

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### Report for Cobdogla Primary School

Conducted in October 2019



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education

## 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 Brenton Robins, 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
- Scan of Aboriginal Education Strategy implementation
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives
  - Leaders
  - Parent groups
  - School Support Officers (SSOs)
  - Student groups
  - Teachers

## School context

Cobdogla Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 223kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 114. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 97. The local partnership is Berri and Barmera.

The school has an ICSEA score of 941 and is classified as Category 4 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 11% Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, 15% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 7% children/young people in care and 36% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their tenure at the school. There are 9 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 2 Step 9 teachers.

## The previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Build teacher capacity for the further implementation and embedding of key pedagogical approaches, and the achievement of SIP targets, by aligning Professional Development Plans with identified student learning outcomes.
- Direction 2** Further promote a positive culture of improvement by providing regular opportunities for teachers to share and collaboratively generate effective evidence-based approaches that promote rigorous learning environments for all students.
- Direction 3** Increase student influence in learning by building the capacity of teachers and students to benchmark learning and achievement against the SEA, and engage in ongoing and reciprocal formative and summative feedback and assessment processes in supportive and explicit ways.

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

#### Direction 1

There is evidence of whole-school pedagogical change, particularly around visible learning and the whole school focus on reciprocal reading and comprehension. Staff Performance and Development Plans (PDP) are clearly linked to site improvement goals, providing a clear focus of building teacher capacity and improving student achievement.

#### Direction 2

There exists a positive culture of collaboration across the school that is evident with the recent whole school focus on reading. The previous review highlighted the need to increase opportunities for staff to plan collaboratively and build collective responsibility and ownership of reception to year 7 programs and approaches. The continuing partnership focus on Learning Design, Assessment and Moderation (LDAM) and visible learning provides the perfect platform for the school to further develop a whole-school culture of collaboration, consistency and continuity in pedagogy.

#### Direction 3

The analysis and interpretation of student achievement data against the Department for Education's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) is providing opportunities for teachers to plan their learning

programs and gauge the effectiveness of their classroom pedagogy. However, student influence in their learning continues to be an area for development. Most students are not provided with the opportunities to engage with their own assessment data and have difficulty in identifying and understanding their next steps in learning.

## 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?*

Teaching staff have a clear understanding of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and are collectively committed to working collaboratively in achieving the actions and success criteria. Comprehensive whole-school analysis of student reading and maths data is conducted by leadership with progress being closely monitored against achievement of the SEA and higher bands.

Significant whole school pedagogical change is evident as a result of the implementation of the SIP actions, particularly around the teaching of reciprocal reading and reading comprehension. This is reflected in improved levels of student achievement in reading, particularly in the SEA, and supported in conversations with teachers, SSOs and parents.

Teachers and SSOs regularly meet with leadership to discuss identified student growth and progress on a regular basis. However, some teachers have recognised that the predominant focus for student data analysis and improvement appears to be on lower achieving students and in the provision of targeted intervention and differentiated learning. As a result, some teachers have indicated that they spend significant time revising the learning for these students at the expense of students who are seeking new learning. Higher achieving students who the panel met with indicated this approach to learning is often repetitive, lacking in engagement and challenge.

Whilst the school has a deep and strategic focus on improving student achievement in reading comprehension and number, the panel evidenced less emphasis being placed on teaching the other areas of the English and numeracy curriculum in some primary classes. The collaborative development of comprehensive reception to year 7 literacy and numeracy whole-school agreements and a focus on the literacy and numeracy progressions will ensure greater student equity, a scaffolded scope and sequence, and a more balanced teaching and learning focus is established.

**Direction 1**      **To ensure greater student equity and a balanced teaching and learning program, collaboratively develop and implement whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements with a focus on literacy and numeracy progressions.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

### *How effectively are teachers using evidenced based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners?*

A common approach to the teaching of phonics in reception has been introduced this year bringing a consistent and scaffolded approach. Early years teachers are collaborating together to provide differentiated learning opportunities for students in the early years.

There is wide use of learning intentions across the school with some classes displaying the learning intentions for each curriculum area with most students being able to identify what and why they were learning.

SSOs are engaged and highly supported in their role working with students and were observed effectively guiding student groups in their learning. The panel evidenced a number of engaging and challenging lessons in maths and science, with students working in groups, predicting, reasoning, observing and explaining their learning.

The provision of personalised and connected learning for students varies considerably across the school. There are pockets of excellence, including the use of pre and post testing, to identify next steps in learning, flexible grouping, scaffolded learning tasks and multiple entry and exit points. However, there was evidence in some classes of students being presented with the same learning task and the same level of challenge. This was also evident in classroom visits and discussions with high achieving students who reported less than challenging learning experiences. Several parents the panel met with indicated limited engagement and challenge for high achieving students, seeing this as an important focus in moving forward.

While the panel evidenced some quality learning design and use of formative assessment strategies, including the use of mini whiteboards to elicit instant feedback, there is little evidence of consistency across the school with some teachers not engaging in quality learning design or formative assessment strategies regularly enough to effectively engage or challenge students in their learning. There appears to be greater reliance on summative assessment tasks to identify student progress. Affirmation of student learning is used extensively across the school, but with an overuse of comments of praise and stickers evident in a number of classes.

**Direction 2** With a focus on visible learning, build the capacity of teachers to personalise learning experiences that provide for the individual needs of all students and engages and challenges them in their learning.

**Direction 3** To engage and intellectually challenge every learner, collaboratively develop and implement a consistent whole-school approach to formative assessment and learning design.

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The concept of negotiated learning with students having influence over their learning is in the developing stages. There are some genuine attempts by some teachers to engage students in co-constructing the success criteria in their research assignments and the use of writing continuums that are used to give students an opportunity to compare and moderate their own learning. However, student influence in most classes is limited to a choice of writing topics, who they work with, or what they will research. Students reported to the panel they believe that in order to improve they need to be neat, have lots of information, get it correct and listen to the teacher.

Students indicated that they enjoyed individual discussions with the principal around their assessment data and areas for improvement. While this provides students with an understanding of where they are in their learning, the next step would be to consider how this can be channelled to enhance student ownership of their learning and how best to engage their classroom teachers in this process.

Negotiated and informed student learning goals in some classes have the potential to engage students strategically in their next steps and bring about greater ongoing responsibility for their own learning. There remains an opportunity to engage students in understanding and working with the literacy and numeracy progressions and engaging consciously with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities.

The development of management responsibilities are provided through a Student Representative Council (SRC) model and is providing students with opportunities to engage positively in whole-school initiatives including coaching clinics at lunchtime and the breakfast club. The next step for the school is to develop student voice, leadership and agency so students can act as partners in whole-school improvement.

While there exists a wide variety of understanding about what constitutes effective student influence and student agency, the school is positively placed to provide authentic opportunities for students to influence their learning.

**Direction 4** To enable students to be active participants in their learning, develop and implement a whole-school approach to student agency that enables teachers and students to work collaboratively to reflect on and improve teaching and learning across the whole-school.



## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

The school is well-resourced with excellent grounds and learning facilities. The students at Cobdogla Primary School are articulate, well-mannered and highly value education. The staff are extremely collaborative and committed to improving student outcomes, respectful of each other and clearly have pride in the school. The leadership team is well respected by the wider community, is highly supportive of teaching and learning and is providing stability and strategic direction. The school is well positioned to initiate any pedagogical change that will further enhance student achievement.

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

- Direction 1 To ensure greater student equity and a balanced teaching and learning program, collaboratively develop and implement whole-school literacy and numeracy agreements with a focus on literacy and numeracy progressions.
- Direction 2 With a focus on visible learning, build the capacity of teachers to personalise learning experiences that provide for the individual needs of all students and engages and challenges them in their learning.
- Direction 3 To engage and intellectually challenge every learner, collaboratively develop and implement a consistent whole-school approach to formative assessment and learning design.
- Direction 4 To enable students to be active participants in their learning, develop and implement a whole-school approach to student agency that enables teachers and students to work collaboratively to reflect on and improve teaching and learning across the whole-school.

Based on the school's current performance, Cobdogla Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2022.



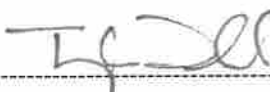
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# Appendix 1

## 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 2018, 89% of year 1 and 84% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement for years 1 and 2, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for years 1 and 2 has been upwards, from 38% to 89% and from 29% to 84%, respectively.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 100% of year 3 students, 100% of year 5 students and 87% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents an improvement, and for year 7 little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for years 5 has been upwards, from 57% to 100%, and for year 7 upwards, from 75% to 87%

For 2019, year 3 and 5 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than and for year 7, is achieving within the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 59% of year 3, 33% 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 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 50%, or 3 out of 6 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 4 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

### Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 82% of year 3 students, 89% of year 5 students and 93% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 75% to 93%.

For 2019, year 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within, and for year 5, is achieving higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 35% of year 3, 11% of year 5 and 47% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards, from 13% to 47%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 40%, or 2 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 4 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.