

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

EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW

REPORT FOR HILLCREST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Conducted in August 2016



**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 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 Helen Tunney, Review Officer, Review, Improvement and Accountability Directorate and David Pitt, Review Principal.

Policy compliance

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

The Principal of Hillcrest 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 94.4%, which is above the DECD target of 93%.

School context

Hillcrest Primary School caters for children from Reception to Year 7. It is situated 9kms north-east of the Adelaide CBD, and is part of the Torrens Partnership. The enrolment is currently 232 students, and has increased over the past 5 years from 155 in 2010. The school is classified as Category 4 on the DECD Index of Educational Disadvantage. The school's ICSEA score is 1016.

The school population includes 5.6% Aboriginal students (12 students), 8.2% Students with a Disability, 36% of families eligible for School Card assistance, 42% students of English as Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) background (97 students), and 2 children in care. In 2015, 14.7% of Reception students were identified as developmentally vulnerable in the Australian Early Development Index. This is down from 40% in 2012.

There is an Oral Aural Unit on-site. All hearing-impaired students are integrated into the mainstream with specialist teachers and School Services Officers (SSOs) working collaboratively with mainstream classroom staff.

The school Leadership Team consists of a Principal in the third year of her tenure at the school, a Deputy Principal and a Coordinator. There are 17 teachers, including 5 in the early years of their career, and 7 Step 9 teachers.

The school values are: respect and responsibility, honesty and trustworthiness, and care and compassion.

School Performance Overview

The External School Review process includes an analysis of school performance as measured against the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA).

Reading

In the early years, reading progress is monitored against Running Records. In 2015, 61% of Year 1 and 55% of Year 2 students, demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA). In Year 1, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 2, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 1 has been upwards, from 44% in 2013 to 61% in 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 2 has been downwards, from 75% in 2013 to 55% in 2015.

In 2015, the reading results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 94% of Year 3 students, 69% of Year 5 students and 87% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average. For Year 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 was upwards, from 77% in 2013 to 94% in 2015. Between

2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 5 was downwards, from 100% in 2013 to 69% in 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 7 was upwards, from 74% in 2013 to 87% in 2015.

In 2015 Year 3 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved higher than the results of similar students across DECD schools. In 2015 Year 5 and 7 NAPLAN Reading, the school achieved within the results of similar students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 67% of Year 3, 23% of Year 5 and 27% 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, 50%, or 3 of 6 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 50%, or 2 of 4 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average. For Years 3 to 7, this result represents a decline from the historic baseline average.

Numeracy

In 2015, the numeracy results, as measured by NAPLAN, indicate that 83% of Year 3 students, 87% of Year 5 students and 77% of Year 7 students demonstrated the expected achievement under the DECD SEA. For Years 3, 5 and 7, this result represents an improvement from the historic baseline average.

Between 2013 and 2015, the trend for Year 3 was upwards, from 65% in 2013 to 83% in 2015.

In 2015 Years 3 and 7 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved within the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools. In 2015 Year 5 NAPLAN Numeracy, the school achieved higher than the results of similar groups of students across DECD schools.

In 2015, 39% of Year 3, 15% of Year 5 and 27% of Year 7 students achieved in the top two NAPLAN Numeracy 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 numeracy, 67%, or 2 of 3 students from Year 3, remain in the upper bands at Year 5 in 2015, and 60%, or 3 of 5 students from Year 3 remain in the upper bands at Year 7 in 2015. For Years 3 to 5 and Years 5 to 7, this result represents little or no change from the historic baseline average.

Lines of Inquiry

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

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

Effective Teaching: How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

School Community Partnerships: How well does the school consult with families and respond to their views and aspirations?

To what extent are students engaged and intellectually challenged in their learning?

At Hillcrest Primary School the Leadership Team told the External School Review Panel that teachers in year level teams have selected a focus for collaborative improvement work from the Site Improvement Plan. These teams are inclusive of non-classroom teachers. One team has focused on developing Growth Mindsets, and the panel also found evidence from students to verify that the work done in Growth Mindsets in some classes is impacting positively on students. Students talked the language of growth mindsets to the panel, and offered it as an example of a way that the teacher helps them to achieve better.

“The teacher explained the value of getting things wrong”, said one student. Another younger student said to the panel about her work: “I went good (sic) in the learning, because I kept trying and didn’t give up”. The school is well-placed to strengthen learning dispositions through growth mindsets implemented consistently across the school.

It was evident to the panel from their conversations with teachers, parents and SSOs, that the school is academically aspirational for its students. In consultation with teachers, the school sets its own targets for student learning that are above the SEA. Parents said that students have ‘their own little targets’ in the classroom. Students have a strong understanding of how well they are learning. Students comfortably refer to standards to measure this. A student talked about the value of the parent-teacher interview to him. He said: “It helped me value the growth I am making in learning and not be so stressed about the grade”. Students could articulate to the panel the value of productive struggle. A student said: “The teacher gives us a bit of a clue that helps us. He does not give the answer”. A next step for the school is to raise the standard of access to ICT as tools for learning, as well as to strengthen student learning about digital technologies, to capitalise on the strong ambitions for quality student learning outcomes that are deeply embedded in this school community.

The panel could conclude that student voice in learning and schooling is activated across the school. Strategies that were spoken about in staff and student groups include: checking prior knowledge; brainstorming; following student interests; ensuring topics relate to self; choice of inquiry question; application of Dylan Wiliam Assessment for Learning strategies; scaffolded student reflection on learning; self and peer-marking; class meeting; and Student Executive Group. A next step for the school is to deepen student voice and move towards learning co-construction, with the application of all Dylan Wiliam Assessment for Learning strategies consistently across the school and, in particular, the development of an explicit narrative between teacher and student about learning intentions.

It was apparent to the panel from its conversations with teacher and SSO groups that Non-Instruction Time (NIT) teachers have strengths in subject integration which was verified by the NIT and classroom teachers. Class teachers raised with the panel issues of a crowded curriculum and the need for scoping and sequencing. Researching big ideas across curriculum areas is valued by parents. More investigative, collaborative problem-solving is valued by parents. The school is well-placed to utilise the expertise amongst teachers to reconceptualise its curriculum in the interests of streamlining curriculum, and curriculum transformation for greater creativity and problem-solving.

The panel found evidence that all teachers are aware of intellectual stretch and the need to plan for it. Students verified teacher use of strategies designed to challenge students, such as: higher-order comprehension tasks; using flip questions; tasks with different entry points; technical language; ‘pushing those who need it’; hand-on activities; ability groups; work walls; transforming tasks; use of rubrics; productive struggle; big ideas; thinkers’ hats and keys; proving things wrong; enabling student talk; the 7 whys; and student design of assessment. Several SSOs are aware of the need to provide intellectual stretch in intervention sessions, and some teachers have a very sophisticated application of pedagogies for intellectual stretch. The school is well-placed to holistically reconceptualise intellectual stretch as being more than extension/acceleration for ‘bright’ students, and to ensure all teachers regularly set challenging learning tasks that always include higher-order questions for all students.

Direction 1

Build on understanding of intellectual stretch, and develop whole-school agreements about practice, to ensure all students experience challenging and engaging learning sustained over time, designed to enable them to achieve an A or B, as measured by the Australian Curriculum, and in higher NAPLAN bands.

How well do teachers plan and design learning tasks to meet the varied needs, skills and interests of all students?

Hillcrest Primary School staff are strongly collegiate, collaborative, and very supportive of each other. This quality collegiality is evident between and within groups of teachers and SSOs, and supports staff induction and continuous school improvement. NIT teachers are connected to whole-school SIP through training and development, and teachers value their learning teams. The integration of teachers and SSOs for the deaf into mainstream has been very successful and is appreciated by all staff. The high level skills of SSOs are recognised by the teachers. It will be important for the school to plan for a potential loss of resourcing, as a result of a DECD review of state-wide provisions for hearing-impaired students.

Intervention is strong in the school. The panel was provided with evidence of effective tracking and monitoring of student learning growth and early intervention. Parents verified the school's early identification of students with special needs. There are strong structures for ensuring coherence for students between mainstream and intervention programs. Classroom teachers manage and track intervention, and maintain ownership of the student's program. It is a strength of the school that all teachers are trained in the intervention strategies used by SSOs, for example, *MiniLit* and *Quicksmart*. This is serving to: build collegiality; upskill teachers and SSOs in differentiation; and facilitate effective communication about intervention in the interests of coherence for student learning. A next step for the school is to reduce its reliance on informal communication between teachers and SSOs about intervention, and to increase transparency in the school about the allocation of SSO time.

Teachers are all working deeply to 'tweak' their classroom practice in the interests of improved student learning. A student told the panel that "the teacher personalises your education. It's not the same for everyone". The panel found that teachers are strongly data-literate, and all use regular, small cycles of assess-plan-teach. They follow the school's assessment schedule, as well as skilfully use other data, individually and in teams. Teachers verified that they are supported by leadership to be compliant with the assessment schedule. Data is used to determine Wave 1 intentional teaching, as well as identification for Wave 2 and 3 interventions. A Junior Primary student said about her teacher's use of testing: "It helps her help people at the right level". Teachers have identified tools for maths assessments, and a tool has been developed to screen preschool students for class placement. The teaching of writing is strongly differentiated and intentional through the use of EALD scales as an assessment tool. *Read Write Inc* is strongly embedded; it is evidence-based and guides differentiation. Leadership told the panel that they have noted, as a possible opportunity, the reduction in the number of school improvement foci. The panel concluded that the school is well-placed to adopt a common improvement focus for all learning teams, and to maintain this focus through awareness and implementation, and it being embedded in all practice. In addition, tying performance and development more strongly to this improvement focus will facilitate this improvement.

Direction 2

Build a coherent, school-wide approach to continuous improvement in teacher capacity to ensure professional learning and performance and development is translated into effective teaching across the school.

How well does the school consult with families and respond to their views and aspirations?

There is a very settled, pro-learning student culture of behaviour at Hillcrest Primary School, which is verified by teachers, parents, and in panel observations in class walk-throughs. The strong congruence between home-school values is appreciated by parents and, in particular, the efforts being made by the school to use social media for home-school communication. The accessibility of teachers and leaders facilitates quality home-school communication and ensures that conflict and problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school is well-placed to inform its parent community about the recent changes in child-protection regulations around parents volunteering in their own child's class.

There is strong enrolment growth in the Junior Primary area of the school, and parents told the panel that the school is developing a positive reputation in the community. The school is growing, and an important step for the school is planning for a future increase in enrolments to capacity.

The workshops offered to parents during the transition of Reception students from kindergarten are valued by teachers and parents. Parents talked to the panel about how the school accommodates their involvement around working hours, and teachers acknowledge that there is always strong parent support when needed. The panel was told by Governing Council members that the Oral Aural Unit review was highly regarded by Governing Council. The school is well-placed to optimise the abundant goodwill of parents, and their commitment to, and energy for, the school. Parent involvement could be deepened through more staff-parent committees, for example, OSHC, Finance, ICT, and Grounds/Garden.

Direction 3

Widen parent involvement at the school through more formalised and regular structures and processes to enable families to be involved more deeply as partners in their child's learning, and in the continuous improvement of the school.

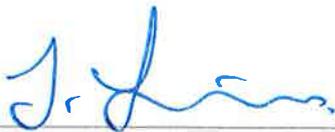
OUTCOMES OF EXTERNAL SCHOOL REVIEW 2016

Hillcrest Primary School operates with shared vision and strategic planning, and its actions and interventions are data-informed and sustained over time. Highly effective regular and strategic self-review processes provide evidence-based and standards-driven findings, which are acted upon. The school evaluates programs and strategies to determine their effectiveness on student achievement and growth.

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

1. Build on understanding of intellectual stretch, and develop whole-school agreements about practice, to ensure all students experience challenging and engaging learning sustained over time, designed to enable them to achieve an A or B, as measured by the Australian Curriculum, and in higher NAPLAN bands.
2. Build a coherent, school-wide approach to continuous improvement in teacher capacity to ensure professional learning and performance and development is translated into effective teaching across the school.
3. Widen parent involvement at the school through more formalised and regular structures and processes to enable families to be involved more deeply as partners in their child's learning, and in the continuous improvement of the school.

Based on the school's current performance, Hillcrest Primary School will be externally reviewed again in 2020.



Tony Lunniss
DIRECTOR
REVIEW, IMPROVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

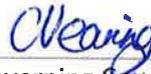


Jayne Johnston
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

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.



Lissa Hutter
PRINCIPAL
HILLCREST PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governing Council Chairperson