EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR ANGLE VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in February 2016
Review details

A priority for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) 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 DECD schools.

The framework underpinning the External School 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 of the External School Review 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.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged. 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 External School Review was conducted by Kathryn Entwistle, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Sue Mittiga, Review Principal.
Policy compliance

The External School Review process includes verification by the Principal that key DECD policies are implemented and adhered to.

The Principal of Angle Vale Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance Policy was checked specifically against documented evidence. The school was found to be compliant with this policy. The school attendance rate for 2015 was 91.6%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Angle Vale Primary School, located 35kms north of Adelaide, has an enrolment of 483 students, which has steadily increased from 2010 to date. The school has an ICSEA score of 965 and is classified as Category 5 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 5% Aboriginal students, 8% Students with Disabilities, 9% students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), and 18% of families eligible for School Card assistance.

Once a school serving the local population, Angle Vale Primary School now enrolls students from a number of districts further from the school, for example, Elizabeth and Munno Para.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in her 9th Year at the school, a Deputy Principal who is in the first year of her tenure, an Assistant Principal, who has a short-term placement until the end of Term 1, and two Coordinators in Numeracy and Literacy.

School Performance Overview

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 32% of Year 1 and 50% of Year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 1 has been downwards, from 49% to 32%.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 73% of Year 3 students, 63% of Year 5 students, and 73% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3 this result represents improvement from the historic baseline average; for Year 5, little or no change; and a decline for Year 7.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 has been downwards, from 71% to 64%.

In 2015 Years 3, 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, achievement is within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 38% of Year 3, 14.5% of Year 5, and 14% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Reading bands. For Year 3 this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Reading, 46%, or 6 of 13 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015; and 37.5%, or 6 of 16 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average. For the last 3 years, the trend from Year 3 to 7, in terms of upper band retention, is downwards.
Numeracy

In 2015, the Numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 67% of Year 3 students, 56% of Year 5 students and 67% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Year 3, this result represents improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, a decline is evident, and for Year 7 little to no change on the historic baseline average has been evident.

For 2015 Years 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school is achieving within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools, whilst Year 5 is just below comparison.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 achievement, compared to results of schools with similar characteristics, has been downwards, from 78% to 67%.

In 2015, 20% of Year 3, 7% of Year 5 and 12% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy bands. For Years 3 and Year 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average, and for Year 5, little or no change.

For those students who achieved in the top two NAPLAN proficiency bands in Numeracy, 50%, or 2 of 4 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015; and 83%, or 5 of 6 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

During the review process, the panel focused on four key areas from the External School Review Framework:

Student Learning: To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

Effective Teaching: To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?

Effective Leadership: How does the school know that its Professional Learning and Performance and Development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?

School Community Partnerships: How well does the school develop partnerships with students and parents to improve student learning?

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning and how do you know?

It was evident through conversations with staff and students, and the walk-through process, that students at Angle Vale Primary School have access to teaching that is designed to elicit intellectual challenge in some classes across the school. These students are provided opportunities to think deeply as they engage with learning that challenges and builds on existing knowledge. The panel heard some teachers speak about having co-constructed learning with students, seeking their input regarding topic, resources and presentation of the learning.

In one conversation, a student described her understanding of how she was progressing as: “You know how you are doing when it makes sense to you”. The implication from this student’s statement is that she measures her progress by deep understanding, owning her learning and making decisions about it. This was not a commonly held perception of learning across the student cohort, as most students determined their success or progress by teacher comment or completion of work, rather than growth in their understanding or development of skills.
In one class, students use Success Criteria to make decisions about and monitor their progress to success. The criteria, which are developed in consultation with the students, increase in sophistication as the students' learning progresses. Some students with whom the panel spoke discussed quality work as being well-punctuated and including complex sentence structures, whilst others referred to quality as being about presentation, neatness and completion, as did some staff.

At a staff meeting, teachers were posed the inquiry question: ‘How effectively are we supporting the learning needs of students meeting or exceeding standards in Numeracy, and how do we know?’ Through the responses, the panel understood that an approach termed ‘sting in the tail’ has been introduced to staff. This approach promotes critical and analytical thinking in Numeracy and has been implemented in many classes across the school. This provides a model for the implementation of pedagogy that promotes the concept of learner achievement, rather than completion.

**Direction 1**

Provide intellectual challenge to students, by teachers engaging in collegial planning to design learning opportunities that enable processes of inquiry and critical thinking.

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**To what extent does the school cater for the varied needs of learners?**

Differentiated, intentional teaching that connects with the needs of each learner, in class, is every student's entitlement. At Angle Vale Primary School, in some classes, students access learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs. PAT-M, PAT-R and Running Records data has been used in many classes to inform not just where a student is in their learning, but why. Many teachers discussed the plans they developed in response to this data; designing group learning that focuses on students’ miscues and teaching strategically to address needs.

Within the TfEL document, Domain Two makes clear the importance of ‘the teacher responding to the students’ changing needs and involving them in deciding the direction of the curriculum’. During a conversation with teaching staff, the panel was informed that, in the past, staff engaged in seeking feedback from students at their discretion. A staff member spoke about having based learning opportunities on student input. The leaders’ presentation made clear that through Partnership processes, staff had sought student input using the TfEL Compass.

Some staff described their approach to differentiated learning as being informed by baseline data and comprising open-ended tasks with multiple entry points, involving problem-solving and structured through grouping. The panel was made aware through conversations with teachers that some staff hold the perception that differentiation is only made possible when SSO support is operating in the classroom.

**Direction 2**

In order to meet the needs of all learners, build teacher capacity to use valid data diagnostically to design teaching and learning that is responsive and differentiated.

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**How does the school know that its Professional Learning and Performance and Development processes are effective in building teacher capacity?**

The development of consistent pedagogy is reliant on effective systems and processes. Regular and ongoing Professional Learning and Performance and Development (PD) processes are key to ensuring staff members' implementation of contemporary, evidence-based practice.

Across the staff, the panel heard varying perceptions of the structures and effectiveness of performance
and Development: at the school. The focus of the PD meetings was reported as including areas of personal interest, student achievement data, intervention processes and use of SSO time. Many staff discussed using the process to raise line managers’ awareness of Professional Learning (Training and Development) they wished to access, and that managers were good at connecting them with relevant opportunities. Some staff spoke of having received written feedback from line managers in the past. The impact that PD processes have on improving practice was not reported as significant by teaching staff. Teachers who had been at the school for a longer period of time informed the panel that they had benefitted from in-class ‘support’ through a peer or line manager in the past.

Performance and Development processes that build teacher capacity are characterised by an on-going, evolutionary approach, rather than a designated time to meet. They can involve peer observations, co-teaching and modelling, and can be implemented by teacher leaders, as well as members of the Leadership Team. The teacher’s role in actively engaging in PD and monitoring their progress cannot be understated.

There is evidence of contemporary and strategic teaching practice at Angle Vale Primary School. The opportunity exists to structure professional learning and PD processes that enable some teachers to take the lead in initiating and embedding evidence-based practice across the school.

The panel heard from the Leaders’ presentation that there is intent to introduce a number of high-yield approaches in 2016, including transforming tasks, differentiation, growth mindsets, Tfel Framework and a consistent approach to writing. It is apparent that the leaders at Angle Vale Primary School have a clear understanding of which teaching practices and principles positively influence student learning outcomes. The next step is to work with staff to review valid data and determine which one area of focus will have the greatest leverage for the school.

**Direction 3**

Embed consistent, contemporary pedagogy through the implementation and documentation of Performance and Development and Professional Learning processes that align with the school’s pedagogical agreements.

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**How well does the school develop partnerships with students and parents to improve student learning?**

Parents, teachers, SSOs and Leaders all reported that it was a challenge to elicit parent input and that this was due to a number of matters. Governing Council representatives spoke with the panel about the most effective forms of communication, citing the Skoolbag app as having provided a valuable tool for communication. They expressed a desire for this to be utilised across all classrooms. At the start of the year, the families are surveyed to determine which mode of communication best suits them in order to access whole-school newsletters. This initiative can be considered further, to provide a line of communication when seeking parent input regarding learning or school improvement. The leaders at Angle Vale Primary School are aware of the priority to engage parents as partners in children’s learning and the Review Panel encourages them to persist optimistically and creatively.

The student voice forum, Children’s Governing Council, is convened with representatives from across the school. Staff and students report that the initiatives managed by this group are, mainly, organisational aspects of the school, such as yard clean-up or special event days. Some teachers reported convening class meetings where students discussed these forums with understanding of the representative process. Leaders at Angle Vale Primary School were committed to inquiry into the efficacy of student voice regarding learning and the Review Panel concurs with this intent. Research has found that “engaging with young people is more than a one-off event.... it involves sustained activity over time.”

Structures exist to have students’ voices heard at Angle Vale Primary School. The opportunity to deepen the scope of the forums and enable authentic influence over aspects of schooling that matter to students was evident. In conversations with the panel, students reported that they would have ideas and opinions
about learning that would provide strong feedback to teachers. Further opportunities for students to influence and co-construct learning and assessment processes within classrooms will strengthen learner ownership and engagement at Angle Vale Primary School.

Direction 4
To better enable students to have influence over decisions that affect them and their learning, conduct a collective review of the structures, processes and strategies that exist across the school and within classrooms, to identify and embed effective practice that progresses authentic student voice.
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

At Angle Vale Primary School, student achievement data is used to inform decisions and actions at the individual student, class and whole-school levels. Teachers are provided with and use structured time for ongoing collaborative professional learning.

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

1. Provide intellectual challenge to students, by teachers engaging in collegial planning to design learning opportunities that enable processes of inquiry and critical thinking.

2. In order to meet the needs of all learners, build teacher capacity to use valid data diagnostically to design teaching and learning that is responsive and differentiated.

3. Embed consistent, contemporary pedagogy through the implementation and documentation of Performance and Development and Professional Learning processes that align with the school’s pedagogical agreements.

4. To better enable students to have influence over decisions that affect them and their learning, conduct a collective review of the structures, processes and strategies that exist across the school and within classrooms, to identify and embed effective practice that progresses authentic student voice.

Based on the school’s current performance, Angle Vale Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.

Tony Lunniss  
DIRECTOR  
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Jayne Johnston  
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

The school will provide an implementation plan to the Education Director and community within three months of receipt of this report. Progress towards implementing the plan will be reported in the school’s Annual Report.

Robyn O’Dea  
PRINCIPAL  
ANGLE VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson  
Lauren Munro