EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR RISDON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in April 2015
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 Julie Hardy, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability and Lee Samson, 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 Risdon Park Primary School has verified that the school is compliant in all applicable DECD policies.

Implementation of the DECD Student Attendance policy was specifically checked against a documented set of criteria. The school was found to be compliant with this policy.

Attendance is monitored closely and consecutive days of absence are routinely followed up using a range of documented strategies. There is a strong focus on ensuring all students attend school and measures are in place to improve the attendance rate. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 89.4% which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context
Risdon Park Primary School is a Reception to Year 7 school of approximately 420 students, situated in Port Pirie in the mid north of South Australia. The school has an ICSEA score of 949, and is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes 8% Aboriginal students, 8% students who have an identified learning disability and 38% are supported by School Card.

The leadership team consists of the Principal in her second tenure, the Deputy Principal, School Counsellor, Coordinator for Powerful Learning, Coordinator for Numeracy Improvement and an Intervention Support Teacher.
### Lines of inquiry

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines of Inquiry</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning</td>
<td>How well are students achieving over time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement Agenda</td>
<td>How effective are the school's self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Teaching</td>
<td>How effectively do teachers support students in their learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How well are students achieving over time?

The pre-review discussion of student achievement data found that results in reading are consistent with similar schools; however, results for numeracy are lower. The percentage of students achieving the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) at Years 3, 5 and 7 in reading is highest at Year 3 and Year 7. For example, in 2014 the percentage of students achieving the expected standard in reading in Years 3, 5 and 7 was 70%, 56%, and 73% respectively and this has been a pattern over time. In numeracy there is a similar pattern, although the percentage of students achieving the standard is lower at all year levels. For example, in 2014 the percentage of students achieving the SEA was 66%, 48% and 58%.

In 2014, there was an increase in the percentage of students achieving the SEA compared with the historical average at Year 3, in both reading and numeracy, and at Year 7 in reading.

In 2015, the school is implementing a closer focus on improving teaching and learning in numeracy as well as literacy and the school improvement priorities are: literacy, numeracy, powerful learning, engagement and wellbeing.

Higher order skills are assessed in the higher proficiency bands of NAPLAN. At the school, the percentage of students achieving in the upper proficiency bands is highest at Year 3 in both reading and numeracy. For example, in 2014 the percentage of students in the higher proficiency bands in reading at Years 3, 5 and 7 was 25%, 8% and 12% respectively. This pattern has been evident in numeracy where the percentage in the higher bands was 20%, 4% and 5% respectively.

Accelerating the achievement of students as they move through the school, is the most significant challenge facing the school and the Review Panel focused on the processes for planning and implementing consistent and effective approaches across the school.

#### How effective are the school's self review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

Continuous improvement processes are evident at the school. The school has a documented improvement cycle that is well established and collaborative. The panel heard how staff members are involved in sequential processes throughout the year and that self review informs improvement planning. Performance development processes are documented and aligned to the school improvement priorities and outcomes of review processes, and progress towards priorities and next steps are described to the community through the Annual Report.

The Governing Council is involved in decision making regarding school improvement and facilities, and is aware of the school improvement priorities and achievement outcomes. Parents talked about the welcoming and inclusive culture of the school. They reported that they felt comfortable raising any issues with leadership or teachers and felt that resolution was quick and effective. These views were consistent with parent perception data collected annually.

The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2015 - 2017 includes both implementation strategies and improvement strategies, focused on learning outcomes for students. The SIP is supported by 200 day plans in relation to powerful learning, literacy, numeracy, engagement and wellbeing that outline general targets for student
learning, strategies and evidence sources. The Review Panel heard that there was a lack of clarity about the expected classroom actions to support the achievement of the SIP targets.

The SIP is implemented through the work of Site Improvement Plan committees comprising of leaders and teacher representatives from each of the teaching units, who meet twice a term to make decisions about the implementation of improvement priorities, evaluate progress towards targets, develop whole school agreements, oversee relevant budget lines, promote up and coming professional learning and monitor data collection. Teachers and curriculum leaders reported a range of actions being undertaken to achieve the outcomes in site planning documents. The Review Panel noted a level of inconsistency between the planned actions and the approaches teachers reported being undertaken in classrooms.

The SIP is finalised during staff meetings and is completed by the end of first term each year, reducing the amount of implementation time during the school year. The Review Panel noted that this time-frame and a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of curriculum leaders, impacted on the implementation of planned actions and student achievement.

**Direction 1**

*Increase the impact of improvement planning on student outcomes by streamlining processes to ensure planning is completed promptly, with a focus on implementation at classroom level. Implement improvement strategies that have clear effect on outcomes for students that can be measured regularly to ensure progress is being made.*

The use of data to monitor student achievement and engagement is a valued process at the school and is central to the school’s improvement efforts. A range of data is collected and collated to evaluate student learning. In addition to NAPLAN, the following data is collected at school level: Australian Curriculum A-E grades, ACER Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading and Maths, the SA Spelling Test, the Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test and Running Records. Student engagement is measured through the ICAN Engagement Matrix and this informs the wellbeing and engagement priority.

In relation to using evidence of student achievement to inform planning, the Review Panel heard that considerable time is spent to collect, store, collate and present data for analysis. However, that data is not easily accessible for routine use at classroom level. In addition, teachers described a varied range of methods for taking Running Records that impact on the consistency of whole school data. Data used to monitor the growth in children’s reading skills must be collected in a consistent and valid manner and the Review Panel noted that the school would benefit from consistent professional learning in relation to Running Records.

**Direction 2**

*Ensure consistent levels of growth in literacy and numeracy achievement, particularly through the middle primary years, by restructuring the data collection and analysis processes to make data available for teachers to use at classroom level, in regular collaborative discussions, about the impact of teaching approaches on student progress.*

**How effectively do teachers support students in their learning?**

The Australian Curriculum guides curriculum across the school and is reported upon to parents. Teachers talked about using the Australian Curriculum as a starting point for their planning and the Review Panel saw evidence of this in program documents. The Review Panel heard that the Teaching for Effective Learning Framework (TfEL) is used to guide pedagogy and classroom observations. The Review Panel heard how in 2015, the TfEL Compass has been introduced to collect student feedback as the school focuses on Domain 3 of TfEL, Develop Expert Learners.

Common agreements about teaching and learning have been collaboratively developed in literacy and engagement for learning. The Review Panel heard that agreements are implemented to varying degrees across classrooms. Explicit expectations for student achievement are clearly indicated within the literacy agreement but this is not yet the case for mathematics. Teachers reported that they undertake some moderation of student work samples to increase the consistency of teacher judgement in relation to
achievement against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards and that more regular structured
time to do this would be helpful.

The Review Panel heard that common approaches were interpreted differently by different teachers. An
eexample of this is the practice around goal-setting with students. Students spoke about goal-setting as a
consistent practice that they had experienced in different classes. They reported that learning goals could
include, reading levels, behaviour goals, specific skill development or broad directions in learning. Students
described how goals could be whole class, group or individual goals and progress could be checked daily,
weekly, termly or over the whole year.

Teachers talked to the panel about the professional learning they had attended and reported that it had
influenced their classroom practice to varying degrees. In relation to mathematics improvement, staff have
undertaken a range of professional learning opportunities and the panel heard that teachers use a range of
approaches in teaching mathematics. Curriculum leaders identified points of difference between the
approaches advocated through professional learning undertaken by different teachers within the school
and that this had the potential to increase the variability of approach between classes.

Teachers identified opportunities to work together as important. They talked about DECD Local Partnership,
Partnership Learning Communities (PLC) as being very valuable, as they are focussed on pedagogy,
reflection and action research. Other opportunities such as moderation of writing tasks during staff
meetings, release time following pupil free days to follow up on professional learning, as well as informal
and voluntary meetings outside of school hours, were also cited as ways that teachers worked together to
build consistent practice. Structured times for unit teams to plan together regularly, were not evident.

**Direction 3**

*Increase the number of students demonstrating the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement, especially at Year 5, by increasing the consistency of practice across the school by providing structured opportunities for teaching teams to plan to meet the needs of all learners in each cohort and assess the progress of students.*
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

Risdon Park Primary School is an improving school. Good performance was evident through collaborative review and improvement processes and a clear focus on improving learning for all students.

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

1. Increase the impact of improvement planning on student outcomes by streamlining processes to ensure planning is completed promptly, with a focus on implementation at classroom level. Implement improvement strategies that have clear effect on outcomes for students that can be measured regularly to ensure progress is being made.

2. Ensure consistent levels of growth in literacy and numeracy achievement, particularly through the middle primary years, by restructuring the data collection and analysis processes to make data available for teachers to use at classroom level in regular collaborative discussions about the impact of teaching approaches on student progress.

3. Increase the number of students demonstrating the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement, especially at Year 5, by increasing the consistency of practice across the school by providing structured opportunities for teaching teams to plan to meet the needs of all learners in each cohort and assess the progress of students.

Based on the school’s current performance, Risdon Park Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2019.

Tony Lunniss
A/DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Anne Millard
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL 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.

Carolyn Clinton
PRINCIPAL
RISDON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governing Council Chairperson