

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Snowtown Primary School

Conducted in March 2020



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 Tanya Oshinsky, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Brenton Conradi, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the principal
- Class visits
- Staff meeting activity
- Document analysis
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
 - Governing Council representatives
 - School Support Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Snowtown Primary School caters for children from preschool to year 7. It is situated 150kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 50. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 53. The local partnership is Mid North Clare.

The school has an ICSEA score of 944, and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1 Aboriginal student, 16% students with disabilities, no students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 46% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 5th year of tenure.

There are 8 teachers including school-based preschool, 2 in the early years of their career and 4 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Improve student achievement levels through the design and application of shared learning plans, which incorporate opportunities for students to demonstrate intellectual stretch.**
- Direction 2** **Increase the number of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of feedback to and from students.**
- 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.**

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

There has been dedicated and focussed attention on the previous directions at Snowtown Primary School (SPS). Clarity of this journey and its emphasis on intellectual stretch, feedback and developing powerful learners was evidenced by the panel. The principal stated that with a small team it is important to ensure everyone is ‘on the same page’. Staff and parents confirm that the culture has significantly changed over time and is now more collaborative and focussed on students’ learning achievement.

Implementing Brightpath has been an instrumental part of the journey and is well embedded into classroom practice. Explicit scaffolds enable students to track and monitor their own writing achievement and to set goals for continuous improvement. Feedback from Brightpath is very specific and teachers have been mindful of providing students with explicit feedback in varied learning areas. Feedback keys have been developed to ensure teachers keep this strategy at the forefront of their work.

Teachers have unpacked the concept of students as powerful learners for a shared understanding and students have been encouraged to identify with this concept. There has been additional focus on growth mindset, learner qualities, making thinking visible and goal setting as part of the improvement agenda. The challenge for the school with changes to staffing is maintaining the expertise of teachers in the

delivery of agreed strategies while continuing the improvement work in other areas. Professional learning, dedicated staff meeting time and partnership work supports the improvement journey at SPS.

Lines of inquiry

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

To what extent has the school drawn on evidence of best practice to determine strategies and actions for improvement?

Teachers indicate that the challenges of practice within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) have been determined through ample opportunity for collaborative discussion and consultation, viewing research and data, while remaining focussed on meeting the needs of students. Teachers have been supported to action the expectations within the SIP through release time and targeted professional learning. Governing Council representatives also report feeling well consulted, informed and are fully supportive of the school's current directions. The preschool Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is aligned with the SIP in its focus on maths and powerful learners.

Consultative processes with students have been undertaken through a Student Leadership Team (SLT). The SLT group attended a leadership forum last year and discussed the SIP, Australian Curriculum and learning progressions to determine the next steps for the school from the students' perspective. Student opinion was then shared with teachers and influenced discussions about the SIP. These innovative practices are in the early stages and are yet to be further developed. However, the school is to be commended for its genuine attention to student voice in influencing their learning.

The analysis of data and gaps in student learning leads to action. Jolly Phonics targets phonemic awareness and phonics, Brightpath was introduced to address writing results and more recently '5 drawers' for targeting maths needs. The school has engaged consultants, seeks external student learning opportunities such as the 'PMA powerful learners' challenge' and values partnership forums, in continuously seeking improvement in learning for the students. Maintaining a focus on all students achieving higher levels of learning is continuing work for the school.

With a small team, teachers often discuss through meetings and informally, the progress of students. The principal reports that more formal review processes have taken place each term and there are regular check-ins through the Brightpath agreements. Involving all staff in regular self-review processes that support their understanding of the impact of their work on student outcomes, will enable the amplification of effective practices and provide the opportunity to reflect on other actions that are less effective.

Direction 1 **Improve student outcomes, by developing specific strategies that monitor and evaluate the impact teaching practice is having across all aspects of literacy and numeracy, then amplify and adjust practices accordingly.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The school has worked diligently to embed effective practices across all classrooms. Brightpath, thinking routines and 5 drawers for maths were visible in all 3 classrooms along with visual scaffolds that support students to be active participants in their learning. Practices around growth mindset, powerful learners, feedback and goal setting were also evident. The school has developed its own tools and modified others to support the implementation of agreed practices. Staff and student transience has presented some challenges in ensuring effective practices remain embedded over time.

The panel evidenced solid practice around students tracking their own learning and setting explicit goals in their use of the Brightpath ruler and exemplars. Year 6 and 7 students were plotting their own achievement in a graph during the panel walkthrough. Students were also being provided with an explicit scaffold in setting goals that not only identified what they wanted to achieve but also how they would do so. The majority of students interviewed could articulate clearly to the panel their next steps in writing. Strengthening the SPS language for learning would further enhance the visibility of learning across the curriculum at SPS. Students need to be consistently provided with clarity about what they are learning and the purpose (learning intentions) and how they can be successful (success criteria).

Multiple year levels per class provide additional challenges for teachers in designing tasks that provide effective differentiation and enable the stretch and challenge necessary for the varied needs of all learners. While the panel noted that all staff genuinely want to improve outcomes for students, conversations around how they ensure stretch and challenge in practice were less clear and students showed little evidence of understanding their next steps outside of writing. The principal identified task design as an area of growth for the school and the partnerships current work in learning design, assessment and moderation, will further support the teachers at SPS to develop task designs with multiple entry and exit points for differentiating learning. Assessment and moderation practices will promote discussion as to whether those tasks have provided the opportunity for continuous stretch in student learning.

Direction 2 **Ensure all students achieve higher levels of learning across the curriculum, through strengthening teachers' capacity to design and implement differentiated learning experiences that provide ongoing opportunities for intellectual stretch and challenge.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The principal identified the school's value of 'listening' as being intentional about developing student voice at the school. There are different SLTs over time for the school yard, powerful learners and most recently the SIP SLT. The school's focus on powerful learning and making learning visible has provided a strong foundation for students to take control of their learning. The panel found students to be generally articulate about their learning and have positive dispositions about themselves as learners. There has also been intentional focus in providing links with the community, for example with some students engaging with the aged care facility.

Three way interviews provide opportunity for students to discuss their learning and goals with their teacher and parents. Students reported that they usually get their test results at these meetings and then know how they are going in their learning. Regularly sharing assessments and the progressions of learning with students in all areas of the curriculum will foster the same certainty and exemplary practice that is occurring in writing. Students described to the panel that they have a say in their learning through choice in how to present their work or in how much they choose to do above the minimal expectation. Developing an agreed concept of student agency at SPS is future work.

Teachers and students verify that explicit feedback to students is intentionally given and supports their learning. While formative assessment practices described were limited teachers having regular learning conversations with students were in evidence. Students are also encouraged to talk to their peers about their learning. Teachers acknowledged that students providing feedback about their learning and teachers adjusting their practice based on this feedback, was still an area of growth.

Student agency in writing, through Brightpath, was in ample evidence. Being self-directors of their own learning and setting goals in other curriculum areas were less evident. Goals were then found to be broader and were more often designed in consultation with teachers. Students were also less clear about how they could improve their outcomes in other areas of learning. Students knowing their own achievement and having clear knowledge of the progression of their learning in writing has been significant in their daily stretch and challenge in writing. Amplifying this exemplary practice in other aspects of literacy and in maths, will be ongoing work for the school.

Direction 3 Strengthen student agency in their learning, by building teachers' skills in regularly sharing learning progressions, assessments and feedback with students.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

There has been strategic and intentional attention to building a positive culture of learning at Snowtown Primary School. This is fostered by consistent and effective pedagogical practices that are focussed on students being powerful learners. Learning environments provide rich scaffolds for learning and students have positive learning dispositions. The school is to be commended for the improvement journey that has been undertaken and in building a strong foundation for further improvement.

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

- Direction 1** Improve student outcomes, by developing specific strategies that monitor and evaluate the impact teaching practice is having across all aspects of literacy and numeracy, then amplify and adjust practices accordingly.
- Direction 2** Ensure all students achieve higher levels of learning across the curriculum, through strengthening teachers' capacity to design and implement differentiated learning experiences that provide ongoing opportunities for intellectual stretch and challenge.
- Direction 3** Strengthen student agency in their learning, by building teachers' skills in regularly sharing learning progressions, assessments and feedback with students.

Based on the school's current performance, Snowtown Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohorts of students. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data from Snowtown Primary School from 2015 – 2019.

All data references in appendix 1 are aggregates and percentages of aggregates:

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. From 2015-2019, 53% of year 1 and 58% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2015-2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 68% of year 3 students, 66% of year 5 students and 50% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2015-2019, 15% of year 3, 16% of year 5 and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands.

Numeracy

From 2015-2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 76% of year 3 students, 72% of year 5 students and 75% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

From 2015-2019, 47% of year 3, 6% of year 5 and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands.