

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Mawson Lakes School

Conducted in August 2020



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 Julie Bishop, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Kylie Eggers and Rob Smyth, Review Principal.

Review Process

The following processes were used to gather evidence relevant 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
 - Student groups
 - Teachers
 - SSOs

School context

Mawson Lakes School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 15kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 765. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 780. The local partnership is Hollywood Lakes and Gardens.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1060, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 5% students with disabilities, 33% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 18.5% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 6th year of tenure, a deputy principal in the 1st year of tenure, 2 senior leaders with a focus on teaching for effective learning, 2 coordinators, 1 with a wellbeing focus and the other with a stem/innovative pedagogies focus.

There are 42 teachers including 6 in the early years of their career and 15 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** Increase the percentage of students reaching and sustaining higher levels of achievement through the effective use of differentiation, multiple entry tasks and feedback on how to improve.
- Direction 2** Increase student's ownership for their learning by developing greater opportunities for peer learning and student influence in their assessment and learning processes.
- Direction 3** Strengthen professional accountability in curriculum planning, pedagogical development and use of achievement data in all learning areas.

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

The principal reported the following progress in the previous directions:

Direction 1 Staff are using data to better differentiate learning, including designing open-ended tasks and greater clarity in the design of learning intentions and success criteria. They have extensively worked in professional learning communities (PLCs) to identify and develop strategies to 'fill the gaps' in students' entitlement to the curriculum. There was a general increase in student achieving both at SEA and in the higher bands.

Direction 2 Staff are generally providing more opportunities for students to be partners in their learning, including the development of assessment rubrics to share how learning will be assessed. Staff have unpacked the Australian Curriculum learning progressions with students developing 'I can' statements. It was noted that this work was yet to be embedded.

Direction 3 PLCs now operate via year-level teams with a more formal structure and meet 3 times per term. They are led by teachers (PLC facilitators). The core work for the PLCs is aligned to the site improvement plan (SIP), concise and published agendas and meeting minutes are distributed. Literacy and numeracy consultants have been engaged to support the improvement work. The leadership team attend

all PLC meetings and provide ongoing support to the PLC facilitators. Leadership are frequently in class via walkthroughs, intentional time in classrooms and physically taking small groups to model and support effective practice.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How well does the school review and evaluate the effectiveness of improvement planning processes and the impact on student learning to inform next steps?

The leadership team worked diligently to develop and sustain a culture of improvement that is strengthened through clarity and transparency in practices and processes that support staff when undertaking new learning.

Teachers reported that monitoring the progress of the SIP was led by the leadership team who provide directions and timelines. All personal development plans (PDP) are aligned to the SIP, thus strengthening collective ownership by all staff.

Leadership reported that initially 3 goals were identified, 2 are focused on reading and 1 on numeracy. The school noted that extensive on-site coaching by independent consultants in numeracy was undertaken from 2016 through to 2019, as such, reading is now the identified SIP area for improvement. The school subsequently identified 2 goals, those being: the implementation of a consistent approach to synthetic phonics at reception to year 3 and guided reading at years 4 to 7.

The school has strongly committed to the provision of comprehensive professional learning directly aligned to the SIP goals. Teachers reported this has resulted in the development of common understandings across the site. Whole-school professional learning focused on SIP priorities has been comprehensively undertaken and strongly supported by personnel with expertise in literacy.

Teachers reflected that implementation of the SIP strategies resulted in the following: consistency in processes used when undertaking Running Records assessments, clarity and common understandings of the elements of effective guided reading, individual student goal-setting, peer observations and students who are now confidently articulating strategies they use in their learning.

Staff acknowledged that they would all benefit from undertaking professional learning in both guided reading and phonics. Many staff strongly identified that the next step in relation to the SIP priorities was to embed the teaching of phonics and guided reading across the entire site.

The school is now well-positioned to develop and embed planned opportunities for all staff to collectively review and evaluate the progress of the SIP at regular points throughout the year. Work in this area can be further strengthened through student participation as integral components of key actions within the SIP.

Direction 1 Strengthen and embed planned opportunities for staff and students to collectively review and adapt SIP targets and success criteria at identified, planned points throughout year.

Effective teaching and student learning

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

In a survey conducted during the ESR relating to a recent unit of work, 83% of staff identified that clarity of learning intentions was achieved at a moderate degree, with no students understanding the learning intention to a high degree. When reflecting on success criteria, 20% of staff identified it was achieved at a high degree, but only 6% of staff identified that students had understood success criteria to the same degree. Learning intentions explicitly describe what students should know, understand and be able to do as a result of the teaching and learning. Success criteria focus on what students need to do, they provide a scaffold during the task and are used as the basis for feedback.

Evidence of students co-designing learning intentions and success criteria aligned to the Australian Curriculum and/or the literacy and numeracy progressions were provided. Early years teachers identified that development of visual learning intentions and success criteria would strengthen student understandings. The school is well-placed to further this work.

A strong commitment to goal-setting was apparent, with some students setting their own SMARTAR goals in spelling. Staff identified that opportunities for students to be stretched and help them think deeper about the topic was an area for ongoing development. Parents often asked why their child was not receiving an 'A' grade.

Teacher perspectives of what constituted an 'A' grade varied across the site. The school is well-placed to develop and share consistent understandings in what constitutes an 'A' and a 'B' grade across year levels and areas of learning. Observations and interviews with students demonstrated that they were confident to undertake challenges in their learning. Collaborative work in effective task design will strengthen the implementation of planned opportunities for all students to consistently display learning at higher levels.

Direction 2 Strengthen and embed collaborative work in effective task design to establish regular, planned opportunities for all students to consistently display learning at higher levels.

Effective teaching and student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

The leadership team is committed to high levels of continuous improvement across the site, including the leadership team providing in-class demonstrations and observations. Teachers acknowledged that structures to promote high expectations and quality teaching were embedded across the site.

Modelling, recording and sharing of quality teaching practices by leadership were significant in building teacher capacity when undertaking new learning. Further to this, the intentional allocation of pupil free days to the SIP priorities strongly supported the development and sustaining of common understandings across the site. Teacher knowledge in guided reading and phonics has increased, and is now confidently implemented in classrooms.

Reflections and observations from staff identified that students are now more accountable for their learning. Students demonstrate confidence as learners, articulating what they know and informing teachers when they are stuck in their learning. When interviewed, students shown a strong indication of a language for learning when describing themselves as learners.

Considerable evidence from staff in relation to a shared commitment and responsibility for the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning, including the work undertaken in PLCs was provided. Teachers reported that having their PLCs scheduled on a regular basis has significantly validated the importance of collective collaboration. Some staff reflected that they need to show and share the data with students on a regular basis.

When discussing how well the school fosters innovation for change and improvement, staff said: “We feel like a team now” and “we see the bigger picture”. Suggestions for improvement included the need to structure PLCs with defined individual year level goals and to develop a continuous cycle of professional learning from a whole-school perspective.

Staff identified that the deprivitisation of classroom practice combined with planned opportunities to observe and discuss ways to improve each other’s practice was an area for further development.

Direction 3 Strengthen teacher efficacy via planned opportunities for peers to observe and reflect on ways to improve each other’s practice.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

The school has a deep commitment to ongoing improvement. Work in this area was exemplified via the school's actions to improve their phonics data. The school deemed previous results to be unacceptable, they worked persistently and sought expert advice. The implementation of a consistent and comprehensive approach to phonics instruction has resulted in very significant improvements in the phonics data within a short time frame. Mawson Lakes School is to be commended for the comprehensive improvement agenda that has been implemented across the site.

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

- Direction 1** **Strengthen and embed planned opportunities for staff and students to collectively review and adapt SIP targets and success criteria at identified, planned points throughout year**
- Direction 2** **Strengthen and embed collaborative work in effective task design to establish regular, planned opportunities for all students to consistently display learning at higher levels.**
- Direction 3** **Strengthen teacher efficacy via planned opportunities for peers to observe and reflect on ways to improve each other's practice.**

Based on the school's current performance, Mawson Lakes School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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 2019, 51% of year 1 and 68% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. These results represents a decline for year 1 and year 2, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 2 has been downwards, from 80% to 68%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of year 3 students, 92% of year 5 students and 91% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 5 and 7 this result represents an improvement and for year 3, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 7 has been upwards from 85% to 91%.

For 2019, year 3 NAPLAN reading, the school is achieving within and for years 5 and 7, higher than the results of similar students across government schools.

In 2019, 45% of year 3, 33% of year 5 and 13% of year 7 students achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN reading bands. For year 3, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 70%, or 19 out of 27 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 20%, or 3 out of 15 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 85% of year 3 students, 82% of year 5 students and 89 % of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3, this result represents an improvement and for years 5 and 7, this result represents little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards, from 77% to 85%.

For 2019, year 3 and 5 NAPLAN numeracy, the school is achieving within and for year 7, higher than the results of similar groups of students across government schools.

In 2019, 33% of year 3, 28% of year 5 and 41% 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.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 76%, or 19 out of 25 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5 and 100%, or 5 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

