

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Birdwood Primary School

Conducted in November 2021



# 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 Rebecca Pears, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Karyn Alford, Review Principal.

## Review Process

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

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Attendance at staff meeting
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers.

## School context

Birdwood Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 55kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 273. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 276. The local partnership is Torrens Valley.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1011 and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes less than 5% Aboriginal students, 7% students with disabilities, less than 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 23% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the first year of tenure and a Deputy Principal.

There are 15 Teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 8 Step 9 Teachers.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1**    **Strengthen the whole-school assessment processes to include school agreements in using formative assessment practices based on the collaborative use of data and effective pedagogy that builds on teacher capacity.**
- Direction 2**    **Collaboratively develop a whole-school approach that embeds intellectual stretch and challenge, promotes and sustains engagement and rigour in daily classroom teaching and learning, and is understood by the whole-school community.**

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

A Coordinator was appointed from 2013 until 2020 to support and coach staff in literacy and numeracy. Whole-school English and mathematics agreements have been created to support continuity. An assessment review cycle process has been introduced to all staff, ensuring the use of consistent assessments across the school. Leadership regularly visits classes to engage with staff and students in relation to the school improvement plan (SIP) initiatives, pedagogy, student engagement and assessment for learning. All staff have engaged in professional development to analyse and interrogate data, identify areas to target and build teacher capacity. Teaching staff have been involved in a scope and sequence intensive program to ensure consistency of curriculum from reception to year 6. Professional learning community (PLC) meetings related to implementing the SIP have been occurring, with teachers identifying commitments to action related to the plan.

A whole-school approach to the teaching of writing is producing higher standards of writing across the school. Teachers have strengthened their practice in relation to teaching redrafting, editing, vocabulary development and using a range of feedback strategies. Class visits and book looks have provided evidence of the focus on teaching of writing across the site and that student writing has improved.

Teachers are consistently implementing at least one problem-solving task per week to improve student resilience, willingness to trial multiple strategies and ability to choose the most efficient strategy. The explicit teaching of place value has also been consistent across the school. The use of lexile levels for all students above level 30 have provided stretch and challenge for students from years 2–7.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?

Staff are reflective, demonstrated a commitment towards improving practice and have collective ownership of the SIP, as stated by a teacher, 'the SIP underpins everything'. Whilst it was originally developed by leadership in consultation with teachers, the SIP has been discussed at governing council meetings and staff performance and development goals are connected to its implementation. The local education team has been accessed to help support the development and monitoring of the SIP.

Staff were able to identify changes to classroom practice from implementing the SIP. For example, teachers have introduced bump it up walls, word walls, individual goal setting with students and weekly problem solving in maths. Further opportunities for staff to share practices, processes and develop a shared language would help further develop consistent practices across year levels. The SIP is regularly reviewed by all staff to monitor its implementation. The school practice of closely monitoring 6 students with a range of learning abilities in each class, has enabled the implementation of targeted strategies to improve achievement and refine teaching practice. Teaching pedagogy is supported by regular class visits from leadership. The use of thought-provoking questions during these visits enables teachers to reflect on their practice. Teachers work collaboratively with a partner to observe and discuss the implementation of an identified pedagogical practice.

Staff are collaboratively analysing a diverse range of data sets. They have deeply interrogated the progressive achievement tests (PAT) data and used this resource to inform practice. The common use of a rubric for assessing writing would support the development of more consistent practices and the identification of next steps for teaching and learning. Staff found it difficult to explicitly discuss the impact of the actions on the SIP. At times, they referred to anecdotal evidence rather than specific student achievement data to demonstrate student achievement. Strengthening the use of data and student evidence to monitor and determine the impact of changes to pedagogy and practice, will enable teachers to refine their teaching.

**Direction 1    Strengthen the use of evidence and student achievement data to monitor the impact of changes to pedagogy and teaching practices identified in the SIP.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school has implemented a new numeracy and literacy data analysis and improvement cycle which provides a schedule of assessments to ensure consistent practice. Teachers have been trialling the Department for Education units of work to ensure the provision of a quality guaranteed and viable curriculum. Teachers are grouping students to enable differentiation particularly in spelling, guided reading, and mathematics. Teachers are more regularly incorporating problem solving tasks into mathematics lessons. Guided reading is occurring in every classroom, providing differentiated practice and direct instruction for all students. Teachers in the early years accessed guided reading training together, supporting the development of consistent practice. Students reported that teachers try to make learning interesting and engaging.

Teachers provide both verbal and written feedback in relation to next steps in learning. Students are being provided with more opportunities to write and bump it up walls are being utilised to identify next steps in writing. Some teachers have also been accessing the learning progressions to provide feedback to students in relation to how they can improve their writing. Students receive feedback through a range of strategies, including peer feedback. Teachers identified that they need to consolidate new learning and further explore processes for effectively providing feedback that is used by students.

Teachers scaffold tasks and concentrate on the provision of direct instruction to cater for students with learning difficulties. School services officers (SSOs) are being used to support students identified with a learning difficulty and the school intends to implement targeted intervention programs for identified learners. Although more complex tasks are being provided, teachers identified the need to further refine their practice in relation to challenging students, particularly high achieving students. Strengthening students' reasoning skills, use of metacognition and the further provision of open-ended mathematics tasks would support this. The school is well positioned to develop teachers' ability to utilise pedagogy and learning design that strengthens differentiation, particularly in relation to stretching learning.

**Direction 2    Strengthen and embed the use of learning design and pedagogy that ensures all students are stretched and challenged in their learning.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

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

This year all students have individual specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time bound (SMART) goals for reading, writing and maths. Some classes regularly review and celebrate goal achievement and some students have been involved in reviewing whether other students have achieved their goals. At times teachers are using the literacy progressions and bump it up walls to determine goals. However, practices in relation to the creation and monitoring of goals vary across the school. Some students were unable to articulate their goals. Consistent practices and opportunities for students to create, monitor and provide evidence of goal achievement would help support students to own their goals and enable continuity across the school.

Students effectively presented data and information in relation to the trial of positive behaviour strategies. They have been involved in collecting, analysing, and monitoring the data related to student behaviour. This data demonstrated positive results and significant improvements.

Teachers from R-7 are using learning intentions and success criteria with students. At times students have been involved in creating the success criteria and in some classrooms, learning intentions and success criteria are visible for students to access. The implementation of the Department for Education units of work are supporting the use of learning intentions and success criteria. Several teachers are using 'I can' statements for success criteria. However, there are not consistent practices in relation to the use of learning intentions and success criteria and students are not necessarily involved in developing success criteria.

The school is well positioned to collaboratively refine whole-school processes to enable students to be involved in collaborative planning and decision making particularly in relation to the development of student goals, and the use of learning intentions and success criteria. Providing further opportunities across the school for students to engage in the language of learning and decision making will enable them to actively assess, monitor and regulate their own learning and support continuity of practices from R-7.

**Direction 3     Strengthen and embed consistent whole-school processes that further develop students' ownership of their learning and create continuity R-6.**



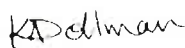
# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Birdwood Primary School has incorporated the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program into learning. Students tend to a very large vegetable garden and produce healthy, quality foods. They enjoy a five-course meal together with staff and parent volunteers. This provides opportunities for students to develop an understanding of healthy food, try different and unusual produce and develop table manners in a very warm and comfortable setting. Several parents reported their appreciation for the support the school has provided to cater for their child's individual needs. They value the school's responsiveness to issues or concerns raised.

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

- Direction 1**      **Strengthen the use of evidence and student achievement data to monitor the impact of changes to pedagogy and teaching practices identified in the SIP.**
- Direction 2**      **Strengthen and embed the use of learning design and pedagogy that ensures all students are stretched and challenged in their learning.**
- Direction 3**      **Strengthen and embed consistent whole-school processes that further develop students' ownership of their learning and create continuity R-6.**

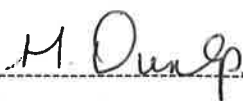
Based on the school's current performance, Birdwood Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Review, Improvement and Accountability



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Helen Dunlop  
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Birdwood Primary School



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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 2020 84% of year 1 and 84% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 85% of year 3 students, 89% of year 5 students and 77% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average, or year 5 this result represents an improvement, and for year 7 a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN reading the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2021 52% of year 3, 40% of year 5 and 26% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading 65% or 11 out of 17 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 62% or 8 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2021 the numeracy results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 73% of year 3 students, 83% of year 5 students and 72% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 and 7 this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average and for year 5 this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2021 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2021 30% of year 3, 14% of year 5 and 10% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2021 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy 39% or 5 out of 13 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 50% or 3 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.



# External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and  
Preschools Division

BIRDWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2021

The External School Review process supports schools to raise student achievement and sustain high performance by providing quality assurance in highly effective schooling practices.

The review panel acknowledges the co-operation provided by the school.



**Anne Millard**

Executive Director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education