

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

# EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

## REPORT FOR SNOWTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in August 2016



**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 framework underpinning the External School Review identifies the key levers for school improvement and has been shaped and informed by research.*

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

*This Report of the External School Review 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.*

*The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. While not all review processes, artefacts and comments are documented, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this Report.*

*This External School Review was conducted by June Goode, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Ros Frost, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

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

The Principal of Snowtown 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:

Part 5 Safety: Item 5

The school is working towards a draft policy which will be tabled and ratified at a Governing Council Meeting prior to the end of 2016.

When the school's actions achieve compliancy with DECD policy and procedures, the Principal must resubmit the Policy Compliance Checklist to the Education Director.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 91%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

### **School context**

Snowtown Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school located 150kms north of the Adelaide CBD with approximately 53 students. Enrolment numbers have remained steady from 2013 until 2015. The school has an ICSEA score of 897, and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 16% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 2% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 49% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in a 12-month tenure at the school.

### **School Performance Overview**

*The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).*

*Considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making any judgement due to the lower numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school.*

#### **Reading**

In the Early Years, reading is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 3 of 9 Year 1 students, and 4 of 10 Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). The Year 1 and 2 results are above the school's historic average. From 2013 to 2015, there is an upward trend for Year 2 students, from 17% to 40%.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 2 of 5 Year 3 students, 3 of 4 Year 5 students, and 1 of 2 Year 7 students, demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, the results are below the school's historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, no Year 3 student achieved in the higher bands. One of 4 Year 5 and 1 of 2 Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands.

A single student achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading at Year 3 (2013), taking into

account arrivals and departures, and remained in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015. This result shows an improvement compared to the school's historic baseline average. A single student in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), taking into account arrivals and departures, remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. This result is also higher than the school's historic baseline average.

### Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 1 of 5 Year 3 students, 3 of 4 Year 5 students, and both of the Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result shows a decline compared to the school's historic baseline average. The Year 5 and 7 results are above the school's historic baseline average.

From 2013 to 2015, there is a downward trend evident for Year 3 Numeracy, from 30% to 20%. Year 7 showed an upward trend over this period, from 60% to 100%.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across the DECD system.

In 2015, no students in Year 3 or 5 achieved in the top two higher bands, whilst 1 of 2 Year 7 students did achieve in the higher bands.

A single student, who achieved in the top two bands at Year 3 (2011), remained in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015.

### Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

**Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

**Effective Teaching:** How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?

**School Community Partnerships:** How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

### To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

From the reading data in the school report, one student in Year 3 (2013), one student in Year 5 (2015) and one student in Year 7 (2015) achieved in the higher bands. In numeracy, one student in Year 3, no students in Year 5 and one student in Year 7 (2015) achieved in the higher bands.

However, the numbers of students attaining SEA is showing an increase in Years 5 and 7 in 2015. This is reinforced by the number of students achieving at a 'C' level in site-based data.

The opportunity to accelerate the number of students in higher bands needs to be a priority, given the growth in numbers in Years 5 and 7.

The Review Panel acknowledges the strategic and triangulated approach to mapping student learning across the site. The Principal, staff and parents clearly articulated the impact intervention programs are having for any student needing support. An opportunity now arises to support students to be extended to achieve at and above SEA expectations through the design of learning plans, which incorporate higher-order thinking.

Written and verbal evidence from the Principal, staff and parents, show that all staff have high expectations for all students. Student comments indicate that they are "comfortable" in terms of where they are at. When questioned about challenge in their learning, one student responded: "We can get a higher year level worksheet or we can do another worksheet". When asked "Do you know how to get

better?" responses were: "The teacher will tell us". In terms of challenge, all students commented that the higher-level students get more worksheets or, "If we finish early, we can help other students".

There is a varied level of understanding of what intellectual stretch and challenge means, with most staff providing differing levels of challenge; however, the majority of it is aimed for the higher-achieving students, and not for all students at their actual level.

An opportunity exists to develop common purpose and understanding of what intellectual stretch looks like through collegial conversations and networking of good practice across the Partnership.

**Direction 1**

**Improve student achievement levels through the design and application of shared learning plans, which incorporate opportunities for students to demonstrate intellectual stretch.**

**How effectively does the feedback students are given motivate them to improve?**

There are varying and inconsistent levels of effective feedback being provided to students to support and motivate them in their learning, with a low level of feedback presented in student workbooks. For example, "good work" and "well done" were common, whilst verbal feedback included low-order statements such as "good job" and "great effort". The Review Panel sought evidence from students, in terms of their learning, as to how they knew how they were going, and student responses were: "when I get lots of ticks" or "when I get good marks". Comments were also made that sharing their work with the Principal meant that they were going well.

In relation to how teachers provided feedback, the students responded stating teachers provide written feedback in their books or "the teacher tells us". When asked about how the teacher helps them improve, the comments were about doing another worksheet, getting a worksheet designed for a higher year-level or helping other students in the class.

Staff at Snowtown Primary School undertake Professional Learning in effective feedback. The Review Panel acknowledges the collegial support clearly evident through observations and conversations with staff and parents. The next opportunity for staff would be to re-address what effective feedback is and what it isn't. Then, together, to reflect on the impact this is having at class and individual levels through peer to peer observations. This should lead to the development of a consistent approach to providing feedback which supports, challenges and then acknowledges learning growth.

**Direction 2**

**Increase the number of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of feedback to and from students.**

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

The Review Panel can verify through conversations with staff, students and parents the many varied possibilities students have in school operations, including participating in the Governing Council and key leadership responsibilities.

The impact of "powerful learning" was observed to be learning directed by the teacher, and having a voice meant "we vote on the game we want to play".

The varying levels of understanding of how to provide a differentiated curriculum and intellectual challenge was evidenced in conversations and through observations. The next opportunity would be for staff to engage in exploring what "powerful learning" is, including attitudes to learning, as well as student ownership and responsibility. Active powerful learning is a genuine opportunity for students to express their opinions and make decisions regarding the planning, implementation and evaluation of their learning experience.

All teachers stated they have high expectations for students, and there is uptake across the school in

students setting individual goals. Whilst this is in the early stages, the level of uptake is notable. The majority of students were able to articulate the purpose for goal-setting, however, the level of monitoring progress was varied across the site. Many students were unable to state what their goal was or, if they did, how they were progressing.

Evidence from students to the Review Panel indicated that students would like to be challenged, but lessons were driven by teachers. Parent comments indicated their concern about the level of challenge provided and the reduced numbers of role models due to declining enrolment numbers.

An opportunity exists for teachers to practise with students the purpose of setting class goals, which are linked to the Site Improvement Plan. Long-term class goals can then be broken down to smaller goals, which could be set by students. It will then be pivotal for staff to engage students as data sources about how the class is tracking in relation to the set goals and how individual students are responding. This should lead to students being actively involved in the process of data analysis, both at a class level, and then cascading down to individual levels.

The potential to engage students as co-constructors in learning design, assessment rubrics and success criteria should empower them to become involved in the learning process, both individually and collectively, and should provide them with a sense of ownership and responsibility, and support achievement at and above the SEA.

**Direction 3**

**Engage in opportunities to extend current practice to include “powerful learning” as leverage to improving student engagement in order to increase student achievement and growth.**

### OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

There is a genuine commitment to developing whole-school consistent approaches to build teacher capacity and improve student learning at Snowtown Primary School. Positive connections with the school and wider community ensure partnerships are being extended to promote Snowtown Primary School as a school focused on providing learning opportunities linked to their community.

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

1. Improve student achievement levels through the design and application of shared learning plans, which incorporate opportunities for students to demonstrate intellectual stretch.
2. Increase the number of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of feedback to and from students.
3. Engage in opportunities to extend current practice to include “powerful learning” as leverage to improving student engagement in order to increase student achievement and growth.

Based on the school’s current performance, Snowtown Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Trish Boschetti  
PRINCIPAL  
SNOWTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson