

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR HAWKER AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in November 2015



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education
and Child Development

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 overarching review question is "How well does this school improve student achievement, growth, challenge, engagement and equity?"

This External School Review has evaluated:

- *the school's self-review processes and findings,*
- *the school's achievement data and progress over time,*
- *the outcomes of the meetings and interviews with representatives from the school, and*
- *parent and student views about the school.*

The External School Review included an analysis of the school's key policies and procedures.

The support and cooperation provided by the staff and school community is acknowledged.

This External School Review was conducted by Tony Sullivan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Lia Tedesco, 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 Hawker Area School verified that the school is working towards being compliant in all applicable DECD policies. The Principal advised action is being taken to comply with the following DECD policies:

- Governance Item 1: that there is greater collaborative involvement of the Governing Council in developing the Site Improvement Plan.
- Governance Item 3: that there is greater collaborative involvement of Governing Council in improvement planning, policy development, monitoring, self-review and reporting.
- Governance Item 4: that the Governing Council and the Principal work collaboratively to report to the school community, on a regular basis, on student achievement, school finances and the Council's plans and operations.
- Governance Item 5: that the Governing Council and the Principal work collaboratively to report to the school community about school priorities through the school's Annual Report.
- Teaching and Learning Item 9: that the school establishes provision for student voice.
- HR Management Item 3: that the school implements the DECD Performance and Development Policy and ensures all staff have performance plans.

Implementation of the *DECD Student Attendance Policy* was checked specifically against a documented set of criteria. The school has implemented comprehensive tracking and intervention processes, and was found to be compliant with this policy. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 83.6%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Hawker Area School (HAS) is a small rural township located approximately 400km north of Adelaide. It has an enrolment of approximately 35 students, catering for students from Reception to Year 12.

The school has an ICSEA score of 916 and is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school population includes three Students with a Disability, nine Aboriginal students and one student under the Guardianship of the Minister.

The school is a part of the Pichi Richi Trade Training Centre Consortium and offers Certificate II in Construction at the Pichi Richi Railways, and Certificate I in Hospitality to students within the Trade Training Centre.

The school has the Hawker Childhood Service Centre located adjacent to the school. The school also has a Technical Studies Centre and Home Economics Centre linked to the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. Indonesian and Adnyamathanha languages are offered to students from Reception to Year 9.

An Active Play Program operates for children from birth to eight years of age. A Community Library also operates from the main administrative building.

The school operates under the guidance of a Principal in her third tenure at the school.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning: **How well are students achieving over time?**

Effective Leadership: **How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development practices are effective in building teacher capacity?**

How well are students achieving over time?

In the early years, reading achievement is monitored against Running Records. An analysis of reading achievement (based on Running Records) revealed that 11 of 15 Year 1 students achieved the expected DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) over the four-year period from 2011 to 2014. At Year 2, 10 out of 12 students achieved the SEA over this same period of time.

The reading achievement over the period of 2008 to 2014 (as measured by NAPLAN), shows 12 of 15 Year 3 students, 19 of 23 Year 5 students, 15 of 22 Year 7 students and 8 of 17 Year 9 students at, or above, the SEA. These numbers reveal that as students progressed beyond Year 5, the percentages of students at, or above SEA, declined to Year 9.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher reading bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the period of 2008 to 2014, on average, there were 3 out of 15 Year 3 students, 2 out of 23 Year 5 students, 2 out of 23 Year 7 students and 0 out of 17 Year 9 students, in the top two bands.

When students achieve in the top two bands it is important that they retain this level of achievement as they progress through school. Of the three students who tested in the higher reading bands at Year 3 from 2008 to 2014, only one student remained in these higher bands at Year 7.

The numeracy achievement over the period of 2008 to 2014 (as measured by NAPLAN), shows 13 of 15 Year 3 students, 14 of 23 Year 5 students, 10 of 23 Year 7 students and 3 of 14 Year 9 students at, or above, the SEA. These numbers reveal that, as students progressed from Year 3 onwards, the percentages of students at, or above SEA, declined to Year 9.

In relation to the percentage of students who achieved in the higher numeracy bands (as measured by NAPLAN) over the period of 2008 to 2014, on average, there were 4 of 15 Year 3 students, 0 of 23 Year 5 students, 2 of 23 Year 7 students and 0 of 17 Year 9 students, in the top two bands.

When students achieve in the top two bands it is important that they retain this level of achievement as they progress through school. Of the three students who tested in the higher numeracy bands at Year 3 from 2008 to 2014, no students remained in these higher bands at Year 7.

The school is commended for offering SACE subjects in the areas of health and physical education, English, HASS, art, PLP and Work Studies and design and technology. From 2011 to 2014, the ratio of 'C- grades', or above, in SACE (Years 11/12) was 100%. There has also been a 100% SACE completion rate of potential completers over the last three years; and a 100% of 'C- grades', or above, assigned to all attempted SACE subjects at the school over the years 2011 to 2014.

From 2013, the school has undertaken PAT-R (reading) and PAT-M (maths) assessments for students from Years 1 to 10. In 2015, staff participated in training to analyse and interpret the data and considered this information to inform planning and programming, and to monitor student achievement against the standards.

There was evidence that the school used Running Record levels (to level 30) and NAPLAN data to track and monitor individual student progress in reading. A data wall was evident in the staffroom with each child's achievement level recorded using the summative assessments above.

Documented student reports were verified during the review. The reports were reflective of achievement standards described in the Australian Curriculum (AC). The students received A–E scores (or word equivalent) for each curriculum area. The Governing Council verified the reports as an accurate indicator of student achievement. These standards should be included as reliable and valid when referencing evidence of student achievement.

The Governing Council expressed the importance of knowing how the students of Hawker Area School performed in comparison to schools in other jurisdictions. Parents indicated that NAPLAN reports provide some of this comparative data to make a judgement. The Principal also provided 'mean score' comparisons through the Annual Report to indicate the performance of the school in relation to the national average. One of the parents on the Governing Council commented: "I think the standard has gone up a bit in 2015."

The Principal and secondary teachers had been collaborating with colleagues in the Far North Partnership to design learning tasks in Maths, Science, English and HASS, to enable students to demonstrate their learning at each year-level standard. The staff indicated that planning and moderating the work was critical for gauging the comparative standard of HASS students against students beyond the school. The staff also commented that this moderation with peers led to better task design to enable students to better demonstrate their learning.

Direction 1

Improve student achievement and growth through the strategic use of data and DECD standards to enable teachers to personalise learning for every student at the school.

The Principal's presentation highlighted the challenges of leading a small-sized country area school. As well as taking on a teaching load, the Principal has attempted to implement many initiatives linked to DECD and Partnership priorities. The Principal commented that other teachers had been required to "step up to take on other projects" as required.

There has been a broad range of learning initiatives introduced by the Principal during her appointment. These include: spelling, formative assessment, personal learning folders, goal-setting, Results Plus (literacy and numeracy), Powerful Learners (growth mindsets), Anne Baker maths, data collection and analysis, individual learning plans, moderation in assessment and inquiry-based learning.

The Principal commented on the need to engage the Governing Council more in governance-related issues linked to the educational program, strategic directions, improvement and accountability processes.

As a result of the above data and the Principal's presentation the Review Panel explored the following Line of Inquiry.

How does the school know that its professional learning and performance and development practices are effective in building teacher capacity?

Evidence presented through staff, parent and student comment indicated that many learning initiatives introduced into the school had not yet achieved a level of sustainability across the school.

Staff readily engaged in professional learning linked to improvement initiatives but implementation is disrupted before changes are embedded. The concept of change as 'project management' has inhibited the achievement of sustained practices to validate evidence-based improvement.

Inquiry-based learning had recently been introduced across the school. This approach to engaging students more deeply in their learning is to be commended. Continued professional learning, sharing, refinement and

documented agreements about the implementation of inquiry-based learning will need to be undertaken to ensure that this approach is embedded into teacher practice.

Direction 2

Challenge and engage students in their learning by embedding effective evidence-based teaching practices and approaches that are sustained over time.

The Review Panel noted documentation from a previous Supporting Schools Initiative (SSI) review undertaken in 2012. This review recommended the implementation of a staff Performance and Development policy that "refines and improves professional practice." Evidence presented from the Principal and staff indicated this had not been fully implemented.

Staff commented that feedback about their professional practice was undertaken in a relatively informal manner. There was little evidence of formal written feedback to staff based on observations and teacher performance standards aligned to effective teaching practices. The staff members were professional in their endeavour and supportive of the requirement to receive and reflect on personalised performance feedback.

The implementation of agreed and evidence-based teaching practices and approaches across the school must be supported by an effective performance and development process with staff. Consistency and alignment of agreed teaching strategies will best serve the students and provide continuity in their learning.

Direction 3

Raise student achievement through the implementation of effective performance and development processes for all staff that incorporate performance planning, classroom observations and documented feedback aligned to teacher professional standards, the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework and agreed school priorities.

OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Hawker Area School is performing effectively in improving student achievement, challenge, engagement and equity. The school continues to develop a culture of high expectation for students. There is evidence of structures and processes to support school improvement. The school has sufficient data to monitor, track and personalise learning for every student at the school to maximise their learning achievement and growth.

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

1. Improve student achievement and growth through the strategic use of data and DECD standards to enable teachers to personalise learning for every student at the school.
2. Challenge and engage students in their learning by embedding effective evidence-based teaching practices and approaches that are sustained over time.
3. Raise student achievement through the implementation of effective performance and development processes for all staff that incorporate performance planning, classroom observations and documented feedback aligned to teacher professional standards, the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework and agreed school priorities.

Based on the school's current performance, Hawker Area School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SCHOOL AND PRESCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

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.



Beth Walsh
PRINCIPAL
HAWKER AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson