

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE FOR EDUCATION

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR MOONTA AREA SCHOOL

Conducted in July 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 Ann O'Callaghan, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability, and Amanda O'Shea and Vanessa Mortimer, Review Principals.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Moonta Area School has 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:

Aspect of Governance

- a. Item 7: A site-based Parent Complaint Policy is currently being documented and a monitoring process is being developed to supplement the existing website process.

Aspects of Teaching and Learning

- a. Item 4: The Early Years Learning Framework is currently used in transition activities with local preschool staff. Opportunities for greater collaboration to reference the work of Reception teachers at the school are being discussed.
- b. Item 5: By the end of 2015 staff members are committed to completing the on-line training update. The Keeping Children Safe Child Protection Curriculum training register is monitored by the School Counsellor.

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. There is, however, a downward trend in the school's attendance rate from 90.4% in 2012. In 2014, the school reported attendance of 87.1%, which is below the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Moonta Area School is located at the top of the Yorke Peninsula on the Copper Coast, 160 kilometres north of Adelaide. The school provides education for students who live mostly in the Moonta township and the surrounding towns of Moonta Bay and Port Hughes.

The school has an ICSEA score of 931 with 82% of families represented in the lower two quartiles. Moonta Area School is classified as Category 2 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. Thirty-eight per cent of students from Reception to Year 12 are eligible for School Card assistance.

There are currently 509 students in the school. This is a decline from the peak enrolment of 582 students in 2013. The school's current population includes 12% (56) Aboriginal students. 11% of students are verified with a learning disability, including twelve students from Year 3 to 7 who are placed in the school's Northern Yorke Peninsula Special Small Class. There are forty-seven students enrolled in Flexible Learning Options, eight of whom are in Year 12. Over the last three years there has been an average transient enrolment rate of 35% students arriving and departing from the school during the school year.

The school leadership team consists of an experienced Principal in the third year of her first tenure at the school, and an Executive Leadership team of an acting Deputy Principal Primary (Reception to Year 6) for 2015, and a Senior Leader (Year 7 to 12) in her first tenure. There are four Co-ordinators: Teaching and Learning at each level of schooling, Reception to Year 12; two School Counsellors; a Co-ordinator: Additional Needs; and a Business Manager as an SSO4. There is 39.4 FTE teaching staff at the school, 17 of whom are assessed at Step 9 classification. Currently, there are 515 SSO hours per week deployed across aspects of school services and student support.

Lines of inquiry

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

Student Learning:	How well are students achieving over time?
Effective Teaching:	How effectively are students supported in their learning?
Improvement Agenda:	How effective are the school's self-review processes in informing and shaping improvement?

How well are students achieving over time?

An analysis of Moonta Area School student achievement data formed the starting point to evaluate how well all students are achieving over time against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

In the early years (Reception to Year 2), reading achievement is monitored against Running Records. In 2014, 55% of Year 1 students and 31% of Year 2 students achieved the Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) or above. Between 2012 and 2014 is a downward trend in results for Year 2 – from 60% in 2012 to 31% in 2014. There is no trend at Year 1.

The 2014 Reading results at Years 3 to 9, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 54% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students, 56% of Year 7 students and 65% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA. These results at Years 3, 5 and 7 are also lower than the 2008 to 2013 historic averages of 62%, 65%, and 67% respectively. Achievement at Year 9 indicates an improvement on the historic average from 2008 to 2013 of 61.3%. The Year 9 results in 2014 are also 22% higher than similar schools.

The Numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 62% of Year 3 students, 54% of Year 5 students, 53% of Year 7 students and 53% of Year 9 students achieved the SEA. These 2014 Year 3 and 5 results are approximately 8% higher than similar schools. The Year 7 and 9 results are lower than similar schools. The 2014 Year 3 results show an upward improvement trend from 43% in 2012. The results at Years 5, 7 and 9 are lower than the historic average of 70%, 68% and 60% respectively.

In relation to the proportion of students who achieved in the top two proficiency bands in Reading in 2014, there were 23% (9 of 39) students in Year 3, 5% in Year 5, 0% in Year 7 and 8% in Year 9. This compares to the historic averages of 21%, 13%, 13% and 8.5% for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 respectively, between 2008 and 2013. The trend between 2012 and 2014 was upward only at Year 3, from 14% in 2012. In 2008, there were ten Year 3 students demonstrating achievement in the top two proficiency bands. It is of concern that in 2014, one student retained these results at Year 9.

In relation to the proportion of students who achieved in the top two proficiency bands in Numeracy in 2014, there were 8% (3 of 39) in Year 3, 0% in Year 5, 5% in Year 7 and 7.5% in Year 9. This data shows declining results compared to the averages of 10%, 8%, 11% and 12% for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 respectively, between 2008 and 2013. In 2008, two Year 3 students demonstrated achievement in the top two proficiency bands. In 2014, one student had retained these results at Year 9.

In summary, there is a pattern of student achievement over time showing low results against the SEA. While each year there are a few aspects of improvement, the annual results and historical averages provide evidence of minimum improvement. This pattern is not new, which may well reflect that there are a number of deep-seated issues to be addressed. The Review Panel heard from staff that they feel a sense of urgency for a 'turnaround' to be achieved. The student achievement results, along with demographic changes in the community, demand that the school continues what has been started in 2014 and 2015. The school vision to 'deliver flexible learning to reflect individual needs in a changing world' can drive the development of self-regulated, socially and emotionally competent students, who feel a sense of belonging at the school and strong connections as powerful learners.

Direction 1

Improve student engagement and raise achievement by strengthening the resolve and professional practice of staff to support all students to be successful learners, and work closely with families from Reception to Year 12 to ensure shared responsibility exists for this outcome to be fully realised.

Knowing how well each student is achieving at any point in time and over a period of time is an essential first step for this direction to be achieved. The professional practice of tracking individual student progress and growth is a process that also helps to sustain student engagement. It serves as a precondition for effectively supporting and challenging each student as a learner. The Review Panel heard from teachers that they want more time in teams to do this and to meet together and talk in a structured way about assessment. Such a refocus will need to include prioritising time to further understand the diagnostic value of the available learner achievement information, the design of common assessment tasks, and the frequent referencing of benchmarks, targets and data management systems.

As all teachers consistently incorporate formative assessment processes into teaching and learning, and use the achievement information about progress and growth to guide their programming, they will see increasing numbers of students demonstrating greater engagement and capacity to achieve at higher levels.

Direction 2

Increase the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning, and the number of students achieving and retaining scores in the higher two bands, by regularly tracking and monitoring student progress and by using this evidence to inform learning design and targeted teaching.

A range of South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) options are offered at the school. In 2014, there were 36 Year 11 students who collectively attempted 372 Stage 1 subjects, with 86.8% grades of C or better achieved. At Year 11 there were 26% A grades achieved. Of the 42 Year 12 students enrolled, 13 had the potential to complete their SACE studying Stage 2 subjects. All 13 students completed the requirements, which, for nine of the students, included a VET component. There were 66 subjects attempted with 95% grades of C- or above attained, including 21% A grades achieved.

21 Year 12 students did not have a SACE pattern. Of these students, 8 were enrolled as full-time or part-time in the Flexible Learning Options program. The remaining 21 Year 12 students were connected to schooling through a variety of Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) programs and pathways based around social, emotional and wellbeing needs.

Known destination data for Year 12 students in 2014 includes 11 students in paid employment, 7 at university, 5 at further training and 4 seeking employment.

The school has recently introduced a SACE Improvement Strategy to raise student achievement levels for all students at senior secondary level. Daily supervised study lessons had been introduced this year, along with mid-term reporting, use of SMART goals, and the regular analysis of data to predict results and trends. Performance and management meetings are starting to focus on improving teaching practice to ensure all students achieve in compulsory subjects.

Direction 3

Increase the number of students successfully completing the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) by engaging Year 10 to 12 students, staff and parents in the design and consistent implementation of the school's SACE Improvement Strategies.

How effectively are students supported in their learning?

Parents were very supportive of the school. They reported that their children were happy and that this is important. They would like to see more consistency between year levels and across year levels in straight and composite classes. They identified phonics in Reception to Year 1 and the spelling program in Year 3, as examples of approaches they knew about and thought were working. They thought that project-based learning, concept lessons and enterprise projects extended students in the middle school. These strategies

were also supporting their children to be independent learners. In the senior school, they thought the new daily 'study line' was being used well; however, they felt a wider subject choice was needed.

Timely communication is valued by all parents, about what is happening in the classroom and about how their child is going with their work. Parents talked positively about the assistance provided to children with learning difficulties. These comments concur with the Parent Opinion Surveys conducted in 2014, including responses from 82% of parents, who felt staff expected their child to do their best. The school works well with parents and they felt their opinions are taken seriously. They were not sure, however, what the 'standard' is, and wanted clarity about grades and how to get a 'C'.

The Review Panel heard from parents, students and staff about the collaborative behaviour review processes undertaken across 2013-2014. All groups felt that whilst there were still times when there were problems, the new approach was improving the situation. Governing Council members said that they thought the statistics were changing and that the committee work, led by the Assistant Principal, had resulted in a positive 'behaviour choices for learning' process being trialled this year. However, some primary students, in particular, did express a level of frustration about being unable to get on with their work when other class members were not consistently making strong choices.

The Review Panel members spoke with students from each sub-school about how well they were learning and how well they were supported. Students in the early years just 'love being at school', enjoy their friends, and could talk about one thing they could get better at in their work. Primary students knew how they were going when they have tests and they get their grades in the report card. They like tasks that include 'criteria for assessment', opportunities to work independently and in pairs, and it works well when the lesson is organised to give everyone a chance to have a say.

Students in the middle years said they could improve their grades if they had fewer distractions, if they asked for more help, got more work done and/or if they were more interested. This year they felt well-supported in English and Mathematics because there was more explicit support available from teachers and through classroom posters and a project-based learning approach. The best lessons were those when they finished without feeling "overwhelmed and left behind". The individual conversations with the teachers about their PAT-Rc results and about what to do to improve were valued.

Senior students said they were most successful when being self-driven and supported by their parents. Their teachers helped them when they received assessment tasks and feedback that indicated the next step in their learning. They valued their connections with teachers over several years and their personal friendships at the school. These older students talked about the decreasing numbers of students in the senior school and about poor attendance: "There has been only one day when all Year 10 students were at school so far this year".

Whilst students were able to talk about a range of school matters and activities, they were less able to discuss issues relating to their learning.

In a staff meeting held during the review, teachers used the 'capacity breakdown' quality learning tool checklist to discuss some strategies they had trialled to introduce active involvement of students in their learning. Staff discussion included the design and use of assessment tasks, ways they had supported students to apply their knowledge in new contexts, and ways they were developing independent self-help skills to problem-solve as a learner. This professional learning focus encourages reflective practice and, as it continues, will provide a useful scaffold to increase opportunities for students to influence their learning.

Direction 4

Challenge students to aspire and achieve by increasing opportunities for all students to personalise and influence their learning and be involved in authentic decision-making to support higher levels of learning.

The Review Panel heard that the school has undertaken a significant amount of work implementing the Australian Curriculum (AC). There is a planner teachers can use as the preferred template to develop units of work and some teachers are developing curriculum overviews. Of note was a process in place that teachers use at Years 7 to 10 to collate and monitor all AC grades, subject by subject, for all students twice a year. The overall grade summary data for 2012 to 2014 indicates that the average achievement over this period was 17%, 34% and 40% of students gaining A, B and C grades respectively. The school is planning to

set up a similar process to collect and monitor the grades assigned against the Australian Curriculum achievement standards for Year 1 to 6 students.

Since 2014, the Site Improvement Plan documents the few agreements put in place across the school so far, to support specific student wellbeing needs and ensure consistency, coherence and continuity of teaching and learning from Reception to Year 12. The behaviour management policy has been one of them. Another was developed in response to supporting students with low grades and/or NAPLAN results. Twice a year class teachers send a pro-forma letter home to the parents of a student who achieves below the benchmark standard in one or more subjects or one or more aspects of the NAPLAN. Parents are invited to attend an interview with their child and the teacher to develop a SMART plan with targets for improvement.

A range of practices related to the implementation of the Literacy Agreement was shared by staff. Staff said that some aspects of the 'modelled, guided and independent learning time' structure were embedded and some aspects were in the early stages.

In relation to assessment practice across the school, the early years staff take Running Records mostly for data collection purposes; Running Records are used in the primary years up until a student is at level 30. All Year 1 to 6 teachers are using the Progressive Achievement Test (PAT-Rc) data as an annual score but, as yet, are not tracking students over time. All Year 7 to 12 teachers are using the PAT-R assessment information to inform their teaching and some reported the positive impact their own engagement in the 'literacy for learning' professional development course is having on student learning.

Goal-setting has been introduced this year at some levels but it is not yet used across the school. All teachers in the middle years sub-school complete a grade analysis twice a term and predict who is going to 'make the grade' by the end of the assessment period. Parents are contacted if the teacher is concerned that students will not achieve the C or above standard. Similar interim reporting systems are used at Years 11 to 12 to track progress and predict grades. One teacher reported that when goal-setting was used, it was revealing to hear a student say: "The grade lifted when I did what I said I would do!"

The Aboriginal Education Team and the Student Intervention Team have developed comprehensive processes for identifying, tracking and addressing the needs of students from priority groups in the school.

The Aboriginal Education Team works collaboratively to support the learning and wellbeing of the Aboriginal students, monitor attendance, and liaise with families. A case management approach is used to support individuals who may change schools from time to time or who require interagency support. The staff reported that all Aboriginal students who are attending consistently are making progress.

The new leadership position created in 2015 for the Intervention Team, which was set up in 2014, has been timely. The Coordinator tracks the progress of all students below benchmark. The team now oversees support for 52 students with negotiated education plans and 60 students who require accommodations under the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data scheme (NCCD). There are 45 students with additional needs from Reception to Year 9 involved in Wave 2 intervention programs for literacy and mathematics. A pre-referral and 'student of concern' process is used to ensure all students who require additional assessment and specialised planning and support receive the help they need when they need it. A flow-chart explains the process, which rightly starts with a parent discussion.

Direction 5

Use self-review processes to monitor the impact in each sub-school of the implementation of assessment and teaching policies and agreements at each year level, and the effectiveness of differentiated teaching strategies on student learning outcomes at the cohort level.

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

In 2015, the change agenda in the school is shaped to focus on learning improvement. The Site Improvement Plan (SIP) is a one year plan with one priority: Quality Teaching and Learning. Specific areas for attention are listed as Numeracy, Literacy, the Development of Powerful Learners, and Build a Culture of *Learning, Caring and Sharing*, which supports all to strive for personal best. The SIP also includes Key Processes and Key Strategies which aim to achieve eight improvement targets. To break the cycle of variance in improvement results and the declining performance in the higher bands, the SIP makes clear what the minimum requirements will be for 2015. The use of agreed diagnostic assessment tools to target

the needs of individuals and cohorts is upfront, along with the development of formative and summative assessment tasks.

Action Plans have been developed this year by the Deputy Principal and the Senior Leaders for each sub-school to ensure that the improvement agenda is supported and implemented at the classroom level. The noticeable consistency in the action plans aims to achieve continuity in learning and coherence in curriculum and teaching from Reception to Year 12. The school is using a number of quality improvement tools in a regular cycle of monitoring and review processes at staff meetings, pupil free days and in sub-schools. A self-review schedule lists what data and perception information is collected and when.

While there is support for quality improvement from 100% of teachers, and 92% of support staff agree or strongly agree that the school looks for ways to improve, some staff raised the issue of workload demands. These staff felt there were competing demands on their time for them “to do what teachers need to do”. A few staff said that there were too many meetings and felt improvement processes were not always relevant.

Making schools better places for children and young people, aiming for quality and excellence on a daily basis, and raising student achievement, is the purpose of improvement. This purpose is reflected in the school’s SIP and in expectations included in the recently-documented staff handbook. Implementing these agreements is tantamount to raising student achievement in a systematic way and in a safe, orderly and productive environment. Finding ways to do it and using the right processes is also tantamount. Most staff felt they needed more time together for talking about “students and their learning, teachers’ work and our planning”. They wanted to share their students’ progress, plan together for differentiation and intervention, and moderate assessment tasks to improve their professional judgement.

The Review Panel concurs with this focused collaboration. In this context, it will be useful to make reference to the relevant domain and career stage of the Australian Professional Standards (APST), to link each staff member’s personal plan with the school improvement priorities.

Direction 6

Support all teachers to raise student achievement by using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as a benchmark for improving practice, and use school agreements and targets to prioritise the use of structured time for collaborative teamwork and professional learning.

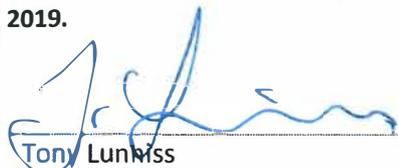
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2015

There is room for improvement in Moonta Area School's current student achievement data. The school has identified that strategic actions are urgently required to reverse this trend. Work has commenced to develop and implement a coherent whole school approach to teaching and learning and build the capacity of staff to work adaptively to improve the results of all students from Reception to Year 12.

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

1. Improve student engagement and raise achievement by strengthening the resolve and professional practice of staff to support all students to be successful learners, and work closely with families from Reception to Year 12 to ensure shared responsibility exists for this outcome to be fully realised.
2. Increase the proportion of students demonstrating higher levels of learning, and the number of students achieving and retaining scores in the higher two bands, by regularly tracking and monitoring student progress and by using this evidence to inform learning design and targeted teaching.
3. Increase the number of students successfully completing the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) by engaging Year 10 to 12 students, staff and parents in the design and consistent implementation of the school's SACE Improvement Strategies.
4. Challenge students to aspire and achieve by increasing opportunities for all students to personalise and influence their learning and be involved in authentic decision-making to support higher levels of learning.
5. Use self-review processes to monitor the impact in each sub-school of the implementation of assessment and teaching policies and agreements at each year level, and the effectiveness of differentiated teaching strategies on student learning outcomes at the cohort level.
6. Support all teachers to raise student achievement by using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) as a benchmark for improving practice, and use school agreements and targets to prioritise the use of structured time for collaborative teamwork and professional learning.

Based on the school's current performance, Moonta 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.



Kirsty Amos
PRINCIPAL
MOONTA AREA SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson