

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for St Agnes Primary School

Conducted in September 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 Phil Garner, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Tonia Noble, 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

St Agnes School caters for Preschool to year 7 students. It is situated 17kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 276 students with 33 in the Preschool. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 222 with 33 in the Preschool. The local partnership is Tea Tree Gully.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 1024 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 7% Aboriginal students, less than 5% students with disabilities, 10% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, no children/young people in care and 16% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the second year of a 5-year tenure and the Deputy Principal in the first year of a 5-year tenure.

There are 17 teachers including 3 early career teachers and 8 step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Enable intellectual challenge and student agency through collective inquiry into teaching strategies that make the intent and criteria of the learning clear to students, and that stimulate deeper cognitive reasoning.
- Direction 2** Cater to the needs of all learners and increase the opportunity students have to demonstrate their learning at higher levels through the consistent implementation of intentional teaching characterised by rich task and assessment design.
- Direction 3** Develop rigorous and agreed approaches to professional learning and performance and development through the collective design of strategic, influential systems that build teacher capacity and expand a collegiate culture across the school
- Direction 4** Progress collective responsibility, inclusive of the student community, through the development of systems that enable authentic influence and input of all students, in the classroom and across the school.

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

Direction 1 - The school has focused on providing students with greater connection to the learning. Teachers consistently share and discuss learning intentions and success criteria with students. There is evidence of some teachers providing students with opportunities to deeply analyse their learning expectations. Teachers and students collaboratively designing the learning criteria and assessment are the next stage in enhancing student agency.

Direction 2 - A focus on data analysis is identifying where students are in their learning journey and has enabled targeted intervention for individual students. The challenge of practice in maths and reading has focused intentionality and consistency in teaching practices. Providing opportunities for students to demonstrate higher levels of learning was evident in pockets across the school and continues to be a work in progress.

Direction 3 - The school has worked consistently to develop a collaborative and collegiate culture. Teachers have taken opportunities to be involved in leadership initiatives that support and guide the improvement journey of the school. Professional learning, discussing, sharing best practice and implementing whole-school initiatives with authenticity are embedded practices. Early career teachers are supported by mentors with a focus on improving practice.

Direction 4 - Students are involved in decisions around whole-site initiatives. Student voice in event planning and school promotion are embedded practices. The decision-making structures of the school are one of consultation and collaboration involving the whole-school community. Authentic student voice in the classroom continues to be a work in progress. Refer to line of inquiry 3 in this report

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

Leadership and the school improvement planning team have carefully and strategically guided the school through the development and implementation of the school improvement plan (SIP). The result is a robust and clear improvement plan with high levels of ownership and commitment from staff.

Teachers are confident in analysing student achievement data including pre and post assessment strategies to identify misconceptions in learning. However, the effective use of progressive achievement test assessment data to identify individual and cohort learning needs and design learning is variable across the school. Some teachers are using it for whole-class teaching, but less so for individual learning.

The leadership team, that includes representative teachers, has been strategic in how they have reviewed and evaluated the site improvement plan.

Staff reported honest, individual conversations with leadership in regard to their personal engagement and implementation of the SIP actions including their performance development plans. Teachers identify and conduct action research on a specific individualised aspect of the challenge of practice reviewing its impact on student learning. Teachers are effectively involved in adjusting and fine tuning the plan to provide greater clarity around the achievement of improved outcomes.

All teachers are engaging effectively with school wide focus on improving teacher practice and student achievement in the teaching of phonics and comprehension. However, understanding how these connect with the school's statement of practice in literacy is an area for further development. Teachers discussed the need to link the school's statement of practice with a whole-school agreement and sequence of learning that promotes consistency in the teaching of literacy across the school.

The school has successfully developed an improvement process that promotes collaboration, commitment, and effective engagement by all staff. Ensuring that teachers continue to develop and design learning that focuses in all six components of reading in combination and with a strategic focus on writing and vocabulary are the next steps in improving student achievement in literacy.

Direction 1 Enhance student acquisition of literacy by implementing a whole school agreement and sequence of learning that promotes consistency and quality in the teaching of literacy in every class.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school has focused on providing students with multiple entry and exit points in learning tasks, particularly in mathematics. This enables students to engage confidently with an appropriate level of challenge. Explicitly teaching mathematical concepts with a wide variety of scaffolding is providing students with multiple opportunities to engage with and understand the concept being taught. Teachers and students spoke confidently around the teaching and learning in maths including problem solving.

All classes are engaging with the learning intentions and success criteria but this is to varying degrees. Teachers in upper primary years discuss and analyse success criteria rubrics with students. This provides students with an understanding of what they are doing and how they can successfully achieve the outcomes. Some teachers have designed creative ways to successfully engage students with the learning intentions.

While most teachers and students are engaging with the process of goal setting, there is little evidence to suggest that the setting of goals is guiding the individual next steps in learning or having any positive effect on student achievement.

There is wide variance in the marking of student learning tasks and the provision of formative feedback across the school. Students and teachers indicated that most feedback was provided verbally and at point of need. However, most students had difficulty remembering the teacher feedback provided. Understanding where each student is in their learning journey and providing effective formative feedback has the potential to increase engagement and achievement for all students including higher achievers.

The panel observed some quality teaching across the school with most students engaged effectively in their learning. However, most high achieving students indicated that the learning in English, maths and science is less than challenging. Catering for the individual learning needs of students, in particular those students who complete the learning task with ease and challenging them with deeper learning is an area for further development.

Direction 2 Increase challenge and achievement for all students by implementing a consistent whole-school approach to individualised learning, student goal setting and effective feedback.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The school has effective processes that engage students in whole-school initiatives including the physical development of the school environment. Student leaders in the school value their involvement in strategic decisions. They are often invited to present at governing council meetings.

Students across the school are provided with opportunities to collaborate and engage with peer assessment of student learning tasks. Implementing a process where students can moderate their learning against specific criteria or an ideal work sample has the potential to further enhance engagement in their learning. High achieving students in the upper primary classes are participating in student led literature circle reading sessions enabling greater freedom and providing higher levels of engagement with the text.

Most students have a limited understanding of how to achieve higher grades in their learning. They believe that if they work harder, they will improve their achievement. However, students could not determine what this means in terms of pedagogical practices. Effectively engaging students in the process of learning and co-designing the success criteria and assessment tasks will enable them to have a better understanding of the connection between learning intention, success criteria and how they can improve their achievement.

Increasing opportunities for students to engage with their achievement data is an area for development. Students indicated that knowing the questions and concepts they had difficulty answering correctly in assessments would greatly assist them to focus their learning. Understanding where they are in their learning, where they should be, and what the next learning steps are encourages higher levels of responsibility, engagement, and achievement.

The school effectively provides a range of opportunities to engage students genuinely in leadership and decision making across the school. However, their involvement in collaboratively planning and making decisions about their learning varies. The most effective student voice comes when students are engaged in the language of learning, understand the learning process and what they are expected to learn. Engagement in constructing the success criteria and assessment tasks with opportunities to self and peer assess, and moderate their learning strengthens them as learners.

Direction 3 Improve student ownership and voice in their learning by providing greater opportunities to analyse and engage with their achievement data, reflect on their learning, and engage with lesson design including assessment.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

A positive and collaborative culture has been nurtured with high levels of respect that strengthen the social, emotional, and cultural environment of the school. The leadership have a very strong understanding of where the school has been, where they are now and what the next steps for growth in teaching and learning and student achievement are. The school is to be commended for the comprehensive processes used to ensure that all staff have collective ownership of and responsibility for the school's improvement journey. Staff indicated that they feel strongly connected to each other and to the improvement work they are undertaking.

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

- Direction 1** Enhance student acquisition of literacy by implementing a whole school agreement and sequence of learning that promotes consistency and quality in the teaching of literacy in every class.
- Direction 2** Increase challenge and achievement for all students by implementing a consistent whole-school approach to individualised learning, student goal setting and effective feedback.
- Direction 3** Improve student ownership and voice in their learning by providing greater opportunities to analyse and engage with their achievement data, reflect on their learning, and engage with lesson design including assessment.

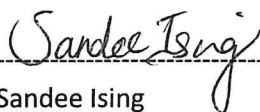
Based on the school's current performance, St Agnes Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.




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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, 87% of year 1 and 69% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 1 this result represents little or no change and for year 2 a decline from the historic baseline average.

In 2021 the reading results as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 86% of year 5 students and 97% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7 this result represents an improvement and for year 5 little or no change 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 67% of year 3, 46% of year 5 and 27% 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 73% or 11 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 54% or 7 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 86% of year 3 students, 89% of year 5 students and 88% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7 this result 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 42% of year 3, 29% of year 5 and 27% 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 80% or 8 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 42% or 5 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.