

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

**EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW**  
**REPORT FOR ELIZABETH PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Conducted in April 2015



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education  
and Child Development



### **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 Kathryn Entwistle, Review Principal.*

### **Policy compliance**

*The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.*

The Principal of Elizabeth Park Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

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 reported attendance of 88.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%. A member of the leadership team is responsible for the implementation of the attendance policy and for ensuring intervention and support is provided. The process for monitoring absences is recorded including contact with families regarding unexplained and chronic non-attendance.

### **School context**

Elizabeth Park Primary School is located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. There are 330 students enrolled from Reception to Year 7 and 60 children enrolled at the on-site preschool.

The school has an ICSEA score of 886, with 61% of the community placed in the bottom quarter of relative disadvantage. The school is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. There are 63% of students eligible for school card assistance. The Northern Family Network operates from within the school as a community hub to co-ordinate services for families from the school and other neighbouring suburbs. The local community is changing as a result of housing rejuvenation.

The school population includes 59 (18%) Aboriginal students, 66 (20%) students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 66 students with a Disability. Forty-six of these students are placed across the thirteen mainstream classes, twelve students are in the Regional Special Small Class (Years 3 to 7) and eight students are enrolled in the junior primary and primary classes in the Centre for Hearing Impaired (CHI).

The cohort numbers are largest from Reception to Year 4. The numbers of students arriving at and departing from the school in the last year equates to a transient factor of 20%.

The sixty pre-school children attend in two groups for five half-day sessions per week. A playgroup operates for 20 young children and their parents.

The school's leadership team consists of a Principal in his second tenure (0.8 FTE), and an Acting Principal on one day per week who is also the Aboriginal Education Teacher. The leadership team includes three Assistant Principals who individually have responsibility for Curriculum, Intervention and Support, and Early Years. There are also five teacher Coordinators responsible for managing and leading Literacy, Numeracy, Centre for Hearing Impaired, Whole School Events, and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden. A senior School Services Officer is deployed as an Executive Assistant and member of the leadership team.

Over the three year period (2011-2013) there was a permanent staff retention rate of 100% with 50% of the teaching staff working at the school for more than 5 years. The Work Health and Safety staff survey indicates that there is high morale and high job satisfaction at the school. Overall, there is 90.3% staff retention with a sick leave rate of 2.5% per annum.



**Lines of inquiry**

*During the review process, the panel focused on three key areas from the External School Review Framework:*

<b>Student Learning:</b>	<b>How well are students achieving over time?</b>
<b>Improvement Agenda:</b>	<b>How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?</b>
<b>Effective Teaching:</b>	<b>How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated to cater for the varied needs of learners?</b>

**How well are students achieving over time?**

The clearly-stated mission of Elizabeth Park Primary School is for all students to graduate as highly literate and numerate life-long learners and as respectful, healthy and socially-responsible citizens.

The Review Panel found evidence that this moral purpose is embedded in the school culture. It is enacted primarily by focusing on student wellbeing and through the implementation of informed teaching practices to improve oral language skills across the curriculum (OLaC). This specific teaching and learning priority has been identified by the school from the research that finds the acquisition of sound oral language capacity is the foundation for the development of literacy skills, an indicator of pro-social competence, and significantly, a strong predictor of academic achievement across all areas of learning.

The Review Panel heard that the origin of the school's current approach to raising student achievement started when the Principal and staff analysed the 2012 Australian Early Developmental Index (AEDI) data to identify factors underlying the developmental learning needs of students in the school. In 2012, 50% of the Reception children were assessed as vulnerable on two or more domains of the AEDI with 80% of students vulnerable or at risk in communication skills and 61% vulnerable or at risk in school-based language.

The school reported that these developmental areas continue to impact upon the current range of results seen in the phonological awareness (PA) screening tests undertaken at pre-school and the phonological awareness skill mapping (PASM) undertaken for each student from Reception until Year 2 or until a student has acquired all skills in the developmental sequence and is no longer considered at risk.

While Reception and Year 1 results are starting to show gradual improvement over time, skills mapping shows there is still PA work to be done with older students. One class data set record seen for Year 3 phonological awareness skill mapping (dated February 2015), showed that 77% of the class was achieving within the expected range of Reception and Year 1/Year 2 foundation skills. In this class, the Running Record reading levels for the students were spread from level 2 to level 30.

The school's reading results as measured by Running Records at Year 1 and Year 2 indicate that the historic trend over a three year period (2012-2014) shows 27% of Year 1 students demonstrated the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) and 46% of Year 2 students demonstrated the DECD Standard. Most recently, the 2014 results are lower and show that 9 out of the 44 students in Year 1 (i.e. 20%) and 16 out of 45 students in Year 2 (i.e. 36%) were reading at the expected DECD Standard.

Some improvement in growth over time (2012-2014) for the school is currently reflected in the school performance trends for students at Year 3 and Year 5 in Reading, as measured by NAPLAN against the SEA. The latest results for 2014, indicates that 63% of Year 3 students demonstrated the SEA and 43% of Year 5 students demonstrated the SEA in reading. An additional analysis shows that the reading results for the Year 3 cohort demonstrating proficiency at the SEA were 10% higher than for students in similar schools.

The Years 3 and 5 Numeracy results in 2014, as measured by NAPLAN, show that 49% of Year 3 students demonstrated the SEA, and 28% of Year 5 students demonstrated the SEA, an improvement over time (2012-2014) for Year 3, and little or no improvement for Year 5.



The Year 7 results in 2014, as measured by NAPLAN, show lagging scores and no improvement trend in both Reading and Numeracy. When looking at performance over time in Reading, 50% of Year 7 students achieved the SEA in 2012, 43% in 2013, and 38% in 2014. In Numeracy, 35% of Year 7 students achieved the SEA in 2012, 27% in 2013, and 35% in 2014. For 2014, these results meant that in the cohort of 26 students, ten students achieved the DECD Standard in reading and nine students achieved the DECD Standard in Numeracy.

Older students themselves reported that they felt their learning was getting better now than compared to “when we were younger”. For example, they said teachers used “different ways” to teach mathematics, helping them to think and reflect, saying “we used to do maths in the traditional way, now we do mental routines, activities and solve problems”. “Teachers give us more work, they challenge us”. “I used to give up but now I know I have to try harder”.

Other students identified some of the oral language and thinking strategies they have used to assist them in their learning. ‘Think Pair Share’ was one example given, “we do that in History, we have to talk a lot, not just sit back”. A range of opportunities are provided for students to share their voices. The Review Panel heard that ‘talking literacy strategies’ are deliberately used to increase ‘student talk time’ and subsequently reduce ‘teacher talk time’. Opportunities are also structured and timetabled for positive play programs, leadership assemblies, and for school captains and student voice committee members to meet.

Parents felt that as far as student wellbeing and behaviour management was concerned, the school has a ‘can do’ attitude and supports students to ‘not give up’ when the going is tough. They reported that they had heard the school’s results were “up and down” but were happy with their own children’s learning and the attention they received, especially in the early years. Parents who were long-term members of Governing Council reported that the school has improved “massively” from previous times.

In redressing the acknowledged impact on learning that comes from high levels of impoverished language, the school is steadfast to build powerful learners by improving oral language skills and a rich academic vocabulary. This has not been and is not a one-off one year priority. The Review Panel was able to verify this focus as being the overarching priority guiding school improvement over time. Placing oral language as a central ‘thread’ in the explicit teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing skills across the Australian Curriculum should be maintained and strengthened.

#### **Direction 1**

**Raise the oral language proficiency of all students by providing structured experiences that enable the development of ‘talking literacies’ to explain understandings and demonstrate success against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.**

#### **Direction 2**

**Increase the achievement levels of all children and students by ensuring rich vocabulary development is a consistent feature of explicit teaching in every lesson, every day from Pre-school and Reception through to Year 7.**

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

The school uses an evidence-based approach to shaping the improvement agenda. “Layers” of processes are led by identified staff and used to continually monitor and evaluate student and school performance.

The Review Panel found that there is a high level of ownership by staff for the Site Learning Improvement Plan. The priorities are embedded in classroom practice and reflect the school’s goal “to improve student learning outcomes by improving the quality of teacher instruction through the use of scaffolded pedagogy with targeted intervention”.

The Principal has designed and led an ‘Investigate Trial Assess Reflect Share’ (ITARS) model to support the implementation of this improvement agenda. The model operates across three levels: whole-school improvement, specialised intervention for students at risk, and individual staff performance.



The whole-school improvement strategies are led by the Site Improvement Team consisting of four Curriculum Learning Community (CLCs) leaders and the involvement of all members of staff. Currently, each CLC is focusing on *"Building Powerful learners: developing a rich vocabulary to understand and communicate"* by enacting this goal through related and focused investigations:

- English CLC: increase comprehension through vocabulary development;
- Mathematics CLC: increase vocabulary through mental routines and problem-solving situations;
- Wellbeing CLC: increase vocabulary used to explain behaviour choices;
- Oral language Across the Curriculum CLC: try new instructional strategies for student thinking.

During the external school review the Review Panel observed a scheduled staff meeting where each CLC leader shared the initial findings from their committee's Term 1 investigation. The ongoing work of the CLCs was reflected in the 2014 Annual Report. The Annual Report document and the accompanying 2015 Site Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) provided the Review Panel with a comprehensive picture of the strategic planning and review processes used by the Principal, the leadership team and other teacher leaders to monitor and evaluate effectiveness.

The desired outcome of all improvement efforts is increased levels of student achievement. The success measures currently included in the SLIP aim at this point in time to monitor the expected implementation of practices being actioned this year. As these current milestones are achieved, the school will be positioned to include improved student achievement outcomes as a measure of success. The comprehensive work identified through the self-review processes can then be evaluated against the performance of all Elizabeth Park students achieving at higher levels of learning towards and beyond site growth targets and the SEA.

### Direction 3

**Strengthen the impact of school improvement processes by including results oriented, realistic and time-bound targets as success measures that can be used to make data-informed judgements about improved student learning at the whole-school, cohort and class level.**

#### How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated to cater for the varied needs of learners?

The Review Panel followed this third line of inquiry because it was apparent that a sharp 'focus on results' would assist the school to further understand how best to address the range of learning needs in each class. As one teacher put it when talking about planning: "we can't assume that all the kids know it".

The Review Panel found that phonological awareness (PA) information is used by the school as the starting point for the identification of initial learning needs and is tracked as a predictor of academic performance as students move into higher grades. The Review Panel also saw whole-school data sets for all students from Reception to Year 7 used to monitor reading growth twice per year, currently against the Northern Area Regional benchmark and the site intervention indicator. Staff reported that while achievement across the school for many students is in the lower bands they are seeing evidence of a general correlation in the data between improved oral language skill levels, increased vocabulary development and academic growth.

The school has used the PAT-M and PAT-R tests since 2013 to monitor and compare actual and expected scale score growth. The staff shared their concerns regarding the results of these tests in response to feedback that the students did not see much value in the testing nor find the genre accessible. Staff also reported frustration with the slow speed of the online testing. Older students themselves talked about the recent opportunity their teachers had given them to look at and talk about their latest Progressive Assessment Test (PAT) results. Consequently, the students had identified ways in which they could approach the test genre in a more patient and positive way in the future.

The Review Panel found evidence that as recently as Term 1 this year staff had identified and grouped students to inform a three-tiered response to intervention across the school. A graphic representation of the whole-school distribution of students per class was created for reference in the staffroom. Noticeably there was a majority of students in each class and across the school (73%) identified as requiring



supplemental intervention and/or intensive support in order to achieve and progress. The Principal and leadership team explained that teachers are expected and supported to address the range of needs in each class by using differentiated teaching as the core program. This differentiation also includes accommodations for all students with individual learning plans of one type or another.

In the school 'layers' referred to above, there is a dedicated "Student of Concern" committee of specialist staff who meet regularly to consider referrals from class teachers requesting support and advice and the allocation of additional resources to address the needs of students achieving below the school's own intervention indicators. In addition, the school has negotiated for on-site speech pathology and social work university students to be regularly available to support individual students. There is also limited and targeted use of withdrawal programs for some mainstream students with additional social and emotional learning needs, including a Nunga Club and the Kitchen Garden mentor program.

The school's curriculum folder for staff includes comprehensive guidelines about the teaching and assessment strategies expected for literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and oral language. A Literacy and Numeracy Data Protocol is included that states the expectations and timeline for the collection of school-wide data. This data collection also includes specific assessments used to monitor the learning of students in priority groups e.g. Language and Literacy Levels for EALD students.

All staff are expected to implement the agreed approaches, receiving support to do so from site leaders, their team members, and the school-based literacy and numeracy coaches and specialist staff. The Review Panel heard that the school provides opportunity for all teachers and non-teaching staff to undertake a range of connected professional learning programs, which address pedagogy as well as curriculum planning.

The Review Panel heard that the school makes a considerable investment to provide and develop on-site curriculum leaders, quality professional learning and ongoing access to consultancy coaching from experienced speech pathologists and social workers, accelerated literacy consultants and mathematics consultants. At the time of the review the school was involved in professional learning on the use of explicit teaching in mathematics. Teachers reported the problem-solving approach to mathematics was well received by students, and that it was challenging everyone to "change our mindsets" about learning.

Teachers reported that they are working in Learning Band Teams to implement the Australian Curriculum and are sharing various ways to include formative assessment not only in mathematics but as part of their planning and teaching. Some teachers said they were hoping more students would be able to demonstrate their learning in 'new contexts' so they would be able to achieve at C grade or above.

Overall, the Review Panel found that the school has developed and is implementing a focused approach to meeting the varied needs of learners. The Principal felt that his planned next steps to start a discussion about the design of an agreed lesson/unit planner was timely. The discussion will aim to ensure that 'planned intentionality' is consistently practiced by all staff, that students understand "what they are learning" in class (success criteria) and that there is coherence from the perspective of students in the way the gradual release of responsibility approach is used to support and stretch them in all lessons.

Underpinning the improvement of student achievement across the school as a whole will also be more emphasis on regular tracking of student achievement to ensure that growth is made by each student from their own starting point towards proficiency, and that this growth will be sustained as progress over time.

#### **Direction 4**

**Improve student achievement levels across the school by consistently using diagnostic and formative assessment strategies to track growth, inform planning and deliver intentional teaching that enables students to regularly set their own goals to empower them to succeed beyond their current levels.**

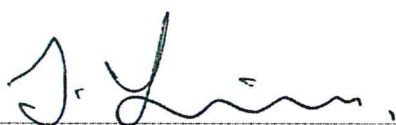
## OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Elizabeth Park Primary School is tracking well. Good performance is evident by a positive and focused culture of improvement, effective leadership that provides and resources strategic direction, and self-review processes that are owned by staff and embedded at the whole-school, team and classroom levels. The students identify with the school and their voices are valued.

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

1. Raise the oral language proficiency of all students by providing structured experiences that enable the development of 'talking literacies' to explain understandings and demonstrate success against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards.
2. Increase the achievement levels of all children and students by ensuring rich vocabulary development is a consistent feature of explicit teaching in every lesson, every day from Pre-school and Reception through to Year 7.
3. Strengthen the impact of school improvement processes by including results oriented, realistic and time-bound targets as success measures that can be used to make data-informed judgements about improved student learning at the whole-school, cohort and class level.
4. Improve student achievement levels across the school by consistently using diagnostic and formative assessment strategies to track growth, inform planning and deliver intentional teaching that enables students to regularly set their own goals to empower them to succeed beyond their current levels.

Based on the school's current performance, Elizabeth Park Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

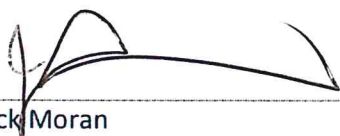


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The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's Annual Report.



Patrick Moran  
PRINCIPAL  
ELIZABETH PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson