

Department for Education External School Review

Partnerships, Schools and Preschools division

Report for McLaren Flat Primary School

Conducted in September 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 Debbie Grzczkowski, Review Officer of the department's Review, Improvement and Accountability directorate and Toni Burford, 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

McLaren Flat Primary School caters for children from reception to year 7. It is situated 45kms from the Adelaide CBD. The enrolment in 2020 is 205. Enrolment at the time of the previous review was 217 students. The local partnership is Sea and Vines.

The school has an ICSEA score of 1030, and is classified as Category 7 on the Department for Education Index of Educational Disadvantage.

The school population includes no Aboriginal students, 8% students with disabilities, less than 6 students with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) background, less than 6 children/young people in care and 10% of students eligible for School Card assistance.

The school leadership team consists of a principal in their 2nd year of tenure and a deputy principal (0.8 FTE) whose responsibilities include the Inclusive Education Support Program and wellbeing leader.

There are 11 teachers including 2 in the early years of their career and 4 Step 9 teachers.

The previous ESR or OTE directions were:

- Direction 1** **Strengthen student challenge and engagement in learning by supporting teachers to develop even more intentionality in teaching through the diagnostic application of student data.**
- Direction 2** **Continuously improve learning outcomes for all students by supporting teachers to become more attentive and responsive to feedback from teachers about the individuals pedagogy.**
- Direction 3** **Build on teacher capacity through a coherent, deep and narrow whole school improvement focus in which training and development, performance and development, coaching and observations are closely aligned.**

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

The previous ESR directions guided school improvement planning, but had reduced impact due to changes at a leadership level, with most areas still current and pertinent to the school. Appointment of a new principal helped sharpen the school's improvement work by providing clarity and narrowing the direction.

Staff have an agreed data schedule and collect a range of data used to create the improvement focus. Whilst some staff competently use data to inform their practice, this is not consistent across the school. Appointment of a numeracy coach assisted teachers to refine their practice, with some teachers using high-impact teaching strategies.

The new leadership team is well-placed to build coherence across all classes, which will support teacher pedagogy and positively impact on learner outcomes.

Lines of inquiry

Effective school improvement planning

How effectively does the school monitor and enhance its improvement strategies and actions based on their impact on student learning?

Teachers were collectively engaged in creating the current school improvement plan (SIP), through reviewing and analysing a range of data during allocated staff meeting time. The plan was reviewed using a comprehensive self-evaluation process. Professional development plans (PDPs) are linked to the SIP for teachers and targeted professional learning supports the plan's goals. Partnership work on oral language further supports the SIP.

Leadership aligned staff meeting structures to give staff opportunity to meet regularly in learning teams and interrogate data as part of ongoing practice. Teachers engage with a wide range of achievement and growth data, which drives intervention for identified students.

Staff discussed collecting a range of data, but when presented with the previous year's phonics screening and Running Records data, some expressed surprise at the low levels of achievement. Not 'knowing' the data could contribute to the relaxed sense of urgency to act now to improve student outcomes.

Whilst there were pockets of highly effective teacher practice there was variance across classes. Several high-impact strategies deployed by teachers are currently not being shared amongst all teachers. Developing clear structures and process allowing staff to share and connect their practice will help drive and support the improvement agenda.

Although all teachers have a PDP, processes for leaders to provide them with regular feedback and explicit goals to refine their craft was not common practice. Use of Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership teacher standards and including individual student data will further support PDP conversations. Leaders have the opportunity to lead learning through further strengthening processes and structures to build staff capacity. Intentional performance development processes, supported by focused observations with feedback, will support whole school consistency. Monitoring and observing teacher practice, explicitly linked to the narrow focus of the SIP, in conjunction with the successful coaching model, will provide rigour and support a cycle of continuous improvement which positively impacts on classroom practice.

Direction 1 Build consistency and refine teacher practice through focused leadership walkthroughs which provide explicit feedback for improvement.

Effective teaching and student learning

How effectively are teachers supporting students to improve their learning?

Teachers have good understanding of the Australian Curriculum. Most use pre-assessments to refine planning and post-assessments to track student growth. All staff track data to identify students, but how this is used to inform student learning varied, as differentiated lessons were not a consistent practice. With support from the numeracy coach, staff interrogate numeracy data and create maths units of work based on gaps in learning. This data analysis is used to structure intervention groups addressing individual student needs.

A few teachers are successfully using self-assessment rubrics, direct explicit instruction and formative feedback. Creating opportunities for staff to share these strategies would enable a series of learning sprints where all staff could use and assess their impact on student outcomes.

Students are able to articulate their learning, with the majority reporting engagement and enjoyment of lessons. All identified students have a current individual learning plan to support and direct their learning. School support officers provide a mix of in-class support and quality, proven intervention.

Most students are aware of their reading level, but with little evidence of explicit individual learning goals across all classes, or ownership of their personal data. Half of students interviewed indicated choosing 'easy' work when presented with a choice of activities, and most felt they needed to be challenged, to push and stretch their learning. Tasks in bookwork, through discussions and observations, provided limited opportunity in some year groups for students to achieve higher grades.

Teachers need a collaborative understanding of stretch and challenge. Increased opportunities to refocus on learning design and outcomes would facilitate rigour, with stretch and challenge for all students, to become routine practice. Teachers highlighted differentiation, stretch and challenge as areas for further support. Assisting staff through focused observations, coupled with the strategic coaching model, would further strengthen capacity.

Direction 2 Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.

Conditions for effective student learning

To what extent does the school promote a culture of learning with high expectations of achievement for all learners?

Students feel strongly connected to adults at the school, but report having little voice in their learning or running of the school. Student leadership is firmly placed in the upper years, with input into fundraising, Reconciliation Week activities and the physical environment of the school. Leaders discussed being positive role models and wanted to be 'inspirational' to younger members of the community. Some of the upper primary class have independently taken control of the school's greenhouse, and give their time to tend to and grow this space. Given the vibrant student community, there is opportunity to further explore leadership across the school.

Whilst students are 'happy' and 'safe' at school, there is little indication of them taking risks in their learning. The historical focus on wellbeing needs to shift to learning for wellbeing. Learning is referred to as 'getting a better score' or 'completing work', with little curiosity or inquiry. The key to engagement and high expectations in learning, where students are self-motivated and driven, lies in teacher pedagogy.

The majority of interviewed students felt they could have increased influence in their learning. They talked of being given choices in lessons but these were always teacher-driven. Most students did not have explicit individual learning goals to provide their next steps in learning. Clear success criteria and learning intentions were provided only in some classes. Some teachers provide quality feedback as routine practice, but this was not consistent across the school. A few students have the opportunity to provide feedback to teachers and, where this happened, it was appreciated, with a preference for it to happen more regularly.

There is opportunity for staff to refine current practice and embed a culture of high expectations through refocusing on the Teaching for Effective Learning framework (TfEL). Implementing and embedding processes, which provide all students with regular opportunities to input into their learning, will support learner dispositions and enable authentic ownership and risk-taking in learning.

Direction 3 Develop a culture of high expectations through the consistent implementation of TfEL to support positive learner dispositions and enable students to authentically own their learning.

Outcomes of the External School Review 2020

The strength and potential of the leadership team was acknowledged and supported by staff, students and parents. Cohesive and transparent leadership provides vision, clarity of direction and supports staff in refining their practice to further support student learning. The improvement agenda is strategically driven by learning teams aligned to the SIP. Teachers appreciate the coaching model, and benefit from sharing and understanding the impact of their practice. Students have a strong sense of pride in their school and value the relationships with adults who support their learning.

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

- Direction 1** **Build consistency and refine teacher practice through focused leadership walkthroughs which provide explicit feedback for improvement.**
- Direction 2** **Collaboratively strengthen teachers' capacity to design and implement learning experiences that further enable differentiation, intellectual stretch and challenge to be an integral aspect of everyday learning for all.**
- Direction 3** **Develop a culture of high expectations through the consistent implementation of TfEL to support positive learner dispositions and enable students to authentically own their learning.**

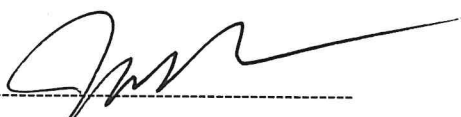
Based on the school's current performance, McLaren Flat Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2023.



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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, 50% of year 1 and 93% of year 2 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. This result represents a decline from the historic baseline average for year 1 and an improvement for year 2. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 2 has been upwards from 76% to 93%.

In 2019, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 84% of year 5 students and 78% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For year 3 this result represents an improvement and for years 5 and 7, little or no change, from the historic baseline average.

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

In 2019, 53% of year 3, 36% of year 5 and 33% 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. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 36% to 53%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in reading, 80%, or 8 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 80%, or 4 out of 5 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.

Numeracy

In 2019, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 87% of year 3 students, 84% of year 5 students and 78% of year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement against the SEA. For years 3 and 5, this result represents an improvement and for year 7, little or no change, from the historic baseline average. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend for year 3 has been upwards from 77% to 87%.

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

In 2019, 40% of year 3, 7% 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. Between 2017 and 2019, the trend has been downwards for year 5, from 17% to 7% and upwards for year 7, from 18% to 28%.

For those students in 2019 who achieved in the top 2 NAPLAN proficiency bands in numeracy, 10%, or 1 out of 10 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 5, and 100%, or 4 out of 4 students from year 3 remain in the upper bands at year 7.