

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Riverdale Primary School

Conducted in June 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Julie James 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

Riverdale Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 21kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 251. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 266. The local partnership is Hollywood Lakes & Gardens.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 937 and is classified as Category 3 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 29% students with disabilities, 13% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, 2% children/young people in care and 35% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 5th year of tenure, a Deputy Principal, 1 early years literacy leader, a senior leader, disability and a counsellor.

There are 20.4FTE teachers, including 6 in the early years of their career and 4 Step 9/HAT teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Continue to build data literacy in the school, engaging students with their own data for improvements in learning.
- Direction 2** Develop students' use of metacognitive strategies to assess, monitor and regulate their own learning.
- Direction 3** Ensure the uniform use by all teachers of quality, evidence-based pedagogical practices that engage and challenge all learners.
- Direction 4** Provide individualised and intensive mentoring and coaching to support continuously improving teacher capacity.

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

Actions were taken to address the previous ESR directions. There are developing practices across the school in engaging students with their learning data, particularly in writing. Statements of practice were developed, implemented and monitored in:

- early years pedagogy (including the implementation of synthetic phonics)
- writing (drawing on Brightpath and Seven Steps strategies)
- professional learning communities (PLCs) aligned to the school improvement plan (SIP) and trauma-informed practice.

A culture of accountability was established and maintained, involving leadership walkthroughs, observations, feedback aligned to statements of practice, reflective conversations at data meetings and traffic light check-in processes aligned to the SIP. A strong focus around self-regulation and creating safe conditions for rigorous learning was implemented. Actioning strategies, such as growth mindsets and the learning pit, provided a language for students to talk about their learning in some classes.

Redesign of staff meetings to focus on professional learning, and restructure of PLCs focussing on implementation sprints and release time on a regular basis created opportunities for intensive learning. A focus on distributive leadership, building leadership capacity of key teachers, has emerged, with these teachers identified to lead the work in writing, wellbeing and intervention.

The directions created a consistent approach and a growing de-privatisation of practice in literacy. Teachers increasingly used data for intentional teaching. The wellbeing approaches created a calm, safe and consistent learning environment, allowing more focussed and explicit teaching to occur. A dispositional shift within staff is evident through deeper and more rigorous learning conversations during staff meetings, PLCs and data meetings.

Elements of the previous directions are still to be addressed and actioned, in conjunction with strategies identified in the school improvement plan.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

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

The Principal and the leadership team were instrumental in leading and developing a culture of learning, using the SIP as the vehicle for change, and evidence-based practices to identify changes for improvement. Teachers recognise that SIP goals and targets keep them on-track and have a strong understanding about the impact of this planning on their practice.

A whole-school approach in literacy, with a particular focus on phonics and writing, is well-understood. Learning approaches such as Jolly Phonics/Grammar, Big 6 and, more recently, synthetic phonics and 7 Steps in Writing, are practised at all levels across the school. Future considerations such as reviewing the success of current initiatives (eg phonics and initial work in writing) and ensuring their sustainability will lead to embedded practice. Continue to reference the curriculum agreements to identify what the explicit expectations and commitments are to practice, ensuring consistency of practice and meeting of SIP learning outcomes.

The SIP priorities are part of professional development process, and staff are now more accountable to the SIP and the impact it has on their teaching and planning. Teachers spoke positively about how staff meetings and PLCs are used to explore best practice and shape improvement plans. School services officers are included and valued as members of the learning team and involved in professional learning and staff development.

The school achievement data is in the mid to low range, and leadership recognise they are charged with leading the focus on 'raising the bar' when it comes to SEA and high-band results. It is timely for leadership and staff to reflect on data trends, as a result of the practices implemented, and develop new and aspirational 2022-2024 SIP targets. Refining future goals and actions in the SIP will ensure existing improvement work is implemented and embedded with fidelity.

Direction 1 Strengthen and refine current teaching practices with a greater alignment to the SIP challenges of practices to increase the number of students achieving SEA and high bands.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

The Principal reported that all work conducted is strongly focused on evidence-based educational research, quality data and several models for implementation. The Principal and teachers regularly cited the phonics and guided reading approaches, adopted as part of the challenge of practice to support their teaching. The curriculum focus on reading and writing allowed teachers to sharpen their focus on intentional teaching.

Learning tasks are diverse and appropriately designed according to student need. Staff mentioned that strategies they apply to enable differentiated teaching tended to have a bias towards students with specific learning needs and mid-level achievers. This is supported by the teaching survey results: all teachers rated their ability to differentiate learning ranging from a medium to high level. The survey also indicated that two-thirds of staff rated their planning in engaging and challenging the diversity of students at a medium level. The next steps to consider include revisiting the concept of differentiated learning and how it can be consistently understood and effectively embedded across the school.

A collective enthusiasm about the positive change in direction, in terms of whole-school pedagogy, is shared across mainstream and specialist teachers. Teachers are now using data to audit student progress and adjust their teaching. Intervention strategies are proving to be successful, and data is shared amongst staff. The special unit is to be commended in their work and focus on literacy (phonics) and assessments using the ABLES progress data.

The teaching survey indicated that 69% of staff create opportunities to challenge students to enable them to think deeper about a topic at a medium level. Next steps to undertake include revisiting the purpose of formative assessments, learning intentions, success criteria and learning goals, to ensure that task design provides meaningful engagement and challenge for all learners. Couple this with the positive learning strategies (growth mindsets), with the aim to engender perseverance amongst the students when attempting new work.

Direction 2 Build on teacher capacity to provide quality differentiated instruction that embeds the formative assessment cycle to engage and challenge all learners.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

It is evident to the review panel that the school is transitioning from creating and maintaining a safe learning environment towards a stronger learning-focused environment. Leadership provides strategic direction, and the school's planning processes are evidence-based and targeted. Teacher and leader practice are positively impacted by effective systems to build capacity. The parent community fully support changes in the learning focus and recognise the work that leadership and teachers are doing to improve the learning opportunities for their children.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen and refine current teaching practices with a greater alignment to the SIP challenges of practices to increase the number of students achieving SEA and high bands.**
- Direction 2** **Build on teacher capacity to provide quality differentiated instruction that embeds the formative assessment cycle to engage and challenge all learners.**

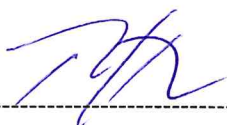
Based on the school's current performance, Riverdale Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2024.



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Thomas Harvey
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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 2019, 41% of year 1 and 40% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 1 and 2, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN indicate that 52% of year 3 students, 67% of year 5 students and 57% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For year 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 22% of year 3, 12% of year 5 and 3% 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 year 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019, who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 25%, or 2 out of 8 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 11%, or 1 out of 9 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 59% of year 3 students, 55% of year 5 students and 60% 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.

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

In 2019, 11% of year 3, 3% of year 5 and 3% 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 year 5, this result represents little or no change and, for year 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019, who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 25%, or 1 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 50%, or 1 out of 2 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.