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 Ann O’Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and, Dianne Jamieson, Review Principal.
Policy compliance
The external review process includes verification by the principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Settlers Farm Campus R – 7 has verified that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet obligations to implement the identified policies on the checklist. The school has a three-year cycle to review approximately seven policies a year. The Principal has specifically noted that plans are in place to develop the site induction policy in 2015.

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. In 2014, the school’s reported average four term attendance rate was 92% which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Settlers Farm Campus R - 7 is a metropolitan school with 762 enrolled students, located in the north western suburbs of Adelaide. The school has an ACARA ICSEA rating of 962, and is classified as Category 4 on DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 86 Students with Disabilities, 28 Aboriginal students, 225 (37%) students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) and 30% students who are eligible for school card assistance.

There are 31 mainstream classes across the school. At the beginning of 2013, the junior primary school and the primary school amalgamated to form Settlers Farm Campus R - 7. The campus includes an Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) program and a preschool.

The Principal is in her first tenure at the school after being appointed in 2013. A Deputy Principal, two Assistant Principals, a School Counsellor and a Senior School Services Officer, comprise the school leadership team.
Lines of inquiry
During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:

- **Student Learning:** How well are students achieving over time?
- **Effective Teaching:** How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?
- **Effective Leadership:** To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?

How well are students achieving over time?

In 2014, an average of 75% of the Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 students at Settlers Farm Campus R - 7 met the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in reading, as measured by NAPLAN data. Included in these results are the students who achieved in the higher two proficiency bands: 24% at Year 3, 18% at Year 5 and 13.5% at Year 7. Analysis of data over a four-year period provides evidence of incremental improvement. In 2014, the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN for the same cohorts indicate that 74% of Year 3 students, 60% of Year 5 students and 53% of Year 7 students met the SEA. Analysis of the 2011-2014 numeracy data shows a downward trend in results over time. Developing a consistent and coherent whole school approach to improve outcomes in mathematics is a current priority on the school improvement agenda.

Reading performance in the early years is measured against the benchmarks for Running Records agreed by schools in the Hollywood Lakes and Gardens Education and Child Development (ECD) local partnership. These benchmarks are above the DECD SEA. In 2014, 47% of Year 1 students achieved level 20 or above and 61% of Year 2 students achieved level 25 or above. In the data held centrally by DECD, 46.6% of Year 1 students demonstrated the DECD SEA (level 17 or above) and 70% of Year 2 students demonstrated the SEA (level 21 or above). When considering either of these most recent data sets, the school is aware that fewer than 50% of Year 1 students met the DECD SEA.

Since 2013, the Principal and other members of the leadership team have worked collaboratively with all staff to place the analysis and use of data and information about student achievement at the forefront of decision making at all levels in the school. This is evident in the measures and outcomes outlined in the current School Improvement Plan (SIP). It is also evident in data sets held for specific cohorts: e.g. expected growth for EALD students achieved as measured against the language and literacy levels; and the triangulated data sets used to monitor progress of Aboriginal students.

The forthcoming implementation of a new data management system in the school provides impetus for staff to develop a systematic and purposeful process to use summative and formative assessment information to monitor learning progress to inform teaching. To achieve this, all teachers will need to build their data literacy skills, design quality assessment processes and share assessment for learning strategies.

Through this reflective collaboration teachers will be able to identify the purpose and value of the summative data that exists in the school and agree on what formative data and processes can be added. Staff will then be well placed to decide which information can be triangulated to measure achievement of all students, monitor the progress and growth of individuals, priority groups and cohorts, and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.
The most useful data sources will be those aligned with the DECD SEA including the Australian Curriculum A-E grades. An initial priority for R - 7 will be to explore and agree on what standardised or moderated assessment information will be used to guide curriculum planning and instruction for each student to improve their learning outcomes in mathematics.

**Direction 1**

**Attain higher numbers of students achieving the DECD standard of educational achievement by using data and assessment information to inform planning, instruction, intervention and reporting, at the class, team and whole school level**

**How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?**

Governing Council and other parent groups reported that they feel their children’s needs, “no matter how small’, are catered to by teachers and non-teaching staff. While whole school events are well attended, providing more opportunities for more parents to be actively engaged with the school as partners in their children’s learning is a priority. Both the Governing Council and the leadership team said they are committed to exploring a range of initiatives to support this. Events such as this year’s AGM Wellbeing Expo and planned meetings of interest groups (e.g. for parents of children with special needs) are positive signs of success.

Students told the Review Panel they know how they are improving when the teacher tells them or when they do a test. Older students reported that they were setting goals for English and Mathematics in their class this year, some middle primary students talked about class goals to improve reading stamina, and junior primary students knew that mental routines made them think and that “chunking and stretching words” helped them to get better at reading.

Specialist staff, involved in providing additional support for students with special needs and for those from priority groups, shared well documented evidence of teachers supporting students through collaborative planning at the start of each year. Individual learning plans and negotiated education plans are prepared for nearly three hundred students. The effective communication that exists between the non-teaching staff, who run the many intervention programs and teachers, is also highly valued.

Overall, teachers know that working in professional learning teams is central to strengthening support for all students to gain higher levels of achievement. Across the school, staff members said they appreciated the ongoing professional learning they had received in literacy and more recently in Mathematics. Some staff identified a common language being used by students and colleagues in relation to reading. An agreement has been made to implement a scope and sequence that ensures explicit teaching and regular assessment as part of reading practice in R - 5. Upper primary teachers were also taking or a similar approach to bring coherence to the learning continuum for students. The Review Panel observed R - 7 staff members participating in ongoing collaboration through sharing of mathematics journals. In classroom walkthroughs, students and staff used common language when talking about some approaches to reading and when talking about problem solving in Mathematics.

In addition, teachers have been familiarising themselves with the Australian Curriculum content descriptors and achievement standards in English, Mathematics and other learning areas. This familiarisation has included some collaborative planning of units of work and moderation activities with colleagues, at school and from across the local partnership. The teams are yet to analyse any A-E data assigned as achievement grades reported to parents. As the collated grades are added to the school’s data protocol and annual self review process, the discussions leading up to this will enable staff to develop a shared understanding of the criteria used for consistent judgement of the standard. Such consistency can then be explained to students to support them in their learning. By designing and using a range of challenging assessment tasks all students will be able to demonstrate their capacity to achieve and exceed the expected DECD SEA.
Direction 2
Support all students to achieve at high levels by providing assessment tasks that enable them to apply their learning in new contexts to demonstrate proficiency against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.

To support teachers to improve the way they support students in their learning, the school has a four-year operational plan with a wide ranging list of over 70 strategies for development and implementation. From the perspective of most teachers, all the strategies are important and their presence on the plan gives them prominence because “if it’s not on the plan it may not get done”. The Review Panel discussed the wide reaching nature of the plan noting that implementation could become overwhelming and the intention to increase student achievement could become dissipated. The senior leadership team is aware of this cumulative effect and is drafting a number of statements about agreed practice from R - 7 to make explicit the current expectations around effective teaching. As the agreements are completed and annual self review conducted, the school will be able to progressively refine and reduce its operational plan.

To what extent is leadership capacity evident across the school?

Following the amalgamation of the two schools, the Principal has worked with the staff to build leadership capacity. The Review Panel heard that a professional learning team (PLT) strategy aims to build critically collaborative teamwork, de-privatise practice and develop the culture required to achieve coherence in teaching and learning across the school. The Principal and leadership team reported that all staff members involved are expected to make a commitment to action to have a say in what and how things will be improved at their year level.

Commencing in 2014, each of the four PLTs elected a teacher colleague to take on a collaborative leader role. At the whole school level, these four teacher leaders were supported as a curriculum leadership team by working together, with the literacy coach and reading support teacher, and with the Principal. At the end of 2014, each team leader and team member was given opportunity to provide reflection on the first year and make recommendations for improvement. Overall, staff found the model to be positive and challenging. An analysis of the response surveys revealed that each team achieved their own level of success with some saying they were satisfied with their effectiveness and others saying they took a while to get to know each other, build trust and make decisions. All said, they would be more efficient this year. The Review Panel heard that the feedback had been used to revise the team structures for 2015 and to make explicit the accountability the team members owe to each other and the shared responsibility they have to achieve better learning outcomes for all students.

The Review Panel met with the teacher leaders more than once during the onsite visit, and with team members in their team meetings and during classroom walkthroughs. Teachers readily talked about the changes for 2015. This year the responsibilities of the teams have been explicitly linked to the management of an allocated budget of approximately $40,000 to $60,000 per team to support the delivery of additional intervention and improvement programs. Teachers and school servicios officers reported that each team decides by consensus which students will benefit from these resources, in what way and with whom. The delegation to the team is provided with conditions set for expenditure. Each team is also expected to use the budget to provide time for professional learning and planning that is aligned with the school improvement plan and team or individual needs.

The re-elected learning team leaders said that in 2015 these documented conditions have given greater clarity and comfort than there was at times last year. As leaders they reported they understood that the professional challenge is for them to be and be seen as facilitators, and not feel that others want them to be the experts. Team members said the expectations were clearer for them too. As one teacher reported, “we need to do what we say we will do”. The Review Panel suggests it is also important that staff members make explicit the evidence-based criteria they use to make choices about the strategies selected to support learner improvement.
By consistently adhering to each team’s code of conduct and their agreed plans and actions for improvement, staff members will be able to strengthen their professional practice together, making it evident that each member knows they share responsibility for improving the learning of all students. Under the direction and guidance of the Principal and other senior leaders, the PLTs should ultimately demonstrate the outcomes achieved as a result of their collective efforts. The principles of performance and development can form the basis of this professional accountability.

**Direction 3**

**Build collective responsibility for improving student achievement by implementing performance and development processes that monitor coherence in practice and report the effectiveness of the professional learning teams**
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Settlers Farm Campus R – 7 is tracking well. Good performance is evident by a culture of improvement and the development of shared leadership across the school.

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

1. Attain higher numbers of students achieving the DECD standard of educational achievement by using data and assessment information to inform planning, instruction, intervention and reporting, at the class, team and whole school level
2. Support all students to achieve at high levels by providing assessment tasks that enable them to apply their learning in new contexts to demonstrate proficiency against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards
3. Build collective responsibility for improving student achievement by implementing performance and development processes that monitor coherence in practice and report the effectiveness of the professional learning teams

Based on the school’s current performance, Settlers Farm Campus R – 7 will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Susan Cameron
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school’s Annual Report.

TANYA OSHINSKY
PRINCIPAL
SETTLERS FARM CAMPUS R - 7

Governing Council Chairperson