EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR LAKE WANGARY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in September 2016
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 framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Julie Bishop, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and Rebecca Read, Review Principal.
Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Lake Wangary 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 documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 88.9%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Lake Wangary Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 647kms west of the Adelaide CBD. The school has a current enrolment of 75 students. The school has an ICSEA score of 1011, and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 9% Aboriginal students, 4.5% students with disabilities, 3.4% funded students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), 1.3% children in care, and 20% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the second year of her first tenure. There are no other leadership positions in the school.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 27% of Year 1 and 67% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 2 has been downwards, from 82% in 2013 to 67% in 2015.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of Year 3 students, 67% of Year 5 students and 69% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school is achieving within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 33% of Year 3, 44% of Year 5 and 23% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3, this is a decline from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 100%, or 4 of 4 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50%, or 3 of 6 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of Year 3 students, 56% of Year 5 students and 69% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA.
For Years 5 and 7, this represents a decline from the historic baseline average. In Year 5, there is a decline from 73% in 2013 to 56% in 2015.

For 2015 Year 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 17% of Year 3, 22% of Year 5 and 8% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands.

For Year 3, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been upwards, from 0% in 2013 to 22% in 2015.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 66.7%, or 2 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and nil percent, or no students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and a decline for Years 3 to 7.

### Lines of Inquiry

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

- **Student Learning:** To what extent are students engaged and challenged in their learning?
- **Effective Leadership:** To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance development processes effective in building teacher capacity?
- **School Community Partnerships:** How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community?

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

The Review Panel met with 24 students from Years 2 to 7 in three different forums. Students were asked to comment on how they felt they had done in either NAPLAN or their mid-year report, and if they knew why they had received those grades.

Thirty percent of students from Years 4 to 7 indicated that they did not know why they had received the particular grade/NAPLAN result. Three students indicated that they were very surprised with their NAPLAN results (all of which indicated a decline from their previous NAPLAN assessment). They also stated that they did not know how this could have occurred; one student stated: "I'm below average for the first time, it happened in everything". Another student stated: "I was really surprised because in class I was OK".

The majority of responses from students relating to how they could improve were behavioural or effort-based, for example: "keep trying" and "do more work at home". It is apparent that ongoing specific and regular feedback to students about their learning would support them to become highly engaged in their own learning and, subsequently, develop the skills to become reflective learners.

The setting of learning goals at the beginning of each term and reviewing them at the end of that term is a very positive initiative, and provides the opportunity for students to focus on specific aspects of their learning. This could be further enhanced by joining their teacher to view their personal datasets, and then collaboratively set goals based on that data. Making the learning goals available to parents at regular intervals throughout the year could further enhance opportunities for students to become powerful partners in their learning.

Observations were undertaken in all classrooms. Students in one class were asked how they knew if they were successful in the learning task they were undertaking, and the following responses were provided
order of frequency): “don’t know”, “if others have the same answer” and “if you get it marked”.

Students in two other classes were able to articulate multiple strategies to use when they were stuck. When strategies for success are public, visible in the class, and part of everyday discourse, students very quickly become embedded in a culture where they ‘own’ their learning.

The Principal used the TfEL compass student survey with all students, the CPAC (Coordinator Primary Australian Curriculum) and teachers analysed the data, which was then shared with students. The Principal commented that a valued outcome of this was students now seeing teachers as learners, thus enhancing the development of Lake Wangary School as a community of learners.

The school is to be commended for the work they have undertaken on Growth Mindsets. Further work in this area would provide the framework for students to develop and embed the language of success in their own learning and further enhance the culture of success orientation across the school.

When asked via a survey conducted by the Review Panel during the External School Review (ESR), 20% of teachers indicated, to a high degree, that they effectively created opportunities to stretch students to think more deeply about a topic. Sixty percent responded that they provided this opportunity to a medium extent, and the remaining 20% indicated that this opportunity was provided to a low extent. Continuing work on the development of tasks that provide multiple entry and exit points will support teachers to develop their skills to provide regular opportunities to provide challenging learning and tasks. Collaborative work with their neighbouring school may further enhance this work.

It is clear that careful, strategic planning is demonstrating the development of a culture of success supported by staff and community. The challenge for the school is to now embed the practices across all sectors.

Direction 1
Embed authentic student influence using data and feedback to stretch students and strengthen the emerging work on task design.

To what extent are the school’s professional learning and performance development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

The Principal is currently in her sixth term and first tenure as Principal, and is to be commended for the strategic manner in which she has led an effective change agenda to align Site Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities with Professional Learning and Performance Development processes to build teacher capacity.

English was the first curriculum area to be addressed. Initial conversations were held around what was assessed in English. It became apparent that teachers were collecting data, but it was passed on by request only; there was no group analysis of the data and subsequently no whole-school perspective of datasets. Class support from the School Support Officers and the Principal was provided on the basis of time allocation rather than student need, and not informed by data.

Agreements were reached around the when and what of assessment for English across the school. Teachers now assess students at the end of each term and forward the data to the Principal, where it is collated and distributed to teachers for the beginning of the next term.

Staff meetings are set aside to identify the specific waves of intervention for individual students in each class. Classes are then allocated support according to student need.

The data is made public; the Principal reported that the implementation of the above processes saw some teachers beginning to look at their own pedagogical practices. The Principal then began classroom observations with staff reporting that they found it beneficial. Professional Learning through the Partnership has included a focus on writing and reading, with a planned focus on spelling later in the term.

The Principal has expanded the work undertaken in English to incorporate Performance Development by establishing protocols that include teachers writing an overview of English in Term 1, English and maths in Term 2, and English and maths and one other area of learning in Terms 3 and 4. Teachers were provided with a guide outlining requirements of an overview. The CPAC worked with teachers in developing their
The majority of teachers commented that they have found the support of CPAC to be extremely beneficial in improving their own pedagogical practices, whilst also progressing the school’s change agenda.

A three-week cycle has been established where in the first week, the overview is handed to the Principal, in the second week, the Principal undertakes a classroom observation related to the overview, and in the third week, a performance development meeting is held with the teacher to provide feedback and determine future directions based on the overview and the observation.

Other initiatives include the Principal now attending Professional Learning with staff, thus being able to embed the learning with all staff, as a powerful strategy in building individual and group capacity. Teachers have also used the I/EL tool to observe their peers.

The school has worked with a neighbouring school in moderation of both writing and maths. All teachers who have worked with the neighbouring school indicated willingness for this to continue. Consideration could be given to the joint development of a scope and sequence for identified learning areas that acknowledge the challenge of multiple year-levels per class in small schools.

Professional Learning in a small rural school is often challenging to access, and staff are to be commended for the manner in which they take personal responsibility for themselves as learners. Several staff commented that they access a considerable amount of learning online, while another teacher stated that the Principal encourages staff to access professional learning. Teachers are also supported to undertake observations in other schools.

There are very clear links between professional learning and performance development to build teacher capacity in English and, to some degree, in maths. This work provides a powerful template for ongoing development across all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum.

**Direction 2**

Embed the linking of the SIP, professional learning and performance development across all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum with a specific focus on the development of a scope and sequence for each learning area, as pertinent to multi-year level classes.

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**How well does the school develop partnerships with students, parents and the wider community?**

In exploring the effectiveness of partnerships with students, parents and the wider community, the panel met with 8 Governing Council representatives, 5 parents, the ACEO and an SSO, as well as teachers, students and the Principal. Governing Council members are very supportive of the school and see it as an environment where students all get along, and where a high level of care is evident across all staff. Specific mention was made of the family-like atmosphere at the school, where older students care for the younger students in a very positive, genuine and tolerant manner.

One family indicated that they had relocated so that their children could attend Lake Wangary School because of the supportive school environment. The parent group is highly supportive of the work of the Principal and the staff, commenting that the changes have all been positive, with a great atmosphere very evident in the school, and one parent stating: "If the school continues to run as it is now, it will only get better".

In spite of the very strong affirmation for the school, there was a residual perception from some parents and staff that school-community partnerships were not as strong as they would like. This perception may, in part, be due to the specific circumstances of Lake Wangary Primary School. The school is in a unique situation where there are no services other than the school available in the community. The majority of students are transported to and from school via the school bus, resulting in a very limited number of parents who drop-off and collect their children on a daily basis and, subsequently, reducing the opportunity for staff to engage in the daily interactions with a wide range of families, as is the case in many schools.

At the meeting with the Governing Council, it was stated that maintaining improved communication needs to be kept a priority. The school currently provides the following avenues for communication: class dojo,
Skoolbag, Facebook and the school website, together with more traditional paper-based forms of communication.

The school is to be commended for the initiatives they have implemented this year. Each term, the school invites families on a specific day to come and view the work each class has undertaken on a given topic. Families are encouraged to visit each class. The school, whilst sharing the learning, are providing reasons for families to come to the school and opportunities for students to articulate and demonstrate their learning in a meaningful context.

The kindergarten has recently voted to amalgamate with the school; it is anticipated that this will be in place for the start of the 2018 school year. At a meeting with the Governing Council during the ESR, one member stated that the engagement they had with their children at kindergarten and in Reception/Year 1 was highly effective and wondered how this could be replicated across the school.

The school has recently appointed a Pastoral Care Worker (PCW) and an Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO). Parents and Governing Council members commented very positively on both appointments and the work they are doing in the community.

The school became a 'Kids Matter' school in 2015, although progress has been hampered due to the lead teacher no longer working at the school. Staff commented positively on the impact that it had created and their willingness to re-engage with Kids Matter as a lever for improved partnerships with the school community.

The development of an action committee is an integral component of the Kids Matter program. Composition of the action committee could include community representatives from the kindergarten and school, together with the PCW and the ACEO. This may provide an opportunity to incorporate diverse perspectives through a structured and ongoing program and further enhance the work already undertaken.

**Direction 3**

Strengthen partnerships with community, using Kids Matter, the amalgamation of the kindergarten and the appointments of the Pastoral Care Worker and the Aboriginal Community Education Officer, as levers for change.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Lake Wangary Primary School has effective leadership that provides strategic direction, planning and targeted interventions. Student achievement data and other evidence are used to inform decisions and actions at the individual, class and whole-school levels.

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

1. Embed authentic student influence using data and feedback to stretch students and strengthen the emerging work on task design.

2. Embed the linking of the SIP, professional learning and performance development across all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum with a specific focus on the development of a scope and sequence for each learning area, as pertinent to multi-year level classes.

3. Strengthen partnerships with community, using Kids Matter, the amalgamation of the kindergarten and the appointments of the Pastoral Care Worker and the Aboriginal Community Education Officer, as levers for change.

Based on the school’s current performance, Lake Wangary Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Jayne Johnston  
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.

Sandra Spencer  
PRINCIPAL  
LAKE WANGARY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson