of all students with classes that are composite year levels containing students with a wide range of needs and abilities. Teachers described how they used data to design differentiated learning to meet the needs of students and the panel observed in some classrooms, students being grouped according to their ability with learning and assessment tasks scaffolded and set to their ability level.

Students commented that in most classes they felt supported by teachers and some were able to articulate the learning requirements of set tasks. Students explained that they received feedback about their learning predominantly in written comments on draft work, verbal feedback in class or termly reports, whereas some teachers encouraged peer feedback. When asked whether they were challenged in their learning they believed this was dependent on the teacher and what task they were completing. Classroom teachers confirmed that they knew their students and their learning needs referencing use of data to inform planning for learning and intervention. Some teachers described the wide range of abilities and the number of students with learning needs as a factor in providing challenge for all students. Recent partnership moderation processes had focussed their attention more closely on task design to better support this.

A number of effective teaching pedagogies were observed in classes across the school. In the reception to year 1 class, routines, explicit teaching, clear expectations with well organised support for learners was a feature. Year 2 to 3 3D printer design work incorporated scaffolded writing activities in which technical vocabulary was being broken down for understanding with the teacher using effective questioning techniques to model exemplars of high quality writing. Learning intentions and success criteria co-constructed with year 3 to 4 students guided their learning and were also reviewed regularly. The year 5 to 7 class highlighted data use by the teacher to determine student groupings in literacy and numeracy while using explicit teaching, scaffolded learning and assessment tasks as appropriate.

To support the engagement and challenge for all learners, including those in higher bands, there is a need to reach agreements on high yield pedagogical practices that support all learners.

**Direction 3      Ensure engagement and challenge for all learners by reaching whole-school agreements of effective pedagogical practices that support differentiation and student agency in learning.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

At Mount Pleasant Primary 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** Further enhance the schools capacity to assess impact and adjust practice as required through a collective, aligned and regular data informed approach to self-review.
- Direction 2** Strengthen student engagement by building common understandings, strategies and learning dispositions that enhance student influence in learning.
- Direction 3** Ensure engagement and challenge for all learners by reaching whole-school agreements of effective pedagogical practices that support differentiation and student agency in learning.

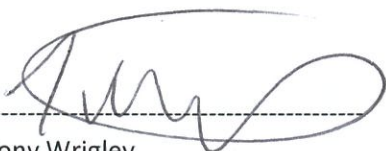
Based on the school's current performance, Mount Pleasant Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



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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, 75% of year 1 and 50% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 1 has been upwards, from 20% to 75%.

In 2019 the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 80% of year 3 students, 88% of year 5 students and 69% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change and for year 5, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been upwards, from 64% to 88%.

For 2019 year 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 10% of year 3, 38% of year 5 and 31% 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, 100%, or 2 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 4 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 70% of year 3 students, 75% 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, for year 5 this represents little or no achievement, and for year 7, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2019 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 20% of year 3, 13% of year 5 and 15% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been downwards, from 50% to 15%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 0%, or 0 out of 1 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 2 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.