

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Flagstaff Hill R-7 School

Conducted in July 2018



Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Review details

A priority for the Department for Education 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 government schools.

The external school review framework underpinning the 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 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, they all have been considered and contributed to the development and directions of this report.

This review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Nicole Crawley, Review Principal.

School context

Flagstaff Hill R-7 School caters for students from reception to year 7. The school is situated 20kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the South Valley Partnership. The enrolment is 579, and has increased over the last 5 years.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1068, and is classified as Category 7 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3% Aboriginal students, 6% students with disabilities, 6% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), and 10% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of an acting principal, an acting deputy principal responsible for professional learning, special education, intervention and the 'Art and Science of Teaching', and an acting assistant principal who is responsible for attendance and wellbeing.

Lines of inquiry

In considering the data summary in the school performance overview (Appendix 2) and the principal's presentation, the review panel explored the following lines of inquiry to evaluate the school's effectiveness towards raising student achievement and sustaining high performance.

During the external review process, the panel focused on 3 key areas from the External School Review framework:

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| Improvement Agenda: | How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement? |
| Effective Teaching: | How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning? |
| School Community Partnerships: | How authentic is the influence of students on their learning? |

How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

The panel was provided with a diverse range of evidence relating to self-review processes that have shaped and informed improvement at Flagstaff Hill R-7 School. Self-review practices are an embedded component of the school culture. The 2015-2017 site improvement plan was focused on 'high achievement for all'. Three priorities via the 'Art and Science of Teaching' (ASOT) and based on the 'high reliability schools' structure were identified: safe and collaborative culture, effective teaching in every classroom and a guaranteed viable curriculum.

The school worked with a consultant to align the High Reliability Schools (HRS) structure with the Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) framework and the design questions from ASOT. This strategic approach ensured that the alignment between ASOT and the department's priorities and processes were transparent and complementary.

Self-review processes were undertaken in the area of induction processes for staff new to the school, including newly appointed teachers, school support officers (SSOs) and pre-service teachers.

Assessment schedules were reviewed; the process involved all teachers and SSOs, and focused on identifying and using assessments that informed teaching. Shared understandings of the purpose and value of assessments for all staff were subsequently developed. Pacing guides were developed in 2016 in mathematics and English, and are reviewed throughout and at end of each year.

Intervention processes were analysed with a focus on review to ensure that all students identified as needing support actually received their entitlement. The school determined that students, whenever possible, were best placed within their own classroom for this support. Intervention was subsequently restructured so that support personnel worked in classrooms.

Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) were established and teachers, working in mixed year-level groups, identified ASOT goals to work toward. The performance and development structure was formalised to ensure all staff met each term with their line manager. Staff were released to work on year level agreements to ensure Guaranteed Viable Curriculum (GVC) documents in reading and numeracy were in place.

The strong culture of self-review for improvement is embedded practice and an integral part of the school culture, as a member of the leadership team stated: “we are always reviewing what we are trialling, and we’re now reviewing from a proactive perspective rather than a reactive mode”.

Next steps for the school will be to apply similar processes in the development and review of the 2018 site improvement plan (SIP). It was acknowledged that the 2018 SIP was a work-in-progress. It was also reported that the development of the current SIP has involved all staff working in collaboration. One staff member indicated that this was the first time they had understood what a site improvement plan was, and reported that, previously, there had been minimal input and, subsequently, little ownership of the SIP from staff.

All staff, including SSOs, unpacked site data and subsequently determined 3 priority areas: raising reading achievement for all students, improving engagement of all students, and raising achievement across all curriculum areas through inclusive practices. Each staff member elected a priority area they wished to work on, with a member of the leadership team undertaking responsibility for one of the priority areas. The leadership team developed a draft document based on feedback from staff, which was shared with staff and governing council.

Staff acknowledged during the review that the development of action plans against each priority was still in the developmental stages. It should also be noted that development of strategic planning documents to guide site improvement is new learning for the staff. Leadership acknowledged that the processes used and the engagement and ownership by staff were as important as the product itself at this point.

One group focused on raising reading achievement for all students. The school datasets indicate that the school has improved against the historic average in Running Records and NAPLAN SEA reading at all year levels. The 2017 higher-band data for NAPLAN reading indicated an average of 49% of students across years 3, 5 and 7 were achieving in the higher bands. Conversely, an average of only 35% of students across the same year levels were achieving in the higher bands for writing. Reading is an area of strength for the school. The school may benefit from reviewing the accessibility of all datasets in relation to literacy, thus ensuring that areas of learning requiring the biggest lift can be identified and addressed.

Action plans are most effective when they are achievable, measurable, directly related to the priority and understood by all. Targets that clearly indicate improved outcomes, strategies that explicitly unpack the actions of staff and leaders, and evaluation measures that appraise progress towards achievement of the targets are components of high-quality planning for improvement.

The school is well-positioned to collaboratively progress the development and implementation of effective site improvement planning to guide ongoing improvement at the site.

Direction 1

Refine and improve site improvement planning through the development of action plans that are informed by data for each priority and include explicit strategies and measurable targets related to the plan.

How effectively are teachers supporting students in their learning?

The school has worked strategically and collaboratively to develop consistency and congruence in effective pedagogical practices, including a strong focus on making learning visible to students and parents. There was clear evidence from staff of a strong commitment to the school and to continual improvement. The implementation of clear, focused learning goals and 'tuft' sheets (rubrics), are embedded practice across the site.

All staff use the formats of WALT (We Are Learning To) and WILF (What I'm Looking For) to ensure clarity of learning intentions and success criteria. Staff create and use 'tuft sheets' in reading, writing and mathematics lessons. The tuft sheets are written from the perspective of the learner with 'I can' and 'I have' as lead statements. Staff work with students to identify and discuss their progress against the tuft. The panel observed some students confidently using the tufts individually and with peers.

Additional whole-school approaches in scaffolding learning are also embedded practice, and include the use of TIB (This Is Because), and WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like). Staff use a green pen to indicate that work has been seen and a pink pen to indicate the student needs to rethink. This process has resulted in all staff and students using the slogan: 'green, it has been seen' and 'pink, I need to think'. When a common language and processes for learning are embedded practice across the site, there is consistency and clarity from the perspective of both teacher and learner.

As an integral part of the ASOT, the school has developed Guaranteed Viable Curriculum (GVC) documents at each year level for maths, English, Japanese, the arts and physical education. A GVC is designed to ensure the curriculum being taught is being assessed, whilst also guaranteeing there is adequate time for teachers to teach and for students to learn the content. The GVCs include term-by-term pacing guides with content descriptors and subject-specific proficiencies, whilst also identifying aspects to be revisited throughout the year. Tufts are aligned to the GVC. This approach has provided clarity and consistency within and across the site for all staff and students.

The school has demonstrated a planned and consultative approach to ongoing improvement across the site; next steps for the school will be to focus on strengthening the teaching of maths. The panel noted a heavy reliance on worksheets in maths and the school would benefit from establishing a review across the site related to identifying and strengthening common understandings in effective pedagogical practices in maths. The implementation and sharing of effective pedagogical practices in maths can then be implemented, monitored and reviewed across the site.

At the staff meeting held during the review staff analysed the 2017 literacy datasets, which included: NAPLAN reading and writing, the reading progressive achievement test (PAT-R), and the mid and end-of-year grade allocations for English.

Staff identified some anomalies that warranted further exploration when analysing the triangulation of the literacy datasets. The anomalies included relatively similar levels of achievement in NAPLAN at SEA in

reading and writing across years 3, 5 and 7, but a distinct decrease in higher-band achievement at years 5 and 7 in writing.

Staff also identified that A and B grade allocations for English and higher-band achievement in years 5 and 7 had a wide variance. In year 5, 45% of students received an A or B in English at the end-of-year grade allocations; however, only 19% of the same students performed in the higher bands in the NAPLAN writing assessment. A similar pattern emerged in year 7, where 63% of students received an A or a B in English at the end-of-year grade allocations; however, only 27% of the same students performed in the higher bands in the NAPLAN writing assessment.

Staff identified areas for further consideration: to moderate writing across year levels, to adjust the tuft sheets to ensure congruence with NAPLAN writing and the achievement standards, and to embed a whole-school pedagogical approach to the teaching of writing across the site. It is intended to strengthen the development of consistency in processes, assessments and understandings in writing. Several staff posed the questions: “are we pushing our higher-band students enough?” and “are the tufts rigorous enough?”

Several groups during the staff meeting suggested that working in PLTs to develop exemplars with peers from other sites would strengthen consistency in moderation across the partnership. Specific reference to what an ‘A’ and a ‘B’ looks like in identified subjects would be advantageous in developing common understandings of high achievement within and across sites and year levels. The school has demonstrated a planned and consultative approach to ongoing improvement across the site with a deep commitment to continuous improvement, and is well-placed to continue this work.

Direction 2

Collaboratively develop and embed common agreements and effective pedagogical practices and assessments in numeracy and writing across the site.

How authentic is the influence of students on their learning?

The majority of students interviewed during the review indicated that most of their work was ‘just right’, with very few students reporting that their work was too hard or challenging. Several students also indicated that they were happy with their learning being ‘just right’.

When asked what they would do if their work was challenging, many students provided a range of effort-based responses, for example: “try again” or “ask the teacher”. Some students, however, provided specific behavioural and learning strategies: “I’d sit quietly for a few minutes and clear my head” and “I’d put my cup on yellow or red” (a formative assessment strategy). Learning-based responses included: “I’d discuss it with others” and “try to re-do it and see what I can do and double-check”. It is clear that some students are able to articulate a range of learning strategies to use when stuck in their learning; embedding this for all students will further strengthen the strong learning dispositions.

Most students indicated that they would tell their teacher if their work was too easy; however, the majority of students indicated that this resulted in the students completing additional worksheets in reading, spelling or maths. Very few responses from students indicated that they had planned and regular opportunities to be stretched and challenged in all learning areas. From the survey during the review, 26% of staff indicated that they had effectively provided opportunities to stretch students in a recent unit of work. Developing and embedding a common discourse relating to intellectual stretch and challenge for students, staff and parents will strengthen the work undertaken thus far.

Staff identified during interviews that some students were now designing their own 'tuft sheets'. Staff noted this has resulted in increased engagement and clarity from the perspective of the learner, and some students connecting their learning to previous and future learning. It was also reported that other students were self-assessing using the 'tuft sheets'. Further evidence of peer assessments using 'two wishes and a star' was also provided to the panel.

The school has a strong commitment to continual improvement and, as such, the establishment of learning goals for every student is embedded practice across the site. Work in this area can be further strengthened by sharing the student's learning data with them, thus providing the opportunity for students to become equal partners in their own learning.

'When we share the data and collaboratively set and review learning goals with students, we are providing opportunities for students to become authentic partners in their own learning'. Sharing the data with students also includes informing the higher-band students that they have achieved above the standard of educational achievement.

'When we restrict this information from students and their families we need to consider if we are also inadvertently restricting the aspirations of the higher-band students'. Acknowledging that students have achieved in the higher bands also assumes the need for a discourse in differentiation in learning for those students. As identified by staff during the staff meeting, consideration relating to revision of the 'tufts' to provide further stretch and challenge for students requires thoughtful deliberation.

The panel explored co-design of learning with staff during interviews. Some staff reported it was an area that they were currently working in; however, it was generally acknowledged as an area for further development across the site. Some staff found the demands of the curriculum did not allow sufficient time to explore the co-design of learning. Other staff believed they were at the beginning stages, but were interested in exploring this further.

'When we involve students in their learning as equal partners and develop their self-awareness regarding their strengths, preferences and areas for improvement we develop expert learners. Students at all year levels benefit from opportunities to be active participants in their own learning, sharing data, discussing reports, setting learning goals, and providing opportunities for students to share how they best learn gives real and explicit opportunities for all student to be successful learners'.

The school is well-placed to undertake next steps in this area. Students demonstrated a high commitment to continual improvement and acknowledged that they were not consistently challenged in their learning. Co-design of learning involves students giving feedback to others, talking about learning with others, sharing feedback, explaining and helping to problem-solve. It also provides opportunities for students to see themselves as powerful partners in their learning, and to be acknowledged as co-designers for teaching and learning improvement.

Direction 3

Collaboratively develop and embed authentic student influence for learning, including the exploration of co-designing learning as a powerful means for all students to become equal partners in their own learning.

What is the school doing particularly well and why is this effective?

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing significantly to school improvement at Flagstaff Hill R-7 School.

Effective practice in tracking and monitoring the outcomes and growth of Aboriginal students was evident. Academic progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students indicates that high percentages of ATSI students are achieving at or above the SEA in reading and numeracy assessments. Seventy-seven percent of ATSI students in year 1 and 67% in year 2 achieved at or above the standard for Running Records. In the PAT-R and PAT-M tests, 100% of students in years 6 and 7 achieved at or above the scale score.

In the NAPLAN Reading tests, 89% of year 3 students and 100% of year 5 students achieved SEA, with 44% of year 3 and 67% of year 5 students achieving in the higher bands for the same assessment. In the NAPLAN Numeracy tests, 78% of year 3 students and 100% of year 5 students achieved SEA, with 67% of year 5 students achieving in the higher bands. There is a consistent pattern of ATSI students sustaining improvement as they progress through the school. The school has a strong commitment to supporting ATSI students in improving and sustaining achievement over time.

A representative group of ATSI students met with the review officer during the review. The majority of students in the group identified maths as an area of learning they were good at. Most of the students identified their post-school aspirations as attending university. The ATSI students recognised the cultural groups they belonged to and stated they would like to have further opportunities to explore their cultural heritage. One student mentioned exploring online options in their desire to learn the Kaurna language. The students and the school are to be commended for their commitment to continuous improvement across all aspects of schooling.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Flagstaff Hill R-7 School has an embedded culture of improvement characterised by high expectations for students. Effective leadership provides strategic direction, planning and comprehensive intervention processes that are located within the classrooms.


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

1. Refine and improve site improvement planning through the development of action plans that are informed by data for each priority and include explicit strategies and measurable targets related to the plan.
2. Collaboratively develop and embed common agreements and effective pedagogical practices and assessments in numeracy and writing across the site.
3. Collaboratively develop and embed authentic student influence for learning, including the exploration of co-designing learning as a powerful means for all students to become equal partners in their own learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Flagstaff Hill R-7 School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.

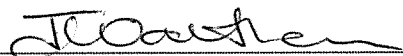


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The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



Jane Waltham
A/PRINCIPAL
FLAGSTAFF HILL R-7 SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson

Appendix 1

Attendance policy compliance

Implementation of the Education Department student attendance policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

The school attendance rate for 2017 was 93.2%.

Appendix 2

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 2017, 91% of year 1 and 65% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. These results represent an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 1 has been upwards, from 74% in 2015 to 91% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 96% of year 3 students, 83% of year 5 students and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 82% in 2015 to 93% in 2017.

For 2017 year 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools. For 2017 year 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2017, 54% of year 3, 46% of year 5, and 48% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 79% of year 3 students remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 80% of year 3 students remain in the upper bands at year 7.


Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 94% of year 3 students, 90% of year 5 students, and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 84% in 2015 to 93% in 2017.

For 2017 year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2015 and 2017, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3 and 5 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.



In 2017, 46% of year 3, 30% of year 5, and 37% 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 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 63% of year 3 students remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017, and 69% of year 3 students remain in the upper bands at year 7.