

Department for Education

External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for Highbury Primary School

Conducted in February 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 Andrew Gilsenan-Reed, 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
 - School Services Officers (SSOs)
 - Student groups
 - Teachers

School context

Highbury Primary School caters for students from reception to year 7. It is situated 15kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 479. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 543. The local partnership is Modbury.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1036, and is classified as Category 6 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 1% Aboriginal students, 14% students with a verified disability, 10% students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, and 18% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school hosts a satellite class from Modbury Special School with 1.2 FTE teachers and 1 SSO.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in the 3rd year of their tenure, and a deputy principal in their 2nd year of tenure. There are 32 teachers.

The previous ESR directions were:

- Direction 1** Ensure that all students are intellectually challenged in their learning by building teacher capacity to design learning and tasks that engage students in higher-order thinking.
- Direction 2** Motivate and support students to strive towards higher levels of achievement by developing consistent approaches to formative assessment using transparent success criteria and providing constructive task-relevant feedback.
- Direction 3** Strengthen the use of the gradual release of responsibility model so that students are supported to negotiate their learning and set and monitor appropriate personal learning goals.

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

Direction One:

The principal reported that the school undertook extensive professional learning in mathematics and numeracy. The site has developed literacy and numeracy agreements and the principal reported to panel that this work has supported consistency within year level teams.

Direction Two:

Leadership reported that supporting students to strive towards higher levels of achievement had been addressed through the establishment of year level Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), staff performance and development processes, the introduction of the Report-It platform to track student progress and ongoing support to strengthen learning design, assessment and moderation (LDAM) processes across the site.

Direction Three:

The school has established individual learning goals for all students. Discussions with the leadership team indicated that learning intentions had progressed but the implementation of success criteria was an area for ongoing development.

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 panel observed clear evidence of deep planning for improvement. This was substantiated through the development and implementation of year level PLTs, a professional development committee, and the leadership team. The meeting structure facilitates a strong culture of review, including the evaluation of identified priorities and the subsequent incorporation of strategic and targeted professional learning that is directly aligned to Site Improvement Plan (SIP) priorities.

Identified staff meetings are allocated for staff to track and monitor the progress of the SIP. The panel noted a wide variance in staff responses relating to the processes used to address numeracy targets. Some staff provided clear evidence of links between the SIP and their professional development plan with reference to numeracy. Other staff reported that they had focused on the numeracy targets but provided minimal evidence of success in meeting the stated targets. Several staff noted that the engagement of students in numeracy had improved through the application of open ended challenges.

At the staff meeting held during the review, staff identified the following as aspects for further development: to develop consistent understandings and actions in tracking and monitoring SIP progress and to ensure the active involvement of all staff in regular, planned SIP review processes at identified points throughout the year.

Students have demonstrated high levels of achievement against the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) in reading, writing and numeracy, however this is not subsequently reflected in higher band achievement at years 5 and 7. The school is well positioned to review the current higher band SIP targets to ensure they reflect current data.

The school is well positioned to develop processes that ensure all staff know, understand and implement SIP priorities across the site. Planned opportunities for all staff to track and monitor SIP processes throughout the year will strengthen the collective efficacy of staff. The SIP process could be further strengthened through the establishment of a representative management team with responsibility to oversee the SIP processes throughout the year.

Direction 1 **To devolve responsibility for monitoring the progress of the SIP to all staff, thus strengthening the collective ownership of, and responsibility for, the implementation and progress of the SIP.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

Staff identified that designing learning to enable students to consistently demonstrate higher levels of learning was an area for further development. Datasets indicate that students consistently display learning at significantly high levels of achievement against the SEA. The school is to be commended for the continuous improvement across areas of learning and year levels as evidenced in NAPLAN and PAT assessments.

Staff reported that access to data via online platforms had strongly supported decision making in relation to pre and post assessments. A diverse range of formative assessments are used to support student learning across the site. The panel noted that all staff appreciated the clarity and expectation provided by leadership in the effective analysis of assessment and feedback data.

Students reported high levels of engagement in learning, however only 16% of students interviewed during the review indicated that they were regularly challenged in their learning. A to E grade allocations are not congruent with student assessment results where very few students are allocated 'A' grades in English and maths. Staff noted that developing clarity in what an 'A' or 'B' level tasks look like across all areas of learning and year levels was significant work for the school to undertake. Staff identified that planned time in PLTs to embed effective moderation processes was an area for consideration.

Staff acknowledged the need to explicitly unpack and collaboratively share the development of effective task design, thus ensuring the provision of ongoing opportunities for students to consistently demonstrate learning at higher levels. Work in this area can be strengthened through the exploration and subsequent implementation of assessment tools in writing and reading with specific reference to students in the middle to upper years. Staff identified that feedback provided by students in relation to task design was currently in the developmental stage. The school is well placed to develop and embed a language for learning in relation to stretch and challenge that is underpinned by collaboration in the design of tasks that acknowledge the diverse needs of all learners.

Direction 2 **To develop and embed a whole-school approach in effective task design that provides opportunities for students to consistently display learning at higher levels across all areas of learning and levels of schooling.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING

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

The school is to be commended for their clear focus on high impact strategies to improve learning for all students. The panel noted extensive evidence of high levels of engagement in learning from students across the site. The newly established flexible learning spaces have provided further opportunities for students to engage in learning in multiple modes.

At interviews held during the review, students from years 3 to 7 indicated the following: only 2% of students found reading challenging, and 4% found science challenging. In the same survey, 28% of students identified writing and 40% of students identifying maths as challenging. The school is well positioned to further investigate student learning dispositions in these areas. The school would also benefit from the exploration of relevant assessment tools to inform next steps resulting in the provision of ongoing opportunities for students to be challenged in their learning.

The panel noted clear evidence that staff understand the value and impact learning intentions and success criteria can have for all students. In a survey conducted during the review, staff identified wide variance between teacher perception and student understandings of learning intentions and success criteria. 68 percent of staff indicated that clarity in learning intentions was achieved to a high extent, however staff reported that only 37% of students had understood the learning intentions to the same degree. Staff recognised the need for a whole-school approach in the rationale, construction and implementation of learning intentions and success criteria, hence ensuring consistency and congruence across the site.

The panel observed high levels of commitment to supporting students in setting goals and targets to track and monitor learning at regular intervals. The panel noted considerable variance, including some exemplary practice in the production, ownership and review of learning goals. Students at Highbury Primary School are well positioned to become partners in collaborative planning and decision making about their learning including the co-construction of their learning. The school is well placed to build and embed their collective efficacy in this area across the site.

Direction 3 Strengthen effective evidence-based pedagogical practices through ongoing, planned opportunities for students to work in partnership with teachers to make decisions about their learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

Highbury Primary School is strongly committed to embedding highly effective teaching and learning across the site. The school leadership is to be commended for the clarity and consistency in a whole site approach to improvement. Three core aspects that frame the work at Highbury Primary School are culture, trust and improvement. This is underpinned by the 4 power model – resources, information, relationships and decision making. The panel noted very strong support from the community for the work the school has undertaken.

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

- Direction 1** To devolve responsibility for monitoring the progress of the SIP to all staff, thus strengthening the collective ownership of, and responsibility for, the implementation and progress of the SIP.
- Direction 2** To develop and embed a whole-school approach in effective task design that provides opportunities for students to consistently display learning at higher levels across all areas of learning and levels of schooling.
- Direction 3** Strengthen effective evidence-based pedagogical practices through ongoing, planned opportunities for students to work in partnership with teachers to make decisions about their learning.

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



Andrew Wells
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIPS, SCHOOLS AND
PRESCHOOLS

Frank Mittiga
PRINCIPAL
HIGHBURY PRIMARY 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).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2019, 83% of year 1 and 75% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents an improvement for year 1 and a decline from the historic baseline average at year 2.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 76% of year 5 students and 83% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents little to no change and for years 5 and 7, a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 5 has been downwards, from 88% to 76%.

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

In 2019, 56% of year 3, 22% of year 5 and 20% 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, 50%, or 8 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 44%, or 8 out of 18 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of year 3 students, 70% of year 5 students and 87% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement, and for year 5 a decline, from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 37% of year 3, 15% of year 5 and 28% 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, 58%, or 7 out of 12 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 63%, or 10 out of 16 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.