

# **The Department for Education**

## **External School Review**

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

**Report for Lock Area School**

Conducted in May 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 external school review 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 Alison Lynch, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Ilia Tsoutouras, Review Principal.

## School context

Lock Area School caters for children from reception to year 10 on-site and in years 11 and 12 through Open Access College. The school is situated 631kms west from the Adelaide CBD in the centre of the Eyre Peninsula in cereal cropping farming country, and is part of the Central Eyre Partnership. The enrolment in 2018 is 54 students, and has declined over the last 3 years. The school has an ICSEA score of 993 and is classified as Category 6 on the department's Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 3 Aboriginal students, 2% of students with disability, 6 families eligible for School Card assistance, no students of EALD background, and no children in care.

There are 4 composite classes:

- years 1/2
- years 3/4/5
- years 6/7, and
- years 8/9/10.

There is a straight reception class, and 70% of students are in the primary sector.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of his tenure at the school, and a coordinator 0.4FTE (learning improvement). There are 8 teachers (6.6FTE), including 6 Step 9 teachers.

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

**Effective Leadership:** To what extent are the school's professional learning and performance and development processes effective in building teacher capacity?

**Improvement Agenda:** How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?

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

Students and parents appreciate the relationships staff develop with students across the school, particularly by teachers who link the learning to students' lives (for example, connections to farming). Learning spaces are calm and settled, and recognised by students to support their learning.

In response to questions from the panel, students shared their views and understanding about teaching and learning, confidently and openly. They expressed a strong sense of connection and pride in the school, were motivated to learn and, generally, enjoyed coming to school. Student engagement is supported through a broad range of opportunities provided, including some 'buddy' class interactions, year 6 and 7

students engaging in technical studies, home economics classes and leadership through the student representative council.

Relating to a recent unit of work, all teachers responded in a survey provided by the review panel that they created opportunities to a medium or high extent to stretch students' thinking, enabling them to think deeply about the topic. However, students believed that the work was not challenging in all learning areas. Some students articulated effort-based/behavioural strategies to move their learning forward (keep trying and ask for help) and most identified that they could improve if they were provided with work at a harder level.

When asked if the work they were doing was too hard, just right or too easy, only 1 student in the middle primary years indicated the work was sometimes hard in maths. Only 2 students felt they were being challenged in maths by working at a higher year level in a multi-aged class. The parent of one of these students was appreciative of the opportunity for learning to be extended. When asked what they do when the work was too easy, all students commented that they would "just do it". While they did say that they could tell their teacher and ask for harder work, they generally did not do this. Other students stated they were working at the same level as other children in their year level.

When reflecting on what they had done well in their planning, teaching and assessment of a recent unit of work and what they would have liked to have done better, several teachers identified differentiation, stretch and challenge as a priority. Teachers indicated openness to further understanding learning design. Training is planned within the partnership and through access to the Senior Leader, Learning Improvement Primary (SLLIP) officer. Next steps are to build teacher capacity to provide tasks with multiple entry points so all students can be intellectually challenged.

Students are open to feedback and reported receiving marks in tests that focus on positive comments. In a survey conducted during the review, 100% of staff indicated that improvement feedback provided to students was at a medium level. Student workbooks showed some marking of student work with ticks and comments such as 'well done' and 'great persuading'. Discussions with students are the most common strategy used to provide feedback, particularly for those requiring additional support. Small class numbers provide the opportunity for close monitoring and supporting individual student engagement by providing explicit next steps for learning (for example, 2 stars and a wish). Effective feedback identifies what students are doing well, areas for improvement, and provides students with strategies to achieve that improvement.

When asked to provide examples of formative and summative assessments used to inform and refine their planning, teachers responded only with a range of summative and diagnostic assessments. Formative assessments inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. One teacher indicated she had participated in professional learning with Dylan William (Assessment for Learning) and is attending a follow-up session during this year. The sharing of this learning with other staff should be a focus within the school to ensure learning is both relevant and challenging for all students. Accessing a range of formative assessments during the lesson would provide timely information to teachers on adjusting the teaching and learning as it happens, thus supporting all students to be challenged and supported.

Students stated that they could speak with their teacher about their learning, usually at the end of a lesson or by putting their hand up. Most students stated that they didn't take up this opportunity. Although some teachers sought feedback from students, it related predominantly to their enjoyment of the lesson and, sometimes, to the level of difficulty. Student feedback is essential in informing teacher

reflections on practice and provides opportunities for students to become authentic partners in their own learning.

#### **Direction 1**

**Develop an environment where students and teachers give regular feedback to each other about their learning, embedding feedback for learning as a two-way process, through the use of formative assessment strategies to ensure all students are supported and challenged in their learning.**

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

Several teachers were unsure of what performance management expectations were at Lock Area School, and 1 thought the principal indicated he would be doing an observation at some stage of the year. Teachers have not previously been formally observed by leadership or their peers, nor provided with critical feedback on their teaching. They have been using the department's templates and a meeting with the principal.

Staff spoke of previously receiving positive comments on a note in their pigeon-hole and sharing 'ah-ha' moments at staff meetings. It is important that staff are provided with regular feedback on their teaching, using both formal and informal processes. Performance and development processes that are aligned to school priorities and meet the department's requirements, including provision of written feedback, and regular walk-throughs, need to be collaboratively planned, documented and communicated in advance.

Teachers' Performance Development Plans should provide the opportunity to narrow and personalise the focus for observations. Developing protocols around the how and why will ensure a respectful process. The TfEL Review Tools provide clear processes for involving a triangulation of reflections, including working with students, self-review and working with trusted colleagues. The panel saw evidence of varying teaching methodologies and pedagogies being implemented in classes during observations and walkthroughs. The opportunity for teachers to observe each other's class will help improve the consistency in approaches, supporting students in transitioning into classes in coming years, particularly after being with the same teacher for several years.

While teachers were able to list a wide and extensive range of recent professional development accessed off-site, it was indicated that only Back to Front Maths and Thinking Maths training was attended by more than 1 staff member. There is evidence that teachers are supported and committed to develop their expertise through engaging in professional learning. Information Technology sessions held after school are regularly attended. It is important, however, to align staff learning opportunities with the site improvement plan (SIP), partnership and the department's priorities. The school is engaging in and committed to partnership priorities, including Back2Front maths.

Clear expectations for staff to trial, share and mentor other staff, when returning from PD, will increase opportunities to embed new learning across the site. The provision of time in staff meetings is vital in ensuring the sharing of new learning and the building of skills and understandings. The panel was provided with several copies of staff meeting minutes which clearly showed limited or no time available for PLCs or professional development of staff. By implementing alternate means to share administration issues outside of staff meetings, time will be freed up to allow for a focus on teachers' professional learning, sharing of practice and reviewing progress toward site improvement priorities.

Early years teachers reported they are involved in partnership PLCs twice a term, which were appreciated for the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their teaching practice with like year level teachers. The panel suggests investigating opportunities for this to be expanded within the partnership for all staff to connect with teachers of similar year levels in neighbouring sites. Upcoming professional development in learning design for secondary teachers could enable ongoing connections to be made between teachers of similar subject areas and year levels.

The opportunity for staff to share, reflect on, review and revisit new learning, in collaborative teams, will enable teacher capacity to be built within a common frame of reference.

## **Direction 2**

**Collaboratively develop protocols and processes to enable a coordinated approach to professional learning and performance and development that is aligned to the SIP priorities.**

## **How well are the results of data and evidence translated into targeted actions?**

The school collects data from a range of tests in literacy and numeracy, according to an assessment schedule:

- Running Records
- Spelling
- PASM
- Oxford
- PAT, and
- STAR reading.

The principal has a strong focus on creating multiple datasets. There is evidence of the collection, collation and plotting of whole-school student achievement using NAPLAN, PAT, and engagement and wellbeing data, visually displayed in the principal's office. When interviewed, all staff showed a willingness to engage with data. Two teachers identified using the results of some testing (for example, PAT maths and reading) and the online resources available, to plan for individual students and year levels. It was not evident, however, that this was common practice.

Running Records data of early years students has identified a need for targeted intervention, now in place through the MiniLit program, with an SSO recently trained. The coordinator has worked with teachers to develop Negotiated Education Plans (NEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for identified students. These can now be refined to include SMARTAR goals with clear measurable targets, and actions that are aligned to individual student needs. Additional training in SMARTAR goal-setting would benefit all staff, including SSOs, with a curriculum focus. The school could also explore the opportunity to be involved in the department's One Child One Plan initiative, particularly as professional learning for the coordinator with an intervention focus in her role.

Individual student folders (reception to year 7) contain past diagnostic tests, but staff did not comment on their impact on teaching practice. Multiple copies of tests are kept, showing a repetition of tests for students who have previously scored highly from the early years; for example, 1 student had spelt *where* incorrectly a number of times. In this case, words misspelt in a child's Oxford test and in their writing should be included in his/her individualised spelling program.

The panel did not find evidence of regular whole-school processes of teachers analysing and interrogating data to identify trends and actions needed to support learning improvement of individuals and cohorts.

Targets set within the SIP need to be measurable and aligned to individual student growth. By relating the data to individual students, teachers are able to reflect on how they can adapt their teaching to meet the needs of each student. Structured, ongoing professional learning communities provide opportunities to engage in Assess – Plan – Teach conversations. The opportunity now exists to build the capacity of staff to collaboratively reflect on their practice, determine, analyse and use relevant data to inform their teaching. The existing assessment schedule should be reviewed and refined to ensure all data is collected for distinct purposes and utilised as a teaching resource.

Opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in using and analysing relevant data will support the implementation of school-wide strategies that will raise student achievement across all year levels.

### **Direction 3**

**Develop a common agreement and understanding of relevant datasets that inform next steps for instruction, and refine the consistent and coherent collection and analysis of relevant individual data that shows students' achievement and growth over time, matched to targeted actions.**

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

During the review process, the panel verified the following effective practices that are contributing to school improvement at Lock Area School.

Access to extensive and well-equipped technical studies, home economics and science facilities provide year 6 to 10 students with the opportunity to engage in a range of relevant pathways. This proactive practice encourages families to keep their children at Lock Area School for the later years of schooling.

The school engages positively with the community as a central hub, through the onsite community library, a sewing group and playgroup offered through the school, or as a venue for community use. There is a strong parent/community/school partnership evidenced by the attendance at various school functions, including students sharing their learning. Parents and students appreciate the extra-curricular activities provided.

## Outcomes of the External School Review 2018

At Lock Area School, there is a coherent and engaging curriculum for students using the Australian Curriculum. The school works in partnership with parents and stakeholders.

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

1. Develop an environment where students and teachers give regular feedback to each other about their learning, embedding feedback for learning as a two-way process, through the use of formative assessment strategies to ensure all students are supported and challenged in their learning.
2. Collaboratively develop protocols and processes to enable a coordinated approach to professional learning and performance and development that is aligned to the SIP priorities.
3. Develop a common understanding of relevant datasets that inform next steps for instruction, and refine the consistent and coherent collection and analysis of relevant individual data that shows students' achievement and growth over time, matched to targeted actions.

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



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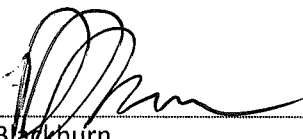
Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



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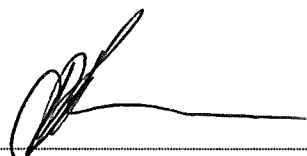
Anne Millard  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND  
PRESCHOOLS

The school will provide an implementation plan to the education director and community within 3 months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school's annual report.



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Peter Blackburn  
PRINCIPAL  
LOCK AREA SCHOOL



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Governing Council Chairperson



# 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 88.4%.

# Appendix 2

## School performance overview

The external school review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the department's Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In considering the data below, there needs to be some caution in making a judgement due to the low numbers represented in the student cohorts at the school. The data below represents a summary of aggregated data for Lock Area School over the years 2014 to 2017. This is done for two reasons: to overcome the anomalies that may occur in any one year, and to minimise the possibility of identifying individuals in any small cohort of students.

### Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. Between 2014 and 2017, 76%, or 19 of 25 year 1 students, and 96%, or 23 of 24 year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 88%, or 21 of 24 year 3 students, 85%, or 17 of 20 year 5 students, 74%, or 19 of 24 year 7 students, and 77%, or 24 of 31 year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 25%, or 6 of 24 year 3, 20%, or 4 of 20 year 5, 21%, or 5 of 24 year 7 students, and 21% of Year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading.

Between 2013 and 2017, 1 student was retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN reading from year 3 to 5, 36% of students from year 3 to 7 and 42% of students from year 3 to 9 also remained in the higher bands.

### Numeracy

Between 2014 and 2017, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 75%, or 18 of 24 year 3 students, 85%, or 17 of 20 year 5 students, 92%, or 22 of 24 year 7 students, and 74%, or 23 of 31 year 9 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA.

Between 2014 and 2017, 21%, or 5 of 24 year 3, 20%, or 4 of 20 year 5, 25%, or 6 of 24 year 7 students, and 18%, or 6 of 31 year 9 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy.

Between 2013 and 2017, 3 of 4 students from year 3 to 5, 2 of 2 students from year 3 to 7, and 2 of 3 students from year 7 to 9 were retained in the higher bands in NAPLAN numeracy.