

# Department for Education

## External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

### Report for Mitcham Primary School

Conducted in June 2019



## 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 Simon Harding, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Alison Lynch and John McCade, Review Principals.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relating 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

Mitcham Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 6kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2019 is 766 students. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 700.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1109, and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population has no Aboriginal students, 3% students with disabilities, 25% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), 2 children in care and 9% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal and deputy principal in the first year of their first tenure, 2 assistant principals: curriculum in the first year of their second tenure and special education in the first year of their first tenure.

## Previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Improve the learning outcomes of all students by reviewing the implementation of practices and pedagogies outlined in whole-school agreements, and link these explicitly to the school's values.
- Direction 2** Increase the number of students achieving in the higher proficiency bands by increasing the rigour in learning and supporting the development of expert learning skills.
- Direction 3** Build teacher capacity for implementing key pedagogical approaches and meeting SIP targets by continuing to work towards aligning professional development plans with student learning outcomes.
- Direction 4** Encourage parents as partners by developing consistent and regular forms of communication between teachers, students and parents about key teaching and learning approaches and classroom learning programs.

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

The school has demonstrated evidence of implementing initiatives in relation to the previous directions.

The school has strategically set up structures to develop higher level collaboration and sharing of practice across staff. Professional learning has been streamlined to focus on school priorities. Staff willingly and enthusiastically participate in professional learning and share their learning with other staff through staff meetings and team meetings.

The school has worked consistently over time with an expert in maths, strategically implementing more consistent practices and language throughout the school. This has led to improved outcomes in maths. The school has STEM as a priority with the strategy to engage and challenge students in their learning.

There has been a focus on improving learning design in STEM both within classroom practice and through an extension program offered to students.

Working with parents as partners continues to be a focus for the school. The school provides parent workshops to support learning in the key teaching approaches and has worked to develop guidelines communicating information for parents about their child's progress. This continues to be a focus for the school.

## Lines of inquiry

### EFFECTIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

#### *How effectively does the school use improvement planning processes to raise student achievement?*

It is evident the school uses clear consultative processes to support their improvement planning and implementation cycle. Leadership and staff stated that decisions are made using evidence-based datasets. Staff stated that leadership consulted staff during the development of the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) and believe that their opinions and feedback are valued leading to ownership and commitment to the SIP goals.

The school has an established SIP team with members from both leadership and staff. This team is instrumental in filtering and collating information, both in the formulation, and ongoing monitoring of progress towards the plan. Parents are aware and feel their opinions are taken into consideration as part of the planning cycle, stating they have a high level of trust in leadership and staff to make the decisions necessary in relation to improvement. They also acknowledged the consultative processes the school, and in particular the principal, is undertaking and could cite specific examples to support this.

There are clear expectations from leadership that staff professional plans are closely aligned to site priorities along with relevant training and development opportunities. Staff are keen to participate in targeted professional learning and understand their responsibilities of reporting back and sharing practice from the training in which they participate. This continues to strengthen collegiate support and builds consistency of practice in the priority areas. Implementation of the plans of action including the training provided as set out in the SIP, and teachers using this new learning with their students, is evident. There is need for further clarity on the status of the new initiatives as expressed in the plan, and the new literacy agreement, as there are some inconsistencies of expectations and teacher understanding.

Leadership have provided clear expectations and structures, including some common release time in relation to team planning and collaborative work with a focus on the initiatives in the SIP. Effectively monitoring and evaluating the implementation of SIP actions to ensure time and support are provided for new learning, and its implementation and consolidation, are next steps.

The school is well placed to continue to strengthen the processes that support the monitoring, evaluation of the plan implementation, with staff clear about their roles and responsibilities.

**Direction 1      Strengthen processes that monitor and clarify plans of action to ensure time and support are provided to effectively implement, evaluate and embed initiatives within the SIP that improve student learning outcomes.**

## EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

It was clear from the principal that the school is working to develop effective and consistent pedagogy across the school. The school has recently reviewed their agreements in literacy and numeracy. These, along with a strategic approach to the training of staff have been valuable to support engagement with new initiatives. Staff affirmed that the support and responsiveness of leadership, along with time to work collaboratively with colleagues, are leading to more consistent practice across teams and the school.

Teachers clearly articulated the value they place on training opportunities that are targeted to site priorities, and are committed to sharing the new learning and practice with colleagues. Teachers are working towards providing students with authentic, real world learning experiences which are closely aligned with the learning they have been undertaking in task design.

STEM is a key driver across the school linked to this work in task design, providing students with challenge in their learning. The school offers an extension program with a STEM focus as a strategy to provide challenge and stretch in student learning. Students often commented that the learning was 'just right' but not necessarily challenging. Students clearly articulated that 'struggle' is important in their learning. Parents believed there are opportunities for challenge and stretch for their children however there was some inconsistency in this across the school.

There are whole-school expectations and systems in place to support teachers to use data effectively to inform their practice. There is a whole-school data and assessment schedule and teachers work individually, in teams and as a school to analyse data. Teachers shared how they use pre and post testing to inform their teaching and to measure distance travelled in student learning. Staff value the opportunities and the input from the SLLIP to develop consistency of judgement through the moderation of student work.

Teachers shared a variety of strategies they use to provide students with opportunities to engage in task design and providing feedback for individual students. There is evidence of the effective use of success criteria and some use of individual student learning goals being used to support students in their learning. The depth of knowledge and practices in relation to student influence in task design and effective feedback to inform students of their next steps varied across the staff. Providing students with clear feedback about their performance, can be powerful for students when co-constructing goals. Strengthening common understandings and consistency of practice in these areas, inclusive of using existing staff expertise, is an area for further development.

**Direction 2      Strengthen student engagement in their learning through active participation in task design and effective feedback for learning.**

## EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

### *How effective are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes in building teacher capacity?*

Leadership are committed to ensuring that professional learning takes priority and is closely aligned to SIP priorities. There is a focus on providing teams of teachers with professional learning to more effectively share the learning across the school. Staff are keen to take on new learning and are supported in the implementation by colleagues and leadership. There are clear expectations for staff to closely align their personal goals in their professional development plans to the site priorities. Structures are established which continue to enhance a culture of learning and improvement. Teachers are released at common times with the expectation of collaborative planning and monitoring progress. Staff shared how they value learning as teams with their focus of sharing and evaluating practice. Deepening collaborative approaches and continuing to build collective accountability would strengthen these established processes.

Teachers are committed and encourage students to be the best learners they can be. Parents are very supportive of both the leadership and staff and have confidence in their ability to effectively support students with their learning. They believe they have a good understanding of where their child is at through the reporting processes provided by the school, reporting that teachers are approachable and willing to make a time to meet as needed.

A willingness to improve is evident across the staff and there is increased knowledge and recognition, through higher levels of collaboration, of the expertise of staff. Colleagues are increasingly willing to initiate discussions, both formally and informally, about how to improve their practice and provide consistency for students. Teachers talked about how they seek and provide feedback about their practice. Teachers are provided with time to share their knowledge and collaborate when planning. Quality teaching is the single most influential factor on student achievement. Opportunities exist to continue to strengthen effective feedback for teachers from both colleagues and leadership as they reflect on, and further develop their practice, through the evaluation and review of performance development processes.

**Direction 3      Strengthen the clarity and rigour of performance development processes to continue to build capacity of staff to best meet the needs of students.**

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2019

There is evidence from all stakeholders of a positive, respectful community at Mitcham Primary School. Staff acknowledge the positive change of culture over the last few years including an increased willingness to support each other, sharing of practice and resources. Staff are keen to engage in new learning and value the opportunities provided in accessing professional learning and the expectation of sharing this learning with colleagues. There is evidence of work across the school with design thinking, especially through the focus on STEM. Staff and the community acknowledge that the school has good facilities and is well resourced to optimise learning for students.

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

- Direction 1** Strengthen processes that monitor and clarify plans of action to ensure time and support are provided to effectively implement, evaluate and embed initiatives within the SIP that improve student learning outcomes.
- Direction 2** Strengthen student engagement in their learning through active participation in task design and effective feedback for learning.
- Direction 3** Strengthen the clarity and rigour of performance development processes to continue to build capacity of staff to best meet the needs of students.

Based on the school's current performance, Mitcham 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, 76% of year 1 and 86% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline for year 1 and an improvement for year 2 from the historic baseline average.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 2 has been upwards, from 76% to 86% respectively.

In 2018, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 95% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students, and 89% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement, and for year 7 this represents little or no change from the historic baseline averages.

For 2018, years 3, 5, and 7 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

Between 2016 and 2018, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3 and 7 NAPLAN reading relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 61% of year 3, 49% of year 5, and 43% of year 7 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, 73%, or 35 out of 48 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, 58%, or 21 out of 36 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.

### Numeracy

In 2018, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 92% of year 3 students, 85% of year 5 students, and 94% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5 this result represents little or no change, and for year 7 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For 2018, years 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving higher and for year 5 within the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

Between 2016 and 2018, the school has consistently achieved higher in years 3 and 7 NAPLAN numeracy relative to the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2018, 49% of year 3, 34% of year 5, and 38% 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.

Between 2016 and 2018, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 39% to 49% respectively.

For those students who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 66%, or 19 out of 29 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 in 2018, and 67%, or 18 out of 27 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7 in 2018.