

# Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

## Report for Lock Area School

Conducted in November 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 Maxine McSherry, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Chris Edmonds, Review Principal.

## Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant to the lines of inquiry:

- Presentation from the Principal
- Class visits
- Document analysis
- Discussions with:
  - Governing Council representatives and parents
  - School Services Officers (SSOs)
  - Student representatives
  - Teachers.

## School context

Lock Area School caters for students from reception to year 10. It is situated 631kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2021, as at the February census, is 46. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 54. The local partnership is Central Eyre 1.

The school has a 2020 ICSEA score of 964 and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students, less than 5% students with disabilities, less than 5% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 5% children/young people in care and 43% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The preschool has amalgamated with the school and is integrated in the early years.

The school leadership team consists of a Principal in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of tenure and a Coordinator (0.4FTE)

There are 6 teachers including 0 in the early years of their career and 1 Step 9 Teacher.

### The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- 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.**
- 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.**
- Direction 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.**

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

In response to the previous directions some teachers are providing students with an increased level of feedback to move their learning forward. At this stage, feedback from students to teachers is not evident.

Sharing data is being explored in the secondary area of the school using Microsoft Teams to provide students with electronic access to their grades and summative comments. An annual data assessment schedule has been developed and is reviewed each year. The Principal creates data sets (colour coded) which are collaboratively analysed to identify growth, gaps, and trends. The analysis is used to inform school improvement planning.

All staff administer site agreed tests, mainly in literacy, with all data collated and placed into an assessment folder for each child. The folder progresses with each student throughout their schooling and includes four writing samples assessed using a writing assessment tool.

## Lines of inquiry

### Effective school improvement planning

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

The school has alignment between the targeted focus on writing and staff professional development. The performance development plans for each teacher reflect the area of school improvement with an expectation that one of their personal goals is directly linked.

The school is intentionally using multiple data sets in literacy to inform the new school improvement plan (SIP). Data sharing opportunities are planned and implemented through the professional learning community (PLC). A staff training day is used annually to spend targeted time on literacy data analysis. Teachers share the narratives that sit behind the data and collaboratively identify strengths and challenges. A collegiate sense of trust is building between all staff allowing for the sharing of data in a professional manner. The school is now well positioned to consider what specific aspects of leader and teacher practice are impacting on the data and reflect on how this information can be used to improve their practice.

Support from the local education team curriculum lead and the writing assessment consultant has supported teachers with new literacy learning. Writing assessment results have been analysed and teaching sprints are used to trial the explicit teaching of literacy skills in areas where gaps have been identified. Teachers collaboratively share the results of the sprints at staff meeting and teachers new to the school are supported by the Principal in the development and implementation of this approach. The school is now well positioned to explore how the focus of the sprints can shift from building student competency to strengthening effective teaching pedagogy in high impact strategies.

The small number of students in classes provides a unique opportunity for teachers to look in depth at individual student data and determine what may be the next steps for every child in their learning.

The school is committed to developing a whole-school agreement for both literacy and numeracy. It is encouraged that this happens with some urgency as these documents, when embedded, will further support the development of a common approach to teaching across the school.

Teachers engaging in collaborative practices including mentoring, team teaching, observations, and reflective conversations would further enable academic growth for every child.

**Direction 1**     **Teachers and leaders to analyse data and collaboratively reflect on their practice to determine and consistently implement high impact strategies to improve student outcomes.**

## Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers analysing assessment and feedback data to inform differentiated curriculum planning and instruction?

The pre-school amalgamation with the reception and year 1 class is a strong example of how the school is differentiating to support the learning needs of students in the early years. The school is to be commended on this initiative. The integration is of benefit socially and academically to both the pre-school and school students. The approach provides a seamless transition with early years phonics and NAPLAN data showing strength. The school intends to explore the correlation between teacher pedagogy in the early years and students' academic growth.

Analysing data has been a focus with teachers further developing their competency within this area. One teacher is sharing progressive achievement test (PAT) data with students enabling them to see their strengths and gaps as a cohort. Middle years students have been introduced to Microsoft Teams using this platform to access their grades and summative feedback of their work. Feedback on sight words in the early years and writing checklists are also used to help children self-assess.

Using data to inform curriculum planning and provide differentiated instruction for every child is within its infancy. Teachers reported they provide children with the same task but have different expectations of work completed and they discuss with students what they need to do to improve. Teachers are well placed to build on students interests and skills by adjusting their content, tasks, processes, and product expectations to ensure personalised instruction is provided to lift the performance of every child.

Intervention programs for children who are not at standard achievement have been trialled with varying degrees of success and this year an evidence based effective early years literacy intervention program has been introduced and resourced with school service officer time. Data will be gathered, and the program reviewed, to determine the effectiveness of the approach. School service officers would value additional training for the program.

Teachers and parents highlighted the complexity of multi-year level classes and the strengths and challenges this provides for curriculum delivery. Teachers reported that further opportunities to undertake professional development and complete moderation with peers teaching the same year level at other schools would further support the development of their pedagogy.

**Direction 2      Provide students with explicit and personalised feedback and differentiate the lesson content, tasks, processes, and product outcomes to move learning forward for every child.**

# Outcomes of the External School Review 2021

Lock Area School sits within a well-established farming district. Parents and staff value the small class numbers and understand the unique strengths and challenges of multi age groups. Parents have a strong presence in the school and value the recent improvements in home, school communication. The community library promotes the school within the local area and is an additional resource valued by staff and students. All parents have been surveyed to gain a deeper understanding of what they would like to see at their local school to support the stabilisation of student numbers. Parents felt their child's social skills were well developed. Teachers and students valued the opportunities to visit and work with other schools in their partnership to strengthen learning connections.

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

- Direction 1** Teachers and leaders to analyse data and collaboratively reflect on their practice to determine and consistently implement high impact strategies to improve student outcomes.
- Direction 2** Provide students with explicit and personalised feedback and differentiate the lesson content, tasks, processes, and product outcomes to move learning forward for every child.

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



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Lock Area School



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).

Due to the low numbers of students in year level cohorts this data has not been included to ensure individual students are not identified. The annual report, on the school website, provides additional information in relation to school performance data at Lock Area School.