

The Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Seaford K-7 School

Conducted in August 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 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 Greg Graham, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Josie McBain, Review Principal.

School context

Seaford K-7 School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 30kms from the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the River Hub Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 233 students, and has been steady over the last 5 years. The school is classified as Category 4 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 952.

The school population includes 5% of Aboriginal students, 14% of students with a disability, 55% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 1% of students of EALD background, and 6 students in care.

There are 9 mainstream classes and 2 regional special small classes. There are 4 junior primary classes and 5 primary classes which are mainly composite. The school operates 3 sub-schools – junior, middle and upper primary.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of her tenure at the school, a deputy principal and 2 senior leaders. There are 16.2FTE teachers, including 1 in the early years of their career and 10 Step 9 teachers. There 85.25 school services officer (permanent) hours and 117.5 hours of temporary staff.

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:

- Student learning:** **How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?**
To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?
- Improvement Agenda:** **How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?**

How effectively is student learning growth monitored and evaluated?

Two of the school's site improvement plan priorities aim for higher standards of learning achievement in literacy and numeracy with the focus on tracking and monitoring children's achievement and progress in reading and maths.

The principal's presentation acknowledged that, historically, expectations of learning have been low, with a focus on student behaviour, and low achievement trends in NAPLAN and Running Records results mirror this focus. Over the last 3 years there has been a gradual cultural shift with a change in focus towards student achievement. Several parents acknowledged the work of the principal and leadership team and commented on the good 'vibe' that now exists across the school and stated that their children like coming to school.

Contributing factors to this change include a stronger emphasis on intervention programs such as Multilit, Quicksmart and PASM phonological awareness to establish some baseline data on student achievement and progress. Other strategies include establishing a literacy agreement that is actioned and continually

being refined and modified to suit the changes in teaching practice. The local partnership work on Learning Design and Moderation (LDAM) with follow-up sessions at staff meetings, has enabled improved staff knowledge in evaluating student achievement.

Monitoring students through programs such as Brightpath writing and Daily 5 has enabled teachers to evaluate the growth of students along with diagnostic tests such as Oxford Word lists, and SA Spelling, which are used to identify ability groups. Individual teachers use a variety of personal recording processes to track their students, but there was limited evidence of cross-checking with system tests.

The recent introduction of a data wall has been beneficial to all teaching and SSO personnel who commented favourably on its value as a tool to monitor student growth. Teachers said: "It's enabled me to visually see where my kids are and how they are tracking against similar year levels" and "...starts to build a picture of where your teaching needs to go to help children improve".

Students interviewed named a few strategies that they have used to help them understand their own learning growth, such as wall charts for Brightpath writing, Daily 5 spelling and simple written comments in books. There was little reference to the use of NAPLAN or PAT achievement results by teachers with the students.

Parents indicated that their children sometimes talked about their learning, but it was generally when the learning was exciting, such as a science experiment, a test result or a 'fun activity'. Several parents did speak favourably of the DOJO app that enabled them to get some immediate information on their child's achievements, and provided them with the opportunity for their children to share what they have learnt.

Several staff members commented on the school focus as striving to get the students to benchmark as measured by NAPLAN Running Records and PAT tests. The review panel noted that many of the staff comments on student learning growth are impacted by behavioural issues or as quoted, "some children just don't seem to understand". It was apparent that staff are aware of the importance of monitoring student growth; however, the panel recognised that the depth of understanding and the consistency of practice varied across the school. The school may need to consider further professional development exploring research on growth data, and how it can support task design, student engagement and learning.

It has been recognised that the school uses information from a variety of assessments to support and plan for student learning. As a consequence, the variety of assessments to evaluate student learning can raise questions on the consistency and accuracy of the measures. The next phase of the school's future planning would be to continue to work on explicit assessment criteria, task design and moderation that incorporate feedback processes to and from students.

Direction 1

Strengthen the whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback processes from reception to year 7.

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

A number of strategies have been introduced to redirect the school's approach in addressing how to engage and improve the learning of all students. These include changing the school timetable, training staff in Growth Mindsets, lunchtime sports activities, and introducing student groups such as the Lego Club. Staff meetings and introduction of the data wall have changed the focus from predominantly administrative matters to professional learning on teaching and learning.

The teaching group indicated that a change in the learning focus has enabled greater discussion amongst the teachers about students and their learning. Teachers mentioned that professional development opportunities in whole-school programs, such as Daily 5, maths and moderation, have impacted on teaching practice, saying: "...the Daily 5 provides stretch for kids" and "...it has provided some drive to do better".

Work across Partnership schools in moderation (LDAM strategy) has been taken up by staff with some evidence of year-level team moderation, as well as sharing of pre and post-assessments in lesson planning. Some teachers described a number of other professional learning sessions like Jolly Phonics, while STEM 500 maths has helped them to individually strengthen their own personal development. They reported doing more hands-on work and less worksheets as a change in practice.

The review panel recognised elements of formative assessment processes being used at various levels across the school, with teachers offering different entry points, scaffolding work and modifying tasks to support and engage students. Students told panel members that teachers explained things clearly and use different ways to help individuals.

Feedback to students about their learning varied amongst staff, with verbal feedback being the prominent strategy. The panel recorded other forms of feedback such as ticks and stickers in books, simple written comments and progress charts. Students indicated that most of the feedback was done through conversations and ticks in books, and recognised that feedback was to help them understand the work or provide clues for the next stage of their learning.

Use of learning intentions in classrooms was limited, with some classes displaying the lesson purpose on a whiteboard. In most cases, teachers discussed lesson topics at the beginning, and some occasionally used other strategies such as 'WALT' (We Are Learning To), but not consistently. Students said the language of learning intentions differed between teachers and classes, and indicated teachers introduce a topic only but not the reason why.

The use of learning goals varied across the classes and in range, with some being targeted in numeracy and literacy (for example, Daily 5 spelling goals or reading level goals). Others included maths goals (times tables) or personal organisational goals. Teachers use a number of ways to display the learning goals from desktop cards, booklets and wall charts. Most of the goals were reviewed through consultations or at the end of a unit of work or term. Learning goals tended to be simple, such as 'improve writing' and 'be neater in books', or directly linked to their Daily 5 work. The school may consider student involvement in setting their own goals, as a subset of class or topic learning intention, so each student has a specific goal that addresses their personal learning need for that topic.

Development and embedding of a common understanding that intellectual stretch is applicable for all students and all learning areas, is most effective when tasks are designed that provide multiple entry and exit points, and strengthen student agency within the planning process/co-design of learning tasks.

The depth of engagement of all students in their learning is varied. Students involved in intervention programs are well catered for; however, the sense of high expectation and engagement of the middle and higher achievers appears to be at a surface level. Some responses about stretch and challenge from the adults interviewed include: "easier for kids who have the inner drive to come and seek challenge", "we are building their stamina for learning" and "...room to expand with learning". Next steps for the school are to collaboratively develop a whole-school approach to intellectual stretch and challenge, that does not equate to just the provision of work at a higher year level. This is coupled with the building of consistent teaching practices that link student learning from reception to year 7, and strengthen the student influence in their own learning.

Opportunities for students to be intellectually stretched in their learning result from the development of tasks that provide different perspectives and levels of understanding, designed for students to be doing the thinking. Planned work within year levels and learning areas in the development of transforming tasks is important for the school to undertake.

Direction 2

Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.

How well does the school make data-informed judgements about student learning?

In the past, collection and collation of student achievement data was not managed well, and the principal and leadership team have made changes to improve the recording of student data and plan to improve accessibility of data. They have been instrumental in strengthening the use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning and practice through implementing a data wall, and realigning staff meeting agendas to focus on student learning.

The strategic focus on data analysis has improved through targeted conversations in performance development meetings, PLC actions and timetabling to allow teachers to look at data (via Scorelink) and co-plan. The school has initiated a whole-school approach in reading by conducting Running Records assessments across reception to year 7, with all teachers involved in conducting and analysing the data results. NAPLAN data use within lesson planning was limited, with students indicating little discussion about NAPLAN results or other tests from their teachers.

Teachers use a variety of assessment and diagnostic tests (for example, Oxford Word lists and SA Spelling) to help structure class ability groups and recognise students requiring intervention support. Intervention assessments, such as Minilit, Quicksmart and PASM were used to support identified students, and coordinated by school services officers. Parent involvement in negotiated education plan meetings was seen as valuable, and enabled a partnership between the school and home to support the specific learning needs of students. Parents commented that communication from the school on any learning concerns was supported by evidence-based data.

Teachers involved in the special education classes were supportive of the work around the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) assessment program. The school is in the beginning stages of implementing the program, while training and development undertaken by staff has been valued. As this is a specialised area, staff are pleased to work with other schools in both the training and trialling of the program with their classes.

All of the teachers commented favourably on the data room and its purpose, with many saying that the visual representation of the student data and having meetings in the room enabled teachers to continually monitor student progress and learning growth. Specialist teachers said the data wall gave them an insight into the learning issues of some students, and that they made changes to their lesson to accommodate their specific learning styles or needs.

The Daily 5 program and its use across the school was evident and commented on favourably by all staff. Its implementation was done through a staged process, with teachers observing each other in how they were using it in their class. As a consequence, there were some inconsistencies in practice based on teacher confidence and understanding of the program. Students indicated that the Daily 5 enabled them to choose their own activities, while a few indicated that their classes did it differently from others, with

one only doing the work over a three-day period. With an investment such as the Daily 5 program, the school may need to consider developing an agreed approach to the program to ensure consistency of action.

Students are keen to achieve and were able to articulate how to move from a 'C' grading to a 'B' or 'A' grade by 'simply working harder'. It would be beneficial for all members of the school community, but particularly students, to see and know what the 'A', 'B' and 'C' standard looks like in a specific task or activity, and how to achieve the desired grade. Further exploration in using growth data may assist in developing common understandings and practices in grade allocation through consistent moderation processes that include students in knowing what is needed to improve.

There is opportunity to further explore the use of growth and effect size measures (Hattie) as a professional development focus to support numerical data and to inform judgements when planning learning programs. Students at all year levels benefit from the opportunity to have authentic influence on their learning. The school is well-positioned to undertake this important work.

Direction 3

Design, implement, review and embed effective and consistent pedagogical practices within and across all learning areas that use evidence-based data to support student learning and growth.

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practice that is contributing significantly to school improvement at Seaford K-7 School.

Effective practice in building the school and community partnerships was evident. Previously, community involvement in the school was low due to a variety of reasons. In recent times, the promotion of the school's achievements and the invitation for parents and broader community to become part of the students' extended learning opportunities has been well-received. Parents trust the principal and staff in the provision of a quality education for their children. The school community value the high level of consultation and know their opinions are valued. The strength of this relationship with ongoing open dialogue and commitment to working together has resulted in a united community with strong support in the school's endeavours.

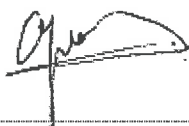
Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

Seaford K-7 School is progressing and improving performance and effectiveness, with student achievement data used to inform decisions and actions for individual students, classes and across the school. Student achievement data and other evidence (for example, multiple measures) is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Strengthen the whole-school assessment processes to include student voice, qualitative data and evidence-based feedback processes reception to year 7.
2. Explore and implement approaches that integrate and effectively embed intellectual stretch, challenge and rigour into daily classroom teaching and learning.
3. Design, implement, review and embed effective and consistent pedagogical practices within and across all learning areas that use evidence-based data to support student learning and growth.

Based on the school's current performance, Seaford K-7 will be externally reviewed again in 2021.



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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 89.8%.

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, 62% of year 1 and 48% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement at year 1 and a decline year 2 from the historic baseline average.

Between 2015 and 2017, the trend for year 1 has been upwards, from 24% in 2015 to 62% in 2017.

In 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 43% of year 3, 55% of year 5, and 66% of year 7 students achieved the SEA. For year 5, this result represents little or no change, and for year 3, a decline from the historic baseline average. There were insufficient year 7 students to identify a trend.

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

In 2017, 5% of year 3, and 14% of year 5 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 17% of students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017.

Numeracy

In 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 48% of year 3, 59% of year 5, and 66% of year 7 students achieved the SEA. For year 3, this result represents a decline, and for year 5, an improvement from the historic baseline average. There are insufficient year 7 enrolments to demonstrate any trends.

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

In 2017, 5% of year 5 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. There were no students in year 3 in the top 2 NAPLAN numeracy bands. For year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 33%, or 1 of 3 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2017.